ENGAGEMENTS, POLITICS

On Post-Fascism

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Fascism is back in Italy. The government of its country, Europe's, or, along with the Russian juntocracy, presumed to be governed by its successor state since the 1990s, is headed by a neofascist, Giorgia Meloni, who, while denying her party's neofascism, is attempting to organize parliamentary politics around fascist ideology, with the help of a number of lesser neofascists of the extreme right, including some who, like Meloni herself, are in her party, Fratelli d'Italia, which she founded and which she has organized as a parliamentary bloc. People making the same observation about Europe as a whole, more or less outside Fascist territories. The government controls that embrace post-Fascist parties are, or are on the verge of, forming in Sweden, Finland, and Estonia, and fascism is a clear and present danger in Germany, where the far-right Fascist is known as a government-in-waiting.

Fascism is back in Europe, in short.

Comparisons to the Europe of the interwar years are inevitable, and they are of mixed, or at least ambiguous, value. Fascism's rise to power in Italy, Germany, and Spain, and its ability to dominate the continent, in historical terms, cannot be presumed. Still, post-fascism is a form of politics, and it is a form of politics that, in its ability to organize a political movement, has shown little trouble in ending a city, a region, or a country's history, with the legacy of Fascism, that is to say, authoritarian, but not an all-encompassing, and that can not have been, or even have been, a matter of indifference, or even a matter of pride, to many people.

Why call this form of phenomena fascism, however post-?

Post-fascism finds its roots, and its very name, in the world of global capitalism that spawned the fascist movements of the interwar years. It shares with its predecessor the ability to mobilize the high ranks of a class, national identity within the world of global capitalism, and to organize a political movement, or a form of government, around that mobilization. It shares with the interwar movements of fascism, and with the post-fascism of the contemporary moment, the ability to organize a political movement, or a form of government, around a mass, or at least a majority, mobilization, and it shares with the post-fascism of the contemporary moment

mental habits of liberation struggle for a more just redistribution of goods and power are not applicable. The problem is not that the Normative State is becoming more authoritarian. The problem is that it belongs only to a few. ◆

Notes

1 A few interesting articles in English concerning recent developments: Harry Ritter, "From Hapsburg to Hitler to Haider," *German Studies Review* 22 (May 1999): 269-284; Jan Müller, "From National Identity to National Interest: The Rise and Fall of Germany's New Right," *German Politics* 8 (December 1999): 1-20; Michael Minkenberg, "The Renewal of the Radical Right," *Government and Opposition* 35 (Spring 2000): 170-188; Jacob Heilbrunn, "A Disdain for the Past: Jörg Haider's Austria," *World Policy Journal* 28 (Spring 2000): 71-78; Immanuel Wallerstein, "Albatross of Racism," *London Review of Books*, May 18, 2000, pp. 11-14; Rainer Bauböck, "Austria: Jörg Haider's Grasp for Power," *Dissent* (Spring 2000): 23-26.

2 See G. M. Tamás, "Ethnarchy and Ethno-Anarchism," *Social Research* 63 (Spring 1996): 147-190; Idem., "The Two-Hundred Years War," *Boston Review*, Summer 1999, pp. 31-36.

3 Michael Mann, "The Dark Side of Democracy: The Modern Tradition of Ethnic and Political Cleansing," *New Left Review* 235 (May/June 1999):18-45.

4 See Mark Neocleous, "Against Security," *Radical Philosophy* 100 (March/April 2000): 7-15; Idem., *Fascism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1997). The evolution from "l'état social" to "l'état pénal" has been repeatedly highlighted by Pierre Bourdieu.

5 Georges Bataille, "The Psychological Structure of Fascism," [November 1933], trans. Carl R. Lovitt, in *Visions of Excess*, ed. Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 137-160. Concerning the problem of masses and violence, see Etienne Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, trans. Peter Snowdon (London: Verso, 1998), pp. 105, 115-116. Also: Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights, 1988). An interesting liberal critique of Bataille's theory of fascism can be found in Susan Rubin Suleiman's "Bataille on the Street," in *Bataille: Writing the Sacred*, ed. Carolyn Bailey Gill (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 26-45. Bataille's critique has to be understood within the context of the anti-Stalinist, revolutionary ultra-left. Two volumes of correspondence whirling around Bataille, Souvarine, Simone Weil, and the mysterious Laure (Colette Peignot) have recently been published: Laure: *Une rupture*, 1934, ed. Anne Roche and Jérome Peignot (Paris: Editions des Cendres, 1999); and Georges Bataille, *L'Apprenti sorcier*, ed. Marina Galletti (Paris: Editions de la Différence, 1999). As to another radical critique of fascism in the 1930s, see Karl Polányi, "The Essence of Fascism," in *Christianity and Social Revolution*, ed. J. Lewis, K. Polányi, D. K. Kitchin (London: Gollancz, 1935).

6 Bataille, "Psychological Structure," 142. See the two intriguing drafts to the essay on fascism: "Cet aspect religieux manifeste…" and "En affet la vie humaine…" in Georges Bataille, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 2 (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), pp. 161-164. Also: Antonio Negri's theory of constituent power and constituted power in his Insurgencies, trans. Maurizia Boscagli (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1999), pp. 1-128, 212-229.

7 On the parallel between Bataille and Carl Schmitt, see Martin Jay, "The Reassertion of Sovereignty in a Time of Crisis: Carl Schmitt and Georges Bataille," in Force Fields (New York, Routledge, 1993), pp. 49-60; Bataille's essay on "Sovereignty," *The Accursed Share* vols. 2 and 3, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1933).

8 See Jean Piel, "Bataille and the World," in *On Bataille: Critical Essays*, ed. Leslie Anne Boldt-Irons (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), pp. 95-106.

9 Ernst Fraenkel, *The Dual State* [1941], trans. E. A. Shils, E. Lowenstein, and K. Knorr (New York: Octagon, 1969). See also: David Schoenbaum, *Hitler's Social Revolution* (Garden City: Anchor Doubleday, 1967), pp. 113-151.

10 Fraenkel, *The Dual State*, p. 153.

11 See G. M. Tamás, "Democracy's Triumph, Philosophy's Peril," *Journal of Democracy* 11 (January 2000): 103-110. On alarming alternatives to politics as we know it, see Jacques Ranciére, *La Mésentente* (Paris: Galilée, 1995), pp. 95-131.

G. M. Tamás

G. M. Tamás, former director of the Institute of Philosophy of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, has been a visiting professor at the Central European…

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