Review

Reviewed Work(s): Fascism: A History by Roger Eatwell

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Fascism: A History. By ROGER EATWELL. New York: Penguin Books USA, 1997. Pp. xxvii + 404. $34.95 (cloth); $14.95 (paper).

Fascism: A History blends political theory with history in order to make accessible for readers one of the most intricate phenomena of the twentieth century. This methodological combination offers clear advantages but has some limitations. Roger Eatwell needs the history of fascism to substantiate the points he makes in the first part about the originality, consistency, and importance of fascism as a political ideology that, in the hands of charismatic leaders, recruited millions into its ranks and changed the course of European history. From the other side, political analysis imbues Eatwell's work with the kind of explanations that, transcending events and circumstances, allow the reader a deep understanding of the historical phenomenon. From these points of view, the balance between the two aspects of *Fascism: A History* is excellent. This is true, if we add a word about the depth and learning shown by Eatwell in these chapters. A complete review of the different theories on fascism is succinctly presented in the first part of the book. There, the argument about fascism as a remarkable event of political culture covering the whole of the twentieth century, in its different aspects—ideological, movement-party, regime—is established, shattering the argument that tried to limit fascism's scope to the interwar period and to define it as an exacerbated anticommunist reaction. The value of this argument is further proved in the third part of the book, which deals with the four main cases of neofascism, in Italy, Germany, France, and Great Britain, as well as providing an updated analysis of the problem in terms of historical revisionism, Europeanist tendencies, and new brands of fascism or postfascism à la Gianfranco Fini and his Alleanza Nazionale.

The core of the book is the second part, in which Eatwell develops the historical analysis of four cases: the rise of fascism to power in Italy; the rise of Nazism in Germany; the failure of the divided French fascism to crystallize into a political force able to create a regime by itself and the problems of Vichy; and a brief dissection of the British Union of Fascists and the role of their leader, Oswald Mosley—the fascism that never took off. The methodological choice is clear. Eatwell analyzes central cases that developed in different directions around the core ideology of fascism in order to present a range of possible fascisms. This is done on the basis of accurate historical data. It is here that the combination between history and political science comes to fruition. Each of the cases is closely analyzed, following the criteria set out in

the first part of the work, especially the definition of fascist ideology as a "form of thought which preaches the need for social rebirth in order to forge a *holistic-national radical Third Way*" (p. xxvi). The criteria for success—the fascist movement-party reach to power and regime creation and institutionalization—are also set out there: "[fascism] succeeded where it managed to achieve some form of *syncretic legitimation*, in which the insurgent party was able to portray itself as both economically efficacious and a legitimate part of the national tradition, and the Establishment elites were willing to accord fascism an important element of support" (pp. xxvi–xxvii). This also serves as a key analytical element in the historical explanation of fascism's rise to power in the second part of the book. It is in this framework that historical analysis transcends description, circumstantial explanations, and the limits set by events and facts to achieve a more complete picture of a western European phenomenon of distinctive political characterization that has profoundly marked Europe in the twentieth century. By stating the case so clearly and limiting the choice of cases analyzed in *Fascism: A History,* Eatwell opens wide the political and historical debate about the nature of fascism. Are his criteria applicable to other areas, beyond western Europe? As Eatwell knows well, fascist movements flourished all over Europe in the interwar period: Portugal's Camisas Azuis and Nacional-sindicalismo, Integralismo Lusitano, and Salazarismo; the Falange Española of José Antonio de Primo Rivera; the Austrian DNSAP; the Hungarian Arrow Cross; Corneliu Celea Cordreanu's Archangel Michael Legion in Romania, generally described as a variant of fascism; Rexism in Belgium and the NSB in the Netherlands; the fascist movements in the Baltic countries and Scandanavia; the Lapua movement in Finland; and others. But the question mark grows geographically when we take notice of the ideological developments and fascist movement formation in other corners of the world. A close examination of the cases of fascist movements in Latin America, South Africa, Japan, and the Middle East proves the extent to which Italian fascism and German Nazism were imitated outside, but these movements also adapted fascist ideology and practice to local political culture and practices, sometimes introducing new elements into it. This brings us to the question of criteria of definition and conditions for appearance and development of fascism. Undoubtedly both criteria used by Eatwell appeared in different measures of intensity and centrality in fascist movements outside Italy, Germany, France, and Great Britain: *holistic-national radical Third Way* and *syncretic legitimation*. Each fascist or quasi-fascist political movement from Chile to Japan possessed an ideological core that attempted to create a

"third way" between communism and capitalism based on a holistic radical nationalism of mass mobilization and societal control and penetration or, in other words, totalitarian characteristics. All these ideologies and movements combined slightly different approaches to social problems based on corporative and productionist solutions. These approaches addressed at the same time the issue of social solidarity and national power, rejecting both individualist and class-based solutions, and found bases of legitimation in the country tradition and history. Then, the growth of fascism from the ideology of a few into a mass political movement and its performance in attempts to reach power depend also on other factors or independent variables. Support or lack of support by the established elites seems essential; socioeconomic crisis may provide incentives for the development of fascism but do not constitute a sine qua non for its ideological appearance. One must remember that the ideological development of fascism in western Europe took place in the period before World War I, drawing from radical mobilizatory nationalist sources, as well as from socialists who had become disenchanted with Marxism. Although Eatwell states that by 1919 fascism was still embryonic, its main elements, as a "third way" to practice modern politics, were clearly established together with the antimaterialist, antirationalist, and anti-universalist philosophical cornerstones within which all fascisms developed, before World War I in Europe and later elsewhere. The crises—the post–World War I situation in Europe and the Great Depression beginning in 1929—served as catalysts that widened the phenomenon but did not create it. Everywhere nationalist politicians were asking themselves how to cope with the social impact of modernization and how to integrate the masses into their movements. This was true in different degrees for the founders of the Movimiento Nacional Socialista in Chile, for Antun Saade Syrian People Party, and for the members of the Shōwa Research Foundation in Japan. Admirers of fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, such as Perón in Argentina, made use of some political elements developed by these regimes in order to achieve their goals. Although generic fascism may be a European phenomenon, the multiple examples of quasi-fascism in different parts of the world cannot be disregarded. This is true because fascism provided not only an ideology and a new political style but also an alternative powerful model of doing politics in societies convulsed by modernization.

Eatwell's *Fascism: A History* does not cover the whole scope of fascism, but it brings the key elements for the understanding of its development within the historical perspective of four central, western European societies. This in itself is an important contribution because

the book breaks away from historicist-particularistic explanations without becoming a tract on political theory and without losing the perspective of the facts as they were and are. It is an excellent book that makes fascinating reading because of its richness of detail, which communicates the texture of fascist experience in four societies in which fascism enjoyed different degrees of success. This book should be read not only by students of fascism but by all those who try to understand twentieth-century politics, because it deals theoretically and empirically with the central issues of modern politics—integration, identity, socioeconomic differentiation and mobilization, the autonomy of civil society, and the power of the nation-state.

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Stalinism and Nazism: Dictatorships in Comparison. Edited by IAN KERSHAW and MOSHE LEWIN. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Pp. xii + 369. $54.95 (cloth); $18.95 (paper).

In *Stalinism and Nazism* Ian Kershaw and Moshe Lewin have collected thirteen essays from a conference in Philadelphia in 1991, where twenty-seven papers and eighteen commentaries were presented. The contributions span the history of Stalinism and National-Socialism for the fifteen years between 1930 and 1945, making comparable and, in part, comparing the two systems, especially their wartime records.

In their introduction the editors choose what they call the "common ground" approach—not trying to judge whether or not a label like "totalitarianism" might fit or whether we may speak of an essential "sameness," but looking for "pointers towards explaining how such easily equated dictatorships, though fundamentally different in so many respects, were produced almost simultaneously in countries with sharply differing profiles" (p. 5). In his overview on Stalinism, Ronald Grigor Suny describes the constant narrowing of the political field from Lenin's times to the 1930s, when the "Khoziain" regularly and frequently gave directives. Lewin points to the contradictory process of a growing bureaucracy on one hand (it exercised a monopoly of implementation of politics and was growing fast) and, on the other hand, the despotism of Stalin, the "creature of his party" (p. 70). Stalin depended on shock methods that were antibureaucratic in character.

Hans Mommsen also points to the antibureaucratic character of dictatorship, in his case the National-Socialist one. Hitler's conviction that within a seemingly archaic competition system the best would win