

# The Extreme Right Before 1980

The Radical/Populist/Extreme Right in Western Europe

## Introduction

Review/Preview

## The Interwar Extreme Right

Pre-1914

Right-Wing Movements in

Interwar Europe

Right-Wing Regimes

## The Extreme Right after the War

Conclusion



# Current Events

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- ▶ Austria:
  - ▶ Deputy mayor of Braunau forced to resign from Freedom Party over “rat poem”
  - ▶ Party secretary threatens journalist with “consequences” in TV interview
- ▶ Today: meeting of Le Pen, Wilders, Okamura, others in Prague
- ▶ ... ?

## Last week's class question

- ▶ In teams of five students, pick one right-wing party you are reasonably familiar with and answer these questions
  1. Are they nativist?
  2. Are they extremist?
  3. Are they populist?
  4. Are they authoritarian?
- ▶ Designate one person to keep notes

## Last week:

- ▶ Attempts to define and label the relevant party family
- ▶ Mudde's 2007 typology now standard
  - ▶ Lowest common denominator: Radical Right (nativist)
  - ▶ Many of them populist (elite/people dichotomy)
  - ▶ Very few of them extreme/extremist (openly fighting democracy)
- ▶ New (post-1980) parties operate in different environment, so different from Interwar Extreme Right
- ▶ What *was* the Interwar Extreme Right?

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# The long, liberal 19th century



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  - ▶ End of the century: liberal parliaments in place in many states
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  - ▶ *Distrust of mass politics*
- ▶ Conservatives
  - ▶ Against liberal (and further reforms)
  - ▶ Restoration of old regimes
  - ▶ Sometimes pretty authoritarian
  - ▶ Not very nationalistic, political ambitions of mostly moderate scale
  - ▶ *Distrust of mass politics*
- ▶ By and large: an age of rationality and positivism

## Backlash against rationality

- ▶ A small, heterogeneous intellectual movement against rationality
- ▶ In favour of emotions, heroism, mysticism, paganism, violence, action, nationalism
- ▶ + Social Darwinism
- ▶ + New Anti-Semitism
- ▶ A *revolutionary*, new right that wants to restore an imagined, glorified past, not the old system
- ▶ Very much a minority culture; the seeds of future Fascism
- ▶ In some countries (e. g. France), harbingers of future mass movements

# Democracy in Interwar Europe

- ▶ End of “Long 19th Century”
- ▶ 1919 peace settlement → Democratic Nation State as model for Europe (Wilson’s 14 points)
  - ▶ Many new States
  - ▶ Many newly Democratic States
  - ▶ Advent of mass politics
- ▶ Opposition from old elites and large segments of society
- ▶ Russian revolution → threat of working class radicalisation
- ▶ “Democracy without democrats”
- ▶ Ethnic tensions in many states + discontent (peace settlement)
- ▶ Massive economic crises

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  - ▶ Traumatized/formed by war experience
  - ▶ Extreme levels of pointless violence, nationalism
  - ▶ A shared experience of struggle + male bonding, contempt for politics as usual
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  - ▶ **Unlike most of the old right: a mass movement**
- ▶ Summary: the right
  - ▶ At best ambivalent, usually hostile towards democracy
  - ▶ Mad about the threat of a Communist/Socialist revolution
  - ▶ Hate for Liberalism, Social Democracy, Communism



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- ▶ Sometimes tried to *use the new right* – never a good idea → Italy, Germany

# The master case: Italian Fascism I

- ▶ Italy before the war: a “liberal” (elite-dominated) constitutional monarchy
- ▶ After the war:
  - ▶ Italy (the right) not satisfied with territorial gains
  - ▶ Intense social, economic, political conflict
  - ▶ A lust for rebellion, heroism, a “breaking of the mould” amongst the returning war-generation
- ▶ Former Socialist journalist Mussolini creates Fascist movement in 1919
- ▶ *Not* a very elaborated/homogeneous ideology, rather a rebellion against “weak”, “foreign”, rational systems (Marxism, Liberalism etc.)

## Italian Fascism II

- ▶ Radical change/reform including land reform, nationalisation etc.
- ▶ Improve situation of workers/peasants
- ▶ “Direct Action”
- ▶ Anti-socialist/communist; a national socialism
- ▶ Glorification of Italian/Roman past and future
- ▶ Morally conservative
- ▶ Different streams, Mussolini extremely flexible

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- ▶ *Not interested* in biological racism, anti-semitism
- ▶ Disproportionately high number of Jewish members and sponsors

## Fascism III

- ▶ Fascism struggled in 1919; sponsored by Northern businessmen
- ▶ 1920/21 Fascism becomes even more anti-socialist, less revolutionary
- ▶ Tens, then hundreds of thousands of members
- ▶ Leaders willing to compromise with established elites; Fascist party in 1921
- ▶ 1922: Mussolini PM, more or less at the invitation of established right
- ▶ Rise by no means inevitable, long period of consolidation (1922-25)
- ▶ In many ways, a model for other European countries



# “National Socialism”

- ▶ Similar but different
- ▶ Partly influenced by Mussolini's style, methods, ideas
- ▶ + Violent anti-semitism
- ▶ + Biological racism
- ▶ + even more radical social Darwinism
- ▶ + Pan-Germanism

## Fascism in Italy

- ▶ Mussolini declared a dictatorship in 1925
- ▶ Embraced the label “totalitarian” and “corporative”
- ▶ Cult of the leader (Duce)

## Fascism in Italy

- ▶ Strong state, relatively weak party
- ▶ Church, crown and army co-operated but remained intact
- ▶ Totalitarian rule limited in practice
- ▶ Imperial war in Ethiopia, involvement in Spanish Civil War (1936), Balkans (from 1940) → Radicalisation and international backlash

## Fascism in Italy

- ▶ Relatively modest levels of political violence
- ▶ No radical transformation of society/economy; no total war effort
- ▶ Racial legislation and persecution of Jews only introduced from late 1930s (to please/appease Germans)
- ▶ Racism largely unpopular with party, army, population
- ▶ One of the highest Jewish survival rates even after German occupation (1943), even in Italian war zones

# The “Third Reich”

- ▶ Decisive move against relics of old right, Hitler’s supremacy constitutionalised
- ▶ Institutions of state and society soon under complete party control
- ▶ Highly aggressive foreign and racial policies
- ▶ Ultimately, the far-reaching “nazification” of German society
- ▶ Then largely successful creation of an European Empire based on race
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- ▶ Total war and the Holocaust
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- ▶ Atrocities at home + subordination of so many countries → Extreme Right politically infeasible for decades to come

# Extreme Right parties in post-war Western Europe



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  - ▶ “Italian Social Movement” founded in 1946 by Ex-Fascists
  - ▶ Co-operation with centre right until 1960 (Genoa congress) → MSI isolated for many years
  - ▶ Splinter groups, but party moderately successful
  - ▶ Towards “post-fascist” party from early 1990s (Fini), later: merger with Forza Italia

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- ▶ Austria
  - ▶ 1949: V/WdU (“Union of Independents”, German nationalists)
  - ▶ Supported by socialist party for strategic reasons
  - ▶ More moderate/liberal since mid-1960s
  - ▶ Until 1986

## The Extreme Right, old and new

- ▶ Many 3rd-wave parties connected to 2nd (post-war) and 1st (inter-war) right
  - ▶ Germany: many old NSDAP members, concerns about German “honor”, territorial losses, racial purity
  - ▶ Austria: German nationalists, neo-nazis etc.
  - ▶ Italy: literally, a neo-fascist party
  - ▶ France: Catholic fundamentalism, colonial war, Poujadist movement
  - ▶ UK (NF): Racism, “British Fascism”, “national socialism”
  - ▶ Spain: Falange parties
  - ▶ Flanders: Racism, Flemish corporatism
- ▶ But many of the new/most successful: not
  - ▶ Freedom parties in Denmark and Norway, Netherlands
  - ▶ LPF in Netherlands
  - ▶ Lega Nord

## The Extreme Right, old and new

- ▶ Who would proudly call themselves “totalitarian” today?
- ▶ Who is *openly* racist?
- ▶ Who dares to openly attack democracy?

# Conclusion

- ▶ 1920s/30s: Democracy in a hostile environment
- ▶ The Interwar right
  - ▶ Conservative/authoritarian
  - ▶ “Revolutionary”
  - ▶ Co-operation against democracy
- ▶ Today:
  - ▶ Democracy “the only game in town” for most people in Western Europe
  - ▶ Crude racism unacceptable for most people
  - ▶ No revolutionary left
  - ▶ Right mostly pacified
- ▶ Not a return of the Fuhrers, Duces, Caudillos . . .
- ▶ Something more subtle

## Class questions

- ▶ How are the two manifestos different from what you might have expected?
- ▶ Where are the key differences between the manifestos?
- ▶ Where are the key differences between these two texts from 1919/20 and the political realities of Fascism/National Socialism?
- ▶ Are there any parallels between these documents on the one hand and the ideology of the modern Extreme Right on the other?