MARCO BRESCIANI (ED.), *Conservatives and Right Radicals in Interwar Europe* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021)

Viewed through diachronic lens, the relatively recent epistemological clarity and methodological precision employed in studies of the far-right, obviously lacking after the Second World War, have proven vital for understanding the intertwined permutations of the radical right and fascism. Drawing flexible boundaries and exploring mutual influences between regimes, movements, parties and factions that shared a rightist inclination, but followed specific historical paths appears important given the persistent pervasive misnomers and terminological confusion regarding nationalism, populism, fascism and conservatism. Improper conflations and interchangeable usage of categories have greatly damaged the academic community and public understanding, as demonstrated by Roger Griffin in a 2002 argument announcing a new consensus in fascist studies. Conversely, the heuristic distinction between conservatives, radicals and fascists has been consistently approached in fascist studies already. It has been taxonomically refined in the classical monograph of Stanley Payne (1996), tackled from various perspectives in collective contributions edited by Martin Blinkhorn (2000) and investigated transnationally in studies collected by Arnd Bauerkämper and Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe (2017). Expanding upon previously studied pathways, the aim of the reviewed volume is to shed a new light upon the antagonistic and the collaborative dynamics of the European far-right during the 1920s and 1930s.

In the editorial introduction, Marco Bresciani announces the book's purpose to reconsider fascism outside isolated typologies and embrace an integrative approach which connects it to the aftermath of the First World War, the shattering of continental empires, the Bolshevik surge, the spread of transnational „illiberal, antidemocratic, nationalist, populist and racist cultures" (p. 2) and the international prominence of the United States. Such broadening of perspective is followed by a historiographical review of fascist studies, which convincingly points out that radical and conservative projects proposed purported solutions to political, societal and economic "questions" by integrating them into wider, transnational systems.

The first analytical chapter, authored by Steven Beller, traces the roots of fascism to the tumultuous dissolution of the Habsburg Empire, a breeding ground for mounting nationalism and irredentism. In a less rigid interpretation of the Empire, Beller does not view it as a "prison of nations", but rather as a mixture of the obsolete and modern, a "multinational and supranational alternative to the standard formula for modernisation through the nation-state" (p. 22), whose collapse facilitated the rise of National-Socialism. The malign stems of the latter had been long present, as illustrated by the political career of Georg von Schönerer, a personal icon of the young Adolf Hitler and the product of a deeply exclusive understanding of

German national identity. By unveiling the foundations of these worldviews, Beller maps the intellectual canvass of various nationalist associations, parties and factions, such as the extreme Pan-German party, which directed its rhetoric (as would the Nazis) towards the lower classes. An equally influential presence in Hitler's political consciousness, Karl Lueger is portrayed as having brought into the popular mainstream the fiercely anti-Semitic tendency of German identity overflowing into Austrian politics, subordinating it to monarchical loyalty. Thus, he initiated a novel brand of social radicalism, later fully appropriated by National-Socialism in Germany.

Also anchored in the German space, Gregor Thum examines *völkisch* thought at the dawn of the inter-war era, a generic, "Blood and soil", anti-Semitic, anti-Slavic, antiliberal and anti-Marxist representation of Germandom. The biographical studies of this chapter, dedicated to the *Volksdeutsche*, examine their connections to the *Reichsdeutsche*, emphasising the significant influence of a demographic of 8 million people spread throughout Europe. The figures analysed, lesser known, yet highly representative for the revisionist formulas they espoused, are Karl Hermann Frank, an influential NSDAP activist on the Czech issue, Max Hildebert Boehm, an ever-present ideological figure of the Baltic lands, and Paul Schiemann, more intent on restructuring, instead of overthrowing the post-war order. Frank is portrayed as a former paramilitary thrown by the Versailles upheavals into a Czechoslovak state he despised. He was an active *völkisch* militant, who rose as a noteworthy political ally of Konrad Helein's Sudetenland movement and took charge of the Sudeten German Party Propaganda machine. As an active agent in the undermining of Czechoslovak democracy, he became an SS and Police head in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, reinforcing his status both as henchman of the NSDAP hierarchy and developer of a *sui-generis* program of Germanisation, founded on "*völkisch* radicalism and economic pragmatism" (p. 51). Boehm, a wartime journalist connected to Baltic irredentist circles, is depicted as a "hypernationalist" promoter of the German Empire, an anti-Semitic theorist and a cultural advocate of the German annexation of the Baltic. During the Weimar years, when he was engaged in the "conservative revolution", he imagined a German "community of faith" wider than the National-Socialist racial order, with voluntary assimilation as an ethnopolitical cornerstone. The most complex figure of the three, Schiemann is rendered as a staunch liberal, rigid to compromise, who outright rejected *völkisch* stances and supported a unified democratic Baltic state. An ethnic minority member of the Latvian parliament, yet an adversary of German conservative revisionists, he argued in favour of an "a-national" state. These loosely linked portrayals show the great diversity of the *Volksdeutsche*. Radicalisation often occurred before the rise of fascism itself.

Turning focus south, Marco Bresciani's chapter presents a thorough perspective of post-Risorgimento Italy and the rise of Fascism. The early stage of Mussolini's regime is seen as a "hybridisation" of nationalism and fascism through the revival of Emilio Gentile's well known theses and pondering upon the core "tensions between conservative and revolutionary ideas and impulses" (p. 69). These are studied via a historical synthesis of the Italian political structure from *fin-de-siècle* through the First World War, with emphasis on external developments. It was indeed a fertile context for Mussolini's blend of "socialist and nationalist

discourse" in 1919. The author's deeper analysis shows how the "cycles of violence" sped up the liberal state's demise and anticipated the role Fascism sought for itself in the post-Habsburg Northern Adriatic. The unrest caused by the paramilitaries and the revolutionary turmoil is linked to externally employed strategies, which ensured the establishment of order within. Such methods were used during the brutal repression of socialism, peaking with the March on Rome and the subsequent normalisation of violence. This phenomenon is regarded by Bresciani as specific for the interweaving of conservatism and revolution. The triumph of the fascist synthesis is partly explained through the monopoly reclaimed on internal and external issues. Internally, the agrarian reform was set into motion, meaning forced property redistribution and land retribution. Externally, the Habsburg's collapse was taken advantage of, resulting the expansion into the Adriatic and a diplomatic campaign targeting the vanquished of the war.

The next contribution, by Mark Biondich, explores the dismantling of inter-war democratic Yugoslavia, which led to competition between conservative and fascist forces. During that period, the ethno-structural debates of integral Yugoslavism and the autonomous ethnic identities overlapped. In a concise overview, Biondich sketches the historical and territorial complexities of the Yugoslav state, highlighting the democratic collapse at the end of the 1920s, caused by deep-rooted national question and the power plays of Aleksandar I, whose authoritarian project ended after his assassination. The "widespread alienation and further resentment" (p. 100) are linked to the ensuing ideological failure building up to radicalisation. Three particular contexts are symptomatic for the dissolution of the post-Aleksandar state. Firstly, the emergence of the Serbian fascist Zbor, which supported a populist, Orthodoxist and nationalist ethos, organising a paramilitary in a typical fascist manner, undermined by a lacking popular support. Secondly, the following rise of Croatian Ustaša, a violent fascist alternative to systemic forces, fiercely anti-Semitic, which enforced an anti-Serbian, anti-Communist and independentist "cult of Croatian statehood" (p. 106). It openly promoted genocidal aspirations, a youth's culture, the charismatic authority of its *Poglavnik* Ante Pavelić and its affinities to Fascist Italy. Thirdly, in Serbia and Croatia, some far-right minorities and clerical groups were influenced by the mainstream political tendencies. In his noteworthy assessment, Biondich does not dismiss native fascist currents as dysfunctions of the modernization process. He frames them as a "by-product of Yugoslavia's vexing national question" (p. 109) and its many responses regarding identity, statehood and nationhood, that mingled fascism with conservative and authoritarian ideas.

In the fifth chapter, Oleksandr Zaitsev examines the controversial (and poignantly current) matter of Ukrainian fascism through its most iconic avatar, the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN). In its historical records, the OUN appears either genocidal and fascist, or liberative and heroic. The author goes beyond this questionable dichotomy. He contextualises the Ukrainian integral nationalism as an expression of authoritarian organicism, conceptually interchangeable with ultranationalism. Some developments came after the defeat of the Ukrainian War of Independence (1917-1921), followed by its territorial insertion either in the Soviet Union, or in the re-established Polish state. The ensuing sense of national

collapse favoured the emergence of intellectuals such as Dmytro Dontsov, the towering figure of Ukrainian nationalism. According to Zaitsev's portrayal, he embodied the intellectual with a complicated biography. Dontsov was a local conservative revolutionary, while also defending the ancestral Cossack-Hetmanian tradition, opposed to anomic modernity. The national project of the OUN is unpacked in developmental terms similar to Italian Fascism. The study reveals revolutionary corps hostile to "enemy nations", who created a fusion between corporate economics and ethnic cleansing, driven by palingenetic ambitions and the sacralisation of politics. The OUN unabashedly claimed ingenuity, despite its mimetic cult of heroes and borrowed stylistic tropes. This is crucial for Zaitev's study, as the inclusion of Ukrainian integral nationalism into fascism becomes questionable. Alternatively, the author observes the fascistising dynamic of the 1930s and ascribes OUN to a parallel category, a "proto-fascist integral nationalism" (p. 136).

Grzegorz Krzywiec displays similar interest for conceptual precision among the composite right in Poland, a state under strenuous existential threat since its inter-war rebirth. Given the unruly national context, counterrevolutionary and authoritarian ideological stances paved the way for a radicalisation spiral, prompted by the "psycho-political conditions" of the Soviet peril. Radicalism's most visible expression was the ascent of National Democracy, supported by Roman Dmowski, an uncompromising authoritarian, anti-Semitic conspiracist and theorist of generational revolt. Following Piłsudski's military coup in 1926, Poland witnessed a massive surge of protofascist groupings. At first, the most noteworthy was Dmowski's OWP (Camp of Great Poland), an open replica of Italian Fascism, founded on a "national ethic", which opposed the Catholic hierarchy through its instrumental use of religion. By the mid-1930s, there was a flourishing concurrence of nationalist factions, ranging from the millenarian anti-Semites to the pragmatic revolutionaries. They invariably fell apart into splinters, under prospective dictators, unable to gain political traction. Moreover, these movements engaged in a dynamic "grass-roots and parochial activism" (p. 154). Krzywiec's analysis provides an insightful inquiry as to how the state occasionally relinquished its monopoly on violence.

A similar diachronic progression is studied by Béla Bodó in Hungary. Bodó's research retraces the pro-Habsburg, Catholic, aristocratic origins of Hungarian conservatism, which confronted the decaying liberal current in the aftermath of the 1848-1849 civil war. These historical developments are causally linked to the rise of neoconservative factions throughout the 1890s. Following the First World War, Hungarian conservatism underwent a radical change, brought on by the looming peril of the Soviet Left, peasant uprisings, wealth losses suffered by the native aristocracy and the unleashing of the Red Terror. The leftist revolutionary deluge generated a realignment of the right within military-industrial and financial circles, many turning into support structures of Horthy's regime establishment. A cohesive nationalism followed their metamorphosis, actively leading the expansion of the state, drawing upon a conspiracy mindset reinforced by anti-Jewish-Bolshevik stereotypes. Taxonomically, the neoconservatives and radical rightists are separated by Bodó based on the latter's embrace of violence as a legitimate political tool, which inspired atrocious

manifestations of protofascist paramilitarism. While radical rightists idealised race or nation, Hungarian conservatives stood faithful to the belief that the state was the ultimate driving force of history. Distinctions aside, from Bethlen to Gömbös and further to Teleki, the chapter points out the conservative party's fascistising tendency, as illustrated by the national rightward drive that led to the Hungarian Holocaust. Lastly, the study sheds light on the hostile relationship of systemic conservatism and fascism, embodied by the Arrow Cross, accurately labelled as the "true (and perhaps the only) *Volkspartei* in Hungary" (p. 189).

In Romania's case, Roland Clark examines the changes of the far-right through the lens of its press, with compulsive conspiratorial maladies. The painstaking analysis focuses on the general climate of moral panic, depicting the image of a nation in danger. Because of this, Clark argues, the "distinctions between fascist, far Right, authoritarian and mainstream became increasingly loose" (p. 195). The anti-Semitic press continued a broader pre-war tradition of cruel attacks against the political class and the purported Jewish influence backing it. Within these radical tendencies, the media's discourse became a vehicle of moral hysteria, already incited by revolutionary activities both outside and within Romania's border. This context stirred counterrevolutionary actions later evoked by true fascist leaders such as Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, for retrospective legitimation. The mainstream right-wing press joined the bandwagon, providing pro-fascist support, as demonstrated by Nae Ionescu's *Cuvântul* and Nichifor Crainic's *Calendarul*, worsening an aptly labelled "politics of crisis". Different sides of the national enemy merged into a malign spectre of imaginary threat. Accurately distinguishing among various influential parties and factions on the far right, Clark follows their rise on the 1930s Romanian political scene and describes their press apparatus. Throughout a valid argument, a nevertheless doubtful assertion claims that genuine and "token fascisms" (a label borrowed from Traian Sandu) were difficult to distinguish, since "they could not be organised on a spectrum of more to less fascist parties as their rhetoric, policies and practices were remarkably similar" (p. 205). However, despite this equivocal perspective, Clark accurately interprets their common crux of nationalism, Orthodoxism, charismatic leadership, militarism, youth culture, populism and hostility towards the establishment. The case of Greece is tackled by Spyridon G. Ploumidis from a point of clear distinction between nationalism *per se*, a secular religion and manifestation of "new politics" (p. 215), and fascism, which used nationalism only as an ideological ingredient among others. The author thus explores the dynamic of nationalism, conservatism and radicalism in inter-war Greece under the paradigm of "hybrid fascistisation".The absence of a real fascist organisation in a country traumatised by war and external threats is explained through historical context. Ploumidis argues that an order of fascist inspiration would have been ineffective outside General Metaxas' rise to power, although his regime is labelled as a "motley of traditional/conservative nationalist and radical features" (p. 216), hence its many classifications: fascist, quasi-fascist, rightist authoritarian etc. In diachronic terms, the psychological nadir following the *Megali Idea's* defeat started the transition of Greek nationalism to an ideological "nationism" which concentrated "the inner idea of the nation". Metaxas will use this for the sake of a "Third

Greek Civilisation" doctrine, harking back to Spartan legends and Doric tribalism, based on collectivist ultranationalism and an ideal "New State" with and organicist core. The chapter acknowledges formal similarities between the 4th of August regime and fascism, exemplified by structures meant to instil a native *Volksgemeinschaft*, to glorify the agrarian order and to create a horizontal corporatist project. All in all, Metaxas is ascribed to an "authoritarian far right" merging fascist and fascist-like traits.

In the following chapter, Sean Kennedy approaches the diverse French right-wing in the late Third Republic, arguing that, despite certain commonalities, "intra-right divisions endured" (p. 237). Throughout the article, Kennedy carefully avoids debates on the nature of French fascism, while taking into account the instrumental value of the term. The rightist milieus are established as ever-changing, which at the beginning of World War I was true for both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary entities, who engaged xenophobic authoritarians such as Maurice Barrès or the Action Française of Charles Maurras and Leon Daudet. Rightist opposition outside the legal context increased during the following years, from Pierre Taittinger's Jeunesses Patriotes with juvenocratic ideals, to George Valois's Faisceau, inspired by radical syndicalism and Nöel de Castelnau's Fédération Nationale Catholique, actively devoted to a Christian agenda. The author states these forces were shaped to some degree by war trauma, sought national regeneration, denounced democratic parliamentary politics, promoted strong executive solutions and openly admired Italian Fascism. However, any attempts to unite into leagues or cartels were doomed to fail. They were unable to put out internal conflicts, while the late 1920s were foreshadowing the fall of the initial rightist wave. The ensuing void was filled by a new generation in the 1930s, when new groups became increasingly relevant: François de La Rocque's Croix de Feu, Marcel Bucard's Francistes, Renaud Jane's Solidarité Française, all short-lived, but impactful. Tensions rocketed when the Popular Front won the elections of 1936, paving the way for an additional extremist wave which had at its forefront the rise of ex-Communist Jacques Doriot's Parti Populaire Française (PPF), gaining the allegiance of noteworthy intellectuals such as Robert Brasillach and Pierre Drieu La Rochelle. Symptomatically, factions of the radical right embraced contradictory stances when it came to external fascism. Some areas of agreement were mostly found in a "growing anti-Communist" consensus. Given the French collapse early in the Second World War, Kennedy accurately remarks that the concurrent dynamic among rightists turned into a collaborationist competition.

A national case of equal complexity, Spain is approached by Giorgia Pirorelli and Alejandro Quiroga. The authors focus on the rightist bloc's emergence during the Spanish Civil War. As they point out, the structural weakness of the parliamentary system, overthrown by Primo de Rivera's dictatorship, made the cohesion of this heterogenous force possible. Contextual unification re-emerged when the constitutional order collapsed and the "Francoist self-defined National Catholic regime" (p. 258) came into being. The arguments put forward in the chapter are documented on historiographical inputs that highlight the synergy between fascism and Christianity, employing paradigmatic approaches such as the sacralisation of politics and political religions. The research provides a narrative of perpetual adaptation

undergone by the right. After the First World War, neutral Spain was governed by a Restoration system which oversaw the fall of liberal options and the consolidation of nationalist conservatism. Afterwards, the military regime of Primo de Rivera, intrinsically authoritarian, enforced political repression and tentatively announced an anthropological revolution. Eventually, the Second Republic marked the discreditation of rightism, reduced to militant opposition, mainly by the conservative CEDA, a mass party with strong Catholic links and fascistising tendencies. In its fully matured shape, Spanish fascism only emerged by the 1930s, when Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista (JONS) and Miguel Primo de Rivera's Falange united. Falangism was then nurtured, per the authors' observation, into a genuine palingenetic, modern, ultranationalist permutation. Finally, the entire progression unfolded with the rise of Francoism, a wide doctrinal and political canopy which included the FET y de las JONS, joined by monarchists and the CEDA. The forefront position of the Falange in this dilluted conglomerate brought on a fascistisation process throughout the extended Francoist camp.

As the complexities of fascist interactions go, Giulia Albanese provides both a comparative analysis and a study in self-representation drawing from autoreferential projections of the Salazarist regime. The author notices the quite recent re-evaluation of the dynamics between "conservatives in the broad sense and fascists in the strict sense" (p. 279). Her chapter explores the manner in which two main pillars of the Estado Novo, namely conservative Catholicism and radical nationalism, were influenced by the historical experience of Italian Fascism. The system established by Salazar had been anticipated by dictatorial traits embedded in the First Republic, such as corporatist initiatives, a full-fledged propaganda mechanism, a personality cult and single party model, all sources of inspiration for Salazar's brand of statism. With such transformations in hindsight, Portuguese society was prone to outer influence radiating from the Mussolinian regime. This explains the rise of Rolão Preto, the "herald of Portuguese fascism" (p. 283), and his national-syndicalist integralism. Albanese investigates how the Catholic hierarchy perceived the dictatorship, with "much cautiousness and ambiguity" (p. 288), though it was later swayed by the 1929 Mussolini agreement with the Holy See. The Lateran was taken as a model of political balance between Fascism and Catholicism. On this background of convergence, the ascent of "staunch Catholic" Oliveira Salazar marked the recognition of an alliance between military, Catholic and radical republican milieus. The Estado Novo was consequently established in 1932 and Salazar was appointed as president. Subsequently, he managed to create a *sui-generis* identity for his regime in an overall fascist climate.

In the penultimate contribution of the volume, Kiran Klaus Patel turns towards the United States, questioning its clear-cut image as the orderly example of democratic alterity in the inter-war era. The study connects American inner dynamics to developments propelled outwards from the Old Continent. The author outright rejects hermetic delineations between the three competing modernising blocs – fascism, communism and liberal democracy – never as clearly separated in historical reality. Substantial focus rests on the mechanisms of the New Deal and its third-way aspirations, consistently devoted to the core principles of democracy.

The belief in American exceptionalism and the reticence towards forceful solutions employed on the continent, Patel underlines, became clearer in the 1930s, as totalitarianism "became a great simplifier" (p. 304). Nevertheless, the connections between the radical right in America and Europe were certain, often driven by phenomena such as migration, coupled with homegrown extremist roots. Examples included the German American Bund, the Fascist League of North America, eugenic currents, as well as organisations such as the Silver Legion. As the author details, there were often concerted reactions on behalf of the authorities towards their suppression, given the New Dealers' pervasive fears of encroaching fascism as an insidious fifth column and the will to project the image of a decisive state capable of weeding out fascist threats from within. Nevertheless, American conservatism was just as much linked to European ideological transfers and influences. In a significant development, Patel shows, the anti-planning, neoliberal ideas of von Mises and Hayek gained ground steadily from the mid 1940s on, later giving birth to prestigious intellectual nuclei such as the Chicago School of "transatlantic modern conservatism" (p. 310).

Drawing up the volume to a close, Guido Franzinetti's study returns to the conceptual realm by successively tackling the cultural nature and evolving definitions of three core notions: "fascism" as a generic label, depicted as an overused, conveniently instrumental post-war template; "populism" as a term of wide circulation as well, volatile on its own; and "nationalism", regarded in a similar dynamic flux, given the strong debates surrounding it, from the *Sonderweg* to the *Historikerstreit*. The author adds to his study other issues, such as the totalitarian formula, varying tremendously from Arendt to Gentile, collaborationism, viewed as an endless means of historiographical concern, and ultimately the matter of collective memory, which (re)shaped these intricate notions, inserting them into vivid (trans)national debates. Given the extreme recent developments, Franzinetti opportunely warns, it is mandatory for historians to "resist the temptation of actualisation" (p. 328). Beyond such admirable cautions, it is necessary, perhaps nowadays more than ever, for the safeguards which have kept these phenomena at bay to be kept alive and aware, as the liberal democratic order appears to navigate once again through an age of instability and uncertainty.

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