

---

# UNIT 26 COUNTER REVOLUTION-I : FASCISM TO CONSERVATIVE DICTATORSHIP

---

## Structure

- 26.0 Objectives
- 26.1 Introduction
- 26.2 General Features of Fascism.
- 26.3 The Political Antecedents of Fascism
- 26.4 Foundation of Fascist State in Italy
  - 26.4.1 The Emergence of Fascist Movement and Conquest of Power
  - 26.4.2 Consolidation of the Regime
  - 26.4.3 Major Types of Fascist Mass Organizations
  - 26.4.4 Nature of the Fascist State
  - 26.4.5 The Fall and Solo Republic
- 26.5 Right Wing Dictatorship and Movement in Spain
- 26.6 The French Right and Vichy Government
- 26.7 Right Wing Movements and Dictatorship : Eastern Central Europe and Baltic States
  - 26.7.1 Poland
  - 26.7.2 Hungary
  - 26.7.3 Czecho-Slovak
  - 26.7.4 Baltic States
- 26.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 26.9 Key Words
- 26.10 Answer to Check Your Progress Exercises

---

## 26.0 OBJECTIVES

---

The basic purpose of this Unit is to make you understand the development of extreme right wing movements and regimes in the Inter-War period in Europe. After reading this Unit, you will be able to understand:

- some general features of fascism and the nature of its mobilisation;
- the ideological forms and the organisational style of fascism in various countries of Europe;
- nature of fascist regimes in countries like Italy and Spain, and;
- the spread of semi-fascist regimes and organisations throughout Europe.

---

## 26.1 INTRODUCTION

---

It is important to bear in mind the growth of politics of mobilization of people institutionalized through elections, parties and representation in 18th and 19th centuries. This led to a whole range of political choices from left to right. The latent social-cleavages also came into open. The growth of monopoly capitalism and resultant intense imperialist rivalries fueling extreme nationalist ideologies and militarism after 1870 should also be seen as the background of the growth of right-wing fascist dictatorships in Europe after the first phase of World War I. In this new context, appeal for political support was made on the basis of new, seemingly non-class identities especially outside the workplace. As a result, unique mass-constituencies such as 'war-veterans', 'tax-payers', 'sports fans' or simply 'national citizens' were created.

In the previous Unit you learnt about the triple ideological division of Europe into regimes of left, right and centre, in the post-war period. You were also familiarised with the 'centre', i.e., the liberal democratic regimes of Britain, France and Germany in the 1920s. This Unit focuses on the 'right', i.e., the fascist movements and regimes primarily in countries like Italy, Germany (in the 1930s and early 1940s under Hitler) and Spain. The Unit begins with a discussion on some of the general features of fascism. It then takes up the story of fascism in specific countries except Germany. Germany will be discussed exclusively in the next Unit.

## 26.2 FASCISM : GENERAL FEATURES

Fascism has been interpreted in multiple ways. Some important interpretations explain it as :

- a violent, dictatorial agent of finance capital — a favourite Marxist position;
- the unique expression of Middle Class Radicalism;
- the product of a cultural and moral breakdown;
- the result of Extreme Neurotic or pathological impulses;
- the product of the rise of amorphous masses with the breakdown of traditional identities based on kinship, church, guild and residence etc.; and
- a form of Bonapartism or an autonomous authoritarian government independent of specific class-domination.

Many more points may be added to this list. But these multiple interpretations are sufficient to point to the heterogeneous ingredients of fascism. Fascism emerged in Europe as a synthesis of organic nationalism (a belief in the harmonious collectivity of Nation superseding all other forms of human identification) and anti-Marxist socialism. Its organic nationalism accounts for its deep-rooted hostility to inter-nationalism and organization and movements based on internationalism such as communism, freemasonry, the League of Nations, finance capital and the multi-national Jewish community. Fascism emerged as a radical movement based on the rejection of notions of liberalism, democracy and Marxism. The Fascist synthesis symbolized the rejection of a political culture inherited from the Enlightenment and its ideas such as rationalist materialism, individualism and pluralist autonomy. The other major cultural variables of fascism were: activism, vitalism and social-darwinism. Sorel's philosophy of action was based on intuition, energy and élan. Its activism was used to mobilize the masses. Social Darwinism believed that people in society compete for survival and only superior groups and races succeed.

Fascism was rooted in the 19th century critiques of liberal democracy, parliamentarianism and Marxist socialism. However, it differed from the conservative authoritarian groups. The basis of conservative authoritarianism was generally religious ideology whereas fascism based itself on a new cultural mystique such as vitalism, non-rationalism or secular neo-idealism. The conservatives invoked traditional legitimacies whereas fascists wanted a radical institutional change.

The war did provide sociological and psychological conditions for the crystallization of Fascism. It revealed the capacity of nationalism in the mobilization of masses and economic resources. It further demonstrated the importance of unity of command, of authority, of moral mobilization and of propaganda in the service of the modern state. After the war, Fascism emerged as a vision of a coherent and reunited people, mobilized on the basis of a whole communal liturgy of songs and torch-light processions, highlighting the cult of physical strength, violence and brutality. Its perfect expression being the quasi-sacred figure of the leader-the Duce (as in Italy) or the Fuehrer (as in Germany). The fascist opposition to the democratic-bourgeois institutions and values did not rule out their use of mass, plebiscitary forms of politics, but they opposed the notion of democracy based on respect for pluralism in society, the freedom of the individual and the existence of civil and political liberties. Its attempted mass mobilization featured the militarization of politics, and the use of military insignia and terminology. A party militia was often used to reinforce the sense of nationalism and constant struggle as well as to wipe out opposition. Specifically related to this militarization of political relationship with followers was their extreme stress on the masculine principle or male dominance while espousing an organic view of society. In their organic view of society, the structural relationship of various organs to each other only served to define and delimit their roles, taking precedence over the

identities and rights of individuals. The exaltation of youth and the specific tendency towards an authoritarian, charismatic, personal style of command (whether elective or non-elective) were other features related to this militarization of politics.



Fig. 1: Fuehrer and Duce: Hitler and Mussolini, the fascist leaders

Another significant feature of fascist ideology was the organisation of some kind of regulated, multi-class, integrated national economic structure (variously called national corporatist, national socialist or national syndicalist). The goal of empire or at least a radical change in the nation's relationship with other powers was also a crucial factor.

### 26.3 THE POLITICAL ANTECEDENTS OF FASCISM

The growth of fascist ideas, in embryonic form, can be traced to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The ideas of corporatism (as a community of people, of producers free from class-strife) emerged in reaction to individualism, social atomization and new centralizing states. Initially, it was a residue of the feudal ideology of a mystical 'community' of personal ties. But gradually it acquired modern reformist, class-collaborationist forms. Its two distinct forms were societal corporatism (based on autonomy to corporations) and state corporatism. At the second level, we may discern a tendency from conservatism towards neo-authoritarianism. Action Francaise (founded in 1899 in France) represented this new authoritarian, neo-monarchist nationalism. Its core principle was legitimate monarchy and corporate representation. It also made use of anti-semitism and an embryonic militant group of young activists (as a precursor of the fascist militia).

The third trend toward the crystallization of the fascist right was symbolized by an instrumental, modernizing radical right which combined domestic modernization with militant nationalism. Its political manifestation was the Italian National Association (ANI — founded in 1910). Its ideology of state-corporatism demanded a co-ordination of modern industrial production to make Italy a strong imperial country and its militia Sempre Pronti (Always Ready) countered leftist violence with its own street violence. The other political precursors of radical, semi-collectivist nationalism which anticipated the fascist goal of broader mass mobilization were

Paul Deroulede's League of Patriots in France and the Boulangist Movement in France in the 1880s. Pan-Germanism and the racial nationalism of the Austrian leader Georg Ritter von Schenerer in the late 19th century, Maurice Barres socialist-nationalism embodied in the Czech National Socialist Party (1904) and the German National Socialist Workers' Party (DNSAP) and its leaders Dr. Walter Riehl and Rudolff Jung came much closer to the later Hitlerite ideas and programmes.

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) In what way did the war contribute to the development of fascist movement?

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 2) What are the general features of fascism.?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 3) How would you distinguish a conservative right-wing from fascist movement? Answer in about five sentences.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

## 26.4 FOUNDATION OF FASCIST STATE IN ITALY

By now you must have acquired a general awareness of the features of fascism. It is now time to do a case study. Germany, Italy and Spain are some of the examples of fascism. German fascism will be discussed in the next Unit. Let us now look at the specific forms that fascism took in Italy and Spain.

### 26.4.1 The Emergence of the Fascist Movement and Conquest of Power

Fascism in Italy was created by the convergence of certain existing trends. The split in the radical syndicalist Confederation of Trade Unions took place in 1914 over the issue of Italian participation in the war. The syndicalist believed in the 'self-emancipation' of the 'producers', which could be achieved through 'regulation at factory level', and not through 'seizure of state power'. The state would be replaced at an appropriate time by worker's syndicates or associations, which would act as the instruments of self-government of the producers. The Syndicalist wing which moved towards fascism embraced extreme nationalism, and nations were described by it as proletarian or plutocratic (i.e., in class terms). The futurists who rejected traditional norms and existing institutions and exalted violence, and were fascinated by speed, power, motors and machines, or all the modern technological possibilities, were a second major ideological factor. Mussolini's socialistic views, and ideas on leadership, mass-mobilization and national revolution contributed the third major strand.

The initial programme of fascists, launched as *Fasci di Combattimento* (1919) in Milan called for the installation of a republic and reflected demands for radical, democratic and socialistic reforms including confiscation of the huge war-time profits of the capitalists, the suppression of big joint-stock companies and land for the landless peasants. These leftist elements of the programme were dropped in 1920 and only an emotive mixture of strident patriotism, justification of the war and a concern for national greatness and growing aversion to the socialist party were retained. The growth of fascist squads led by ex-military personnel and supported by the local police and army especially in northern and central Italy- the Po Valley and Tuscany- was directly linked to the actual or perceived threat of the left. The Fascist Militia was created in January 1923 by Mussolini in order to discipline the squads and curtail the powers of local squad leaders.

The poorly organized fascist march on Rome (October 1922) suggests that a revolutionary insurrection could not have succeeded but for the indecisiveness of the King and the passive support of a section of army. The King appointed Mussolini as the Prime Minister on 29th October 1922, who temporarily observed all the constitutional norms after the assumption of power. Mussolini, however, realized that even a multi-class nationalist movement would need a compromise or a coalition of right forces to stay in power. In February 1923, a fusion of Fascist Party and Nationalist Association of Italy (ANI) took place. This fusion with a conservative, elitist, monarchist right-wing became essential to gain broader support among army officers, academics, civil servants and businessmen. This and other steps to seek accommodation with the traditional elites left its imprint on the fascist party and the state. The traditional right groups co-operated with fascists in passing the Acerbo Bill in 1923 which proposed that the party receiving a quarter of votes in an election, should be automatically given two-thirds of seats in the parliament.

#### 26.4.2 Consolidation of the Regime

Using force and fraud, Fascists swept the 1924 election and after temporary discomfiture over the murder of Socialist Deputy Matteotti in 1924, Mussolini went ahead with his institutionalization of dictatorship. In October 1926, all opposition parties were banned. The press was shackled, and the Public Safety Law (1926) made the security of state take precedence over personal liberty. The Syndical Law (1926) brought labour under the control of state, in the interest of production. The law confirmed the fascist unions in their monopoly of negotiations, set up tribunals for compulsory arbitration and banned strikes and go-slows. The Fascist Party itself was bureaucratized. The new party statute in October 1926 introduced rigid centralization of powers, all posts being appointed from above. In 1927, Mussolini resolved the question of the relationship between the party and the state, in favour of the latter. Between 1926 and 1929, over 60,000 squad members were expelled from the party. Attempt was made to control syndicalist ideas among fascist trade unions and Edmondo Rossoni, the leader of syndicalists, was sacked in 1928. The productivist and modernizing goal of early fascism led to a compromise with private capital in the 1920s and 1930s, without formally renouncing syndicalist projects of semi-collectivism. The 'Corporate State' was formally created in 1934 with 22 new combined corporations of employers and employees, but they lacked real powers to take economic decisions.

Mussolini also tried to appease the church. Large grants were made for the repair of war-damaged churches. In 1923, religious education was made compulsory in secondary schools. The Roman question was finally settled in 1929 with the signing of the Lateran Pacts. The Vatican became a sovereign state and a large sum was given to it for the loss of papal territories in 1860 and 1870. The Church's main lay organization, Catholic Action, was guaranteed freedom provided it stayed out of politics.

#### 26.4.3 Major Types of Fascist Mass Organizations

At the top was the Grand Council of Fascism created in 1922 as a consultative body which was converted into an organ of state by 1928. But grass-root organisations were more important. The military type Militia developed out of the fascist squads. It was trained to use all kind of weapons and centred around a core of professional soldiers. Its cadres were indoctrinated and used against opponents. The semi-military propaganda-type organization included Balilla, young vanguards and the young fascists. These organizations were bureaucratically controlled by the Party. The regimented fascist unions for workers were another major mass organization. Fascism's most effective experiment in consent-building was creation of the Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro,



Paul Deroulede's League of Patriots in France and the Boulangist Movement in France in the 1880s. Pan-Germanism and the racial nationalism of the Austrian leader Georg Ritter von Schenker in the late 19th century, Maurice Barres socialist-nationalism embodied in the Czech National Socialist Party (1904) and the German National Socialist Workers' Party (DNSAP) and its leaders Dr. Walter Riehl and Rudolff Jung came much closer to the later Hitlerite ideas and programmes.

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) In what way did the war contribute to the development of fascist movement?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 2) What are the general features of fascism?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 3) How would you distinguish a conservative right-wing from fascist movement? Answer in about five sentences.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

## 26.4 FOUNDATION OF FASCIST STATE IN ITALY

By now you must have acquired a general awareness of the features of fascism. It is now time to do a case study. Germany, Italy and Spain are some of the examples of fascism. German fascism will be discussed in the next Unit. Let us now look at the specific forms that fascism took in Italy and Spain.

### 26.4.1 The Emergence of the Fascist Movement and Conquest of Power

Fascism in Italy was created by the convergence of certain existing trends. The split in the radical syndicalist Confederation of Trade Unions took place in 1914 over the issue of Italian participation in the war. The syndicalist believed in the 'self-emancipation' of the 'producers', which could be achieved through 'regulation at factory level', and not through 'seizure of state power'. The state would be replaced at an appropriate time by worker's syndicates or associations, which would act as the instruments of self-government of the producers. The Syndicalist wing which moved towards fascism embraced extreme nationalism, and nations were described by it as proletarian or plutocratic (i.e., in class terms). The futurists who rejected traditional norms and existing institutions and exalted violence, and were fascinated by speed, power, motors and machines, or all the modern technological possibilities, were a second major ideological factor. Mussolini's socialistic views, and ideas on leadership, mass-mobilization and national revolution contributed the third major strand.

The initial programme of fascists, launched as *Fasci di Combattimento* (1919) in Milan called for the installation of a republic and reflected demands for radical, democratic and socialistic reforms including confiscation of the huge war-time profits of the capitalists, the suppression of big joint-stock companies and land for the landless peasants. These leftist elements of the programme were dropped in 1920 and only an emotive mixture of strident patriotism, justification of the war and a concern for national greatness and growing aversion to the socialist party were retained. The growth of fascist squads led by ex-military personnel and supported by the local police and army especially in northern and central Italy- the Po Valley and Tuscany- was directly linked to the actual or perceived threat of the left. The Fascist Militia was created in January 1923 by Mussolini in order to discipline the squads and curtail the powers of local squad leaders.

The poorly organized fascist march on Rome (October 1922) suggests that a revolutionary insurrection could not have succeeded but for the indecisiveness of the King and the passive support of a section of army. The King appointed Mussolini as the Prime Minister on 29th October 1922, who temporarily observed all the constitutional norms after the assumption of power. Mussolini, however, realized that even a multi-class nationalist movement would need a compromise or a coalition of right forces to stay in power. In February 1923, a fusion of Fascist Party and Nationalist Association of Italy (ANI) took place. This fusion with a conservative, elitist, monarchist right-wing became essential to gain broader support among army officers, academics, civil servants and businessmen. This and other steps to seek accommodation with the traditional elites left its imprint on the fascist party and the state. The traditional right groups co-operated with fascists in passing the Acerbo Bill in 1923 which proposed that the party receiving a quarter of votes in an election, should be automatically given two-thirds of seats in the parliament.

#### 26.4.2 Consolidation of the Regime

Using force and fraud, Fascists swept the 1924 election and after temporary discomfiture over the murder of Socialist Deputy Matteotti in 1924, Mussolini went ahead with his institutionalization of dictatorship. In October 1926, all opposition parties were banned. The press was shackled, and the Public Safety Law (1926) made the security of state take precedence over personal liberty. The Syndical Law (1926) brought labour under the control of state, in the interest of production. The law confirmed the fascist unions in their monopoly of negotiations, set up tribunals for compulsory arbitration and banned strikes and go-slows. The Fascist Party itself was bureaucratized. The new party statute in October 1926 introduced rigid centralization of powers, all posts being appointed from above. In 1927, Mussolini resolved the question of the relationship between the party and the state, in favour of the latter. Between 1926 and 1929, over 60,000 squad members were expelled from the party. Attempt was made to control syndicalist ideas among fascist trade unions and Edmondo Rossoni, the leader of syndicalists, was sacked in 1928. The productivist and modernizing goal of early fascism led to a compromise with private capital in the 1920s and 1930s, without formally renouncing syndicalist projects of semi-collectivism. The 'Corporate State' was formally created in 1934 with 22 new combined corporations of employers and employees, but they lacked real powers to take economic decisions.

Mussolini also tried to appease the church. Large grants were made for the repair of war-damaged churches. In 1923, religious education was made compulsory in secondary schools. The Roman question was finally settled in 1929 with the signing of the Lateran Pacts. The Vatican became a sovereign state and a large sum was given to it for the loss of papal territories in 1860 and 1870. The Church's main lay organization, Catholic Action, was guaranteed freedom provided it stayed out of politics.

#### 26.4.3 Major Types of Fascist Mass Organizations

At the top was the Grand Council of Fascism created in 1922 as a consultative body which was converted into an organ of state by 1928. But grass-root organisations were more important. The military type Militia developed out of the fascist squads. It was trained to use all kind of weapons and centred around a core of professional soldiers. Its cadres were indoctrinated and used against opponents. The semi-military propaganda-type organization included Balilla, young vanguards and the young fascists. These organizations were bureaucratically controlled by the Party. The regimented fascist unions for workers were another major mass organization. Fascism's most effective experiment in consent-building was creation of the Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro.

set up in 1925, its main concern being the organization of leisure-time. It ran a huge network of local clubs and recreational facilities with libraries, bars, billiards halls and sport grounds. The Dopolavoro circles arranged concerts, plays and film shows, organized outings and provided extremely cheap summer holidays for children. By the 1930s, there were about 20,000 such circles in Italy.

#### 26.4.4 Nature of the Fascist State

Though some characterize it as a 'totalitarian' state, the preeminent authority of the state remained only in the areas of conflict, it was never total. Unlike the Nazi German state, it never achieved even an approximate day-to-day institutional control. The bureaucratic structure was never able to intervene in all avenues of life. It was primarily a dictatorship that presided over a pluralistic or semi-pluralistic system, pluralist not in ideological but in an institutional sense. Big business, industry, finance and even army retained their autonomy to a large degree while labour interests were more and more regimented. The administrative machinery was preserved. The bureaucracy was never subjected to a systematic purge, and was dominated, as before, by career officials. The Police and Carabinieri were similarly unpoliticized, i.e., they were not taken over by party officials; however, a new political police, the OVRA was created in 1932. Fascism came to power on the basis of a tacit compromise with the established institutions and elites and never fully escaped the constraints of that compromise.

The state intervention in the economic life of the nation was marginal in the early part of regime. The Direct state investment during the Depression was only an emergency measure. In 1933, after the foundation of IRI (*Institute for Industrial Reconstruction*) and IMI (*Istituto Mobiliare Italiano*), state intervention increased. But even in 1940, IRI possessed only about 17.8 per cent of the capital assets of Italian industry. The state in particular fostered the growth of chemical, electrical and machine industries and gave impetus to modernization through electrification of Railways and growth of telephone and radio industry. Another significant feature was the lack of economic militarism or major investments in military production despite the regime's rhetoric of Italy being 'in a permanent state of war'. Related to this was the predominance of the humanistic intelligentsia in Italy which was not reduced in favour of technical experts.

The Fascist State also introduced certain welfare schemes for workers in 1930s. Family allowances were given in 1934, largely to compensate the loss of income resulting from the imposition of a forty hour week. Insurance against sickness and accident was incorporated into wage agreements, and in later 1930s Christmas bonus and holiday pay were introduced.

The Italian state also lacked any policy of racial anti-Semitism, at least, upto 1937. There were only about 45,000 Jew families and they were well assimilated. Even in 1938, the Party had 16,125 Jewish members. In November 1938, however, under the influence of Nazis, racial laws were passed which banned marriages with Jews, denied jobs to them in public services, debarred them from joining the Fascist Party and from owning more than 50 hectares of land.

#### 26.4.5 The Fall and Salò Republic

The overthrow of militarily underprepared Mussolini's regime in 1943 was effected by an adhoc coalition of the old conservative right represented by the monarchy, army and the upper propertied classes led by moderate fascist leaders. The Salò republic which appeared as a German satellite, divested of its former right-wing allies attempted to introduce certain mechanisms for workers' councils and profit-sharing and envisaged increasing nationalization of industries. But this radicalism proved to be the gesture of a dying organism.

#### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) What ideological strands contributed to the growth of fascism in Italy?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



- 2) How did the nature of fascist state changed after seizure of power by Mussolini?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 3) How was Italian fascism different from its German counterpart?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

## 26.5 RIGHT WING DICTATORSHIP AND MOVEMENT IN SPAIN

The first phase of authoritarian government in Spain was established between 1923-30 by General Miguel Primo de Rivera. It emerged as a kind of military reaction to the socialist pressure for democratic reforms and above all the attempt of Spanish Parliament to fix 'responsibilities' for disastrous military campaign in Morocco, where 9,000 soldiers were killed by Abed-el-Karim Rifian rebels after the collapse of its military command. Initially the overthrow of the Spanish Cortes or parliament was intended to be a temporary step. But a dictatorship was institutionalized gradually. This dictatorship, which some call 'Fascism from above', was based on economic nationalism, protectionism and a militant advocacy of a 'strong' and 'hierarchic' executive for restraining 'social chaos' and attempted mobilization of people from above. It was particularly hostile to the activities of Anarcho-Syndicalist labour union, Confederacion Nacional de Trabajadores (CNT) and Socialist Union UGT (Union General de Trabajadores). The dictator created Union Patriótica Party for a controlled popular mobilization. The Party was based on a militant Catholic ideology and found support of agrarian interests. Similarly, Rivera institutionalized Somaten, a traditional Catalan militia which protected capitalists during crisis and strikes. But the new militia remained an auxiliary of authorities in their endeavour to preserve order and never acquired the status of a radical fascist militia.

The demise of Rivera's dictatorship inaugurated a new phase of mass democracy and led to the radicalization of Spanish politics — along both left and right lines. CEDA or the Confederation of Spanish Right groups was the main conservative authoritarian party during 1933-36. Its youth movement (JAP) underwent a certain vertigo of fascistization but remained ambivalent. The neo-traditionalist Carlist and Alfonsino Monarchists represented another strand of right-radicalism. The Alfonsino neo-monarchists were especially influenced by the Action Francaise — a rightist-French group as well as the Right Nationalist Wing of Italian fascism. Their journal *Accion Espanola*, and their main ideologue Jose Calvo Sotelo envisioned establishment of a new authoritarian dictatorship preceding installation of monarchy with the help of traditional elites-army, landowners, church, etc. and wanted to replace liberal parliament by an indirect corporate chamber representing social and economic interests. Later, Franco regime approximated the structure and policies of Sotelo ideas.

The open fascist groups, however, remained small and insignificant in the Spanish politics. Between 1931 and 1934, a small band of students organized as *Juntas de ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista* (JONS). Their programme resembled Italian fascism.

In October 1933, Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera, with financial assistance from the Basque businessmen formed *Falange Espanola* (or Spanish Phalanx) to give form and ideological content to the national authoritarian movement. JONS merged with Falange in early 1934.

However, it remained politically insignificant and relied heavily on student clientele in the absence of a broader lower or middle class support. By 1935, it assumed more radical tones of national syndicalism and criticized Italian fascism as too conservative and capitalistic. Falange advocated nationalistic ideology, believed in 'authority, hierarchy and order' and its 27 Point Programme included development of a national-syndicalist state, nationalization of banking and credit facilities and the confiscation of large landed estates. This programme resembled early radical programme of Italian fascists. Falangism, however, retained a basic Catholic religious identity, despite being politically anti-clerical. Large sections of Spanish right became 'fascitized' but Falange itself failed to acquire a mass-following. In 1936 election, it received only 44,000 votes or 0.7 per cent of all votes cast. The failure of militant nationalistic ideology in Spain stemmed partially from the influence of intense regional nationalism (or sub-nationalism) of Catalans and Basques, directed against the unified Spanish nation-state. Moreover, Spanish Civil war (1936-39) produced a polarized revolutionary-counter-revolutionary conflict in which leadership passed completely in the hands of the insurgent Nationalist Army which created the Franco regime and subordinated Falange to military dictatorship. In 1937, Franco took over the Falange movement and created a syncretic, heterogeneous state party on the basis of Falangism. This new party was a union of Falangists, Calists and all other members of various rightist and other groups willing to join it. Falange's Programme was raised to the status of official state doctrine but it remained modifiable according to future requirements. Only a marginal role was played by the old Falangists in the new dictatorial Franquist state and even in the administration of new state party, the *Falange Espanola Tradicionalista*. The early Franquism contained a major component of fascism, but it was so restricted within a right-wing, Pretorian, catholic and semi-pluralist structure, that the category of 'semi-fascist' would probably be more accurate. Franquism resembled Italian fascism in its use of subordinated state fascist party and in its limited pluralism under executive dictatorship. By 1945 non-mobilized, 'bureaucratic' authoritarianism replaced a partially mobilized semi-fascist state.

## 26.6 THE FRENCH RIGHT AND VICHY GOVERNMENT

France had many fascist groups but none of them was able to cross 2 percent votes, the minimum required to gain representation in the French electoral system. Action Francaise, founded in 1899, was a kind of proto-fascist reactionary movement. *George Valois Le Faisceau* (founded in 1925) tried to wed syndicalism with nationalism. The *Jeunesses Patriotes* (1924-28), was also organized on military pattern and believed in street-violence. Some other groups developed a broader appeal. Among these were the *Solidarite Francaise* (1933) and *Croix de Feu*. The latter gained support from the big business and finance. Politically, it leaned towards Catholic conservatism. Banned by the Popular Front ministry in 1936, it soon reorganized as the *Parti Social Francais*. The Francistes, organized in 1933 by Marcel Bucard, was another right-wing group.

The *Parti Populaire Francaise*, led by an ex-Communist, Jacques Doriot, represented a kind of half-way house between socialism and nationalistic class collaboration. Marcel Deat, a deviant from socialism, also propagated need for national planning and integration of all productive forces. However, during the German occupation, Deat moved towards fascism and his *Rassemblement National Populaire* (1941) formed the extreme left-wing of French fascism.

The Parties committed to democratic republic (i.e. Socialist, Communist and Radical) created a Popular Front against fascism (1934-35). The real or perceived threat of fascist seizure of power receded after electoral gains of the left (1936) and formation of a coalition government with the support of the Popular Front till 1940.

### The Vichy Government

The devastating defeat of French forces in the Battle of France in which 92,000 army men were killed and 18,50,000 were taken as prisoners of war by the German troops, led to a growing demand in France for an armistice, voiced by Deputy Prime Minister, Marshal Petain and new Commander-in-chief, Weigand. The French Prime Minister Paul Reynaud resigned on 16 June 1940, and Marshal Petain concluded the terms of armistice which included reduction of French army to 100,000 men equipped only to maintain internal order, demobilization of Home Fleet, German occupation of a substantial part of France, an enormous levy to meet the cost of occupiers, and retention of French prisoners of war practically as

hostages until the final conclusion of a peace treaty. Marshal Petain established his government on 1 July 1940, in the cramped and unsuitable hotel rooms of Spa town of Vichy. A demoralised National Assembly gave the right to draft a new constitution and granted 'full executive and legislative powers' to the Marshal. Petain outlook can be summed up by the formulae 'Work, Family and Homeland' (*Travail, Famille and Patrie* in French) which substituted the familiar republican device Liberty, Fraternity and Equality. The Vichy government represented the conservative elite groups' desire to maintain social-hierarchy and order. Rather than Facism, the dominant feature of new government was traditionalism associated with movements like Action Francaise. The Vichy government stressed proper moral instruction as a means of protecting social order. There were attempts to glorify the roles of housewife and mother and to reduce the number of women working outside the home. As a result, the regime received widespread support of the clergy. The economy, however, was increasingly subordinated to German interests. By 1943, 15 per cent of the agricultural and 40 per cent of industrial output was exported to Germany as the occupation cost. The peasant corporation, created in December 1940 as a means of producer's self-regulation, was rapidly turned into a bureaucratic machine for official intervention in the market. In industry, too, growing German demands called for a degree of planning which heralded the development of post-war technocracy. The paternalistic rhetoric and corporatist structures became effectively a cover for policies overwhelmingly favourable to businessmen. Trade unions were banned and any sign of labour resistance was brutally repressed. At local level, appointed mayors replaced the elected councils. Mediation between the masses and Vichy was fostered through an inflated civil service. This led to sway of an unelected social and administrative elite, imposing its control through the bureaucracy and corporations.

In return for collaboration, Vichy had expected concessions on the armistice terms and a favourable peace treaty. However, with the German entry into unoccupied zone in November 1942, Vichy was reduced to the status of a dependent satellite. Initially, however, only few fascists were associated with the government. Marcel Deat and Joseph Darnad were given ministerial berths only in December 1943.

Vichy's anti-semitism also tended to be nationalistic and Catholic rather than racialist. The armistice obliged Vichy government to repatriate Jewish refugees of German origin. In October 1940, a piece of legislation debarred Jews from the electric offices, civil service and teaching and journalism besides imposing quotas on the entry to most professions; although war-veterans and the fully assimilated Jews were exempted. Jewish property was confiscated with Vichy's co-operation in the occupied zone and foreign Jews were repatriated. These policies were extended to the unoccupied zone also after the summer of 1941.

Resistance to the German occupation and Vichy's collaboration developed gradually. This was further fuelled by the German scheme for compulsory labour service introduced in August 1942. Some 40,000 resistants were murdered and 60,000 were deported to the concentration camps.

Allied forces landed on the Coast of Normandy on 6 June 1944 and Paris was liberated on 25 August 1944. By the end of 1944, most of France was free of German troops. Vichy government was forced by the German authorities to shift to eastern France, and finally, as virtual captives, into Germany itself.

---

## 26.7 THE RIGHT WING MOVEMENTS AND DICTATORSHIP : THE EASTERN CENTRAL EUROPE AND BALTIC STATES

---

Quite apart from the established regions of Italy and Spain, Fascism also existed in the form of brief political experiments and organisations in certain other countries of Europe. Not all these organisations possessed the basic ingredients of fascism. The degree and extent of fascism practised also varied. Let us look at the examples of Poland, Hungary, Baltic states and Czecho-Slovak.

### 26.7.1 Poland

Poland had a weak fascist movement. Pilsudski's coup d'tat in 1926 resulted in a strong authoritarian regime. It functioned as a moderate semi-pluralist system up to 1935. National

Democratic Party of Western Poland was a mass parliamentary party, advocated anti-semitism and a more repressive policy towards other national minorities. Its radical youth wing split off as national radicals in 1930s and gave birth to two more explicitly fascist like organizations — ABC and Falanga. Falanga's ideology was of extreme Catholicism and it insisted on elimination of private sector of the economy in favour of some sort of national socialism.

A new corporative, authoritarian Constitution in 1935 reduced the sphere of tolerated pluralism. Pilsudski also died in 1935 and the Colonels who succeeded him created a new proto-fascist state party—the Camp of National Unity or OZN. Colonel Koe, its first director, came to rely heavily on Boleslaw Piasecki, the head of Falanga, and the radical implications of this relationship led to Koe's ouster and the severing of the Falanga's connection. Some have described this system as 'directed democracy', but by 1939, the regime was moving towards a mobilized state organization and a controlled one party system.

## 26.7.2 Hungary

Hungary had the largest assortment of various fascist, fascist type, right radical and simply authoritarian nationalist groups. A large unemployed bureaucratic middle class contributed to fascist growth in the aftermath of Communist Bela Kun revolt (1919). During most of the Inter-war period, Hungary was governed by the conservative authoritarian regime of Admiral Horthy. It valued nineteenth century social hierarchy and was governed by a restrictive parliament based on limited suffrage. The official state party was National Unity Party. A Fascist group, 'Szeged fascists', led by Gyula Gombos lacked popular support, but Gombos was offered prime ministership by Horthy in 1932 on the condition that he would moderate his programme and abandon anti-semitism. He tried to transform the official National Unity Party and state towards national socialism. This transformation, however, remained partial due to his sudden death in 1936.

'Arrow Cross' of Ferenc Szalasi achieved more substantial mass support. The Movement believed in Hungarian racism and proposed a drastic Hungarian expansion that would incorporate the greater Danube-Carpathian area. But there was proposal of autonomy to regions inhabited by a strong majority (of about 80-90 per cent) of a single non-Magyar people. Another anomaly was Szalasi's theoretical eschewal of violence. His movement was not anti-semitic but 'asemitic', advocating that all Jews leave Hungary for elsewhere. 'Arrow Cross' further advocated a revolutionary economic corporatism that would overthrow big landlords and capital in the interest of greater collective well-being. It acquired a broad mass-base among workers and peasants in the late 1930s but its popularity was waning during the war. The movement itself became more nazified and was placed in power briefly in 1944 as a puppet of German military.

## 26.7.3 Czecho-Slovak

It had two overtly fascist organizations : The National Fascist Community (NOF, organized in 1926) and the Czech National Socialist Camp which developed in 1930s. These remained weak as workers clung to socialism and the middle classes remained under the influence of some variants of liberalism. There was partial fascistization of the Slovak People's Party, the principal political force in Slovakia during the Inter-war period. It was originally a moderate conservative authoritarian Catholic-populist nationalist party oriented towards corporatism. It was influenced by Nazification after 1938 when anti-Semitic policies were adopted that excluded Jews from business and the professions. Later, many Jews were deported to Poland under Nazi pressure.

## 26.7.4 Baltic States

A rightist moderate dictatorship was established in Lithuania by a military coup at the close of 1936 after major gains by the left in the domestic elections. Antanas Smetona remained the head of the state till its disappearance in 1940. Some degree of pluralism was tolerated. However, the state was moving towards one party regime in 1940. The State Party National Union (*Tautinin Kai*) found social support among the intelligentsia and the rich peasants.

By contrast, the more moderate regimes of 'authoritarian democracy' in Latvia and Estonia were instituted simply as preventive authoritarianism in 1934 by the moderate forces. Konstantin Pats, the leader of Farmers Party in Estonia established a more authoritarian government to check the influence of the right-radical Association of Estonian Freedom

Fighters. In Latvia, the new Ulmanis government was directed against both the left and the Thunder Cross, a vigorous Latvian fascist type party influenced by Nazism, though politically strongly anti-German. However, pluralism was tolerated in both Latvia and Estonia and in neither case did a well institutionalized dictatorship develop.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Which of the following sentences are correct? (Mark correct (✓) and incorrect (x)).
  - a) Vichy government pursued independent policies.
  - b) The French right was unable to acquire a true mass-following.
  - c) Falange-the Spanish fascist organization, was the main force behind Franco's dictatorship.
  - d) 'Arrow Cross' was the prominent Hungarian fascist movement.

- 2) Write five sentences about Falange's ideology?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 3) What was the role of 'Arrow Cross' in the political life of Hungary. Write in about 100 words.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

## 26.8 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit you learnt the following :

- the basic features of fascist movement;
- the role of war in preparing sociological and psychological conditions of fascism; and
- the basic ideological strands that contributed to fascism and its organizational styles.

We should understand fascism as distinct from conservative right wing movements, as a radical attempt to restructure society and its institutions. We also traced the political antecedents of fascism. It is not correct to see the fascist movement as a kind of catastrophe which erupted suddenly with the Great Depression. Although the Depression provided ideal conditions for growth of fascism, its roots lay in the 19th century Europe and the World War. You also studied the specific variations in fascist movements using examples of Italy, France and Spain, etc. The emergence of Italian fascist regime was analysed in greater detail and the nature of State was specifically dealt with. The examples of France, Spain, the Eastern Central Europe (Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia) and Baltic States will further help you to understand the growth of fascist politics during the inter-war period. However this Unit has left out of its discussion the most extreme right wing regime of Europe-Germany under Hitler. The next Unit takes up the story of fascism in Germany.

## 26.9 KEY WORDS

**Anti-semitism** : prejudice against Jews, its modern variant was based on the ideology of racialism and social darwinism.



**Corporatism** : A semi-collectivist creed that attempted harmonious relationship between employees and employers by binding them in a common organization.

**Elite** : any socially privileged group.

**Liberal Democracy** : a political philosophy of participatory politics which respected social pluralism and freedom and created modern elective institutions.

**Militia** : a semi-military organization.

**Mobilization** : Preparation of people for action around a particular idea.

**Nationalism** : a people or community's sense of belongingness including pride in its culture and history.

**Social-Darwinism** : application of Darwin's ideas to the development of society, a belief that people in society compete for survival and only superior individuals, groups and races succeed. This belief directly fed into the anti-Jewish politics practised mainly under German fascism but also elsewhere.

**Socialism** : Political belief in the collective ownership of a community's resources.

**Syndicalism** : The belief in the self-emancipation of the producers through regulation at factory level by workers' syndicates or associations.

---

## 26.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

---

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Section 26.2.
- 2) See Section 26.2.
- 3) Your answer must focus on the ideological novelty of fascism and use of modern mass mobilization techniques and fascist attempted institutional change and contrast these with right-wing conservatism. See Section 26.2.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Sub-section 26.4.1.
- 2) See Sub-sections 26.4.2 and 26.4.4.
- 3) You should compare their approaches to the Jewish question. See Sub-section 26.4.4. Also see the next Unit.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) (a) (X)      (b) (✓)      (c) (X)      (d) (✓)
- 2) See Section 26.5.
- 3) See Section 26.7, especially Section on Hungarian right-wing movement.