EUROPEAN FASCISM: A CONCEPTUAL SYNTHESIS

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«Don't ask us first what is our program, but what is our mentality.»
Drieu la Rochelle, 1936

«... to define true madness.
What's but to be nothing but mad?»
Shakespeare, Hamlet, act II, scene II

I

This brief paper on the phenomenon of European Fascism will attempt to provide, within the allotted time, a global perspective on the various European fascisms existing between 1919 and 1945. Toward the end of my discussion, I will look at the singular case of a political authoritarian regime, both conservative and Catholic, which is normally labeled fascist even though, in my view, it does not in fact deserve this designation. Before attempting a historical synthesis, however, I first want to acknowledge a theoretical debt to certain scholars from the various disciplines of sociology, history and political science, authors whose interpretations and suggestions have been crucial. I especially want to single out the following names: the Italian Renzo de Felice, the German Ernst Nolte, the Spanish-American Juan Linz and the Israeli Ze'ev Sternhell.

The greatest problem for anyone trying to define or explain the phenomenon of fascism lies in the fact that any reliance on general terms (such as «fascism» or «totalitarianism») stumbles immediately on the difficult

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task of wanting to designate a whole, made up of substantially different political configurations, with one single term as a way of describing what is, by its very nature, equivocal. It is not easy, in dealing with the forms of fascist power, to work towards the construction of a Weberian «ideal type», that is, the search for a unique reality containing only the essential aspects necessary for its continuation as an intelligible whole. These «ideal types» are models that are especially useful as instruments of historical, sociological or politico-logical analysis, for they do not obliterate, in the process of analysis, individual characteristics of the phenomena under consideration. In studying Nazi and Soviet totalitarianisms, for example, Raymond Aron recalls that, in spite of all the similarities between the National-Socialist regime and the Communist regime, there was an essential difference between the two: in one case, the desire to create a new regime and perhaps another human being by means that would stop at nothing — not even slaughter, whereas in the other case, the German one, «a truly demonic will to destroy a pseudo-race» (R. Aron, Démocratie et Totalitarisme, Gallimard, 302). We find here a useful distinction to deal with the interpretation of Nolté, who explains the liquidation of the Jews carried out by the SS and the extremities of the social war created by the Soviets. In his personal testimony and poignant cry of warning to the West, Hermann Rauschning’s study in pamphlet form, The Revolution of Nihilism (published in New York in 1939 and subtitled Warning to the West), puts its finger on the real truth of Nazism: at its core, is a barbarian will synonymous with the business of an absolute nihilistic destruction of the human species itself. It would be difficult to find anything similar in either forms of European fascism, with the exception perhaps of the truly extraordinary case of the Romanian fascist movement known as the Guardia di Fier (Iron Guard), created in 1931 and previously known, until 1927, as the Legion of the Archangel St. Michael. This movement, a rabid anti-Semitic variation of Romanian orthodox nationalism, was perhaps the most radical form of European anti-semitism of our century. This is all the more strange if we consider that in order to eliminate it as a political and social movement partially in power, the Romanian dictator of the time, General Antonescu, asked for help from Hitler’s troops in Romania in January of 1941. As a result, the first European fascism to be destroyed after 1939 was the Romanian Fascism and, in an almost unbelievable paradox, its destruction was accomplished with help of German Nazis.

Such a paradoxical situation shows us just how slippery is the ground on which we tread when we try to define fascism by using history exclusively, without addressing the question of ideologies and programs. Prefacing my attempt at a synthesis therefore with the caveat that it is extremely difficult to find uniformity among the principal regimes and fascist movements, let me now try to generalize about the common characteristics of a Weberian «ideal type» in respect to the various

European fascisms of the 1919-1945 period, that is, from the establishment of the first fascist parties in Italy and in Germany up to the end of the Second World War.

II

All the different forms of European Fascism during the period between the two world wars contain the following fundamental characteristics. First, violence is justified as a method of conquering and/or preserving power. This derives from a clear rejection of the entire ethical, liberal and democratic philosophical tradition. Violent by nature, Fascism rejects any legal basis inherent to the liberal-democratic «State of Rights». In this respect, Fascism is the consequence of the fall of democracies; it is the expression of its political and institutional weaknesses more than an expression of economic crisis within the capitalist system itself. Fascism repudiates the values of individualism as much as the entire tradition of natural rights and liberal thought, which has its origins in the eighteenth century.

Secondly, Fascism exalts extreme nationalism and very often, in traditional Marxist and revolutionary analyses, it substitutes the notion of the class worker for the notion of the nation.

Thirdly, Fascism corresponds to a militarization of society, to an integral militarization of the State and to a conversion of the public servants of a democratic regime into soldiers. Fascism is inseparable from the uniform, from a certain shirt, be it the camisa nera of the Italian Fascists, the blue shirt of the Spanish Falangists or the brown shirt of the German Nazis. With Fascism, the State becomes entirely military. The militarization of the whole Nation and the collective pre-military preparation aims at transforming each citizen into a potential fighter, since the desired new man is an authentic worker/soldier (as Ernst Jünger imagined him, even though he was considered a heretic within the official Nazi ideology).

Fourthly, being anti-rational, Fascism is vitalist and Romantic, a defender of community values and values of brotherhood over and above all those values of the individual which derive from Humanism and are committed to democratic and liberal ideas. Being Romantic and thus glorifying the values of Tradition and Country, Fascism views as sacred both youth and its «Springtime» values — the so-called «primavera de belleza» in the lyrical song of the Ballillas, who were the youth movement of the Italian Fascists. Alongside this overvaluation of youth, and following in this respect the lesson of Georges Sorel, Fascism glorifies myth and attempts to extract from myth the enormous potential for action among the masses.

Fifthly, Fascism emerges as a mass movement destined to fascinate the masses, to charm them and to lead them to collective action; whereas the
task of wanting to designate a whole, made up of substantially different political configurations, with one single term as a way of describing what is, by its very nature, equivocal. It is not easy, in dealing with the forms of fascist power, to work towards the construction of a Weberian «ideal type», that is, the search for a unique reality containing only the essential aspects necessary for its continuation as an intelligible whole. These «ideal types» are models that are especially useful as instruments of historical, sociological or politico-logical analysis, for they do not oblitrate, in the process of analysis, individual characteristics of the phenomena under consideration. In studying Nazi and Soviet totalitarianisms, for example, Raymond Aron recalls that, in spite of all the similarities between the National-Socialist regime and the Communist regime, there was an essential difference between the two: in one case, the desire to create a new regime and perhaps another human being by means that would stop at nothing—not even slaughter, whereas in the other case, the German one, «a truly demonic will to destroy a pseudo-race» (R. Aron, Démocratie et Totalitarisme, Gallimard, 302). We find here a useful distinction to deal with the interpretation of Nolte, who explains the liquidation of the Jews carried out by the SS and the extremes of the social war created by the Soviets. In his personal testimony and poignant cry of warning to the West, Hermann Rauschning’s study in pamphlet form, The Revolution of Nihilism (published in New York in 1939 and subtitled Warning to the West), puts its finger on the real truth of Nazism: at its core, it is a barbarian will synonymous with the business of an absolute nihilistic destruction of the human species itself. It would be difficult to find anything similar in other forms of European fascism, with the exception perhaps of the truly extraordinary case of the Romanian fascist movement known as the Guardia di Fier (Iron Guard), created in 1931 and previously known, until 1927, as the Legion of the Archangel St. Michael. This movement, a rabid anti-Semitic variation of Romanian orthodox nationalism, was perhaps the most radical form of European anti-semitism of our century. This is all the more strange if we consider that in order to eliminate it as a political and social movement partially in power, the Romanian dictator of the time, General Antonescu, asked for help from Hitler’s troops in Romania in January of 1941. As a result, the first European fascism to be destroyed after 1939 was the Romanian Fascism and, in an almost unbelievable paradox, its destruction was accomplished with help of German Nazis.

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Fifthly, Fascism emerges as a mass movement destined to fascinate the masses, to charm them and to lead them to collective action; whereas the
classical conservative authoritarian regimes – as in the case of Salazar – consistently tried to demobilize the masses, excluding them from public displays and offering them a system of values, points of reference and traditional hierarchies, Fascism, on the contrary, tried to inculcate in the masses the sensation of feeling constantly mobilized, always in relationship to the leader who is, simultaneously, the omniscient interpreter of their wishes and the only one capable of bringing them to fruition. It was this phenomenon that G.L. Mosse called «the nationalization of the masses» (The Nationalization of the Masses: political symbolism and mass movements in Germany from the Napol inic wars through the Third Reich, 1975): an effort to substitute the rational notion of existing society, which is taken as dehumanizing and falsely «constituted», by a society born of tradition, will, brotherhood and, as Nazism made so apparent, racial uniformity. German Fascism took the myth of Race and Soil much further than any other fascist movement, with the exception, perhaps, of the Romanian Iron Guard, whose mysticism mixed perfectly with its anti-Semitism. This myth of Blood and Soil was elevated to terrifyingly barbarous heights: think of the expression «Blut und Boden» (Blood and Soil) or its abbreviation «Blubo», which expressed the double, natural basis of that which is truly Hitlerian; that is, the double grounding in both the German race and the simple pastoral image of Mother Earth, a theme which echoes the anti-capitalistic, anti-urban and anti-industrial spirit of the Party and of the SS.

A sixth characteristic of Fascism is that it always tried to be a revolutionary movement, to create a genuine revolution in its means and ends, either by constant mobilization of the masses, or in its capacity to destroy archaic or traditional forms of community, national and local life. In this respect, Nazism went perhaps the farthest in the field of popular mobilization in a revolutionary sense, be it through integrating its women and children into its own movements of National-Socialist indoctrination, be it through the abolition of archaic forms of local administration, manners of being and forms of work. In fact, as Fritz Stern underscores (The Fuehrer and the People, Glasgow, 1975), Nazism carried out a truly revolutionary process very likely not a part of its original plans: it undid the Prussian model of the armed forces, reducing them to the SS, the Black Guard, the true supra-military political elite (the SS were men with a hysterical capacity to gloriously assume all the structures); it created an authentic secret association with millenial intentions; it purified the entire civil bureaucracy; it shackled the Churches, thus inciting the uncommonly severe response from Pope Pius XI with his encyclical entitled Mit brennender Sorge (1937); it did not nationalize industry but it did put it under the management of the State in such a way that it stopped being in the hands of private owners with the power of decision-making; it liquidated all traces of regional autonomy, thus profoundly unifying the German «Ländere» under the management of the overly centralized State; although it glorified the family, it destroyed it by delivering all its youth between the ages of 10 and 16 to youth organizations. In respect to Italian Fascism, which was more theatrical than real, it too had recourse to the constant mobilization of the masses, from youth to adulthood, all made brothers within the holy trilogy of the Duke – «Believe, Obey, Fights». The credo of the Italian fascists, that which the «Balillas» recited and that which Pope Pius XI considered a sacrilege, went as follows: «I believe in Rome the Eternal, the mother of the country and in Italy her eldest Daughter (…) who descended to the grave and was raised from the dead in the nineteenth century; who ascended into heaven in her glory in 1918 and 1922; who is seated on the right hand of her mother Rome. I believe in the genius of Mussolini, in our Holy Father Fascism, in the communion of its martyrs, in the conversion of Italians and in the resurrection of the Empire». And in a decalogue composed in 1931 by the secretary of the National Fascist Party, Giovanni Giurati, one reads in the eighth law: «Mussolini is always right!» This phrase, which was painted on walls all over Italy, would become one of the most often repeated slogans – and one of the most ridiculous – of the Italian regime up until 1943: Mussolini ha sempre ragione!

A seventh characteristic of European fascisms is the ethic of heroism. Whether in the enthusiastic exercises of the Hungarian and «Balilla» youth, or through the special devotion of the founder of the Spanish Falange, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, for the well-known poem of Rudyard Kipling entitled «If», or in the Romanian Codreanu's cult of sacrifice, death and the new man (Omul Nou) to be created by the Legion of the Archangel of St. Michael – every Fascist believes in the heroic mythology of redemption, of self-sacrifice and of the immolation of the individual/soldier on the altar of the Country, thus extending Nietzsche's «gefratich Leben» (dangerous life) in an overly Romantic, enthusiastic and willful sense. The fascist aesthetic broadens this cult of the national or party hero in its use of solemn and rhetorical. The sculptures of Arno Breker and the films of Leni Riefenstahl are paradigmatic examples of this heroizing trend, which also had its equivalent in Mussolini's Italy.

¹ There was in the Romanian Fascism of the Iron Guard a true cult of death (that recalls that of the Falange and Fascism in Spain). For the Legion of the Archangel of St. Michael, death ought to be seen as a happy, jubilant pleasurable; a compensation. One of Romania's favorite songs went this way: «The Legionary dies singing/The Legionary sings when he dies/This is how the Legion triumphs; The Legionary death is dear to me». The motifs cults of death were many with the Iron Guard, with special devotion in relation to the «Captain» Codreanu, who was assassinated in 1938. The funeral of the two legislators who were killed in the war in Spain were also shadowy Romanian apostles, in 1937, in order to bury Ion Moisa and Marin in the chapel of Via Gogoni in Bucharest. See Rudolf Isaac, The Guard of the Archangel, Fascist ideology in Romania (Boulder, 1990), maxime pp. 139-148.
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The eighth characteristic lies in the fact that Fascism is the apotheosis of the political principle of the leader as absolute, as the «Führerprinzip», the leadership system raised to the highest level of political theory and practice, the charisma transformed into an absolute source of legitimation of power. The cult of the Leader, begun by the Italian Fascists, finds its culmination in the leadership of Achille Starace, secretary of the National Fascist Party from 1931 to 1939, a man of fanatical devotion to the Duce, the leader who was always right. This cult of the leader was of crucial importance as well in German Nazism and other fascist movements such as Rexistism, Falangism, the Iron Guard, etc. In 1931 in Germany, Goebbels made it mandatory to use the expression «Führer» within the National Socialist Party and it became an indispensable ritual practice to make the salutation «Heil Hitler!». In 1935, already in power, the Nazis published the *Führerlehrplan*, a kind of Who's Who of Nazism where a certain title would be made known to the whole party machine: the hierarchy of the various leaders of all the party levels and all the levels of society reflected this predominance of the charismatic command whose crowning point was the person of Adolf Hitler. In Italy the cult of the Duce and the political mantra of «Mussolini ha sempre ragione» summed up the authoritarian and totalitarian essence of the regime: the famous phrase, repeated by the whole of Italy, was more than a simple fetish or an ideological obsession.

And finally the ninth characteristic is that Fascism is inseparable from the idea and practice of a single party, a party of the masses, aimed at keeping them permanently mobilized and inducting them with its exclusive and totalitarian ideology. Such a party is intensely hierarchical and entirely anchored in a bureaucratic organization of government (that is, when the fascist movement becomes a political regime), when not located somewhere above it. In the opinion of Rausching and especially Franz Neumann, National Socialism was «tended to be» a «state, a chaos, a rule of lawlessness and anarchy» (Neumann, Behemoth, 1963, VII). In other words, the party as truly a super-State — or supra-State — tended to constitute itself as one and only total and totalitarian power, thus making possible the nonexistence of any genuine and real German Nazi State. «What has taken place in 1933 ... is not the establishment of the state's totality but of the totality of the National Socialist Movement», stated Alfred Rosenberg in the *Volkischer Beobachter*, in January 1935, a phrase which Neumann quotes to support his thesis that the essence and reality of Nazi totalitarianism was the Nazi party itself. Both Rosenberg's book, *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* (1930) and Hitler's *Mein Kampf* already announced such a perspective totally subversive of all traditional notions of the State, something that Italian Fascism was entirely incapable of achieving. And it was that subversive perspective which gave meaning to Hitler's famous statement, «The State is not our lord; we are the lords of the State». This State declaration was made in September 1934, after the bloodbath of the «Night of the long knives» in June of the same year, so that the phrase was given transparent political and even juridical meaning: the German State was no longer a State, not even a totalitarian or Hegelian one, but rather something to be consumed by the Biblical monster, the Behemoth.

German political philosophy, tried afterwards by the Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt, would attempt to give a constitutional structure to this political cannibalism, viewing the reality of the German polis after the «Machtgerufung» of 1933 as a tripartite entity: the State, the party, the people. The party, hierarchically superior to the State, was the static element. Adolf Hitler, the leader, was the one who, according to Nazi ideology, linked the State, the party and the people. This leadership, linked the State, the party and the people. And this leadership, which was both mystical and absolute, with a millenarian basis, had obvious charismatic roots. Hitler was the leader of the State, of the people, of the party, as well as the supreme lawmaker, the supreme judge and the supreme administrator. And he was all this for life. All power was concentrated in one single person, Adolf Hitler. The justification for this is charismatic, lying in the affirmation that the leader has qualities which nobody else possesses, qualities which are supernatural, more-than-human. With German Fascism, charisma becomes an absolute.

It is important to note that not all fascist movements and/or regimes were racist. Italian Fascist antisemitism only began to emerge in 1938, that is, 16 years after Fascism having become the only regime in Italy. The non-existence of a racist element within the original Italian Fascist party demonstrates that, beyond the geographical, economic and national differences that exist between the various fascist movements in Europe, even before 1939/1940 — that is, when Germany occupied a large part of Europe and forced into being governments which sympathized or collaborated (such as that of Croatia or the Vichy government in France) — the differences among the various Fascist movements and regimes make it difficult to establish a single model of Fascism for that period. The different national psychologies, and the different stages of capitalism and industry explain the specific differences between the various European Fascisms. The dichotomy Fascism/Totalitarianism cannot help but raise other difficulties for a theoretical definition among the various political forms; as in the case of Nazism and Soviet Communism, these too have points in common but they also have differences which cannot be ignored.

Finally, one must consider the no less important distinction between irrefutable Fascism — the «great ones» as they were then called — and the pseudo-Fascism, the lesser fascism, the semi-fascisms which, like Francoism or Salazarism or even Petainism, do not reveal all the characteristics we have delineated here as essential ingredients for
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And finally the ninth characteristic is that Fascism is inseparable from the idea and practice of a single party, a party of the masses, aimed at keeping them permanently mobilized and intimidating them with its exclusive and totalitarian ideology. Such a party is intensely hierarchical and entirely anchored in a bureaucratic organization of government (that is, when the fascist movement becomes a political regime), when not located somewhere above it. In the opinion of Rauschenberg and especially Franz Neumann, National Socialism was "a chaos, a rule of lawlessness and anarchy" (Neumann, Behemoth, 1963, VII). In other words, the party as truly a super-State - or supra-State - tended to constitute itself as one and only total and totalitarian power, thus making possible the nonexistence of any genuine and real German Nazi State. "What has taken place in 1933... is not the establishment of the state's totality but of the totality of the National Socialist Movement", stated Alfred Rosenberg in the Volkischer Beobachter, in January 1935, a phrase which Neumann quotes to support his thesis that the essence and reality of Nazi totalitarianism was the Nazi party itself. Both Rosenberg's book, The Myth of the Twentieth Century (1930) and Hitler's Mein Kampf already announced such a perspective that it was already incapable of achieving. And it was that subversive perspective which gave meaning to Hitler's famous statement, "The State is not our lord; we are the lords of the State". This State declaration was made in September 1934, after the bloodbath of the "Night of the long knives" in June of the same year, so that the phrase was given transcendent political and even juridical meaning: the German State was no longer a State, not even a totalitarian or Hegelian one, but rather something to be consumed by the Biblical monster, the Behemoth.

German political philosophy, tried afterwards by the Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt, would attempt to give a constitutional structure to this political cannibalism, viewing the reality of the German polis after the "Machtergreifung" of 1933 as a tripartite entity: the State, the party, and the people. The party, hierarchically superior to the State, was the static element. Adolf Hitler, the leader, was the one who, according to Nazi ideology, linked the State, the party and the people. This leadership, linked the State, the party and the people. And this leadership, which was both mystical and absolute, with a millenarian basis, had obvious charismatic roots. Hitler was the leader of the State, of the people, of the party, as well as the supreme lawmaker, the supreme judge and the supreme administrator. And he was all this for life. All power was concentrated in one single person, Adolf Hitler. The justification for this is charismatic, and not against the affirmation that the leader has qualities which nobody else possesses, qualities which are supernatural, more-than-human. With German Fascism, charisma becomes an absolute.

It is important to note that not all fascist movements and/or regimes were racist. Italian Fascist antisemitism only began to emerge in 1938, that is, 16 years after Fascism having become the only regime in Italy. The non-existence of a racist element within the original Italian Fascist party demonstrates that, beyond the geographical, economic and national differences that exist between the various fascist movements in Europe, even before 1939/1940 - that is, when Germany occupied a large part of Europe and forced into being governments which sympathized or collaborated (such as that of Croatia or the Vichy government in France) - the differences among the various Fascist movements and regimes make it difficult to establish a single model of Fascism for that period. The different national psychologies, and the different stages of capitalism and industry explain the specific differences between the various European Fascisms. The dichotomy Fascism/Totalitarianism cannot help but raise other difficulties for a theoretical definition among the various political forms; as in the case of Nazism and Soviet Communism, these too have points in common but they also have differences which cannot be ignored.

Finally, one must consider the no less important distinction between irrefutable Fascisms - the "great ones" as they were then called - and the pseudo-Fascists, the lesser fascisms, the semi-fascisms which, like Francism or Salazarism or even Petainism, do not reveal all the characteristics we have delineated here as essential ingredients for a...
definition of the phenomenon of pure Fascism, that is, as the Weberian «ideal type» of Fascism. The refusal of the liberal-democratic State and of democracy is not sufficient for equating systems of the right or of classical nationalism and the Fascist regimes. The simple refusal of liberalism, of liberal democracy and of the parliamentary system is simply not enough for us to group together all the others under the same theoretical rubric. At the risk of being repetitive, let me briefly restate some of the characteristics which separate the full-blow Fascist model from other lesser forms of Fascism which also reflect authoritarian and militaristic regimes: the authoritarian State was a corporate State of one single party, a dictatorial and military State with faith in the supreme role of its leader, an elitist organization of the masses through the action of a party bent on indoctrinating those masses; it sought party-ideological mobilization over all traditional forms of behavior, social values and life-styles and it asserted the absolute control of the individual by the State and its terrorist system of police control in the service of party and State and the totally arbitrary nature of this political police.

III

One example of an authoritarian regime which must be viewed as a lesser form of fascism is clearly the regime of the personal dictatorship represented by the long term in office of Salazar. António Salazar was Prime Minister from 1932 to 1968, after an initial experience as a «technical» dictator, that is, after being Finance Minister with nearly unlimited power from 1928 to 1932. The «Estado Novo» (New State) of Salazar was formed subsequent to a rightist military coup which ended the chaotic, fragile parliamentary Republic of 16 years and 45 different governments. Named Minister of Finance right at the outset of the dictatorship, he resigned a few days later upon seeing that his draconian measures of financial control would not be accepted by the military, who were, at that time, the country's most powerful leaders. Two years later, in 1928, he would accept the same post again, this time with the military respecting his conditions. And this was the beginning of a kind of technical-financial dictatorship that he transformed into a truly personal dictatorship from 1932 to 1968. The origins of the regime built by Salazar have their roots in the conservative Catholic movement to which he belonged in Coimbra during his years there as a law student. It was this movement that would establish the Contro Católico, a Catholic party which remained faithful to the leadership of the Vatican, which, in turn, had been heavily influenced by the papal encyclicals from Leo XIII to Benedict XV, that is, to the so-called «Christian democracy» adapted to an authoritarian but not fascist model.

On the other hand, the regime of Salazar reviews and prolongs these Portuguese anti-liberal tendencies of both the monarchy of King Carlos, who died in 1908, and of his Prime Minister João Franco, as well as of the presidential dictatorship of Sidónio Pais (1917-1918).

Estranged from the totalitarian leadership of the fascist States even though he allowed an element of fascism here and there within his regime — for example, in 1936, during the Spanish civil war, he created both the obligatory Portuguese Youth (Mocidade Portuguesa) and the voluntary Portuguese Legion (Legião Portuguesa), intending thereby to erect doctrinal and military walls against the «red threat» —, Salazar's regime always distanced itself from the German and Italian models of Fascism, and this became obvious from the moment he repudiated, both within and outside the country, the heresy of the blue shirts. In 1934 he ordered the dissolution of this scheme of the fascist party and he forced his followers to join official organizations created by the «New State».

Afterwards, in 1937, Salazar wrote a kind of political «vademecum» in French, which was distributed to the visitors of the Portuguese pavilion at the universal exhibition in Paris. Given the fact that Salazar remained ever faithful to the social and political doctrines of the Vatican, and given also the fact that in this very same year Pope Pius XI, in his encyclical «Mit brennender Sorge», had just condemned the Nazi regime as monstrous, neo-pagan, guilty of idolatry and racism, Salazar affirmed in that political «vademecum», which read as a kind of synthesis of his own political ideology, that both Italian Fascism and German Nazism practiced the cult of idolatry by making the State omnipotent, and this could not be accepted by the «New State» because it (the New State) considered itself limited by both traditional morality and by law. Furthermore, the text condemned German racism as contrary to Catholic doctrine. Echoes of the Pope's encyclical of this same year are extremely clear. And these ideological parameters were maintained during the nearly 40 years of the existence of the «New State».

To all this we need to add the fact that the regime, even though it was a dictatorship, never created a single party of the masses nor did it truly promote any serious cult of the leader. A cold and secretive dictator who lived far from any contact with the people, Salazar cultivated the opposite image: that of an unmarried, monastic leader who lived quietly among his books and documents in a virtually misanthropic retreat. Salazar, we ought to remember, nearly became a priest, but ultimately chose the career of a law professor at the university. He was not interested in cultivating the sort of qualities associated with the charismatic leader, nor did he possess any personal charisma, so that the cult of the leader and the image of himself was always discrete, slightly secretive; nevertheless the praise and glorification were there, taking more sophisticated forms, especially intellectual forms of appreciation, and thus it was totally alien to the louder, more vulgar style of the Fascist leaders, which was specifically cultivated to incite the masses. Salazar's regime, which favored a rural,
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sleepy, Catholic and submissive Portugal, manipulated police repression and controlled thought and the written as well as the spoken word with unequalled rigidity and efficacy, all the while avoiding blatant forms of public violence.

On the other hand, the Uniao Nacional (National Union), the only party organization which was authorized during the dictatorship of Salazar — other organizations which were more or less political, such as the Monarchic Cause, for example, simply vegetated without achieving the status of true party — was more a league of friends of the government, formed by disciples of Salazar, who had come from various ideological fields and even from distinct forms of the regime: some monarchists and republicans, for example. This explains why the National Union had no true doctrinal function nor could it mobilize the masses, since it was not even necessary to be a member of it to become a minister or to occupy some position of note within the hierarchy of the State. It would not be an exaggeration nor a paradox to state that Salazar's political ideal was the general apoliticalism of the country: his dictatorship was a sociological one, accepted passively and taken as inevitable more than by means of terror, violence or constant mobilization. Grayish, apolitical — and this is in quotation marks! — traditional, modest, routine and absolutely alien to any Romanticism of the fascist mythologies, the tone of which contrasted for Salazar an immoral paganism, the «New State» attempted to repudiate the totalitarian State in favor of a National and Authoritarian States (this is from Salazar's speech on May 26, 1934), limited by morality and by law. A dictatorship it was indeed, yet it was not totalitarian nor was it Romantic, it was not interested in mobilizing the masses nor in inciting mass emotions of enthusiasm and spontaneity. Salazar's «New State» must therefore not be confused with the fascisms that existed at the same time in other parts of Europe. Curiously, the similarity that most strikes us in the designation and in the historical synthesis itself must be sought on the other side of the Atlantic, in Portugal's former colony: the «New State» of the Brazilian dictator Getulio Vargas.

When Salazar stopped governing, in 1968, the magazine Time announced the news in a way that beautifully sums up the situation: for more than 40 years, Salazar was «the unusual dictator of an unfortunate land». Indeed, uncommon and perhaps because of this a very desperate people of a very gloomy country which had to put up with him for such a long time... When, in fact, a physical accident forced him to step down.

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2 On Getulio Vargas, see the studies of Raul Loewenstein Brazil under Vargas (New York, 1942) and John W. F. Delias, Vargas of Brazil: a political biography (Austin, Texas, 1967). The «New State» of G. Vargas began in 1937 and lasted 8 years. Vargas stepped down in 1945 and returned to power in 1950. He finally committed suicide on August 24, 1954, in Rio de Janeiro. Vargas destroyed the Brazilian function of the Integralista past as Salazar had destroyed the Fascists of Italo Balbo.
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