THE FLEDGLING FÜHRERS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF INTERWAR FASCIST MOVEMENTS IN BRITAIN AND THE U.S.

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During the interwar period (1918-1939), Italy and Germany were not alone in their experimentation with fascism. In Britain and the United States, two lesser-known groups, the British Union of Fascists and the German American Bund, amassed tens of thousands of supporters. They funded rallies, managed publishing companies, and organized chapters nationwide. Until both were banned in, respectively, 1940 and 1941, the BUF and the Bund were viewed by their respective governments as real threats to democracy. This begs the question: why were they not more successful? This thesis addresses this question by comparing successes and failures of the BUF and the Bund to their "successful" models (the Italian Fascists and German Nazis), whose ideologies and practices they emulated. Doing so reveals four metrics of fascist success: leadership in the form of a strong authority figure, centralized organization, populist appeals, and use of political violence. These metrics, evidenced by speeches, government reports, propaganda, and other print media, are used to identify the limits of the BUF's and the Bund's success. Through this comparative analysis, it is concluded that both groups, despite their shortcomings, were not failures. The significance of this study is twofold: first, it provides insights into the vulnerabilities within democratic politics that can be exploited by fascist movements; and second, it documents the strengths of democratic practices, institutions, and polices that can limit the impact of fascist appeals and parties.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Fascism is often defined as a political ideology rooted in a specific time and place: continental Europe in the interwar period (1918-1939). It is usually associated with the "successful" fascist regimes: Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, and Francoist Spain.[1] Taking advantage of mass politics and weak, fledgling democratic institutions, fascism spread internationally during the interwar period. Especially during the Great Depression, nations with democratic institutions faced public criticism, allowing fascist parties to take root as potential political alternatives. Up to World War II, many Western democracies had some form of a fascist party or movement inspired by Benito Mussolini's Fascists or Adolf Hitler's Nazis.[2] This thesis focuses on two groups - the British Union of Fascists and the U.S. German American Bund – which operated in two established democratic nations where one might least expect fascism to grow.

Britain's democratic institutions have been developing since at least the 17th century. England's 1689 Bill of Rights fundamentally weakened the power of the monarch and established 13 articles of freedom. These liberties gave certain citizens freedom of speech, freedom to bear arms, and freedom to petition the king.[3] The First Reform Act of 1832 extended the right to vote to middle class men. It is worth noting, however, that up until the 20th century, exclusions were made on the basis of gender and race, which limited freedoms to various

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[1] "Francoist Spain" describes the fascist dictatorship of Francisco Franco over Spain (1939-1975). Because this thesis analyzes fascist parties of the interwar period (1918-1939), his fascist regime will not be included as a model for comparative analysis.

[2] Franco's rule came in 1939, so his fascist regime was not a model for most.

[3] *Bill of Rights 1689*. UK Parliament. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/parliamentaryauthority/revolution/collections1/collections-glorious-revolution/billofrights/

demographics. Regardless, by the 1930s, Britain was a stable democratic nation. This did not prevent it from developing its own fascist party, however.

The British Union of Fascists, or BUF for short, was a party founded in 1932 by Sir Oswald Mosley, a World War I veteran, and an ex-Conservative, ex-Labour politician. A young man inspired by Mussolini's revolution in Italy, Mosley believed Britain's parliament was doomed to gridlock because of international "financial gangsters."[4] To Mosley, a parliament divided between separate competing parties was incapable of facing issues such as unemployment, or the threat of communism, which he believed to be a particular danger to society. Mosley thus advocated for a permanent majority in parliament, which would lead the nation to its previous imperial glory. He founded the BUF as a successor to the short-lived New Party to achieve these goals. [5] Drawing from ex-Labour politicians, Conservatives, and a variety of social groups (workers, women, rural farmers), Mosley crafted a fascist party that found success amidst the global economic depression of the 1930s in Britain. Its growth was only halted in 1940 when the BUF was banned by the British government using wartime emergency powers offered by Defense Regulation 18B.

Similarly, democratic governance and institutions in the United States dates to the mid-18th century and were constitutionally established after the American Revolution. In 1787, the Constitution of the United States guaranteed basic freedoms for its citizens. These freedoms included the right to elected representation. In addition, the 1791 Bill of Rights protected various liberties. The First Amendment, for instance, included freedom of religion, speech, and

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[4] Mosley, Oswald. *Tomorrow, We Live.* 3rd Edition. A Greater Britain Publication. 1938. Pg.7-9.
[5] The New Party was founded in 1931, after Mosley left the Labour Party to begin his own political endeavors. It was originally supported by other Labour politicians before its dissolution in 1932, when the BUF was founded to replace it with fascism as its key tenant.

assembly. Though, exclusions were made on the basis of gender and race. Even so, the U.S. entered the interwar period as a strong democratic state. Like Britain, however, its democratic traditions did not protect it from growing fascist movements.

The German American Bund was an American fascist movement founded in 1936 from the remnants of a group known as the Friends of New Germany.[6] The Bund was led by the German immigrant and former Nazi, Fritz Kuhn. The self-titled American Führer, inspired by Hitler's Nazism, commanded the Bund with hopes of rallying Americans, primarily those of German ancestry, under an "Americanized" Nazi banner. His intentions were to take back the nation from the "other," namely communists and Jews. The Bund was considered a legitimate threat to democracy in the eyes of the American government and the public. It drew support from White Americans of various backgrounds (small business owners and workers for the most part). Though, like Mosley and many other failed fascist leaders of the interwar period, Kuhn had limited success in spearheading a "new American revolution." From 1939-1941, the Bund was subject to legal investigations from the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HCUA). This led to the interning of individual members and leaders, including Fritz Kuhn. After the U.S. entered WWII late 1941, the organization was outlawed altogether.[7]

[6] The Friends of New Germany was a Nazi-sanctioned organization founded in the United States by and for German immigrants supportive of Hitler and his Third Reich.
[7] "German American Bund." United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Accessed November 1, 2022. https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/german-american-bund.

Figure 1. A map of the democratic (dark gray), authoritarian (light gray), and "swing zone" (mixed gray) countries of Europe during the interwar period. Mann, Michael. *Fascists.* Cambridge University Press. Pg. 38.

Britain and the U.S. were not the only democratic countries where interwar fascist movements were organized. Mussolini's seizure of power in 1922, and Hitler's in 1933, inspired like-minded individuals across continental Europe to adopt fascist ideology. Austria is one example of another continental European nation which experimented with the ideology. With its democratic constitution enacted in 1920, Austria entered the interwar period as a representative democracy. However, in 1932, Engelbert Dollfuß, head of the country's right-wing coalition government, was elected chancellor. Like Mussolini and Hitler, Dollfuß suspended Austria's

parliament so that he could rule authoritatively.[8] This "Austrofascism," as it came to be known, was modeled after the corporatist, Catholic, and anti-secularist ideas central to Italian Fascism. He ruled until his assassination in 1934, after which he was succeeded by the like-minded Kurt Schuschnigg, who later supported the Nazis' *Anschluss* in 1938.[9]

Austria was far from alone in its experimentation with fascism. After the Revolutions of 1848, the Netherlands became a parliamentary democracy. However, during the interwar period it also had its own fascist party. The National Socialist Movement in the Netherlands, or NSB for short, was founded in 1931 by Anton Mussert and Comelis van Geelkerken. Mussert and Geelkerken modeled the NSB after both Italian Fascism and German Nazism. *People and Fatherland* and *VoVa* were two of the NSB's weekly papers published through Nenasu, a Nazi publishing company owned by Mussert. Despite their efforts, the NSB failed to gain a majority in parliament. Fascism only succeeded in the Netherlands after the German occupation in 1940, when all parties were banned except the NSB.[10]

The Netherlands' democratic neighbor, Belgium, also had a fledgling fascist party. The Rexist Party, or Rex, was founded by Léon Degrelle and operated between 1935 and 1944. Like other fascist parties, Rex was a far-right, ultra-nationalist, authoritarian party that advocated for the archetypical fascist corporate state. Like the NSB, however, it never achieved mass

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[8] Thorpe, Julie. *Pan-Germanism and the Austrofascist State, 1933-38* Manchester University Press, 2011. Pg. 55.

[9] *Anschluss* is a term describing the annexation of Austria by Germany, which occurred on March 13, 1938.

[10] Kunkeler, Nathaniël. "Organising National Socialism: Nazi Organisation in Sweden and the Netherlands, 1931–1939." *Contemporary European History* 30, no. 3 (2021): 351–65. doi:10.1017/S0960777321000230.

popularity.[11] As was the case for Francoist Spain, fascism's success in Belgium and the Netherlands largely depended upon outside influence from Nazi Germany or, in the case of Spain, Fascist Italy as well.

Beyond Europe, Britain and the United States, fascist movements spread in the interwar period to other democracies, notably Australia and Canada. Founded in 1931, Eric Campbell's New Guard was a fascist paramilitary group that operated in Australia. It began as a splinter party from the Old Guard, an anti-communist organization founded in 1930. The New Guard split from the Old Guard after Campbell criticized its organizational strategies, which emphasized secrecy of membership to protect leaders from public identification. In 1933, Campbell toured Europe to learn more about fascism, even meeting in London with Mosley and other members of the BUF.[12] Campbell was attracted to fascism, particularly Nazi fascism, as a movement of and for "the people," and modeled his Australian movement accordingly.

In North America, the Canadian Union of Fascists, also known as the Canadian Union, was founded in the mid-1930s as a splinter group from the Canadian Nationalist Party. The leader, Chuck Crate, took ideological inspiration from Sir Oswald Mosley and his British Union of Fascists, which advocated nationalism, White supremacy, corporate statism, amongst other fascist ideals.[13] Like their model, the Canadian Union of Fascists published their own newspaper, *The Thunderbolt.* The group remained small and was officially banned when World War II began, not long before the BUF was dissolved.[14]

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[11] Paxton, Robert. *The Anatomy of Fascism*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2004. Pg. 74.
[12] "March of the Fascists." *Caerphilly Journal,* July 29, 1933.
[13] "Fascist Groups Among Canadians." *Ames Daily Tribune and Times,* Oct. 21, 1936.
[14] "Canada Bans 16 Bodies in Fifth Column Drive." *Manchester Evening News,* August 3, 1940.

In summary, fascism resonated amongst peoples within democratic nations across the world during the interwar period. This thesis focuses specifically on the BUF and the Bund for two reasons. First, both the British Union of Fascists and the German American Bund openly – and independently - emulated two successful European fascist parties: the Italian Fascists and German Nazis. After visiting Italy, Mosley purposefully transplanted Mussolini's ideals for his own agenda. Likewise, Kuhn intended to mold the U.S. into an Aryan landscape. By emulating these models, they amassed tens of thousands of supporters, orchestrated mass rallies and marches, funded their own publishing companies, and managed chapters nation-wide.[15] These achievements were gained in two of the world's oldest democracies, so comparing the BUF and the Bund can help explain how fascist parties, such as the BUF and the Bund, could successfully develop even in countries with the longstanding democratic institutions.

Second, despite never seizing power politically like the Italian Fascists or German Nazis, both the BUF and the Bund were successful fascist movements, independent of their models or other right-wing organizations. At their peaks, they maintained impressive numbers of supporters, with the BUF peaking reaching around 50,000 and the Bund anywhere from 25,000 to 50,000.[16] Their initial successes, however, raises a question. Why did they fail to gain greater political power prior to being dissolved forcibly during World War II?

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[15] Fritz Kuhn desperately tried to associate with Hitler, but there is no evidence to suggest that the Bund was sanctioned by or funded by the Nazi Party. There is some evidence to suggest that Mosley received donations from the Fascist and Nazi regimes upon his request, but none to suggest that the BUF was directly influenced by either regime.

[16] The actual number of Bund members is unverifiable, as membership papers were destroyed once it was realized by Kuhn and other Bund officials that the FBI would be investigating the organization. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has estimated a membership of 25,000, while the 50,000 number is derived from newspapers from the 1930s, as well as Kuhn's own (certainly exaggerated) statements during his time as the Bund's Führer.

This thesis addresses this question in two ways. First, it analyzes comparatively the practices of the BUF and the Bund to determine the limits of their accomplishments according to four metrics of fascist success: leadership in the form of a strong authority figure, centralized organization, populist appeals, and use of political violence. Through this comparative analysis, it is determined that the BUF and the Bund were not failures. To understand why they were not more successful, this study argues that one must thus look to the specifical political environments/cultures in which both groups operated.

Following a review of the historiography, this project dedicates a chapter to each of these metrics of success. Each chapter analyzes the BUF and the Bund comparatively, and utilizes primary sources, including government reports, transcribed speeches, manifestos, and other forms of print media (e.g., propaganda and newspapers).

The third chapter of this study, "Leadership," analyzes centralized leadership as a fundamental aspect to a successful fascist party. Successful fascist parties always had a male, authoritarian and charismatic leader who could attract crowds of disillusioned citizens. Without an authority figure who represents himself as the antithesis of liberal degeneracy, it was difficult for a fascist party to stand out as a legitimate political alternative.

The fourth chapter, "Organization," discusses the importance of a party's ability to organize itself effectively. A successful fascist party was committed to its ideology and to its leader, which prevented it from splitting apart. Moreover, a well-organized fascist party could print propaganda and manage chapters nation-wide. Without these key elements, it was difficult for a party to connect to different demographics, or to spread its ideals from town-to-town.

The fifth chapter, "Populist Appeals" explores populism and its ties to fascist political practice. Successful fascist parties took advantage of public fears and hatreds to fuel their support amongst conservatives. Fascists demonized the "other" to appease "the people," thus garnering support and votes in parliament.[17] This eventually bought them into power.

The sixth chapter, "Political Violence" explains the role of political violence and its utility for successful fascist movements. Fascist paramilitaries used violence against the "other" strategically. Though they would generally be the aggressors, fascists managed to justify their violence as "self-defense" against the radical left or other minority groups disdained by "the people." Successful fascists could master the art of stoking hatred and violence, while simultaneously claiming their violent paramilitaries were agents of law and order.

This analysis of the fascist metrics of success is followed by an analysis of political cultures in which the BUF, the Bund, the Nazis, and the Fascists operated. This chapter reveals how well each group was able to successfully adapt their practices to their respective political environments. The Kingdom of Italy and the Weimar Republic were much younger, less secure democratic states. Britain and the U.S., however, were not. The significance of this study is that it identifies vulnerabilities within democratic politics that could be exploited by fascist movements, even within well-established democracies. Furthermore, it documents the strengths of democratic practices, institutions, and polices that could limit the impact of fascist appeals and organized movements. The BUF and the Bund operated in nations whose democratic institutions,

[17] The "other" are usually racial, religious, sexual, or gendered minorities, who are blamed and attacked by "the people," or those deemed to be "founding stock" of a nation, for a variety of societal ills.

while providing them a foothold for appeal, were ultimately resistant to interwar fascist movements.

CHAPTER II: HISTORIOGRAPHY

This historiography has four purposes. First, it surveys the broad debate over fascism to understand why the British Union of Fascists and the German American Bund qualify as fascist movements. Second, it uses recent comparative analysis interwar fascism to distill key metrics of success that will be applied to the BUF and the Bund. Third, it explores the political and cultural environments of interwar Italy and Germany. This is done to explain the conditions under which fascist movements could find success in democratic nations. Lastly, it surveys the historiography focusing on the BUF and the Bund.

What was Interwar Fascism?

In 21st century Western political culture, the word "fascist" is often used derogatorily. The complexities of its interwar origins are thus reduced to a rhetorical weapon, used for branding political opponents. Because of this, outside of academia, the term has been stripped of its historical context. This begs the question: What was fascism as a political ideology and practice in the interwar period? The historiography on interwar fascism is massive, even if one focuses solely on the Anglo-American literature published in the past few decades. Definitions of fascism have changed over time and are often contradictory. As Sir Ian Kershaw once wrote, "trying to define 'fascism' is like trying to nail jelly to the wall."[1]

Robert Paxton is one of the leading scholars of fascism studies in the late 20th century. Paxton is well-known for his 1972 publication, *Vichy France*, which argues that the Vichy government was eager to collaborate with the Nazi regime and did not passively resist fascism. After publishing this text, Paxton turned to analyzing fascism in the French countryside. His

[1] Kershaw, Ian. *To Hell and Back. Europe, 1914-1949.* Penguin Books, 2015. Pg. 228.

French Peasant Fascism (1997) is one of the first late 20th century texts that examines a fascist movement for the purposes of distilling its key characteristics. Specifically, Paxton focuses on an activist known as Henri-Auguste d'Halluin, (Henry Dorgères) and his Comités de Défense Paysanne, also known as the Greenshirts. In this case study, Paxton identifies central traits of fascist ideology and political practice. For instance, he utilizes the public image of Dorgères to explain that fascist leaders typically centered their movements around themselves, as a sort of "cult of personality." Fascist leaders were charismatic men who utilized populist appeals and reactionary rhetoric to instigate violence against the "other." To combat the French communists, Dorgères organized a paramilitary corps, the Greenshirts. Like other fascist movements, the Greenshirts were meant to fight the left.[2] They also served as guards at rallies where, according to Paxton, Dorgères would preach for a fascist, "authoritarian, corporatist state…by violent overthrow of the Republic if necessary."[3] In this case, Paxton roots fascism both in the image and ambitions of the leader, Dorgères, as well as in the political use of public appeal and militaristic supporters to conquer political opposition.

Paxton's *The Anatomy of Fascism* (2004) expands upon his original ideas by analyzing fascist movements comparatively, such as Dorgères' Greenshirts, the Italian Fascists, and the German Nazis. To note, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, like *French Peasant Fascism* before it, does not open with a conclusive definition of fascism. Rather, Paxton admits that fascism was mutable, changing depending on unique national contexts. As such, his research treats fascism as a set of stages, rather than "some fixed essence."[4] Paxton devises five stages for his definition of fascism. The first stage, or the "founding stage," he argues, was where fascist movements were

[2] Paxton, Robert. *French Peasant Fascism*. Oxford University Press, 1997. Pg. 65.
[3] Paxton, p. 5, 66.
[4] Paxton, Robert. *The Anatomy of Fascism*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2004. Pg. 15.

born amongst "radical Right movements with some explicit or implicit link to fascism."[5] Stage two was where these movements became "rooted in political systems as significant players and the bearers of important interests."[6] Stage three involved the seizure of power, with stage four being the exercise of said power. The last stage, stage five, was the so-called "radicalization or entropy" period, where fascist regimes either "had to produce an impression of driving momentum – 'permanent revolution'" or face extinction. [7]

Along with defining its stages, Paxton explains fascism as a form of political practice and ideology:

> fascism may be defined as a form of political behavior marked by obsessive preoccupation with community decline, humiliation, or victimhood and by compensatory cults of unity, energy, and purity, in which a mass-based party of committed national elites, abandon democratic liberties and pursues with redemptive violence and without ethical or legal restraints goals of internal cleansing and external expansion.[8]

Accompanying this explanation are nine "mobilizing passions" which Paxton believes motivates individuals to support fascist movements; 1) "a sense of overwhelming crisis beyond the reach of any traditions solutions;" 2) "the primacy of the group;" 3) "the belief that one's group is a victim;" 4) "dread of the group's decline under the corrosive effects of individualistic liberalism, class conflict, and alien influences;" 5) "the need for closer integration of a purer community;" 6) "the need for authority by natural leaders (always male);" 7) "the superiority of the leader's instincts over abstract and universal reason;" 8) "the beauty of violence and the efficacy of will;" and 9) "the right of the chosen people to dominate others without restraint."[9]

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[5] Paxton, p. 174.
[6] Paxton, p. 174.
[7] Paxton, p. 148.
[8] Paxton, p. 218.
[9] Paxton, p. 41, 219.

Michael Mann's *Fascists* (2004) is another recent comparative study with a broad scope. Mann examines fascist parties across interwar Italy, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Romania, and Spain. This approach, though ambitious, has proven more controversial amongst critics. This criticism is partly owed to Mann's tendency to define fascism more along ideological lines. Both Mann and Paxton explain fascism as a form of ideology and political practice. Mann, however, leans towards fascism as an ideology characterized by reactionary values. Fascist revolutions, he argues, were movements "of high ideals, able to persuade a substantial part of two generations of young people (especially the highly educated) that it could bring about a more harmonious social order."[10] Furthermore, he explains that fascism featured cross-class coalitions of supporters who shared a set of values Mann refers to as "transcendent paramilitary nation-statism."[11] This includes the beliefs that the nation is a special entity that ought be protected, the notion that the public's and state's purpose is to serve said nation, and that violence should be used to protect it.[12] The ultranationalist side of Mann's definition is notably similar to Paxton's, which centers around a national community's sense of self-victimhood, humiliation, and hatred of the "other" as a result.

Mann has been criticized for his focus on ideology, however. Critics such as Rebecca Haynes from *The Slavonic and East European Review*, have argued that Mann's work offers very little to the field of fascism studies. Along with criticizing Mann's "marred" analysis of Romanian and Hungarian fascism, she discounts his frequent use of "evil" in association with fascism and its

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[10] Mann, Michael. *Fascists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Pg. 3.
[11] Mann, p. 77.
[12] Berman, Sheri. Review of *Three Faces of Fascism*, by Michael Mann, Robert Paxton, and Richard Wolin. *World Policy Journal* 21, no. 3 (2004): 95–100. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40210240. Pg. 98.

followers.[13] By dismissing fascist ideology as "evil," Haynes argues that Mann does not take seriously the impact that religious mythology has on human motivation. Indeed, Mann does not emphasize fascism as inspired by spirituality.

The point of mentioning this critique is to demonstrate that fascism is a difficult ideology and political practice to assign a definition to. Fascism was not the only ideology characterized by ideals of national primacy, victimhood by outside forces, or political violence. Any political or ideological group can be inspired by these traits. Moreover, not all fascist movements shared the same ideals. The Italian Fascists and the German Nazis believed in national restoration through Social Darwinian expansionism. The BUF and Bund, despite modeling the practices and ideologies of the Fascists and Nazis, were never avid promoters of British or U.S. imperialism. Throughout their entire lifespans, the two parties were rhetorically isolationist. Mosley and his BUF were opposed to another world war, and to an extent, so was Kuhn and his Bund.[14]

Similar problems exist with Paxton's five-stage definition of fascism. The issue with this model, in Hayne's words, is that "most fascist movements did not complete the five stages. Indeed, the vast majority did not get beyond stage one."[15] The Bund is an example of this. So too was the BUF. Although, it could be argued that the BUF's political viability was more deserving of stage two. Paxton focuses on those fascist regimes which completed his five stages: Fascist

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[13] Haynes, Rebecca. *The Slavonic and East European Review* 84, no. 4 (2006): 770–72. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4214377. Pg. 73.
[14] The Bund's anti-war rhetoric stemmed both from their own agenda to keep the U.S. out of a war with Hitler and Germany, and their acknowledgement of American isolationist values.
[15] Haynes, Rebecca. *The Slavonic and East European Review* 84, no. 4 (2006): 770–72. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4214377.

Italy and Nazi Germany. This leaves other fledgling fascist parties and movements like the BUF or the Bund by the wayside.

The historiography of the last twenty years has approached the question, "What is fascism?" from numerous directions. Generally, however, fascism is understood as either a political practice or ideology, or both. Scholars agree that fascism, and fascists, were at least characterized by their conservative values. These values included obsession over moral and national decadence, as well as fear, hatred, and restorative violence against the "other." Or, in Paxton's words, a "conspiratorial and Manichean view of history as a battle between good and evil camps, between the pure and corrupt, in which one's own community or nation has been the victim."[16] At the same time, there are historians including Richard Bosworth, Julie Gottlieb, and Aristotle Kallis who describe fascism as a form of political activism, whose leaders were not alone defined by rigid ideological pre-requisites. Gottlieb, for instance, makes the case in her *Feminine Fascism* (2000) that British fascism was not necessarily exclusive to men.[17]

Richard Bosworth's *The Italian Dictatorship* (1998) surveys different liberal, conservative, and Marxist understandings of fascism since the early 20th century. For instance, mid-20th century Marxists believed fascism represented the repression of socialists, and therefore, was pre-destined to be a defense to capitalist institutions. In Bosworth's words, fascism to socialists was:

> …the agent of capital, landowners, industry, and all those elements of present wealth, power and status who were doomed to historical defeat when the

[16] Paxton, p. 41.
[17] Gottlieb, Julie. *Feminine Fascism.* I.B. Tauris, 2000. Pg. 11.

> proletariat came into its own. In the Marxist analysis, Fascism was reactionary in its final purpose, and inevitably drew on a class base among those forces.[18]

Conversely, liberals like philosopher Benedetto Croce believed fascism is best understood as a cross-class movement, especially supported by disillusioned youth and veterans of WWI.[19]

In Bosworth's analysis of altering opinions, fascism falls along lines of ideology or political practice, or both. Fascism has been characterized both by its reactionary rhetoric, and its political activities, which distinguishes it from traditional conservative or politicking. What is more, it is almost impossible to boil its ideals down to any one conservative value, as its character changes nationally. This is a sentiment shared by Paxton, as well as Julie Gottlieb. Her *Feminine Fascism* (2002) argues that fascism was not exclusive to males, or even male leaders. Gottlieb uses the case of Rotha Lintorn-Orman's British Fascists (1923), as well as women of the British Union of Fascists to suggest that fascism was a methodology of seeking power, not only a fixed set of conservative beliefs. This would make sense, considering fascists like the Nazis frequently altered their policies to appeal to the masses. To them, ideology was a tool for control over mass appeal and, eventually, the state.

Aristotle Kallis' *Fascist Ideology* (2000) is an example of a text which understands fascists according to their actions. Kallis follows in Paxton's footsteps in arguing that fascist actions spoke louder than their words. Specifically, Kallis demonstrates that Mussolini viewed Hitler's revolution in Germany as a net gain for European fascism, but also thought of it as "a potential threat to the co-operation between the two countries."[20] The growing relationship between

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[18] Bosworth, Richard. *The Italian dictatorship: Problems and perspectives in the interpretation of Mussolini and Fascism*. Arnold, 1998. Pg. 233.
[19] Bosworth, p. 233.
[20] Kallis, Aristotle. *Fascist ideology territory and expansionism in Italy and Germany, 1922-1945*. Routledge, 2000. Pg. 141.

Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany sparked a relationship of "mutual-cooperation and growing rivalry, with both elements contributing equally to the radicalization of the style implementation and scope of their expansionist policies."[21] Although expansionism was an aspect of Italian Fascist ideology, it was electrified into reality by politics.[22] In other words, revitalizing the Roman Empire may have been an ideal held by Italian Fascists, but it was international relations and subtle attempts at keeping rivals like Hitler at bay that made those dreams a reality.

Regardless of the subtle divisions between these understandings of fascism, its ideological and political forms were both important to its character and its ability to successfully develop within an existing political culture. After all, without the *fascio* (bundle of sticks) to hold up the *fasces* (bundle of wood with an axe head), or vice versa, there can be no *fascismo*. The same applies for the characteristics which intersect to create the ideology. For fascism to be "fascism," both its ideologies and political activities must work in tandem.

This thesis argues that the successes and failures of fascist movements are best measured by their political practices. Moreover, while fascism was characterized by reactionary values, its adaptable nature makes it difficult to ascertain a definition that transcends individual national contexts. For the case of the BUF and the Bund, there is not much to be gained by discussing definitions further than this, as they openly modeled two archetypical fascist parties. However, distilling the characteristics of fascism into comparative metrics of success – leadership in the form of a strong authority figure, centralized organization, populist appeals, and use of political violence - determines the limits to the success of the BUF and the Bund in comparison to their models.

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[21] Kallis, p. 139
[22] Kallis, p. 144

These metrics of success are distilled from existing secondary texts on "successful" fascist parties: the Italian Fascists and German Nazis. The next section of this historiography, "Metrics of Success," is broken into four parts to explain these metrics. The first segment illustrates the importance of a party's leadership, while the second highlights the significance of a party's organization. The third segment discusses populism as it pertains to a fascist party's ability to garner mass appeal. A final section, then, explores political violence as a political tool for maintaining the party's legitimacy as a necessary form of "self-defense" against the chaotic "other." All of this is done utilizing works such as Doris Bergen's *War and Genocide*, Jackson Spielvogel's *Hitler and Nazi Germany,* Alexander De Grand's *Italian Fascism,* and Robert Paxton's *The Anatomy of Fascism.* After these four metrics are introduced, then, a short discussion of political environments will explain the role democratic institutions have when enabling or limiting fascist success.

Metrics of Success

Successful fascist parties required valuable leadership. Jackson Spielvogel's *Hitler's Nazi Germany* examines this aspect with regards to the Nazi party prior to 1933. Fascist leaders, representing themselves as saviors of their nation, needed to be charismatic. Hitler was perfectly suited for this role. His speeches were ambitious, loud, and, as Spielvogel describes, characterized by "sexual and religious overtones."[23] Also, as Ian Kershaw argues in *To Hell and Back,* Hitler displayed "exceptional demagogic talent," which, "coupled with his ideological certainty (though tactical flexibility) had enabled him to consolidate his supreme power within the Nazi Movement." Moreover, Hitler's ideology was "broad enough to subsume the different

[23] Spielvogel, Jackson. *Hitler and Nazi Germany.* Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005. Pg. 179.

individual strands of right-wing thinking," allowing his Nazi Party to appeal to a variety of conservative demographics.[24] Hitler was not the only successful fascist, of course. The first fascist leader, Mussolini, was also a charismatic speaker who gained supporters for his Fascist movement through rallies.

The Nazi and Fascist Parties also maintained effective organizations. In 1923, the Nazi Party was banned. After his release from jail in December 1924, Hitler established authority over what remained. At a meeting in Bamberg in 1926, Hitler declared the Nazi's 25-point program unchangeable, and centralized the Nazi party under his ideology. Once in control, Hitler re-organized the party completely. In Spielvogel's words, "the organization of the Nazi Party was established on a regional basis. Germany was divided into regions called *Gau.* At the head of each *Gau* stood a *Gauleiter*, or regional party leader" who "became bureaucratic agents subject to control by Hitler and the party leadership in Munich."[25] Despite its public image as a party of order, however, the Nazi Party was relatively mutable at the local level. This was largely to the Party's benefit. Because the Nazi chapters were organized locally, and catered to the needs of local groups, the Nazis garnered a relatively diverse base of support from women, youth, rural landowners, the middle class, and conservative elites.[26]

This was not only true for the Nazis, of course. Mussolini, like Hitler, led his party authoritatively. The Blackshirts pledged allegiance to him and his ideology, performing highly

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[24] Kershaw, p. 212.
[25] Spielvogel, p. 74.
[26] William Allen's *The Nazi Seizure of Power* is an example of a case study which demonstrates the pivotal role that local activists played in the Nazi takeover of Germany. Allen's text explores the history of a single town, Northeim, and explains how Nazism took hold over local townsfolk who were otherwise considered calm and pleasant, or *Spiessbürger.*
Allen, William Sheridan. *The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town, 1922-1945.* Echo Point Books, 2018.

organized attacks against socialists and racial opponents in agrarian communities to garner appeal from the disillusioned masses.[27] In this way, the Italian Fascists were even more rigid as an organized movement than their Nazi counterparts. So, for a fascist party to be successful in the interwar period, they needed some form of centralized leadership and stable organization. Without these basic elements, the party could not succeed, as was the case for the U.S. Business Plot in 1933.[28] The Italian Fascists certainly demonstrated these metrics. The German Nazi Party, even if not a perfect exemplar of ideological cohesion, prospered under its *Gau* and *Führerprinzip* structures, and thus followed the basic tenants of fascist success. Though all four metrics are important for a fascist party's success, the absence of these two, specifically, would make it impossible for the fascist party to exist in the first place.

Beyond organization and leadership, successful fascist parties utilized populist strategies to appeal to broad audiences. Fascism during the interwar period was internationally popular, Kershaw argues, because of its promises to create a utopian society through traditional cultural values, thus rebirthing the nation "through redemption from the 'decadent,' 'diseased' forms of modernity."[29] In Germany's case, "Nazi agitation stoked the fires of elemental rage and hatred, drawing on disparate resentments and prejudice," while promising national restoration through the creation of a national community, or *Volksgemeinschaft.*[30] Doris Bergen's *War and Genocide*

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[27] De Grand, Alexander. *Italian Fascism.* University of Nebraska Press, 2000. Pg. 31.
[28] The American Business Plot is an example of what happens when a fascist movement has no leader or organization. In 1933, a group of wealth businessmen, discontent with the direction of FDR's administration and policies, approached Smedley Butler, a U.S. military officer, asking him to lead their fascist revolution against the U.S. government. This plan failed, however, because Butler was disinterested in the proposal. The failure of the "business plot" suggests that a fascist movement with no face, and no organization, is doomed to fail.
Hart, Bradley W. *Hitler's American Friends: The Third Reich's Supporters in the United States*. New York: Thomas Dunne Books, St. Martin's Press, 2018. Pg. 121.
[29] Kershaw, p. 175.
[30] Kershaw, p. 175.

(2002), like Paxton's *The Anatomy of Fascism* or Mann's *Fascists,* explores the importance these populist strategies in relation to fascist political practice. Bergen's text is centered around the Nazi Party, whose successes in Germany she explains using an analogy of a burnt house. In her words, "in order for a house to burn down, three things are required. The timber must be dry and combustible, there needs to be a spark that ignites it, and the weather has to be favorable."[31] The Nazis, she argues, were "the spark that set off the destruction we now call the Holocaust."[32] One of the central themes of *War and Genocide* is the idea that Germany was not unique for its peoples' disdain of the Jews, Roma, disabled, and other minorities. For example:

> Eugenics became popular all over Europe and North America. Many places introduced programs to sterilize people considered undesirable. Even though the proponents of such plans claimed to be objective and scientific, they tended to identify people already viewed as outsiders as the least desirable 'breeding stock' and to label them 'feebleminded' or 'degenerate.' For example, eugenics programs in some parts of the United States disproportionately targeted African Americans; elsewhere in North America native people were prime targets.[33]

Nazism represented pre-existing hatreds that both Hitler himself, as well as his supporters held.[34]

Fascists utilized populist appeals to demonize the "other." This point is adopted by Paxton in *The Anatomy of Fascism*. In the section, "Intellectual, Cultural, and Emotional Roots," he describes the ability of fascists to demonize a perceived public enemy for the purposes of accumulating support. In his words:

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[31] Bergen, *War and Genocide.* Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc., 2016. Pg. 13.
[32] Bergen, p. 13
[33] Bergen, p. 26
[34] *The Coming of the Third Reich,* by Richard Evans, is another text that explains how the Weimar Republic, one of the most progressive nations of the interwar period, succumbed to fascism under Hitler according to a variety of socio-economic conditions during the interwar period that exacerbated public fear and hatred against those deemed "other," such as Jews and leftists.
Evans, Richard. *The Coming of the Third Reich.* Penguin Books, 2005.

> Fascists need a demonized enemy against which to mobilize followers, but of course the enemy does not have to be Jewish. Each culture specifies the national enemy. Even though in Germany the foreign, the unclean, the contagious, and the subversive often mingled in a single diabolized image of the Jew, Gypsies [Roma] and Slavs were also targeted. American fascists diabolized blacks and sometimes Catholics as well as Jews. Italian fascists diabolized their South Slav neighbors, especially the Slovenes, as well as socialists who refused the war of national revival.[35]

During the economic decline of the interwar period, conditions were suitable for fascists across the world to find appeal. In a world of uncertainty, fear of communist uprisings during the rise of the Soviet Union and inflamed pre-existing hatreds towards countless categories of "other," masculine saviors like Hitler and Mussolini offered a grip on order and purity. They gained mass support because of their ability to act as messiahs who, alone, could save society from "effeminate" liberal democracies, "Bolshevik" "warmongering" Jews, or other forms of perceived moral decadence.

Within environments where fears and hatreds were ripe for fascist appeal, political violence was often used by successful fascist movements as a tool to further cement the party or movement as a sort of self-defense against internal enemies, such as racial or political opponents. As Michael Mann argues in *Fascists,* fascist violence was usually justified as being a necessary defense against the chaotic "other."[36] The German Nazis and Italian Fascists excelled at scapegoating their opponents while simultaneously causing the very violence they condemned.

So, for a fascist party to be successful in the interwar period, four metrics were required. First, the party needed a strong leader. Fascist parties relied on their ability to stand apart from the perceived degeneracy of liberal politics. If its leader was not charismatic or male, the party lost legitimacy. Successful fascist parties also needed to be well organized. To operate properly,

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[35] Paxton, p. 37.
[36] Mann, Michael. *Fascists.* Cambridge University Press, 2004. Pg. 122

they required chapters nationwide to attract members from various communities, and they needed connections to media to produce their propaganda. Moreover, fascist groups succeeded best when they were ideologically aligned with their leader. Third, successful fascist parties thrived using populist strategies to garner appeal. Without broad support, it would have been impossible for interwar fascists like the Italian Fascists or German Nazis to seize power. Moreover, without populist appeals, it is impossible to justify political violence against the "other," which was the fourth metric for their success. Fascists made big promises of national restoration, citing the "other" as the source of all ills within society. So, successful fascists were able to utilize paramilitaries to attack the "other," legitimizing their party politically by inciting disorder. However, although these conclusions pertain specifically to interwar fascism, that is not to say they are not relevant to extreme right-wing populist movements beyond the interwar period. These metrics can and should be used to evaluate far-right populist parties and movements that have operated in various nations since then.

Political Environments and Cultures

Fascism emerged during the interwar period as an ideology and political practice dependent upon national crises.[37] After World War I, many governments struggled economically or politically. In Germany, the Reichstag was gridlocked. The same was true for the Kingdom of Italy's parliament.[38] Fascism, in Robert Paxton's words, "grew from back rooms to the public arena most easily where the existing government functioned badly, or not at all."[39] After World War I, nations whose governments struggled bred fascist parties like Hitler's Nazis and

[37] Paxton, p. 219.
[38] Paxton, p. 77.
[39] Paxton, p. 77.

Mussolini's Fascists. Their parties took advantage of political gridlock and offered their audiences a solution outside of traditional politics. The idea that liberal democracies were imperfect, chaotic, or as Mann states, "antiheroic," was born from these conditions.[40] This allowed fascists like Hitler and Mussolini to appeal to the public by criticizing the present establishments and offering the law-and-order people desperately desired. From the beginning, fascists thrived off nations whose political environments were unstable, either due to economic or political crisis.

Works like Richard Evans' *The Coming of the Third Reich,* Ian Kershaw's *To Hell and Back,* and Jackson Spielvogel's *Hitler and Nazi Germany* (1987) perfectly demonstrate the importance of a suitable political environments regarding fascist success. From its beginning, the Weimar Republic suffered from a combination of reparations, hyper-inflation, and, like all interwar nations, the Great Depression. Moreover, in Evans' words, "gun battles, assassinations, riots, massacres and civil unrest denied Germans the stability in which a new democratic order could flourish."[41] Although there was a period of stability from 1924 to 1928, the future of Germany was uncertain to many, especially considering the failures of the political parties in parliament to act in any meaningful way. Or, in Spielvogel's words:

> The existence of numerous political parties, no one of which had a majority, necessitated the formation of coalition governments to create ruling majorities. This system was inherently unstable. Political parties in Germany were tightly knit organizations that cared primarily about the specific interests of the people represented by them; they made little attempt to appeal to others.[42]

It was the very prevalence of these types of chaotic conditions which made fascism appealing in the first place. It did not help that Weimar Germany's Constitution was already weak. Hitler, in

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[40] Mann, p. 8.
[41] Evans, Richard. *The Coming of the Third Reich.* Penguin Books, 2005. Pg. 78.
[42] Spielvogel, Jackson. *Hitler and Nazi Germany.* Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005. Pg. 23.

addition to being helped into power by conservatives, was able to further cement his power by suspending the Weimar's weak Constitution. All that was required to cancel the fledgling democracy was the Reichstag Fire Decree, born from the Nazi-orchestrated "communist" burning of the Reichstag, and the subsequent Enabling Act. These laws gave the government the right to suspend civil liberties, arrest political opposition, and issue and pass laws without the approval of the Reichstag, effectively granting Hitler and his Nazis the dictatorship they desired.

These ideas are also paralleled in Alexander De Grand's *Italian Fascism* and Robert Paxton's *The Anatomy of Fascism.* The Kingdom of Italy, like the Weimar Republic, had a weak Constitution that allowed Mussolini to erode democracy legally once he was appointed prime minister by King Victor Emmanuel III in 1922.[43] Moreover, Italy had a democratic system gridlocked by feuding parties that allowed Mussolini to promote fascism as a political alternative to the faltering socialist order.[44]

Analyzing the BUF and the Bund comparatively within the context of their political practices and political environments/cultures helps address why some fascist parties of the interwar period failed, while others succeeded. This comparative analysis can also help identify the strengths and vulnerabilities of democracies in the face of fascist movements. The following "Historiography of the B.U.F. and Bund," however, demonstrates that no attempts have been made to understand the successes and failures of the BUF and the Bund with regards to these considerations.

Historiography of the B.U.F. and the Bund

[43] Paxton, p. 89.
[44] Paxton, p. 88.

The available literature on the German American Bund is thin. What does exist mostly stems from Leland Bell's *In Hitler's Shadow* (1973) and Sander Diamond's *The Nazi Movement in the United States* (1974). The opposite is true for studies on the British Union of Fascists. Like the historiography on interwar European fascism more generally, the BUF has been explored from a wide range of perspectives, from Colin Cross's study of Mosley, *The Fascists in Britain* (1961), to Julie Gottlieb's gendered approach to understanding the BUF in *Feminine Fascism* (2000). None of these authors have analyzed the BUF or the Bund comparatively. However, their interpretations, like Paxton or Mann's, paved the way for this study's research. Whether it be Gottlieb's *Feminine Fascism* and her gendered analysis of British fascism, or Bradley Hart's *Hitler's American Friends,* which argues that the U.S. was not immune to Nazism, all these works provide unique insights relevant to this study.

Published in 1963, Cross's *The Fascists in Britain* was one of the first to delve into the life and political career of Sir Oswald Mosley. Utilizing sources such as Mosley's *Tomorrow We Live,* and other related BUF propaganda, Cross identifies Mosley's personal apocalyptic fear of communism as central to understanding his political convictions. He argues that Mosley "was convinced that some new political force was on the point of being born, an apocalyptic vision which has never really left him."[45] Another potential factor Cross identifies as pertinent to Mosley's character, was his belief that "only 'gentlemen' were capable of ruling."[46] Due to his sympathies and sometimes hesitant association with the Labour Party, Mosley seemed to idolize "examples of working-class men like Henderson, Clynes, Thomas, and Tom Shaw," all of whom

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[45] Cross, Colin. *The Fascists in Britain*. Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1980. Pg. 15.
[46] Cross, p. 19.

were "running Government departments as efficiently as their Conservative and Liberal predecessors."[47] This of makes sense when considering Mosley believed in the restructuring of the governmental to favor the 'true freedom' of the working-class people through representative dictatorship.[48] Cross's work would later be followed up in 1990 by Robert Skidelsky's *Oswald Mosley,* which covered many of the same issues with added analysis of Mosley's 1968 memoir, *My Life.*

The Failure of British Fascism (1996), an anthology edited by Mike Cronin, was the first attempt at understanding the successes and failures of the BUF. Roger Griffin's chapter provides interesting insights on preconditions necessary for fascism's success, including theocratic values combined with nationalism.[49] One of Mosley's successes, Griffin argues, was his appeal to women. In 1928, women gained the right to vote in Britain, and became a target audience of the fascist leader. Martin Durham's *Women and Fascism* (1998), and later, Julie Gottlieb's *Feminine Fascism* (2000) both focus on the British Union of Fascists and Mosley's unique strategy. Both authors argue that the organization prided itself on its feminine support and approaches to gender equality, which were, at least on paper, contradictory to fascist ideology. This marks one of Mosley's greatest successes.

Martin Pugh's *Hurrah for the Blackshirts!* was one of the first 21st century texts to research the BUF. With this case study of British fascism, Pugh argues against the "Churchillian" view of the interwar period that suggests Britain was immune to the authoritarian elements of fascism.[50]

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[47] Cross, p. 19.
[48] Mosley, Oswald. *Tomorrow, We Live.* 3rd Edition. A Greater Britain Publication. 1938. Pg. 6.
[49] Griffin, Roger. "British Fascism: The Ugly Duckling" in *The Failure of British Fascism.* Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016. Pg. 145-146.
[50] Pugh, Martin. *'Hurrah for the Blackshirts!' Fascists and Fascism in Britain between the Wars*. London: Pimlico, 2006. Pg. 4.

Pugh instead argues "fascism enjoyed a longer history in Britain than is usually recognized and that it was far from being simply an import from abroad."[51] To support this claim, he explores some of the socio-cultural preconditions prevalent before and during the interwar period in Britain, which made fascism popular there in the first place. For instance, he suggests that fascism "took root in British fears about national degeneracy, the lack of virile leadership, and international conspiracies allegedly orchestrated by Bolsheviks and Jews."[52]

The German American Bund has enjoyed less academic attention than the BUF. Leland Bell's *In Hitler's Shadow* (1973) was one of the first to discuss the movement. Bell's research surveys "the structure, ideology, and policies of American Nazism from its fragmentary beginnings in the 1920s through the Neo-Nazis of the 1960s."[53] Though its scope is Nazism as a general concept, it delves into the Bund and its Nazification of German-Americans. Particularly, Bell fixates on the Nazi camps for children to understand their antisemitic ideologies and strategies.[54] On the other hand, Sander Diamond's 1974 publication, *The Nazi Movement in the United States,* focuses on Fritz Kuhn, also known as "Hitler's imitator," during the late 1920s and 1930s.[55] This is something that Bell leaves as a secondary or tertiary issue. Diamond contextualizes American responses to the Bund, suggesting that "many Americans believed that

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[51] Pugh. Pg. 3.
[52] Pugh. Pg. 4.
[53] Stern, Sheldon. "Leland V. Bell" *In Hitler's Shadow: The Anatomy of American Nazism.* The American Historical Review. American Historical Association, 1974. Pg. 609.
[54] Bell, Leland. *In Hitler's Shadow; the Anatomy of American Nazism.* Port Washington, N.Y: Kennikat Press, 1973.
[55] Diamond, Sander A. *The Nazi Movement in the United States, 1924-1941*. Cornell University Press, 1974. Pg. 21.

the Bundists intended to establish a Nazi dictatorship in the United States."[56] However, Diamond argues "the Bund movement never posed a serious threat to America's security."[57]

In 1987 there was an article published by *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* titled "Milwaukee's German-American Community and the Nazi Challenge of the 1930's." In it, the author, Dieter Berninger, describes the Bund's failure to gain popularity in Milwaukee. This, Berninger explains, was due to local animosity towards the Nazifying Bund camps.[58] These ideas reflect Diamond and Bell's argument that the Bund ultimately failed to integrate into American society. Scholarship on the Bund remained thin until Bradley Hart's *Hitler's American Friends* (2018). This work brought attention back to the Bund, as well as other interwar fascist organizations in the United States such as the Silver Legion and the America First Committee.

Unlike Diamond, Bell, and Berninger, who conclude that the Bund never stood a chance in the United States because of its distaste for Nazism, Hart argues "until 1941, the threat of fascist subversion was very real."[59] Paradoxically, he describes the Bund as "a miserable failure, destroyed by the vanity of its charismatic leader."[60] What makes Hart's analysis unique is his focus on the Bund's style of organization (i.e. their utilization of the Hitler model). But for the most part, this breakdown begins and ends with the Kuhn's inability to gain Hitler's public favor, and the internal investigations performed by John Metcalfe in 1937, which led to the publication of articles exposing the Bund's Nazi values in Chicago's *Daily Times.* This, Hart argues, resulted

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[56] Diamond. p. 21.
[57] Diamond. p. 22.
[58] Berninger, Dieter. "Milwaukee's German-American Community and the Nazi Challenge of the 1930's." *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 71, no. 2 (1987): 118–42. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4636112. Pg. 140.
[59] Hart, p. 14.
[60] Hart, p. 52.

in a national controversy that both embarrassed Kuhn and forced the German embassy to "comment that 'The idea that any one is attempting to form a Nazi army in America is ridiculous."[61] Although, Hart does not explain why the ascetic of Bundsmen marching in the streets was unattractive to U.S. citizens, save the short line "it was not an image most Americans enjoyed seeing" at the end of the chapter. [62]

All of these works provide insights into the ideologies of these two groups as individual movements. Though, notably, none analyze the BUF or the Bund comparatively to understand why they failed despite their emulation of the "successful" Italian Fascists and German Nazis. Hart, Diamond, and Bell hint that Kuhn's Bund was not popular amongst Americans. Though, they do not explain why Nazis marching in the streets of the U.S. was not appealing to White Americans or German-Americans. Likewise, the BUF's analysis has mostly revolved around what Mosley himself believed, and why he became fascist, or how the BUF was unique for its inclusion of women. Like Hart, Pugh excellently demonstrates that the British were not immune to fascist ideology. However, aside from suggesting economic conditions were not bad enough to warrant violent revolution against the Crown, he does not explain why the BUF failed to appeal to a people who, theoretically, should have approved of their values. So, a common trend amongst works on both the BUF and the Bund is that none explain their successes and failures through comparative analysis. This thesis fills the gap by comparing two failed fascist groups – the BUF and the Bund - to each other, and to their models. In doing so, the successes and failures of fascist movements are contextualized according to the four metrics of success outlined thus far. Even more, the strengths and weaknesses of their nations' democratic institutions are

[61] Hart, p. 47.
[62] Hart, p. 52.

identified to explain why fascist movements like the BUF or the Bund were able to find success in democratic nations, while also ultimately failing to seize power politically like the Italian Fascists or the German Nazis.

CHAPTER III: LEADERSHIP

One of the metrics of success for fascist parties is the presence of a strong leader. The Fascist and Nazi Parties were led by men who embodied everything that fascist ideology promoted: ultra-nationalism, masculinity, and conservative values. Mussolini and Hitler were successful because they could draw crowds and convince them that they were the saviors necessary for national restoration. Sir Oswald Mosley, leader of the British Union of Fascists, was an asset to his party as an experienced politician. He was also a noble, which gave the BUF a unique source of funding. Fritz Kuhn, however, was not an experienced politician or wealthy. Moreover, his thick German accent was subject to ridicule by U.S. citizens in the media. This chapter will examine Mosley and Kuhn to identify their unique strengths and weaknesses in comparison to their models.

Sir Oswald Mosley, the "Man of Action."

Sir Oswald Mosley, 6th baronet, was born in Westminster, England, on November 16, 1896. His wealthy parents were Katharine and Sir Oswald Mosley, 5th baronet. During his youth, his parents separated, and he was raised by his mother and grandfather, Oswald Mosley, 4th Baronet. Growing up, the young Oswald Mosley, or "Tom," as he was known in his youth, was educated at West Downs School and Winchester College. It was not long after, however, that World War I forced him and his countrymen into war. In 1914, "Tom" Mosley joined the Royal Military College at Sandhurst. That same year, at Camp Curragh, he was commissioned into the 16th Lancers.[1] Though, this was not for long. He quickly put in an application to the Royal Flying Corps to become an observer.[2] It was as a recruit of the Royal Flying Corps where he wounded

[1] Mosley, Oswald. *My Life,* Arlington House, 1968. Pg. 41.
[2] Mosley, p. 44.

his leg after crashing during a flight demonstration for his mother and sister. Before he could fully recover, Mosley was thrust into the trenches of Loos, on the Western front in France (1915). Here, his condition worsened until, at one point, he went unconscious from pain and was hospitalized. Despite his early discharge from the war, Mosley emerged hopeful. In his recovery bed, he developed a sense of self-purpose:

> It is easier to rise from a bed of thorns than from a bed of roses because if any credit is due to me, it is on account of the deliberate choice of a hard life in pursuit of certain purposes rather than the altogether delightful existence which circumstances and my temperament offered to me.[3]

After the war, Mosley pursued a career in politics. He joined the Conservative Party, believing it to be the "party of patriotism."[4] Though, he knew little of Conservative politics, and was only concerned with joining the House of Commons to represent the "war generation."[5] After witnessing the eagerness of men to kill and be killed in the war, he became motivated to prevent future wars, and to provide "good homes for our surviving companions of the war." [6] In his memoir, *My Life* (1968), he characterized these principles as "socialistic imperialism."[7] These ideas aided in the BUF's brief resurgence in popularity during the late 1930s, when many feared another World War was on the horizon. Before that time came, however, Mosley was convinced that the Conservative Party was the party of "patriotism," a value which he believed was "a sentiment of good things to be conserved."[8] These assumptions stemmed from his conservative characterization of the left as a party of chaos and disorder. During the general

[3] Mosley, Oswald. *My Life,* Arlington House, 1968. Pg. 71.
[4] Mosley, p. 90.
[5] Mosley, p. 76.
[6] Mosley, p. 43.
[7] Mosley, p. 76.
[8] Mosley, p. 76.

elections of 1918, and at the young age of 21, Mosley became a representative of Harrow (from 1918 to 1924) in the House of Commons. His political career had officially begun.

During his time as a Conservative, Mosley sought the hand of Lady Cynthia Curzon, the second daughter of Mary Leiter, Baroness Curzon of Kedleston, and 1st Earl George Curzon of Kedleston, British Conservative statesman, Viceroy of India (1899-1905), and Foreign Secretary (1919-1924). According to Mosley, Lady Curzon held "advanced Liberal opinions" and "reacted strongly against the splendours of Conservativism."[9] But despite their political differences, they married at the Chapel Royal on May 11, 1920. The event was described by local media as "one of the most brilliant social events of the year," and was even visited by King George and Queen Elizabeth.[10]

Though Mosley had joined parliament as a Conservative, he quickly became disillusioned with some of the Party's policies. His allegiance to the Conservative Party was challenged from 1920 to 1924, during the Irish War of Independence and the Partition of Ireland. It was at this time when Mosley advocated for Ireland's right to self-governance, or "Home Rule."[11] He was angered and disappointed that the British Army, supported by the Black and Tans, constables recruited into the Royal Irish Constabulary, was being used "to break the spirit of the Irish people by systematic terror reinforced with full license to commit individual crimes."[12] Mosley sought support from Conservatives, who he believed would share in his outrage at the violence. When he addressed the issue in the House of Commons, however, he was instead "astonished by the furious reception…from the Conservative benches." Instead of support, Mosley was subject

[9] Mosley, Oswald. *My Life,* Arlington House, 1968. Pg. 94.
[10] "Fatal Relapse." *Hampshire Telegraph,* May 19, 1933.
[11] Mosley, Oswald. *My Life,* Arlington House, 1968. Pg. 126.
[12] Mosley, p. 126.

to ridicule.[13] To his surprise, he "found some affinity with Liberals who were moved by the moral issues of the Irish question."[14] Even so, he refused to abandon the Conservatives for the left on "grounds of political conviction," and only went as far as sitting as an independent in the House.[15] This conviction did not last long, however, as in March 1924, he officially joined the Labour Party.

As a Conservative, Mosley was still sympathetic to elements of the Labour Party. As mentioned before, he referred to his personal ideology as "imperial socialism."[16] Even when he was a Conservative, he believed in helping the working class, and admired Cynthia's Liberal and "transparent sincerity."[17] In particular, Mosley was attracted to socialist value of "conscious control and direction of human resources for human needs."[18] In reality, though, Mosley was anything but a socialist, and like all fascists of the interwar period, he and his Blackshirts would demonize and attack both socialists and communists relentlessly.[19] As for understanding Mosley himself, it is important to acknowledge that he joined the left prior to his return to the right because he found within liberalism certain elements that he was sympathetic towards. This included finding alternative economic solutions to the Great Depression. Eventually, his "solution" would mimic those of Hitler and Mussolini, who established corporate states with totalitarian right-wing governments.

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[13] Mosley, Oswald. *My Life,* Arlington House, 1968. Pg. 128.
[14] Mosley, p. 128.
[15] Mosley, p. 129.
[16] Mosley, p. 211.
[17] Mosley, p. 92.
[18] Mosley, p. 145.
[19] Though opposed to socialism ideologically, fascists often adopted the language of socialism to appeal to different demographics – namely, the urban working class – who traditionally voted along the left.

Mosley believed corporate statism to be the best way of keeping the "ring for the producer" while protecting "the interests of the consumer." He was sympathetic towards a system that was akin to the old Tudor kings who "protected the citizens from the depredations of the robber barons."[20] These ideas became more evident in his rhetoric after journeying abroad. In 1926, he toured the United States to study industry and American lawmaking.[21] During their visit, he and Cynthia were invited by Franklin D. Roosevelt to a fishing trip on his houseboat, the Larooco. Here, Mosley garnered a sort of grudging respect for the would-be president. Mosley believed Roosevelt was "thoroughly a liberal in the best sense of the word…he really cared about people and human suffering."[22] However, he also judged him to be an "example of too much will and too little intellect," of which he yielded English politicians to be the opposite.[23]

[20] Mosley, Oswald. *My Life,* Arlington House, 1968. Pg. 278.
[21] Mosley, p. 163.
[22] Mosley, p. 164.
[23] Mosley, p. 164.

Figure 2. Photo of Mosley and Cynthia standing next to FDR on the Larooco. "FDR, Mosley, Cynthia, and FDR." *My Life*, 1926. Pg. 164.

During his trip to the United States, Mosley and Cynthia toured cities, "beginning with the slums of New York and the virtual segregation of various communities."[24] Witnessing the hard realities of poverty in these communities inspired Mosley's interest in the working class, a demographic which the BUF would target for recruitment. Mosley took these experiences as justification for his ideas of centralized state control.

[24] Mosley, Oswald. *My Life,* Arlington House, 1968. Pg. 168.

In 1929, Mosley was appointed as a Labour MP. A year later, he proposed the "Mosley Memorandum," also known as the "Mosley Manifesto." The Mosley Memorandum called for nationalization of land, banks, and industry.[25] It proposed his vision of "corporate statism," which put an emphasis on state-controlled markets and industry. Mosley believed this would replace Britain's failing economic system and restore the nation's economy.[26] However, the Memorandum failed to gain a majority of Labour support. This was owed to the Laissez-faire ideals held by popular Labour Party leaders Philip Snowden, chancellor of the Exchequer, and Ramsay MacDonald.[27]

Disillusioned with the Memorandum's lack of support, Mosley resigned from the Labour Party and formed his "New Party" in February 1931. The New Party was built upon the premises of the Mosley Memorandum and was initially supported by the few Labour MPs who had originally signed it, including his wife, Cynthia, William Brown, and John Strachey.[28] The tenants of the New Party were as follows:

> The main planks in the policy will be:-The home market must be protected (1) by the regulation and control of imports, such as agricultural products, in a manner which will give stability to the farmer and cheap food to the consumer; (2) By tariffs or, in some cases, prohibition in the case of manufactured goods on condition that behind the protective barrier efficiency shall be secured in industry, together with low prices to the consumer and good wages to the worker.[29]

Despite an ambitious beginning, the New Party failed in the 1931 general elections. So, once more, Mosley searched for political inspiration abroad. It was in Italy where he witnessed the realization of his "imperial socialist" ideas. In Mussolini's Fascist revolution, Mosley found

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[25] "Methods of Mussolini." *The Scotsman,* January 19, 1931.
[26] "Mosley Manifesto." *The Scotsman,* February 25, 1931.
[27] Thorpe, Andrew. *A History of the British Labour Party.* Bloomsbury Publishing. Pg. 71, 121.
[28] Mosley, Oswald. *My Life,* Arlington House, 1968. Pg. 208.
[29] "The New Party Will Fight as an Independent Force." *Northern Whig,* Oct. 8, 1931.

Britain's future. By the time he returned, the New Party became increasingly anti-communist, causing left-leaning members such as Strachey, to leave.[30] Mosley also sought to form his own Blackshirt movement to fight against the perceived rise of British communism. Towards the end of the New Party's short existence, Mosley believed he had to "develop a different character to meet an entirely new situation."[31] Harold Nicolson, a British diplomat who had originally supported and joined Mosley's New Party, also left after more "necessary" radical men had begun to join.[32]

In 1932, Mosley officially transformed the young New Party into the British Union of Fascists. Mosley's emphasis on following the Mussolini model of fascism would go on to characterize all the books and other forms of propaganda produced by party, such as *The Greater Britain, 100 Questions Asked and Answered,* and *Tomorrow We Live*.

[30] Mosley, Oswald. *My Life,* Arlington House, 1968. Pg. 234, 237.
[31] Mosley, p. 237.
[32] Mosley, p. 237.

Figure 3. The *Fasces*. Oswald Mosley, *100 Questions Asked and Answered.* B.U.F. Publications, Ltd., 1936.

Like Mussolini, Mosley ran the BUF with a top-down style. He, and no one else, would be the face of the British fascists. To his benefit, he was already a well-known politician, and in 1931, there was some public interest in his "great come-back into politics."[33] His book, *The Greater Britain,* had even been "practically sold out" by September, a month before the BUF had officially started.[34] In the early days of the BUF, Mosley's personal riches and his publications allowed him to fund the party's endeavors (i.e., rallies, propaganda, newspapers, establishments). Moreover, up until the BUF's decline after Olympia in 1934, Mosley had personal connections with Lord Rothermere (Harold Harmsworth). Rothermere, owner of the *Daily Mail,* was one of the richest men in Britain, and personal friends with Mussolini and Hitler. To endorse Mosley's upstart fascist party, he ran the article, "Hurrah for the Blackshirts."

[33] "By Our Parliamentary Correspondent." *Daily Herald,* Sept. 23, 1932.
[34] "Sir Oswald's Book." *Sunday Mirror,* Sept. 25, 1932.

MONDAY. The Daily Mail JANUARY 15, 1934.

Hurrah for the Blackshirts!

By VISCOUNT ROTHERMERE

BECAUSE Fascism comes from Italy, shortsighted people in this country think they show a sturdy national spirit by deriding it.

If their ancestors had been equally stupid, Britain would have had no banking system, no Roman law, nor even any football, since all of these are of Italian invention.

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THE Socialists, especially, who jeer at the principles and uniform of the Blackshirts as being of foreign origin, forget that the founder and High Priest of their own creed was the German Jew Karl Marx.

Though the name and form of Fascism originated in Italy, that movement is not now peculiar to any nation. **It stands in every country for the Party of Youth.**

and disgusted by the incompetence of their elders in dealing with the depression that has followed on it. The other is made up of men too young to remember the war but ready to put all their ardour and energy at the service of a cause which offers them a vigorous constructive policy in place of the drift and indecision of the old political parties.

Blackshirts proclaim a fact which politicians dating from pre-war days will never face—that the new age requires new methods and new men. They base their contention on the simple truth that parliamentary "gov-views" were an effective substitute in human affairs for action, the National Government would be the best that Britain has ever had. But the experience of the past two years has proved that these futile and time-wasting devices are no more than a screen for inertia and indecision.

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THE huge majority obtained by the present Government at the general election of 1931 was the last vote of confidence that the nation will ever give to Old Gang politicians. Two years from now another general election will be almost due. The whole future of Britain will depend upon its issue.

A prolongation of the present régime may be regarded, in the country's present mood, as out of the question. There will be a pronounced swing either to Right or Left.

If the inflated, impulsive, and largely

Crazy News Reel

Presented by D. B. WYNDHAM LEWIS

OLD soldiers will note, with gratification, one of the Morlands, "The Soldier's Return," a cottage group, at the British Art Exhibition.

The handsome, even foppish, young soldier, wearing an expensive ruffled shirt and a natty velvet neckband, and looking like Squire Thornhill, is evidently telling his humble and astonished relatives how he became quartermaster-sergeant, and how he is now going to buy the village. His aged father waggishly holds out to him a pint mug of rum. He ignores it. Rum interests him henceforth only in bulk.

Figure 4. "Hurrah For the Blackshirts!" *Daily Mail*, Jan. 15, 1934.

When the British Union of Fascists officially began in 1932, it was led by a very capable and popular nobleman. The BUF had funding, connections, and a solid foundation all provided by Mosley himself.

Fritz Kuhn, the American Führer

Successful fascists displayed a larger-than-life personality and/or charisma that helped garner them a cult-like following. Ironically, for someone claiming to be the "American Führer," Fritz Kuhn was a nobody – a cipher from Germany - who rose through the ranks of an already established organization while maintaining a secret past. What is known about Kuhn comes from the FBI. Specifically, it was only after 1939, when the German American Bund was under investigation for embezzlement and fraud, that the specifics behind Kuhn's past were revealed.

Kuhn was born in Munich, Bavaria on May 15, 1896. He served in World War I as a part of the "Bavarian Life Guard Regiment."[35] He was a "Lieutenant in the Machine Gun Detachment of the Alp Corps, and saw service on the French, Italian, Serbian, and Romanian fronts, being wounded three times" and earning the Iron Cross as a result.[36] After the war, he returned to Germany and pursued a doctorate in chemistry, eventually passing the state examination in 1922. In 1919, while undergoing his studies, Kuhn also joined the *Freikorps*.[37] A year prior to achieving his doctorate, in 1921, he also joined the NSDAP (Nazi party). It was also believed that he participated in the 1923 Beer Hall Putsch in Munich.[38] However, in an interview with Paul Ross from the *Anniston Star* in 1939, Kuhn denied all findings from the FBI that described him as a Nazi or a participant in the "beer cellar putsch of November."[39] As will be seen more in the chapter, "Populist Appeals," the later years of Bund strategy revolved around a constant denial of involvement with the Nazi party.

Roughly a year after passing the state exam, Kuhn married a woman named Elsa on March 29, 1923. In 1924, Fritz and Elsa Kuhn emigrated from Germany to Mexico, where they had two children.[40] Though their names were classified in the FBI's reports, it was publicly known that Fritz and Elsa Kuhn had a son named Walter Kuhn.[41] They also had a daughter

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[35] "Fritz Julius Kuhn." FBI file for Fritz Julius Kuhn, part 2, 1939. *The FBI: Federal Bureau of Investigation,* US Department of Justice, https://vault.fbi.gov/fritz-julius-kuhn/fritz-julius-kuhn-part-02-of/view. Pg. 38.

[36] "Fritz Julius Kuhn." FBI file for Fritz Julius Kuhn, part 2, 1939. *The FBI: Federal Bureau of Investigation,* US Department of Justice, https://vault.fbi.gov/fritz-julius-kuhn/fritz-julius-kuhn-part-02-of/view. Pg. 38.

[37] The *Freikorps,* or "Free Corps," were German far-right paramilitary units that acted as private armies.

[38] FBI Vault, "Fritz Julius Kuhn," part 2, pg. 38.

[39] "Allegiance to Hitler Denied." *Anniston Star*, May 23, 1939.

[40] FBI Vault, "Fritz Julius Kuhn," part 2, pg. 38.

[41] "Wife of Fritz Kuhn and Her Son Are Put into Custody." *Helena Independent Record,* Feb. 14, 1943.

named Waltrout Kuhn.[42] It is likely the case that he avoided discussing them publicly because by 1939, Walter Kuhn went to Germany as a student, where he joined the Hitler Youth training school.[43] In 1945, he was arrested by Allied troops.[44]

Whether he was joined by his family is not known. What is known, is that he arrived in the United States in 1928. In Detroit, he worked at Henry Ford Hospital. His career there did not last long, however. On December 23, 1929, he was fired "because of slow hospital and laboratory work."[45] While in Detroit, Kuhn made connections with the local chapter of the Friends of New Germany, the predecessor of the Bund.[46] Luckily for Kuhn, he arrived at a time when American-Nazis were united under one banner. During the 1920s and early 1930s, the state of Nazi parties in the United States was rather chaotic. The National Socialist Teutonia Association, whose goal was to provide haven for exiled Nazis was at odds with the other Nazi-endorsed Gauleitung-USA, also known as Gau-USA.[47] Conflicts over which group was most authentic were frequent even after Hitler endorsed the establishment of the Friends of Germany in 1933.[48] The Gau-USA refused to acknowledge the new organization's legitimacy.[49] Order would not come to the fragmented American National Socialists until mid-1933. This was when Heinz Spanknöbel received permission from the Nazi Party to create the Friends of New

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[42] "Hitler Captured." *Kanab Kane County Newspaper*, May 28, 1945.
[43] "Bund Leader's Son Arrested in Germany." *El Paso Herald Post,* July 2, 1945.
[44] "Son of Fritz Kuhn Arrested by Yanks." *Dubuque Telegraph Herald,* July 2, 1945.
[45] FBI Vault, "Fritz Julius Kuhn," part 2, p. 39.
[46] FBI Vault, "Fritz Julius Kuhn," part, 2, p. 38.
[47] Hart, Bradley W. *Hitler's American Friends: The Third Reich's Supporters in the United States*. New York: Thomas Dunne Books, St. Martin's Press, 2018. Pg. 32.
[48] Hart, p. 32.
[49] Hart, p. 33.

Germany as an umbrella group for Nazis (limited to German nationals and German-Americans).[50]

While a member of the Friends of New Germany, Kuhn rose to leadership of the Detroit Local chapter. After this, he reached the rank of leader for the "Department Middle West."[51] Nevertheless, his position was short-lived. In 1934, the Friends of New Germany came under investigation by Congressman Samuel Dickstein, a Democrat Chairman of the Committee on Naturalization and Immigration. Dickstein believed the Friends of New Germany was spreading German propaganda "for the purpose of inciting race hatred, bigotry and subversive activity against the American Government, under direction from Germany."[52] Dickstein and the Special Committee on Un-American Activities investigated the organization, eventually concluding that the Friends of New Germany did indeed represent an American extension of Hitler's Nazi Party. By March 1936 the organization dissolved.

In the same year, the German American Volksbund was established as a follow-up organization. On June 3, 1936, it was officially renamed the German American Bund.[53] During this period, the Volksbund/Bund was led by Fritz Gissibl, and many of the members he attracted came from the old Friends of New Germany. This included Fritz Kuhn, who was elected as the Bund's leader December 1, 1937. Though it was not an official Nazi cell like its predecessor, the Bund modeled itself after National Socialism and its anti-communist, antisemitic, Aryan idealism. As president, Kuhn was often referred to as the "American Führer."[54]

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[50] Hart, p. 33.
[51] FBI Vault, "Fritz Julius Kuhn.," part 2, p. 38.
[52] "Dickstein Bares Nazi Move in U.S." *Washington Evening Star*, April 8, 1934.
[53] FBI Vault, "German American Federation/Bund," part 11 of 11, p. 2.
[54] "Reckless Tolerance." *Sidney Telegraph*, Oct. 1, 1937

That said, Kuhn did not have a very positive public profile. In newspapers, he was described, for better or worse, as a large, loud man. One 1938 article from *Phoenix Arizona Republic* described him as "a big man" with rough skin and a body that "reminds one of the drill grounds of Europe."[55] In a way this description was to his benefit, as leading a para-militaristic movement as a veteran of the Great War added to his legitimacy as a leader. From his speech and body, the writer claimed, it was easy to believe that he had "served in the Bavarian Guards during the World War and marched with Hitler in the beer putsch of 1923," a fact which Kuhn would deny a year later when it became problematic to his cause.[56]

[55] "Beer Putsch Marcher Heads German-American Bundsmen." *Phoenix Arizona Republic*, July 11, 1938.
[56] "Beer Putsch Marcher Heads German-American Bundsmen." *Phoenix Arizona Republic*, July 11, 1938.

Figure 5. Fritz Kuhn giving a speech. "Beer Putsch Marcher Heads German-American Bundsmen." *Phoenix Arizona Republic*, July 11, 1938.

Kuhn had a reputation as a hardened veteran. He was also described as a "big man with heavy face and a genial smile."[57] But, as will be explored more in the next chapter, he was operating within a nation that, from the Bund's inception, was hesitant towards his modeling of Hitler's Nazism. Throughout his career, Kuhn adopted Hitler's way of speaking. In the one speech he was infamously known for, at the Bund rally in Madison Square Garden in 1939, he repeated Nazi talking points. In his address, he complained of the "Jewish-controlled press," joking to his audience that he had been unfairly treated as a "creature with horns, a cloven hoof

[57] "Ex-Ford Chemist Denies Nazi Charge." *Joplin Globe*, March 13, 1937.

and a long tail."[58] To his credit, Kuhn did extract laughs from his Bundsmen with such lines, which at least added to his portfolio of charismatic qualities.[59] Even so, his speech was mixed with frequent stutters, caused by his thick German accent.[60]

Kuhn's modeling of Hitler's rhetorical style seemed to have some success, at least amongst his Bundsmen. During questionings in 1939, Kuhn's mannerisms matched Hitler's "with such success that his subordinates trembled under his glance."[61] To much of the American public, however, his mimicry of the German chancellor's boisterous style came across like a "poodle dog barking at the moon."[62] Even more, his constant attacks against democratic values and authoritarian virtue signaling were viewed by some as mere childish "whining."[63]

Comparative Analysis

Fascist leaders were more than just figureheads Their parties needed to be led by a man who championed himself to the public as a national chief "capable of incarnating the [chosen] group's destiny."[64] They were charismatic and awe-inspiring leaders whose words were infectious to those who listened.[65] Successful fascist leaders were also capable of manufacturing for themselves a cult of personality. The archetypical fascists: Mussolini and Hitler exemplified these traits. Both were beacons of hope for the disillusioned masses. Moreover, both made themselves and their parties indispensable to voters by offering voters mythical promises of

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[58] Kuhn, Fritz. "Address," *Six Addresses on The Aims and Purposes of the German American Bund.* AV Publishing Corporation, Inc., 1939. Pg. 15.
[59] "German-American Bund Rally Address." DocsTeach, February 20, 1939. https://www.docsteach.org/documents/document/bund-rally-address.
[60] Hart, p. 35.
[61] "One Man Control." *Washington Times-Herald,* May 18, 1939.
[62] "Fair Enough!" *Mansfield News Journal,* Oct. 12, 1938.
[63] "Kuhn Wines." *Madison Wisconsin State Journal,* Oct. 19, 1939.
[64] Paxton, Robert. *The Anatomy of Fascism*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2004. Pg. 41.
[65] Mann, Michael. *Fascists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Pg. 11.

national restoration.[66] However, between the two, it is apparent who was more qualified as a fascist leader. At least during the beginning years of his political relevance (prior to the disaster at Olympia in 1934), Mosley was received positively by his audiences and by local papers who wrote about his rallies. An excerpt from *Staffordshire Sentinel* wrote that, at a town hall meeting in London in 1931, Mosley was "practically swept off his feet by the sheer force of numbers." The people present echoed "where's the man of action?" while a "woman snatched his scarf from his neck and brandished it hysterically."[67] Another article, "The Man of Action," describes Mosley's impact at a New Party rally in Manchester in 1931. The paper described the scene of applause that ensued:

> when Oswald Mosley sat down after his Free Trade Hall speech in Manchester on Saturday, and the audience, stirred as an audience rarely is, rose and swept a storm of applause towards the platform – who could doubt that here was one of those root-and-branch men who have been thrown up from time to time in the religious, political, and business story of England.[68]

[66] Paxton, p. 57.
[67] "Sir Oswald's Reception." *Staffordshire Sentinel*, Oct. 28, 1931.
[68] "The Man of Action: Sir Mosley in Manchester." *The Guardian,* Oct. 26, 1931.

Figure 6. Sir Oswald Mosley speaking at a rally in Manchester. October 26, 1931.

Mosley, the "man of action," was a gentleman, a well-known aristocratic politician, and a leader who could grip the hearts and minds of his audiences. Of course, he did have limits. One of Mosley's weaknesses was his political flippancy. In 1932, after the BUF had been founded, David Keir, a writer for *Hawick News and Border Chronicle,* criticized Mosley's constant crossing over to different political positions. Keir argued, "it is not every politician who can claim to have changed his political opinions, while still an M.P., on no fewer than five occasions within ten years."[69] Keir also poked at the Blackshirts, calling them "tin soldiers" playing in Manchester and London, and whose concerns are "with parades and fisticuffs at meetings

[69] Keir, David. "Notes of the Week." *Hawick News and Border Chronicle*, April 7, 1933.

[rather] than with preaching the filibustering philosophy of fascism."[70] This particular issue, however, will be the subject of the chapter, "Political Violence."

Regardless of Keir's political criticism, Mosley was truly able to cultivate a cult of personality. Kuhn on the other hand, had few qualities as a fascist leader. Both he and Mosley were veterans of World War I, and modeled their organizations after successful fascist parties, but that is the extent of their parallels. Unlike Mosley, Kuhn was not a politician, nor did he come from nobility and wealth. Contrary to his self-important title, the so-called "American Führer" was nothing more than a cipher from Germany. When he spoke on the radio or in rallies, the attention he garnered from U.S. citizens was usually negative. His thick German accent caused him to slip over words, and his mimicry of Hitler's loud style was not well received outside the Bund. Local newspapers rarely wrote of Kuhn or his Bund positively. The only media support the Bund ever received was in the form of advocacy for his and his followers' freedom to speech.[71]

Compared to Mosley or his model, Hitler, Kuhn was a lackluster fascist leader. Outside of espousing antisemitic and anti-communist rhetoric, he offered little to Americans who were suffering under the Great Depression. Never during the Bund's lifespan did Kuhn emerge as a potential leader in the world of American politics, nor did he design the Bund as a political alternative that took advantage of the perceived failures of the U.S. government. Although much of Hitler's persona was constructed through propaganda, as demonstrated by Ian Kershaw's *The Hitler Myth,* he nonetheless represented for millions of Germans "the various facets of Nazism

[70] Keir, David. "Notes of the Week." *Hawick News and Border Chronicle,* April 7, 1933.
[71] *Bradford Era,* March 24, 1937.

which they found appealing."[72] Hitler embodied the various aspects of "courage, manliness, integrity, loyalty, devotion to the cause – over the effete decadence, corruption, and effeminate weakness of Weimar society."[73] Unlike Kuhn, Hitler constantly criticized the political institutions of his nation, specifically Germany's gridlocked parliament and democracy. He also spoke to the anxieties of Germans who were suffering under economic depression and humiliation from the Treaty of Versailles. Even in the U.S., non-fascist political leaders like Franklin Roosevelt offered policies and used populist strategies (i.e., Fireside chats) to appeal to Americans who were struggling through the worst of the Great Depression. Roosevelt propped himself up as an essential alternative to a Republican administration that was unable, and unwilling, to handle the plummeting economy.

Not only did the Bund come after Roosevelt had already established himself, his administration, and his New Deal programs as alternative solutions to handle the Depression, Kuhn never attempted to challenge Roosevelt for similar populist appeals. At most, Kuhn and the Bund projected off Roosevelt's popularity. For example, in 1939, the Bund claimed that the New Deal was a "prelude to fascism."[74] Simply put, Kuhn was an unremarkable leader, who knew little of American politics or how to draw favor from different demographics, as Hitler did before him.

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[72] Ian Kershaw's 'Hitler myth' refers to the constructed elements of Hitler's public persona. Where in reality he was a lazy and relatively unremarkable man (outside of his charismatic capabilities), Nazi propaganda succeeded in depicting him as a popular and powerful figurehead, especially during the regime's reign.

[73] Kershaw, Ian. *The Hitler Myth.* Oxford University Press, 1987. Pg. 3.

[74] "Fascism and National Socialism vs. The New Deal." *Deutscher Weckruf und Beobachter,* Aug. 18, 1939.

CHAPTER IV: ORGANIZATION

For interwar fascist parties to seize power politically, they first needed a solid organizational foundation. Without it, there could be no chapters, no propaganda, and no party. This chapter examines the organizations of the BUF and the Bund to identify some of their strengths, as well as their weaknesses in this regard. In doing so, it is determined that the BUF, despite having a stable structure, had an ideological divide which was detrimental to its growth. Conversely, the Bund had a strong structure, and, unlike the BUF, did not suffer from internal divides.

The British Union Fascists

Mosley's British Union of Fascists was a well-organized party. The BUF had chapters across England that spread from Birmingham in the West Midlands, to the East End of London, to Sussex in the South East. There were even chapters in Edinburgh, Scotland.[1] Prior to 1934, Mosley's publication, *The Greater Britain,* sold well, and Lord Rothermere's *Daily Mail* aided in spreading his propaganda. The BUF even had its own publishing company and printed its own newspapers: *Action!* and *The Blackshirt*.

Despite its solid structure, there was an ideological divide in the party. In June of 1934, thousands of British fascists gathered before Mosley for a rally at Olympia. As was the case with all BUF rallies, crowds of protestors showed up alongside rally attendees. This time, however, Blackshirts looked to "start trouble," and engaged in physical violence against anti-fascist, communist, socialist, and Jewish protestors.[2] The public spectacle of viciousness, and

[1] "Blackshirt' Activities in Edinburgh." *Edinburgh Evening News,* Feb. 13, 1934.
[2] "More About Olympia." *Dover Express,* Nov. 30, 1934.

abandonment of "keeping with the British methods," did not go unnoticed by the public. The Wednesday after the rally, MPs met to consider "the whole question of Sir Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists.'"[3] Moreover, Lord Rothermere and his *Daily Mail* abandoned support of Mosley altogether.

In the beginning, Mosley held a belief of fascism that, like Mussolini's ideology, was not as racially motivated as Hitler's Nazism was. At least, with regards to Jews. In *The Greater Britain,* Mosley focused on economic policies and criticism of the "Old Gang" politicians in the government. In particular, he explained that "the main goal of a modern Fascist movement is to establish the Corporatist State."[4] During his early years as leader, references to Jews were few and far between. The main "other" he was concerned with were the communists and social democrats, who he believed were obsessed with the "blood of class war by the overthrow of existing society."[5] It was not until around the time of and after the Olympia rally, with continued publications from *Action!, The Blackshirt,* and Mosley's own *Tomorrow We Live,* that antisemitism (i.e. the "Jewish Question") became more overt with demands for Jewish expulsion from Britain.[6] Even with the rise of antisemitism, Mosley never admitted to the party being antisemitic. In fact, until his death, he claimed "anti-semitism was not our policy," and refuted such characterizations. [7] Mosley adamantly claimed, "I was ready to then to attack any man, Gentile, Jew, Englishman, Eskimo or Hottentot, who injured the interests of Britain."[8]

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[3] "Cabinet Will Discuss Blackshirts." *Daily Herald,* June 11, 1934.
[4] Mosley, Oswald. *The Greater Britain.* B.U.F. Publishing, Ltd. 1934. Pg. 34.
[5] Mosley, p. 95.
[6] Mosley, Oswald. *Tomorrow We Live.* B.U.F. Publishing, Ltd. 1934. Pg. 65.
[7] Mosley, Oswald. *My Life.* Arlington House, 1968. Pg. 337.
[8] Mosley, p. 339.

Mosley's shallow dismissal of antisemitism did nothing to discourage more radical fascists like John Beckett, an ex-M.P. for Gateshead and Peckham, from joining the movement.[9] Beckett, like Mosley, was a politician who had been a member of the Labour party prior to joining the BUF in 1934. But he had a rather different reputation. For one, he was known for "his exploit of seizing the Mace."[10] In British parliament, the mace is a ceremonial tool used by high officials in civic ceremonies. In 1930, during a heated debate in the Commons over the suspension of Fenner Brockway, Becket seized the mace before leaving.[11] Beckett's reasons for this reflected a frustration for British parliament that was shared by other fascists, including Mosley himself. He was angered by "listening to the same speech on unemployment on at least thirty occasions." The *Derry Journal* reported a statement he made afterwards,

> I have sat in the House hour after hour, silent, without raising any protest – shame, torture, listening on at least thirty occasions. I think it was written by the same secretary. Why listen for hours to the same century-old abominable drive?[12]

Once he joined the BUF he became a chief lieutenant, speaker, and director of publicity. He also actively participated in BUF-sanctioned events, such as dances organized by Lionel Altken, commanding BUF officer of the Western Area.[13] To Mosley's dismay, however, Beckett was more attracted to the racial aspects of German Nazism. The same was true for the Nazi-sympathizing William Joyce, the BUF Director of Propaganda.[14]

During the mid-1930s, antisemitism in *Action!* and *The Blackshirt* became more pronounced. In the article, "Obscene Communists," published July 16, 1936, William Joyce

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[9] "Public Notices." *Hull Daily Mail*, June 1934.
[10] "A Fascist Recruit." *Worthing Herald,* April 7, 1934.
[11] "Ex-M.P. Turns Fascist." *Daily News,* March 5, 1934.
[12] "Why I Removed the Mace." *Derry Journal,* July 25, 1930.
[13] "Plymouth Fascists." *Western Morning News,* May 31, 1934.
[14] "Blackshirt Meetings." *Forres News and Advertiser,* April 25, 1936.

wrote in response to M.P. debate over the BUF in the Cabinet. In this article, he describes the anti-fascist protestors negatively:

> During the debate it was alleged that Fascist speakers use insulting language from their platforms. No reference, however, was made to the conduct at hundreds of meetings of filthy, obscene, Jewish Communists who hide behind the police, and from their position of security hurl the most filthy and disgusting language, not only at the platform, but at any Fascist, man or woman.[15]

Suddenly, Jews in BUF propaganda simultaneously became agents of communism and of the "old gang" international financers whom Mosley criticized from his first days as a fascist speaker.

After Olympia, Mosley not only lost support from the public, but from his wealthiest ally, Lord Rothermere. Moreover, Dr. Robert Forgan, an ex-Labour party member who had followed Mosley in his creation of the BUF and became his second-in-Command, was forced to resign due to health problems.[16] Following the Battle of Cable Street in 1936, when Blackshirts and communists, socialists, and Jews clashed in the inner East End, Mosley was forced to act in fear of losing control over the direction of his party. The increasing radicalism from his supporters lost the party any hopes in the 1937 elections, and so he attempted to switch priorities away from overt antisemitism towards anti-war policy. In doing so, Mosley "purged" John Beckett, William Joyce, and their ally, Sylvia Morris, from the BUF. This led to the creation of a rival fascist party known as the National Socialist League, which modeled Nazi fascism and continued a rivalry with the BUF until its demise in 1939.[17]

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[15] Joyce, William. "Obscene Communists." *Action*, July 16, 1936.
[16] "Dr. Robert Forgan*." Western Mail*, Oct. 12, 1934.
[17] "New Light on Purge." *Nottingham Evening Post*, April 10, 1937.

Mosley's efforts showed in his speeches as well. At the BUF's 5th Anniversary rally held October 3, 1937, members and other National Socialists marched from Millbank to Rotherhithe, where Mosley provided an address. According to a police report from the event, "about 3,400 fascists, including 630 women and 220 youths and girls" participated in the event.[18] The report details that, when Mosley spoke to his supporters, he "dealt with political matters from a fascist viewpoint," but notably "made no inflammatory utterances and did not attack Jews."[19] Especially in 1939, Mosley "denied that the British Union of Fascists was pro-Nazi."[20] These efforts made little difference regarding the BUF's public image. Though, notably, the BUF did recover from its lowest numbers of 5,000 in 1934. After the disaster at Olympia, and after Mosley cut back on antisemitic rhetoric in the following years, the BUF gradually regained its popularity.

Date	Estimated Membership	Source
Feb. 1934	17,000	*News Chronicle* 6.2.34
Aug. 1934	50,000	HO 144/20142/107-122
Oct. 1935	5,000	HO 144/20145/14-17
Mar. 1936	10,000	HO 144/20147/378-387
Nov. 1936	15,500	HO 144/21062/403-407
Dec. 1938	16,500	HO 144/21281/112-114
c.Sept. 1939	22,500	Statement by Sir J. Anderson *HC Debs.* 25.7.40. Vol. 363. Col. 966.

Figure 7. Webber, G.C. "Patterns of Membership and Support for the British Union of Fascists." *Journal of Contemporary History.* Sage Publications, Inc., 1984. Pg. 577.

[18] MEPO 2/3117. The National Archives. Pg. 4.
[19] MEPO 2/3117, p. 6-7.
[20] "British Fascists." *The Scotsman,* Nov. 2, 1939.

Overall, the BUF had the structure of a successful fascist party, but the ideological divide at its heart wounded its potential. Mosley might not have intended for antisemitism to become the face of the BUF, but that did not stop Nazi sympathizers like Beckett, Joyce, and others from making it so. The BUF did slowly gain more membership up until 1939, but by then the British Government had enough. After the Battle of Cable Street in 1936, the Government passed and enforced the Public Order Act of 1936, banning paramilitary uniforms, and eliminating the functionality of the Blackshirts altogether.[21] Again in 1940, the government cracked down on all forms of political extremism, banning the BUF according to Defense Regulation 18B.[22] By May 1940, The BUF was no more.

The German American Bund

As *Bundesführer,* Kuhn maintained "one man control" over the Bund, but the organization's greatest strength was its organization, courtesy of its predecessor, the Friends of New Germany.[23] Like the early Nazi Party, the organization established separate districts across the United States. Each district, or *Gau,* was run by its own leader, or *gauleiter.* Prior to his role as president of the Bund, Kuhn was the midwestern *gauleiter* of the Friends of New Germany. As leader of the Bund, Kuhn simply had to maintain the divisions: *Gau* East, *Gau* Midwest, and *Gau* West. August Klapprott, born in Broehthausen Germany, was the "district leader for Hudson County, New Jersey [East *Gau*], and a trustee of the German American Bund Auxiliary

[21] *Public Order Act 1936*. Legislation.gov.uk, https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Edw8and1Geo6/1/6/introduction viewed February 28, 2023.
[22] *Emergency Powers (Defense) Act 1940.* (c.770). London: Stationery Office.
[23] "One Man Control." *Washington Times-Herald,* May 18, 1939.

operating Camp Nordland."[24] Georg Froboese was the leader of the West and Midwest *Gau*, and became the assistant leader to Gerhard Kunze after Kuhn's arrest in 1939.[25]

The *gauleiters* managed the districts within their jurisdiction. *Gau* east, for instance, consisted of nine general districts (*Bezirke*), each with their own local *Orisgrup*. In Westchester County, New York, there were *Orisgrup* in Bronx, New Rochelle, Poughkeepsie, White Plains, Yonkers, New Haven, Stanford-Norwalk, and Rockland County.[26] *Gau* East also had *Bezirke* in Long Island, Hudson County, New Jersey, Philadelphia, New York City (also the location of the Bund's headquarters), Brooklyn, Staten Island, Buffalo, and Schenectady.[27] *Gau* Midwest had a Milwaukee *Bezirke*, which included *Orisgrup* in Milwaukee, Gary, Hammond, Kenosha, and several other cities including Chicago.[28] This *Gau* also had a Cleveland *Bezirke,* which housed *Orisgrup* in Dayton, Cleveland, Detroit among others.[29] The last district, *Gau* West had *Bezirke* in Los Angeles, and Oakland, each with their own list of *Orisgrup*.[30]

The *gauleiters* organized Hitler Youth-style camps and rallies, which, along with Kuhn's rambunctious orating against Jews and communists at rallies, garnered the Bund an estimated 50,000 supporters by its peak. Although, official numbers for the Bund are highly contested, as personal records were destroyed in the movement's final years. This was done to protect Bund members from government investigations. What is known, thanks to FBI investigations, is that

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[24] "German American Federation/Bund." FBI file for the German American Bund, part 11, 1941. *The FBI: Federal Bureau of Investigation,* US Department of Justice, https://vault.fbi.gov/german-american-bund/german-american-federation-bund-part-11-of-10/view. Pg. 5.
[25] FBI Vault, "German American Federation/Bund," part 11, p. 8.
[26] FBI Vault, "German American Federation/Bund," part 11, p. 4.
[27] FBI Vault, "German American Federation/Bund," part 11, p. 5.
[28] FBI Vault, "German American Federation/Bund," part 11, p. 6.
[29] FBI Vault, "German American Federation/Bund," part 11, p. 6.
[30] FBI Vault, "German American Federation/Bund," part 11, p. 6.

the Bund pulled members from a variety of working-class backgrounds, the military, as well as support from smaller local businesses.[31] Moreover, they prided the organization as a Christian movement that was accepting to "members belonging to Catholic, Protestant, (Mormon, Methodist, Lutheran) and other Church Groups.[32]

Though Kuhn lacked leadership qualities and wealth, the Bund was well organized and funded. On March 27, 1937, the A.V. Publishing Corporation, Inc., was incorporated into the German American Bund. It was based at 178 East 85th Street, New York City, and was tasked with the "printing, publishing, and distributing of newspapers to foster German and American relations."[33] The original officers of the company were Fritz Kuhn, James Wheeler-Hill, and William Luedtke. After Kuhn's arrest in 1939, however, the officers became the new president of the Bund, Wilhelm Kunze, August Klapprott (vice president), Gustav Elmer (treasurer) and William Luedtke (secretary).[34] The AV Publishing Corporation, Inc., published the *Deutscher Weckruf und Beobachter,* the "official organ of the German American Bund and the German-American Business League (D.K.V.)"[35] The *Deutscher Weckruf und Beobachter* was a newspaper that ran pro-Nazi stories, both in German and English, throughout the Bund's lifespan. As seen below, yearly subscriptions to the newspaper cost $3. Specifically, each issue

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[31] "German American Federation/Bund." FBI file for the German American Bund, part 4, 1940. *The FBI: Federal Bureau of Investigation,* US Department of Justice, https://vault.fbi.gov/german-american-bund/german-american-federation-bund-part-04-of-10/view. Pg. 30-240.
[32] Kunze, G.W. "Religion, Culture." *The Aims and Purposes of the German American Bund.* AV Publishing Corporation, Inc., 1939. Pg. 8.
[33] "German American Federation/Bund." FBI file for the German American Bund, part 9, 1941. *The FBI: Federal Bureau of Investigation,* US Department of Justice, https://vault.fbi.gov/german-american-bund/german-american-federation-bund-part-04-of-10/view. Pg. 9.
[34] FBI Vault, "German American Federation/Bund," part 9, p. 9.
[35] FBI Vault, "Fritz Julius Kuhn," part 2, p. 35.

of the newspaper carried "a subscription blank form quoting a subscription rate of $1.50 for one-half a year or $3 for a full year."[36]

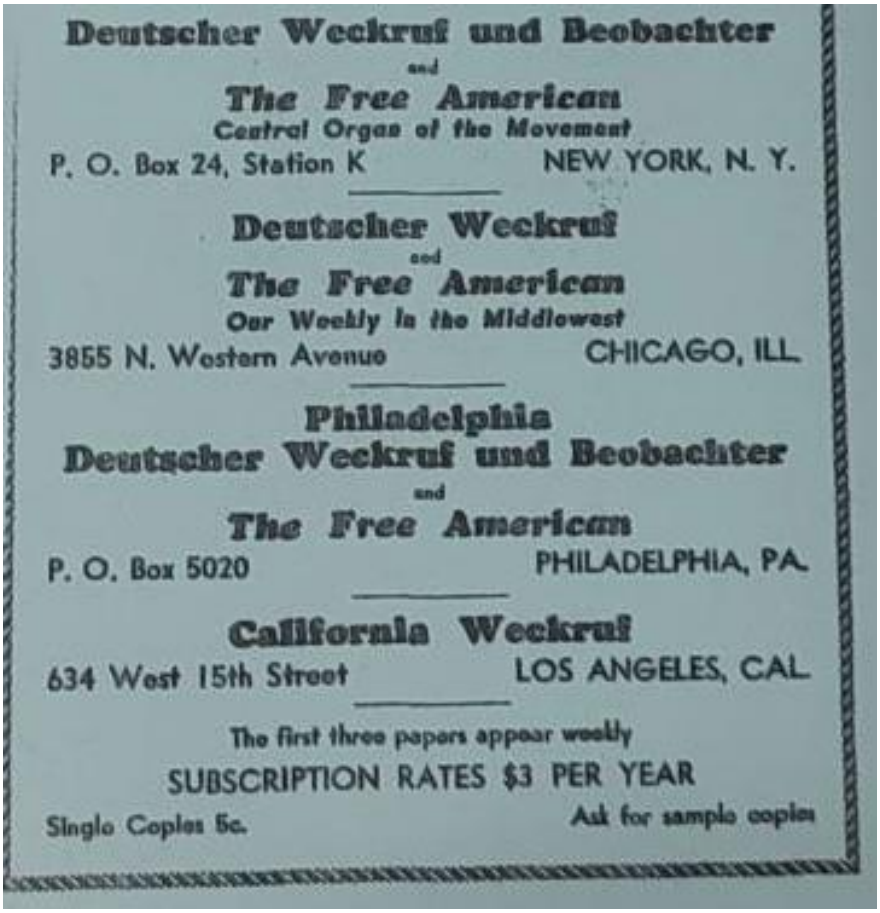

Figure 8. 1939. *Six Addresses on The Aims and Purposes of the German American Bund.* AV Publishing Corporation, Inc., 1939.

According to the FBI's report of the Bund, the company made around $2,437 a month, with its primary profits coming from advertisements ($973.77) and renewed subscriptions ($527.25).[37] Advertisers of the Bund's newspapers came from local businesses (mostly within the New

[36] FBI Vault, "German American Federation/Bund," part 11, p. 9.
[37] FBI Vault, "German American Federation/Bund," part 11, p. 24.

Jersey, Philadelphia, and New York areas) such as the Little German Theatre, Prosthetic Dental Labs, Puppon Hospital, and Reimer's German Pharmacy.[38]

The Bund made profits from newspaper sales, but also from camps where propaganda was sold to audiences. At Camp Siegfried, "vendors and suppliers who dealt with the camp were forced to pay a 10 percent surcharge to the Bund. Other sources of income were realized from the sale of Nazi paraphernalia including decorative swords, Bund newspapers, copies of 'Mein Kamp,' Nazi flags and photos of Nazi leaders."[39]

Figure 9. "Bundsmen Selling Newspapers at Hindenburg Park." California State University, Northridge.

Because the Bund was not concerned with running elections, it instead focused on indoctrinating American youth at Nazi-style youth camps across all the three *Gau.* These camps, from Camp

[38] FBI Vault, "German American Federation/Bund," part 11, p. 24-27.
[39] "When the Bund Strutted in Yaphank." *The New York Times,* May 8, 1977. Pg. 402.

Nordland in Sussex, New Jersey, to Camp Hindenburg in Grafton Wisconsin, and Camp Highland in Windham, New York, were some of the Bund's primary source of influence, as well as income. At Camp Siegfried, for instance, "Kuhn set up a youth section of the camp for boys and girls where loyal Bundists could send their children – at $5 a week – for martial training, Nazi indoctrination, hiking and singing of Germany Army marching songs."[40] Overall, the Bund made around $7,664.60 per year from membership dues alone. Combined with new admissions ($4,842) and propaganda, the FBI's report on the Bund summarizes their annual profits to have been around $14,733.94.[41]

Comparative Analysis

As organizations, the British Union of Fascists and the German American Bund had much in common with the "successful" Italian Fascist and German Nazi parties. Through the 1920s, the Italian Fascists spread propaganda with the newspaper, *Il Popolo d'Italia,* which attracted supporters and financial allies alike. In the 1920s and 1930s, the German Nazis peddled antisemitic disinformation with the newspaper, *Völkischer Beobachter.* In a similar fashion, the BUF and the Bund published their own papers. *Action!*, *The Blackshirt,* and *Deutscher Weckruf und Beobachter* all attracted support from different audiences, which contributed to their numbers and the funding of chapters nationwide. Moreover, both organizations were structured according to *Führerprinzip*, or "leadership principle*"* Though Mosley fought against internal divisions in his party during the mid-1930s, both the BUF and the Bund operated as top-down organizations that gave their leaders unlimited control over their movements. Moreover, both movements were structured well. The Bund, especially, took advantage of the organization of the

[40] "When the Bund Strutted in Yaphank." *The New York Times,* May 8, 1977. Pg. 402.
[41] FBI Vault, "German American Federation/Bund," part 11, p. 41.

Nazi Party, copying its regional *Gau* structure to attract membership from a multitude of audiences across the United States.[42]

That is not to say that the Bund was perfect as an organization, however. One key strength of the Nazi Party was its ideological flexibility. Its local chapters, though influenced heavily by Hitler's 25 Points, were able to operate almost independently. This allowed Hitler's Party to appeal to multiple demographics across Germany. Where the Bund tried to implement their ideology across the United States inflexibility and with little concern for appeal, the Nazis, like the BUF, managed to attract a variety of supporters at the local level. Women, for example, were attracted to a movement ultimately detrimental to their rights because they found in Nazism a space for establishing their own political sphere of influence.[43] Women, like rural workers, middle class landowners, or youth, were drawn to the Nazi Party because of its ideological flexibility, which extended from the Party's lack of a stringent ideological structure at the local level. Nazi supporters could, to an extent, mold their local chapters to fit their own political agendas. This element was non-existent in the Bund, where Hitler's ideology inflexibly defined the organization and its rhetoric, inherently limiting the Bund's appeal amongst different demographics, especially German-Americans. In this case, Mosley's BUF interestingly had more in common with the Nazis than the Bund. Mosley may have emulated Mussolini's ideology but wanted to seize power democratically like the Nazis before him.[44] As such, he found success by appealing to different demographics with various messaging strategies, leading him to find great success in recruiting women.

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[42] Spielvogel, Jackson. *Hitler and Nazi Germany.* Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005. Pg. 73.
[43] Koonz, Claudia. *Mothers in the Fatherland.* Taylor and Francis, 2013. Pg. 55.
[44] Mosley, Oswald. *100 Questions Asked and Answered.* BUF Publications, Ltd., Pg. 15.

CHAPTER V: POPULIST APPEALS

All successful interwar fascist parties were populist. Since fascism was an ideology that pitted "the people" against the "other," fascist organizations necessarily required public appeal. If a fascist party could not capture the hearts and minds of their chosen demographics (i.e., conservatives, corporatists, middle class citizens, rural landowners, etc.), they could not raise a party, let alone seize power politically. This chapter discusses populism as it pertains to fascist practice and evaluates the British Union of Fascists and the German American Bund according to their ability to employ its practices for the purposes of garnering appeal.

Populism

Populism and fascism are similar in many ways. For one, both are often used as rhetorical devices for labeling opponents. As Jan-Werner Müller explains in *What is Populism?*, "both Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders have been labelled 'populists.'" This is because, he argues, "the term is regularly used as a synonym for 'antiestablishment,' irrespective, it seems, of any particular political ideas; content, as opposed to attitude, simply doesn't seem to matter."[1] Populism, like fascism, has been used during the 21st century as a political tool. However, it does have a definition. Fascism was defined by its leader's and party's ability to act as a political alternative to existing political and governmental institutions. It was also defined by its leader's ability to convince "the people" that he was the promised "cure" against the nation's economic and/or moral decline. Similarly, populism, in Müller's words, is "a particular *moralistic imagination of politics,* a way of perceiving the political world that sets a morally pure and

[1] Jan-Werner Müller. *What is Populism?* University of Pennsylvania Press. Pg. 1.

unified – but, I shall argue, ultimately fictional – people against elites who are deemed corrupt or in some other way morally inferior."[2]

During the interwar period, fascist strategies revolved around populist appeals. This is because both fascists and populists "pit the pure, innocent, always hardworking people against a corrupt elite who do not really work (other than to further their self-interest) and, in right-wing populism, also against the very bottom of society (those who do not really work and live like parasites off the work of others)." The issue of "corrupt" elites and opposition to the decadent "other" melds into the populist assumption of who "the people" of the nation are. As such, populists formulate their own understanding of what representation means. Fascists and right-wing populists do not believe in democratic pluralism. Rather, they assume "the people" should oversee the nation, its policies, and its culture. Or, as Müller explains,

> Populists are fine with representation, as long as the right representatives represent the right people to make the right judgment and consequently do the right thing. Apart from determining who really belongs to the people, populists therefore need to say something about the content of what the authentic people actually want. What they usually suggest is that there is a singular common good, that the people can discern and will it, and that a politician or a party (or, less plausibly, a movement) can unambiguously implement it as policy.[3]

Müller uses Viktor Orbán as a 21st century example of right-wing populism in action. Like a fascist, Orbán fearmongers to conservatives over perceived globalist "liberal" threats, including people of LGBTQ+ identities. To note, Orbán was applauded for these beliefs by U.S. Republicans at CPAC 2022, in Texas.

Because a populist movement's appeal is based on its supposed representation of "the people," that allows the movement to deny the legitimacy of democratic institutions and

[2] Müller, p. 19-20.
[3] Müller, p. 25.

elections. In Müller's words, "there is Donald Trump reacting to every loss in the primaries with the charge that his opponents were committing fraud, as well as his preemptive claim that the entire system – including the Republican National Convention itself – is' rigged.'"[4] If a movement is convinced that it represents "the people," then it is impossible to them that they could lose a democratic election. That, of course, is when myths emerge that the election was stolen by some shadowy group of "other." Müller's work is mostly concerned with populism in a 21st century context. Regarding the interwar period, this pertains to the German "stab-in-the-back" legend, which blamed Jews for the loss of WWI. The concept of blaming the "other" for some perceived crime against "the people" was an aspect of fascism that remains timeless.

Fascism and populism share similarities, but they should not be necessarily equated. Right-wing populists and fascists share in their strategies to appeal to "the people" through the demonization of pluralism, the "other," and of moral decadence. However, where right-wing populists are "anti-elitist," fascists, or at least fascist leaders, were always willing to work within institutions of power, with capitalist, military, and conservative elites to cement control in the media or government. Furthermore, their end goal was always to topple the pre-existing democracy in favor of a right-wing, authoritarian regime. Where the populist or fascist supporter is more concerned with who "the people" are, the fascist leader was a power monger whose ideals could be flexible according to what was appealing to conservatives and others aligned with the right at the time.

The Italian Fascist party's greatest strength was its adoption of these populist strategies to garner appeal amongst disillusioned Italians. In the years after 1918, Italy's economy was in

[4] Müller, p. 32.

shambles and its government was gridlocked by conflicting socialist parties. In the Po Valley in 1920, landowners were far from supportive of the existing socialist government. Farmers who needed workers had to go to the socialist Labor Exchange, which forced them "to hire workers year-round rather than only seasonally, and with better wages and working conditions." Moreover, "the socialist unions also undermined the farmers' personal status as masters of their domain."[5] Farmers sought help, but "local officials were socialists themselves, or little inclined to do battle with them." Even more, "Prime minister Giolittie, a true practitioner of laissez-faire liberalism, declined to use national forces to break strikes."[6] This made farmers resentful of the government.

Mussolini's party answered the call of disillusioned and anxious landowners by providing farmers of the Po Valley with land and jobs. It was not hard, then, to convince them to abandon "useless" socialist unions.[7] Appealing to rural working folk and landowners was immediately successful. "Between April and May 1921, membership in the Fascist movement jumped from 80,000 to 180,000. By the end of the year a network of Fascist organizations emerged in the provinces and central Italy."[8] The Italian Fascists found popularity by criticizing, and overcoming, the failures of the government.

The German Nazis, on the other hand, made appeals in a variety of ways. Propaganda on the radio, in posters, and in speeches took on a more personalized form, catering to the needs and fears of different social groups. For instance, in working class regions were voters tended to vote for the KPD, the Nazis campaigned against capitalism, and offered to protect workers by

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[5] Paxton, Robert. *The Anatomy of Fascism*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2004. Pg. 60.
[6] Paxton, p. 60-61
[7] Paxton, p. 61.
[8] De Grand, p. 32.

destroying international finance.[9] For younger audiences, they "denounced conflicts of interest and claimed to stand above classes and parties. They promised to overcome the old class and caste spirit and build a *Volksgemeinschaft,* a national community, a new Germany based on social equality."[10] Nazism's core belief in the nation above the individual (ultranationalism) was attractive to youthful men who sought to revitalize their nation, free from the assumed decadence of liberalism and Jewish Bolshevism. For the lower and middle class and rural landowners, their greatest supporters, the Nazis promised to defeat the KPD and the SPD leftists. To their supporters, they offered what Spielvogel describes as "a sense of community." The Nazis "gave meaning to life, and created the emotional effects that gave people strong convictions."[11]

The British Union of Fascists

To gain appeal, the BUF drew initial support from ex-MPs, as well as the public, who were interested in Mosley's role as a politician who stood outside the Labour-Conservative political sphere. As early as 1930, there was a public interest in Mosley's policies. Sir William Morris, chairman of the National Council of Industry and Commerce, argued in favor of the Mosley Memorandum and its policies. On December 17, 1930, *The Scotsman* recalled his statement to the press: "there is one bright spot on the gloomy horizon – the forceful gesture of a young and virile [sic] section of the Labour party. In Sir Oswald Mosley's manifesto I see a ray of hope."[12] When Mosley left the Labour party in February of 1931, he was met with more sympathetic praise. "No Party Question" from the *Aberdeen Press,* published May 21, 1930, wrote that "the departure of Sir Oswald Mosley from the inner councils of the Ministry

[9] Spielvogel, Jackson. *Hitler and Nazi Germany.* Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005. Pg. 61.
[10] Spielvogel, p. 61-2.
[11] Spielvogel, p. 59.
[12] "A Ray of Hope,' says Sir William Morris." *The Scotsman,* Dec. 17, 1930.

demonstrates how far removed from party feeling the whole question of unemployment and its cure is."[13]

With the Mosley Memorandum as his legacy, and *The Greater Britain* selling out in 1932 with expanded discussion over various policies, it was clear that the fascist leader was a man guided by a strict set of political and economic ambitions – namely the eradication of unemployment through the establishment of a corporatist state that forbade international finance. Of course, this also included the forceful expulsion of socialists, communists, and later, Jews from British society. In *The Greater Britain,* Mosley wrote specifically to the issue of unemployment and the British parliament's failure to adapt after the end of World War I. He demanded for a new governing system that was not "designed by, and for, the nineteenth century."[14] Like Mussolini, he criticized the "lethargy" and "stagnation" of parliament.[15] The corporatist state, Mosley believed, would end class war by putting wages in the hands of the state. Trade unions and federations, under Mosley's model, would be "woven into the fabric of the Corporate State."[16]

This type of messaging was popular amongst those of the urban working class and the middle class who felt their personal wealth had been threatened by the Great Depression. Admittedly, there is little information on the specific class distributions amongst Mosley's fascists. According to G. C. Webber's "Patterns of Membership and Support for the British Union of Fascists," "during the 1930s themselves, neither the fascists nor their opponents could present a common view of the movement. On some occasions it would be depicted as a middle-

[13] "No Party Question." *Aberdeen Press,* May 21, 1930.
[14] Mosley, Oswald. *The Greater Britain.* B.U.F. Publications, Ltd. 1932. Pg. 17.
[15] Mosley, *The Greater Britain.* B.U.F. Publications, Ltd. 1932. Pg. 23.
[16] Mosley, p. 36.

class organization; on the others as a fiercely working-class one."[17] That said, it is known that the BUF actively settled its branches and performed rallies in the urban center of London. Attracting the working class, especially, was a priority for Mosley and the BUF. In fact, the BUF had its own worker's division, the Fascist Union of British Workers, which organized meetings and performed musically at various branches across England, including the National Headquarters in Chelsea (in 1934). The article, "F.U.B.W. Music Section Formed," published by *The Blackshirt* in 1934, advertised the presence of working-class musicians at a rally in the national Theatre on March 19th. The writer explains this event was weekly and emphasized fascist musical talent.[18]

As mentioned briefly above, Mosley's rhetoric was also attractive to some Labour M.P.s, particularly those who had signed the Mosley Memorandum prior to Mosley's resignation from parliament. This included Lady Cynthia, Oliver Baldwin, Joseph Batey, W.J. Brown, Dr. Robert Forgan, John Strachey, among several others. They joined in support of the policies Mosley espoused which led the formation of the BUF on October 1, 1932. Dr. Forgan joined in 1932 and was assigned second-in-command of the organization, at least until his resignation in 1934.[19] John Beckett was another Labour MP, infamous for seizing the mace in parliament, who was assigned the role of Director of Publications when he joined in 1934. He also helped organize speaking events for the BUF. On February 27, 1936, for example, Beckett spoke to fascists at Baths Hall in the city of Bow.[20]

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[17] Webber, G.C. "Patterns of Membership and Support for the British Union of Fascists." *Journal of Contemporary History.* Sage Publications, Inc., 1984. Pg. 589.
[18] "F.U.B.W. Music Section Formed." *The Blackshirt*, January to June 1934.
[19] "Fewer Members." *Derby Daily Telegraph,* Oct. 11, 1934.
[20] "Former Labour M.P. Now Blackshirt." *East End News and London Shipping Chronicle,* Feb. 21, 1936.

The BUF was also rather popular amongst women, who made up anywhere from 10% to 27% of the demographic in fascist meetings.[21] Conversely, Mussolini's Fascists struggled to garner mass popularity within this demographic, as the blatant anti-feminist, conservative nature of the party was highly evident from the start. Although the BUF was reactionary and ultimately opposed to the liberal freedoms they believed to be "degenerate," the party was able to lure women under the assumption that the BUF would establish gender equality, and end what Mosley commonly referred to as the "sex warfare." These ideas are found in various propaganda pieces produced by the BUF in its early years of popularity, such as the following flyer printed by BUF Publications, Ltd.:

[21] Gottlieb, Julie. *Feminine Fascism.* I.B. Tauris, 2000. Pg. 46-47.

FASCISM MEANS FREEDOM

FOR BRITISH WOMEN

F air conditions in Industry

A ctual representation of Women in Parliament.

S ex warfare will be ended

C hildrens Education will be improved.

I ncreased prosperity will mean better wages and more purchasing power.

S lums will be abolished.

M aternal and Infant welfare will be a prime consideration

F ascism will shorten working hours.

R epresentation through Corporations.

E qual pay to women for equal work.

E ducational facilities available to all.

D ominion trading will mean greater markets for British goods.

O rganised national planning decent homes at economic rents within 3 years.

M others and Children will be a special care of the Fascist State.

British Women Join the Blackshirts

You may join as a Blackshirt member to work two evenings a week for the cause in a Blackshirt Unit or you may join as a Political member who does not wear the Blackshirt but is asked to help where possible in the work of Constituency Organisation. SUBSCRIPTIONS: Uniform Members: minimum 1s. per month if employed, 4d. per month if unemployed. Non-uniform members minimum 1d. per week.

READ THE BLACKSHIRT (every Friday) ONE PENNY.

Published by B.U.F. Publications Ltd., London, S.W.
Printed by Burrows & Burrows, 342, South Lambeth Rd. S.W. No. 111 1-6 thous.

Figure 10. "Fascism Means Freedom." B.U.F. Publications Ltd., London, S.W. Printed by Burrows & Burrows, 342, South Lambeth Rd. S.W. 1935.

Women were a primary target for Mosley and his fascists. This is also evident in their daily newspaper. "Listen, Women," which was an ongoing segment in the BUF newspaper, *Action*.

"Listen, Women" stories included a range of topics for readers, but most often they pushed conservative assumptions of women and their assumed roles in society. An article from October 15, 1931, by Olive Rinder, serves as a glimpse into what the BUF continued to publish

after the New Party was transformed in 1932. In this piece, stories including "Foolish Methods of Shopping," and "Things to Avoid in the Home" emphasize a woman's role as a home keeper, a *femme covert* in the private sphere. The latter of the two stories, as a model, explains how women should clean piano keys, or how to clean clothes properly.[22]

Aside from these newspapers, the BUF also included women in the rallies and organization of the party. Though, it should be noted that these women were, in Gottlieb's words, "streamed into traditional female tasks from canvassing and spreading the word to being made responsible for keeping branch premises in orderly condition."[23] For example, Women who joined the BUF could participate in the Women's Defense Force, led by the "commandant," Miss Margery Alken.[24] This branch of the BUF provided lectures and classes that taught members various subjects ranging from first-aid, fencing (Mosley's favorite hobby), and singing.[25] The latter of these subjects was of great value to the BUF. *The Blackshirt,* one of their various newspapers, frequently advertised fascist music as well as the BUF's "Fascist Song-Book."[26] For girls, there was also the "Girls' Section of the Fascist Youth Movement," led by Miss A. Wallace, which operated in public schools across England.[27] In this *Opera Nazionale Balila*-esque youth group, English girls were provided with lectures of fascist issues.

The ability to attract women made the British Union of Fascists starkly different from the Italian Fascists. With flyers and rallies, the BUF promoted unity amongst men and women,

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[22] "Listen, Women." *Action,* Oct. 15, 1931.
[23] Gottlieb, Julie. *Feminine Fascism.* I.B. Tauris, 2000. Pg. 44.
[24] "Speakers' Class." *Weekly Dispatch,* June 17, 1934.
[25] "Speakers' Class." *Weekly Dispatch,* June 17, 1934.
[26] "Fascist Music." *The Blackshirt,* January to June 1934.
[27] "Fascist Music." *The Blackshirt,* January to June 1934.

calling for "all loyal citizens of both sexes" to join the fascist cause.[28] What is more, Mosley outlined how he would protect their rights. He advocated for the establishment of a corporation that would represent mothers under the fascist government. Issues of child's welfare, food prices, and housing were also Mosley's primary concerns.[29] Throughout the BUF's existence, it was the women who remained a consistent demographic amongst British fascists, holding a substantial number in meetings. Their presence ranged from as low as 10% to as high as 27% (excluding the Women's Peace Meetings) regardless of the year.[30] Part of the BUF's success in this regard was also owed to their anti-war policy. Many women of the 1930s lost male relatives or partners during the war."[31] Women joined the BUF because of its role as a political alternative, and because of Mosley's anti-war stance.

Even with these messages, it is worth noting that the BUF was not a women's rights movement. In response to the question "will the position of women be in any way inferior under fascism," Mosley wrote:

> Fascism in Britain will maintain the British principle of honouring and elevating the position of women. We certainly combat the decadence of the present system which treats the position of wife and mother as inferior. On the contrary, we consider this to be one of the greatest of human and racial functions to be honoured and encouraged. But women will be free to pursue their own vacations. Fascism combats the false values of decadence not by force but by persuasion and example.[32]

Mosley's believed in the principle of *femme covert,* assuming that "normal women" should pursue their roles as mothers for the "future of the race."[33] He also argued that "the great

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[28] Advertisement for a BUF rally at the Angel Hotel in Peterborough. "Notice," *Peterborough Standard.* Jan. 12, 1934.
[29] Mosley, *100 Questions Asked and Answered.* B.U.F. Publications, Ltd. 1936. Pg. 31.
[30] Gottlieb, p. 46-7.
[31] Gottlieb, p. 270.
[32] Mosley, *100 Questions Asked and Answered.* B.U.F. Publications, Ltd. 1936. Pg. 31.
[33] Mosley, *The Greater Britain.* B.U.F. Publications, Ltd. 1932. Pg. 56.

majority of women do not seek, and have no time for, a career of politics."[34] In his own words, Mosley perfectly encapsulated his fascist gender values: "we want men who are men and women who are women."[35] However, because of his anti-war policy, advocacy for gender equality, equal pay, childcare, and an emphasis on the role of women as the main pillar of the fascist state, he and the BUF managed to draw women to a movement which was ultimately detrimental to their freedoms.[36] In other words, Mosley was a strong man who led the youthful men of Britain to a fascist future, one where women would willingly "serve as the cheerleaders."[37]

The strategies used by the British Union of Fascists worked in its early years. Meetings across England were frequent and decently attended by both men and women. These BUF meetings attracted anywhere from a hundred to a few thousand members. At Albert Hall, April 25, 1934, 1,500 men and 500 women attended. On September 9, 1934, 3,000 men and 450 women attended another venue in London. On June 16, 1939, when popularity of the BUF enjoyed a brief resurgence, 3,000 men and 1,100 women attended a meeting at Earl's Court.[38]

Aside from meetings, the rallies themselves varied in popularity. In 1934, at a rally in Newcastle Townmoor, Mosley presented in front of a crowd of 4,000. This did not include the 450 Blackshirts who were there to defend against the "Red Hooliganism" of anti-fascist hecklers.[39] At a rally at Beaconsfield-road School, Southhall, however, only an estimated 70-80 people attended. Though, the presence of Mosley's fascists did inspire communists to form an anti-fascist rally during the same evening. Speakers such as G.L. Evans, G. Eldridge,

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[34] Mosley, *The Greater Britain.* B.U.F. Publications, Ltd. 1936. Pg. 55.
[35] Mosley, p. 54.
[36] Mosley, p. 56.
[37] Gottlieb, p. 210.
[38] Gottlieb, p. 46-47.
[39] "Big Newcastle Meeting." *Belfast Newsletter,* July 30, 1934.

representative of the Young Communist League, and E. Wooley, editor of the *Daily Worker*, spoke against fascism at their counter rally.[40] It should also be noted that, even as BUF membership plummeted after the Olympia rally that same year, some of the BUF's 1936 rallies were their most successful. In *East London for Mosley,* Thomas Linehan argues that it was in 1936 when "the BUF held its most successful ever series of meetings with audiences estimated in the thousands observed in Stepney, Shoreditch, Bethnal Green and Stoke Newington."[41]

Even with the successes he had at rallies, Mosley faced issues when it came to his strategies to appeal to certain demographics – namely, the urban working class. As mentioned before, the British working class usually voted Labour or Communist. This caused Mosley to draw negative attention from both groups. In October of 1934, Richard Acland, a Liberal and supporter of the Labour Party, spoke at an event at Barnstaple, which acted as a counter-rally to the BUF. The rally housed some 700 persons according to the *North Devon Journal,* and it consisted of a lengthy discussion during which Acland dissected Mosley's policies and assertions that the British government had failed. In response to Mosley's core tenants, Acland made the following of many comments, criticizing Mosley's "nonsense" and condemning the BUF's connections to "big monied interests":

> The standard of living, in spite of a disastrous war, has just about doubled in fifty years; we have universal education; old age pensions, widows' pensions, health insurance, unemployment insurance, and since the war we have spent millions of pounds on improving housing. Many people will say, and in many cases I agree, that we have not had nearly enough of those things. But when we remember Mosley's backers - big monied interests and manufacturers; when we look at the sort of toughs who commit acts of violence at his bidding - do you think that if those people had been in power for the last fifty years, and if there had been no powers for turning them out that the working classes of this country would ever had even the advantages I have mentioned? I very much doubt it!

[40] "Blackshirts Eject Interrupter." *West Middlesex Gazette*, Jan. 26, 1935.
[41] Linehan, Thomas. *East London for Mosley.* Frank Cass & Co. Ltd. Pg. 10.

He also came to the defense of the Labour Party:

> The Labour Party had to govern this country in the two worst years in the whole economic history of the world, and when everyone has said everything he can say against them there remains these facts. In 1929-31 British wages fell less, and the investments fell less than in any other country in the world.[42]

As will be explored more in the chapter, "Political Environments," Mosley's BUF had very little ground to stand on when it came to their criticism of the British government. Moreover, Acland criticized, or at least cemented doubt, Mosley's status as a working-class advocate, considering his personal connections with "big monied" aristocrats like Rothermere.

Overall, Mosley's BUF benefitted from its initial representation as a legitimate political party appealing to many different demographics. Entry to rallies was free, allowing for people of all classes to join. Questions were also encouraged under the virtues of free speech, something which Mosley was keen to include even when socialists were present in the audience. As the *Middlesex County Times* reported in July 1938, it was the "invariable custom of Sir Oswald Mosley to invite and reply to the oral and written questions of his audience, when he addresses indoor meetings."[43] Before he and his own members became increasingly radicalized towards antisemitism, as well as wonton political violence became more prevalent, the BUF was rather successful populist party.

The German American Bund

Fritz Kuhn, like many of his Bundsmen, was an ethnic-German Nazi who emigrated to the United States. He had no riches, no connections with big businesses, and no political relevancy in either the Democratic or Republican parties. He was a plant in alien soil. Yet, the

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[42] "The Reply to Mosley." *North Devon Journal,* Oct. 25, 1934.
[43] "Questions at British Union Meetings." *Middlesex County Times,* July 16, 1938.

so-called "American Führer" decided to start a Nazi brand of fascism, one born from conditions unique to 1920s and 1930s Weimar Germany, in the United States. The issue with this decision was that German Nazism promoted Germans, or "Aryans," as the ideal race. In White America, however, attitudes towards Germans were not so charitable. As Russel Kazal argues in *Becoming Old Stock*, the 21st century's "marked submergence of German American ethnicity owes a great deal to the anti-German backlash of the First World War."[44] After all, the U.S. helped defeat Germany. Moreover, the United States has the unfortunate tradition of racially demonizing opponents in wartime. Germans were no exception to this rule.

With the declaration of war on April 6, 1917, came a wave of anti-German sentiment. This was, in-part, owed to Woodrow Wilson's racialized "alien enemies" proclamation, which automatically classified German nationals as "enemy aliens" and forced hundreds of thousands of American-born Germans through mandatory interrogations to prove their loyalty to the United States.[45] For reference, "more than 480,000 German enemy aliens were registered, 200,000 permits were issued, and 6,300 enemy aliens were arrested under Presidential Arrest Warrants."[46] The public media aided in this anti-German trend as well, running stories titled "What Is a Pro-German?" that provided tips to help readers identify "pro-Germans."[47] These sentiments were only worsened by wartime propaganda, as showcased in the figure below.

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[44] Kazal, Russel. *Becoming Old Stock: The Paradox of German-American Identity.* Princeton, NJ. Princeton University Press, 2004. Pg. 6.
[45] National Archives and Records Administration. (n.d.). *World War I Enemy Alien Records*. National Archives and Records Administration. Retrieved December 4, 2022, from https://www.archives.gov/research/immigration/enemy-aliens/ww1.
[46] National Archives and Records Administration. (n.d.). *World War I Enemy Alien Records*. National Archives and Records Administration. Retrieved December 4, 2022, from https://www.archives.gov/research/immigration/enemy-aliens/ww1.
[47] "What Is a Pro-German?" *Aurora Observer*, Jan. 3, 1918.

Figure 11. Strothmann, Frederick. “Beat Back the Hun with Liberty Bonds.” 1918.

German internment camps were also set up in various states across the country, such as Hot Springs, Carolina, as shown in Figure 12 on the next page.

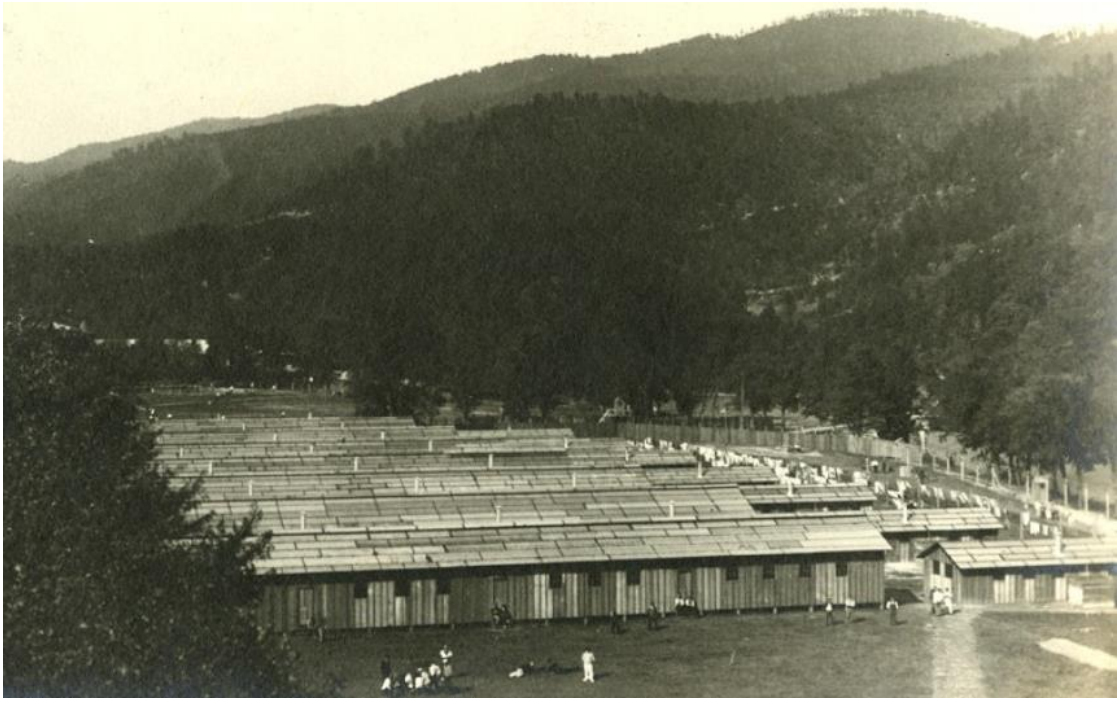


Figure 12. German internment camp, Hot Springs, North Carolina. 1917-1918.

All of this is to say that Kuhn made a mistake when forming a Nazi movement in a nation which had a complicated past with the treatment of German-Americans and German nationals. By identifying the Bund as an ethnic-German, "Aryan" movement, he not only limited his available pool of potential supporters, but also made a target for himself in a nation that was racially anti-pluralist. He succeeded in painting himself as an anti-American in the eyes of the public, media, and government, the latter of which would prove to be the Bund's downfall, like the Friends of New Germany before them. That was not all that was wrong with Kuhn's decision, however. Regardless of what White Americans viewed of Germans after World War I, a larger issue was the identity of German-Americans themselves. One of the Bund's strategies during the mid to late 1930s was planting chapters in heavily ethnic-German cities, such as Chicago, Milwaukee, and Philadelphia. Kuhn and his *Gauleiters* believed that their pro-German messaging would be attractive to German-Americans in these communities. They were wrong.

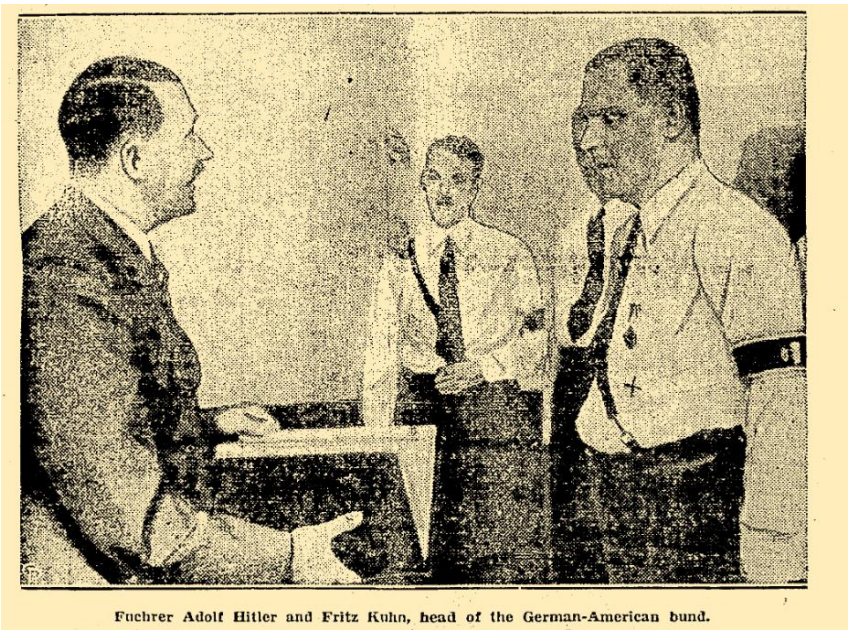
The anti-German legacy of America had lasting effects on ethnic-German communities. A primary reason there has never been and remains no national holiday for German-Americans, like St. Patrick's Day for the Irish or Columbus Day for the Spanish, is because of what Kazal describes as the "100 percent American' nationalism that arose in the 1910s," which "represented an all-out attack on ethnic pluralism – both the idea of it and the de factor pluralist order that had emerged in the United States before the First World War."[48] Early 20th century America was no stranger to forced assimilation, and German-Americans, seeking to protect themselves and their families, were forced to abandon their identities in favor of becoming "American."[49] In Kazal's words, "the German-American case presents an extreme example of assimilatory pressures that other ethnic groups also faced, if to a lesser extent."[50]

Glimpses of this effect are evident in local papers throughout the mid-late 1930s. When the Bund was targeting ethnic-German communities for recruitment, local media reported German-American responses. One news article from the *Nevada State Journal* wrote the following: "Nazism, however, can have no more effective opposition than that now presented by Americans of German blood, who have finally come to recognization whose activities [sic] imperil their reputation as citizens and their peace with their neighbors."[51] Yet another article from the *Appleton Post Crescent Newspaper,* titled "German-Americans are Fighting Kuhn's Bund," defended German-Americans, reminding readers that "indiscriminate resentment against all German groups may be avoided if it is known and kept in mind that the nazis are in the

[48] Kazal, p. 12.
[49] Kazal, p. 10.
[50] Kazal, p. 12.
[51] "Italians Fail to Fight Fascism." *Nevada State Journal,* Oct. 13, 1938.

minority among those German origin or stock and that no element in the American community is more angrily opposed to them."[52]

These social themes and concerns might not have crossed Kuhn's mind in the beginning, however, as he was more concerned in 1936 with legitimizing himself as the "American Führer" by meeting with Hitler at the Olympics to receive photo evidence of his endorsement.



Fuehrer Adolf Hitler and Fritz Kuhn, head of the German-American bund.

Figure 13. Photo of Fritz Kuhn meeting with Adolf Hitler. "Detroit Chemist Denies He Heads U.S. Nazi Army," Titusville Herald, March 16, 1937.

Over time, Kuhn must have seen how the public disdained Hitler and his Nazism. In the media, fascism was frequently decried for its authoritarian nature. What is more, Kuhn's name was often invoked negatively and demands for the Bund to return to Germany were frequent. One judge from Chicago even called for Americans to simply ignore the Bund in hopes that they would

[52] Pegler, Westbrook. "German-Americans are Fighting Kuhn's Bund." *Appleton Post Crescent Newspaper,* Oct. 12, 1938. Pg. 15.

dissipate.[53] To fight against these rising issues, Kuhn and his *gauleiters* almost immediately adopted a narrative of denial. In 1937, well after returning from the Olympics, Kuhn decided it best to denounce his connections to the German Nazi party. In 1938, Kuhn even changed the Bund flag from the Nazi flag, a decision he believed would prove the Bund's status as an independent movement from Hitler's Nazis.

Figure 14. "New Bund Flag." Panama City News Herald, May 4, 1938.

Kuhn's official statement regarding the change was that it was to avoid involving "the German embassy in difficulties by exposing the swastika to insults or making it the cause of rioting." So, instead of the Nazi's black swastika, the Bund would wave a gold one, "resting

[53] "Ignore Bund, Is Advice of Judge." *Sheboygan Press,* November 26, 1938.

obliquely on the base of an inverted pyramid centered against a background of black, white and red rays in the form of a Maltese cross."[54] Kuhn also clarified that the decision to keep the swastika at all was owed to the Bund's "American task, to make this country safe for Aryans." He further explained, "even though we no longer use the German national flag at our meetings, you will notice our organization flag still has the swastika at its center, as the sign of Aryan supremacy."[55]

Kuhn, despite vapidly denying official allegiance to the Nazi party, still maintained that the Bund was an ethnic-German movement whose "American task" was to groom the United States for an eventual Aryan uprising. For the purpose of saving face for the movement, this did little. It did even less for attracting far-right White Americans who might have been attracted to the racist elements of fascist ideology, and yet were not considered to be "Aryans" by the Bund's Nordic-centric standards. Indeed, members were racially vetted upon joining the Bund. As a witness for the Dies Committee investigations in 1939, Helen Vooros, leader of the Bund's girl's organization, testified that the "the organization called a special meeting to discuss whether to admit her because while her mother was German her father was a Greek, born in Syria." Though she was finally admitted due to her "strong feelings for Germany," this process demonstrates the rigidity of the Bund's racial ideology.[56]

As mentioned earlier, Kuhn appeared to have a poor understand of his American environment. His Bund was a German movement in a society that, even by the 1930s, had anti-German sentiment fresh on the mind. He promoted the "Aryan" myth to people whose ideas of

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[54] "Bund Drops Swastika to Avoid 'Confusion." *Chicago Sentinel,* May 5, 1938.
[55] "Bund Drops Swastika to Avoid 'Confusion." *Chicago Sentinel,* May 5, 1938.
[56] "Inquiry Witness Says She Quit Because Leaders Annoyed Her. *Amarillo Sunday News Globe,* August 19, 1939.

what it meant to be "White" or "racially superior" were simply different. That is not to say that Kuhn was completely ignorant of his opportunities, or even that he lacked any possibility of succeeding. In fact, he was a living in the very nation whose socio-cultural values and laws inspired the very essence of Hitler's Nazism. At the very least, the United States was not *immune* to those elements of fascism. By the late 1930s, it was still ripe for it.

In *Mein Kampf,* Hitler wrote of three types of races, the first of which he assigned to the Aryans: "founders of culture, bearers of culture, and destroyers of culture."[57] As James Whitman writes in *Hitler's American Model,* Hitler considered America be one such nation that "had safeguarded its character as a 'Nordic' state."[58] In Whitman's words, Hitler admired "the American conquest of the West, where the Americans had 'gunned down the millions of Redskins to a few hundred thousand."[59] Hitler and his Nazis were particularly attracted to the racial laws of America. Ironically, it was also the Nazis who, Whitman argues, "shuttered at the 'human hardness'" of said laws.[60] To note, the United States' "one-drop" rule meant that, if an individual had even one "drop" of "Negro blood in their veins," they were considered Black, and therefore, inferior.[61]

Kuhn at least understood this during his time as leader of the Bund. It was even addressed by the then second-in-command, Wilhelm Kunze, in Madison Square Garden in 1939. In his speech, Kunze appeals to the racist reality of American society, making the following claim:

> In calling upon our Legislators to adequately develop our Country's Race Legislation, we are decidedly NOT preaching un-Americanism or anything basically new! American law-makers generations ago, promulgated laws

[57] Hitler, Adolf. *Mein Kampf*. Pg. 208.
[58] Whitman, James. *Hitler's American Model.* Princeton University Press. Pg. 47
[59] Whitman, p. 47.
[60] Whitman, p. 127.
[61] Whitman, p. 127.

> forbidding intermarriage between White and Black, Yellow, Brown or Red in twenty-eight of these United States! WE have an Asianic Exclusion Act, 'Jim Crow' Laws, and a complicated System of Immigration Quotas, differentiating even between the various White Peoples! It has then always been very much American, wherever a Race-Problem became acute, to instinctively attempt to create Legislation designed to protect the Aryan Character of our Nation![62]

Kuhn's mistake, however, was the assumption that German Nazism was outfitted for the political cultures and environments of the United States. Fascism as a political form was different from nation to nation. What worked for the Fascists in Italy, for example, was not guaranteed to work in Britain, or vice versa. The same was for German Nazism. Though the German American Bund theoretically operated within a space where reactionary values bloomed, there were elements of German Nazism that simply did not blend well with American political culture. Like fascist ideology itself, definitions of "Whiteness," were transient, and changed from nation to nation. In the United States, Germans, or "Aryans," were not the "superior race." Like the Irish-Americans or Scottish-Americans, German-Americans were minorities who laid outside the sphere of Anglo-Saxon Whiteness. Overtime as well, they became "old stock," and hardly ethnically German. The Bund never managed to overcome this complicated obstacle, even despite attempts to legitimize their brand of Nazi-American fascism by intermingling George Washington with their ideology.

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[62] Kuhn, Fritz. "Address," *Six Addresses on The Aims and Purposes of the German American Bund.* AV Publishing Corporation, Inc., 1939. Pg. 13.

Figure 15. German American Bund rally at Madison Square Garden, New York. Image from U.S. Department of Defense. February 1938.

Though estimates of their membership are hard to confirm, the German American Bund did have a legitimate organization that garnered an estimated tens of thousands of supporters across the nation. This was somewhat remarkable, considering Kuhn had no political allies, no connections to big businesses, no family riches, and poor socio-cultural awareness. For the most part, the Bund was a movement supported mostly by Nazis and Nazi-sympathizing White supremacists, many of whom were associated with other right-wing groups like the Silver Shirts and the KKK. The Bund also found some modest appeal amongst the urban working-class and small business owners. For the most part, the Bund established its branches in urban settings, and

around German communities. From New York, Las Angeles, Brooklyn, Milwaukee, Buffalo, and other cities, the Bund ran rallies became attractive to everyday Americans.


WHITE BLUFFS SPOKESMAN

U. S. Nazi Parade at New Jersey Camp

Figure 16. "U.S. Nazi Parade at New Jersey Camp." White Bluffs Spokesman, October 21, 1937.

Whether attracted to the Bund because of their posturing of White supremacy, or perhaps its anti-war, anti-communist rhetoric, supporters came from working-class Americans of a variety of professions. They also came in the form of small business owners, who also assisted in the funding of the A.V. Publishing company, as demonstrated in the last chapter.

Local newspaper stories reporting on Bund rallies are useful for determining how many people attended Bund rallies, and what aspects might have been attractive to them.

Figure 17. Image of a Bund march. *Elyria Chronicle Telegram*, July 23, 1937

At this rally at Camp Nordland, some 8,000 fascists saluted 1,000 uniformed Bundsmen as they marched. This was not atypical of Bund rallies, as Nazi-style marches usually followed speeches either from Kuhn, a *Gauleiter* such as Schwinn, or some other important Bund higherups. People who attended these rallies were always subject to this typical Nazi routine, as were their children who attended the camps they were held at. The Camp Nordland rally, based in New Jersey, was a rather popular one. Others, such as the state rally in Kenosha, Wisconsin, were less so. The Kenosha rally, for instance, only attracted some 500 persons, of whom 200 were "said to be from

outside the city."[63] It was also at this meeting where communists reportedly joined other anti-Nazi groups in protesting the rally, something which did not happen (according to local reports) at the Camp Nordland rally. These protestors carried placards that read "Bloody Hitler agents must get out of Wisconsin" and "Barbarous nazi murderers are not entitled to rights of American citizenship."[64] That said, attendees of Bund rallies did not come for legitimate policies or polite political discourse. It was obvious, from the Bunds' goosestepping marches, the officers' Hitler-infused speeches, and fascist salutes of their audiences, that Bund rallies were always antisemitic and pro-Nazi. Though that messaging did not appeal to German-Americans to the extent Kuhn hoped, it did draw him a niche crowd amongst the urban working class and small business owners, including groups of White supremacists who were attracted to the general right-wing populist rhetoric Kuhn and his underling officers espoused at their camps.

Comparative Analysis

Despite having vastly different upbringings, both the British Union of Fascists and German American Bund managed to garner modest followings throughout their lifespans. Mosley was an aristocratic politician who made room for himself in the realm of British politics. He and the other BUF leaders made conscious efforts to draw in support from a range of demographics, such as women attracted to the party's outwardly feminist rhetoric, and youthful men drawn to Mosley's anti-war, anti-communist rhetoric. Kuhn, on the other hand, was an immigrant from Germany with no background and no experience in U.S. politics. He had no support from elites, such as Rothermere with the BUF, and he had no personal riches to fall back upon to fund the Bund's endeavors across its three large *Gau.* Despite this, he and his *gauleiters*

[63] "Pickets Denounce Hitler." *Nebraska State Journal,* Aug. 9, 1937.
[64] "Pickets Denounce Hitler." *Nebraska State Journal,* Aug. 9, 1937.

managed to appeal to an estimated 50,000 Americans and German nationals who saw in the Bund certain potentials.

Compared to the Italian Fascists and German Nazis, however, both the populist strategies of the BUF and the Bund lacked at some level to draw them mass support. Where these fledgling groups amassed tens of thousands of followers, the Nazis and Fascists amassed millions. For example, Nazi propaganda on the radio, posters, and in speeches was tailored to the needs and fears of different social groups. In working class regions where voters tended to vote for the KPD, the Nazis campaigned against capitalism, and promised to protect workers by destroying international finance.[65] Conversely, for the middle class, the Nazis "exploited fears of the communist revolutionary threat to private property."[66] For younger audiences, they "denounced conflicts of interest and claimed to stand above classes and parties.[67]

Indeed, one of the strengths of the early Nazi Party was its ability to operate locally and appeal to different demographics by altering their messaging. Like Mosley's British fascism, Hitler's Nazism was ideologically masculine. The Party was defined by sexist conservative ideals that boxed women into the private sphere of child rearing. As summarized by Claudia Koonz in *Mothers in the Fatherland*:

> Women were not born with rights; men conferred them. A man might serve the state in many ways; women's only genuine calling lay in marriage, defined in the narrowest biological terms: to guarantee 'the increase and preservation of the species and the race. This alone is its meaning and its task.' Men in the Nazi state

[65] Spielvogel, Jackson. *Hitler and Nazi Germany.* Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005. Pg. 87.
[66] Spielvogel, Jackson. *Hitler and Nazi Germany.* Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005. Pg. 87.
[67] It is important to note that, up to 1933, the NSDAP's strategies for appealing to the working class had clear limits. Comparatively, the middle class was always overrepresented in the Nazi vote. Though the NSDAP tried to win over workers in the urban centers of Germany, they were already closely aligned with the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the more radical Communist Party (KPD).
Spielvogel, Jackson. *Hitler and Nazi Germany.* Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005. Pg. 129.

> would direct politics, the economy, and the military; women would 'breed absolutely healthy bodies'[68]

However, also like the BUF, the Nazis were able to attract women to their local chapters.

Of those demographics overrepresented in the Nazi Party, women were paradoxically some of Hitler's strongest supporters. Though the Nazis did not keep records on membership based on sex, it is known that women made up around 5% of Nazi membership. The number of women included in Nazi membership based on their class remains unknown, however. Women joined the Nazis, Koonz argues, because they "calculated realistically that women had not achieved sufficient force to make much of an impact on men." So, "Nazi women accepted the promise of second-sex membership in Hitler's movement in exchange for the hope of preserving their own womanly realm against male interference."[69] Indeed, women were attracted to the Nazi Party because of its ideological flexibility. They could, to an extent, mold their local chapters to fit their own political agendas.

As demonstrated in Kevin Passmore's *Women, Gender, and Fascism in Europe, 1919-45* as well, the Nazi Party was, to many, a mass movement of men and women working together to create a new future absent of Weimar degeneracy. After 1931, in Passmore's words, the "NSDAP adopted a more open attitude women's political ideas. Only then was a sustained and focused – and successful – attempt made to attract women to Nazism."[70] So, over time, Nazism, while simultaneously pushing a hyper-masculine narrative, presented for women a real opportunity to advocate for their own rights and desires. Thus, the Nazi Party effectively

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[68] Koonz, Claudia. *Mothers in the Fatherland.* Taylor and Francis, 2013. Pg. 56
[69] Koonz, p. 55.
[70] Passmore, Kevin. *Women, Gender, and Fascism in Europe, 1919-45.* Rutgers University Press, 2003. Pg. 53.

presented itself as a mass movement of "the people" against the various decadent liberal institutions of Weimar society.

They promised to overcome the old class and caste spirit and build a *Volksgemeinschaft*, a national community, a new Germany based on social equality."[71] Nazism's core belief in the nation above the individual (ultranationalism) was attractive to youthful men who sought to revitalize their nation, free from the assumed decadence of liberalism and Jewish Bolshevism. For the lower and middle class and rural landowners, their greatest supporters, the Nazis promised to defeat Communists and other political opponents on the left. To their voters, they offered what Spielvogel describes as "a sense of community." The Nazis "gave meaning to life, and created the emotional effects that gave people strong convictions."[72]

Likewise, the Italian Fascists excelled at energizing crowds using rhetoric of national and racial regeneration. Speaking to the needs of Italians who were already disillusioned with the Kingdom of Italy's failing government, it was easy for Mussolini to attract support from a variety of demographics (i.e., youth, middle class, conservatives, rural landowners, police). Women, too, found themselves a part of the fascist revolution. Like the Nazi Party, the Italian Fascist Party was patriarchal. Moreover, there was no initial desire to encourage women to join the party. Overwhelmingly, the initial members of the National Fascist Party were men. Indeed, as of the founding of the Blackshirts in Piazza San Sepolcro in Milan in March 1919, there were only nine female members present.[73] That did not prevent women from joining afterwards, however. Many feminists joined the early Fascist Party because of their appreciation for

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[71] Spielvogel, p. 61-2.
[72] Spielvogel, p. 59.
[73] Passmore, p. 12.

Mussolini's anti-war rhetoric. Many women were also convinced of Fascist politics, and believed Mussolini could save Italy from the threat of Bolshevism.[74] Despite the Party's misogynistic nature, women found a home in Mussolini's revolutionary party. They even had their own paramilitary units. The first women-only *squadristi* movement, for example, was founded in March 1920 in Monza.[75]

Mussolini, like Hitler, instilled hope in his audiences. He promised to create a racially "pure" Italy, free from corrosive liberal freedoms and degenerate Slavic Bolshevists. For those who were more skeptical of violent revolution, such as large business owners, Mussolini promised to reign in the Blackshirts. He soothed their fears by promising, in Mann's words, to "damp down the revolutionary violence of true, radical fascists."[76] Because of this, "many among the church and political and military elites also swung around to ally with the fascists."[77]

The BUF did succeed as a multi-demographic party to an extent. Where fascist parties of the interwar period struggled to attract women to their vote, the BUF managed to make them a significant portion of their community. By promising to pursue gender equality and to respect the roles of women as the head of the fascist state, Mosley was able to mask his far-right ideology with feminist rhetoric that was appealing to many women. To a variety of social classes, Mosley's economic policies and his dedication to wiping out slums and poverty were also appealing.

Even so, the BUF never succeeded greatly in rallying the working class away from the Communist Party, or even the Labour Party for that matter. On the contrary, Mosley did the left a

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[74] Passmore, p. 12.
[75] Passmore, p. 12.
[76] Mann, Michael. *Fascists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Pg. 120.
[77] Mann, p. 120.

courtesy by uniting them against him, as seen in the consistent anti-fascist, Communist resistance against him and the Blackshirts on an almost daily basis throughout the mid-1930s. Where Hitler recognized the urban workers' allegiances to the SPD and the KPD and consequentially shifted focus to other regions and social classes, Mosley doubled down on BUF presence throughout the urban centers of London.[78] If Mosley had been more ideologically flexible like the Italian Fascists or German Nazis, he may have found more success amongst rural landowners, or the middle or upper class. Of course, Mosley's success in this regard was limited regardless. His opportunities to fear monger over national decline, as the Nazis or Fascists had, were constrained by his misplaced timing as a populist leader in a nation with a National Government making efforts to resolve the issues he criticized.

Similar points can be made for the German American Bund. Compared to FDR, Kuhn was a nobody who offered no real solutions to the Great Depression. Nor did he ever attempt to enter the realm of U.S. politics. He also made the mistake of trying to appeal to Americans using pan-German rhetoric. In a country with a history of anti-German sentiment, Kuhn's promises of restoring the United States through Aryanization was unappealing to many. Moreover, those who did find the Bund's White supremacist messaging attractive also had a plethora of other far-right movements to choose from. The Silver Shirts, KKK, Christian Front, Crusader White Shirts, the National Gentile League, to name just a small number of those active in the 1930s, were all available for far-right Americans to join. Furthermore, the Bund's hopes of drawing support from German-Americans were hugely misguided. Many German-Americans were disinterested in the anti-democratic messaging of the Bund. Moreover, many had already been assimilated,

[78] In interwar Germany, both the SPD and the KPD attracted working class voters. Even after the SPD lost votes during the Great Depression, it remained the second largest party in the Reichstag in 1932 and 1933.

and whatever overt ethnic-German consciousness Kuhn was looking for had already been wiped out by the time he came to the stage in 1936.

Also, where the BUF had steady support from women, the German American Bund struggled to maintain membership from women or girls. When the Dies Committee began investigating the Bund for un-American activities in 1939, they brought forward multiple witnesses to illustrate how the Bund operated. Helen Vooros was one of these witnesses. She was a 19-year-old woman and the former leader of the Bund's girl's organization. According to Vooros, parents frequently complained about the proximity of the boys' and girls' housing at camps. She also claimed the Bund's youth leader, Theodore Dinkellacker, slept with girls in the organization. In her testimony, she described how Dinkellacker slept with a 17-year-old girl during a Bund youth trip to Germany. She also explained how she and others in the girl's organization were told not to report the incident.[79] Vooros was so disgusted with these activities that she left the organization.

In the end, the British Union of Fascists and the German American Bund had limited success when it came to their populist abilities. Though the BUF was able to successfully attract support from women, they struggled to appeal to the urban working class. Similarly, the Bund succeeded in amassing support from Nazi-sympathizing White supremacists, but struggled to appeal to German-Americans, their target demographic. Furthermore, neither party managed to make themselves appealing to established conservative parties. The Bund never attempted to enter the realm of Republican politics. Likewise, the British Conservatives were never desperate

[79] "Immoral Practices at Camp Charged." *Modesto Bee and News Herald*, Aug. 18, 1939.

enough to call upon the BUF for political aid against the left, as was the case with the DNVP and the Nazis in Germany, and the conservatives and the Fascists in Italy.[80]

[80] The British Union of Fascists had few political successes. At Leeds North East in 1940, the BUF candidate Sydney Allen (2.9%) lost in a parliamentary run against Conservative John Craik-Henderson (97.1%) by more than 23,000 votes. The BUF also lost parliamentary elections that same year in Silvertown and Middleton and Prestwich with similar results. Though, it is worth noting that the BUF did elect a few councilors at the local level. In 1934, Charles Budd was elected at Worthing, Sussex, and in 1938, Ronald Creasy was elected at Eye, Suffolk.

CHAPTER VI: POLITICAL VIOLENCE

As discussed in the last chapter, populist appeals were necessary for fascist parties to find success. Political violence was a form of political practice used by the most successful fascist parties, one which, when used correctly, legitimized the party as a form of "self-defense" against the chaos and disorder of the "other." The BUF and the Bund both had their own paramilitary corps. However, neither were as successful as their models (the Fascist Blackshirts and the Nazi Brownshirts). This chapter explores the reasons political violence was useful to interwar fascists, and why the BUF and the Bund were unable to legitimize their violence against their political and racial opponents.

What is Political Violence?

If a fascist party could successfully garner appeal through populist strategies, they could legitimize their political violence. Fascist parties employed this form of political activity against opponents for the purposes of further polarizing the "other" from "the people." That said, determining what is and is not political violence can be difficult. In the anthology, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Political Violence*, edited by Marie Smyth, John Darby, author of the work's first chapter, "Political Violence: An Overview," proposes a definition. Darby characterizes political violence according to four main attributes. First, he argues, "political violence's principal activities and key aims are primarily expressed within an existing political entity, but they may be inspired and strengthened by international movements."[1] Darby also argues "political violence involves the use of violence rather than the use of protest. The use of

[1] Darby, John. "Political Violence: An Overview" in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Political Violence,* edited by Marie Smyth. Routledge, 2016. Pg. 18.

protest to provoke violence lies in the no-man's land between protest and violence."[2] Lastly, "the objective of political violence is to achieve changes in the political system rather than other forms of social change," and is "an organized activity."[3]

The line between legitimate protest and political violence is often blurry. In both cases, protestors might assume their actions are justified because they represent the will of "the people," especially since, according to Harmonie Toros, "citizens are indeed considered to have the right, if not the duty, to follow the higher moral imperative of justice over legality."[4] The right to self-determination, Toros explains, "may be considered a higher moral imperative than the right to life or liberty." As a result, the right to life and liberty is subjugated by the right to self-determination, or "moral" imperative.[5] Darby uses the example of anti-choice radicals in the United States to explore the challenges of defining actions as forms of political violence or political protest:

> Are protesters against abortion clinics an illegitimate restrain on individual choice or a legitimate form of political expression? If the protest leads to violence – and at least eight people associated with clinics in the USA have been murdered since 1993, the most recent being Dr. George Tiller in 2004 – does this constitute political violence?[6]

On one hand, anti-choice conservatives act according to their idea of "moral" right to self-determination. On the other, their actions, like those of fascists during the interwar period, led to the stripping of basic human rights from millions with the overturning of Roe v. Wade in 2022.

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[2] Darby, p. 18.
[3] Darby, p. 18.
[4] Toros, Harmonie. "From Dissent to Revolution: Politics and Violence" in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Political Violence*, edited by Marie Smyth. Routledge, 2016. Pg. 122.
[5] Toros, p. 131.
[6] Toros, p. 21.

Regardless of nuances, there are clear examples of what political violence looks like in action. After all, it is violence that "gives political violence one of its essential features."[7] Considering the interwar period, fascist paramilitary violence was always blatant. It could never be argued, for example, that the murders and burning of homes of communists, socialists, Jews, or any other "other," was some form of legitimate protest of state policies or institutions. In the case of interwar fascist paramilitary action, violence was always intentional and unapologetic. What makes political violence appealing, then, is that it is often performed by "the people" for "the people." Fascists utilized populist strategies to appeal to people who believed in the elimination of pluralism, and the decadent "other," while political violence simply acted as a tool for achieving it. But political violence is not always appealing to populists. In fact, if poorly timed, a fascist party's use of political violence could have detrimental effects (i.e., drawing in more opposition than support). If used correctly, however, it became a powerful tool for garnering appeal.

The Italian Fascists' greatest strength was their ability to perform populist appeals through political violence targeted against political and racial opponents (i.e., socialists and Slavic peoples). The Blackshirts appealed to rural land owners and workers by providing jobs. Mussolini used the failures of the government to further demonize them in the eyes of the public. The Blackshirts targeted communities, like those in the Po Valley. From town to town, they violently attack the "other," humiliating the government and gaining the confidence of local communities in the process. In *Fascismo – Inchiesta Socialista sulle gesta dei fascisti in Italia,*

[7] Darby, p. 21.

edited by the socialist newspaper, *Avanti*, and translated by Alessandro Saluppo, the success of these campaigns is fully illustrated:

> Town after town, destruction, threat and terror has hit the sixty small municipalities of Polesine. One by one, and in about two or three weeks, they have been invaded by hundreds of hooligans during the day, beating all those who have been indicated as being socialists by local agrarians, ransacking buildings, breaking up the furniture and taking away everything they find. At night, moving in groups, wearing masks and holding muskets, they shoot at random in the streets and throw bombs, break into the houses of whoever is part of a municipal administration, league, of a cooperative and so on and, surrounded by the unspeakable screams of women and children, they threat *violentano*, extort declarations, impose shameful things or force people to desperately run away in the countryside.[8]

Mussolini's Fascists perfected the use of what Paxton calls, "mobilizing passions." These foundational traits of fascism included the belief that one's group was superior to all others, yet simultaneously declining "under the corrosive effects of individualistic liberalism, class conflict, and alien influences."[9] Without invoking themes of decadence or decline successfully amongst the public, it was difficult for fascists to legitimize political violence to the extent Mussolini and his *Squadrismo* were.

Of course, political violence is not always guaranteed to be beneficial. After Mussolini's infamous March on Rome in 1922, the NSDAP (Nazi Party) was inspired to do the same. Since its foundation in 1920, the Nazi Party was small and failed to attain a substantial following in the public or political sphere. Yet, encouraged by the Italian Fascist revolution, they believed a strong enough vision, alongside a handful of disgruntled Nazis, was enough to garner the support of the military to overthrow the "effeminate" Weimar government. The Beer Hall Putsch of 1923

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[8] Saluppo, Alessandro. "Paramilitary Violence and Fascism: Imaginaries and Practices of Squadrismo, 1919–1925." *Contemporary European History* 29, no. 3 (2020): 289–308. doi:10.1017/S0960777319000390. Pg. 294.
[9] Saluppo, p. 302.

failed under this assumption, and Hitler was arrested by Munich police afterwards. He was sentenced to five years for treason, but only served eight months before being released.

As the Nazi Party started to gain popularity during the late 1920s and early 1930s, their political violence became more broadly accepted. Like the Italian Fascists, the Nazis took advantage of communities who feared the "other," namely Jews and the left. Though the SA engaged in the same violence as their political opponents, their actions were deemed necessary to protect law and order. In other words, it was a form of a "self-defense."[10] This, notably, was the same justification given to the actions of the *Squadrismo* in Italy.

The BUF Blackshirts

The BUF and the Bund shared issues of legitimacy when it came to use of political violence to gain appeal. Within Italy and Germany, Mussolini's Fascists and Hitler's Nazis had managed to legitimize paramilitary conflict against the "other" (i.e., socialists and racial opponents). In Paxton's words:

> Fascist violence was neither random nor indiscriminate. It carried a well-calculated set of coded messages: that communist violence was rising, that the democratic state was responding to it ineptly, and that only the fascists were tough enough to save the nation from antinational terrorists. An essential step in the fascist march to acceptance and power was to persuade law-and-order conservatives and members of the middle class to tolerate fascist violence as a harsh necessity in the face of Left provocation.[11]

Neither the BUF nor Bund accomplished this. Though, of the two, it was probably the BUF which had the most opportunity for its Blackshirt division to be successful. In Britain, anti-fascist communists and socialists were not keen to watch as Mosley drew support from the urban

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[10] Siemens, Daniel. Stormtroopers: A New History of Hitler's Brownshirts. United Kingdom: Yale University Press, 2017. Pg. 114.
[11] Paxton, Robert. *The Anatomy of Fascism*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2004. Pg. 84.

working class in London. What is more, Mosley was outspoken in his hatred of socialism and communism, inflaming conflicts further. At a rally in London in 1933, he confronted a particular communist in his audience, stating confidently the BUF would "smash your Communist revolution."[12]

From 1932 up until 1940 when the party was dissolved, fascist-communist quarrels were all too frequent in England. At that same meeting in London there were "fisticuffs" between fascists and anti-fascist protestors.[13] At another rally that same year, anti-fascists rioted until Mosley was forced to leave the stage, at which point he reported that the Blackshirts "have preserved order at 300 or 400 meetings this year."[14] In Brighton, as well, communists kidnapped and presumably murdered a 17-year old fascist, leaving a note stating: "We have got rid of one of your members, and we will get rid of the lot of you, one by one, if you don't close down."[15] A year later at the 1934 Olympia rally in June, fascists and anti-fascists brawled in the open, leading to the downward spiral of BUF legitimacy in the public eye, and Rothermere's pulling of support altogether.

Other newspapers, such as the left-wing *Daily Worker* turned increasingly against the BUF. Before the Hyde Park rally on Sunday, September 9, 1934, the *Daily Worker* printed a propaganda piece as shown in Figure 18 below:

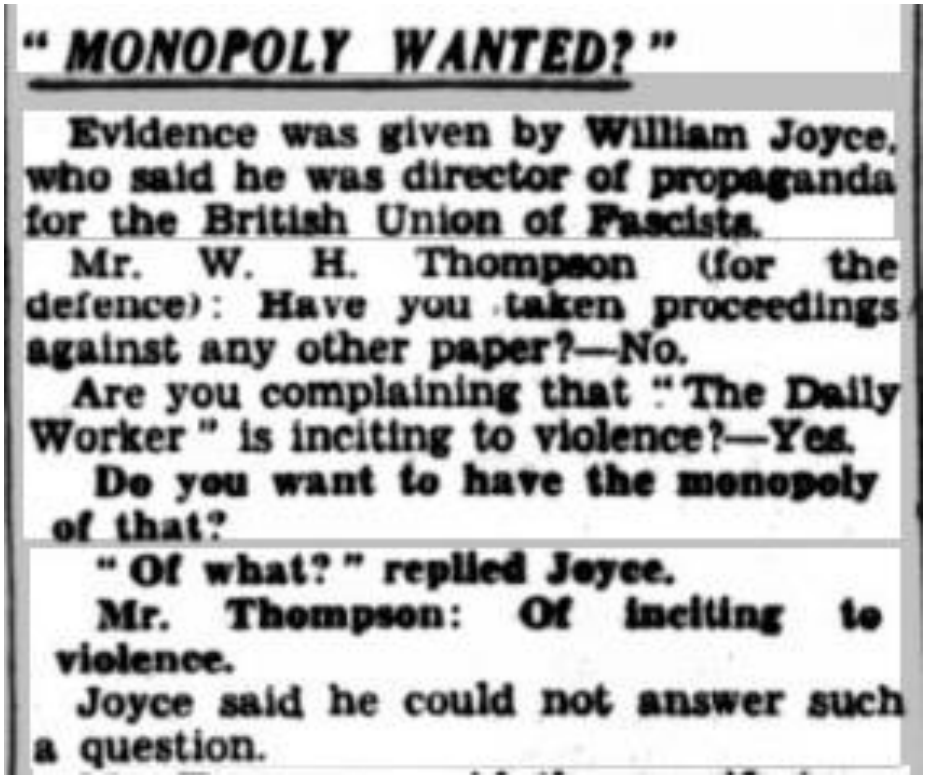
[12] "Fisticuffs at Meeting." *Birmingham Gazette,* Jan. 6, 1933.
[13] "Fisticuffs at Meeting." *Birmingham Gazette,* Jan. 6, 1933.
[14] "Fascists in Riot." *Shields Daily Gazette,* March 13, 1933.
[15] "Got Rid Of." *Nottingham Evening Post,* May 27, 1933.

Figure 18. Sir Oswald Mosley, as depicted in cartoon form in a local newspaper. "The National Government of Exploiters & War-Mongers." The National Archives, September 1934.

Here, Mosley is illustrated in his typical black shirt, wielding a bloodied bat in his right hand, and brandishing spiked brass knuckles on his left, while standing before a crowd of Nazi saluting fascists. According to an article titled, "Summonses Brought By Fascists Dismissed," from the *Daily Herald*, William Joyce, the BUF's director of propaganda, tried to accuse the *Daily Worker* of inciting violence before the Hyde rally occurred on the ninth. The *Daily Worker's* piece called anti-fascists to turn the Hyde rally into an "anti-Fascist triumph," which Joyce interpreted as a call towards violence.[16] Joyce brought forth this evidence to court. However,

[16] "Summonses Brought by Fascists Dismissed." *Daily Herald*, Sept. 8, 1934.

W.H. Thompson, the defendant for the *Daily Worker,* managed to have the case dismissed, critiquing the BUF's hypocrisy. The full conversation can be found in Figure 19.



"MONOPOLY WANTED?"

Evidence was given by William Joyce, who said he was director of propaganda for the British Union of Fascists.

Mr. W. H. Thompson (for the defence): Have you taken proceedings against any other paper?—No.

Are you complaining that "The Daily Worker" is inciting to violence?—Yes.

Do you want to have the monopoly of that?

"Of what?" replied Joyce.

Mr. Thompson: Of inciting to violence.

Joyce said he could not answer such a question.

Figure 19. "Summonses Brought by Fascists Dismissed." *Daily Herald,* Sept. 8, 1934.

Thompson ridiculed the BUF's defense, suggesting that counter rallies at Hyde Park were not uncommon in the past. He also commented that, "if the anti-Fascists were as timid and touchy as the Fascists, the courts would be flooded with applications of this sort against the British Union of Fascists."[17] Emphasizing that these complaints had been brought by the BUF and not the authorities, Thompson succeeded in convincing the magistrate, Mr. Langley, that there was nothing illegal about the comments made in the *Daily Worker's* article. A day after this was made public, the Hyde Rally was held. As a result, thousands of anti-fascists, many led by

[17] "Summonses Brought by Fascists Dismissed." *Daily Herald,* Sept. 8, 1934.

Strachey, a previous ally to Mosley, threatened to battle against the Blackshirts.[18] Over time, these counter-rallies only grew with popularity. For instance, on October 3, 1937, at the BUF's fifth Anniversary rally in Rotherhithe, an estimated 50,000 organized communists and members of the Independent Labour Party rallied against the 3,400 present fascists, causing "considerable damage to property" and violence that left several officers wounded, according to a police report of the event.[19]

By 1937, the Blackshirts had failed to legitimize themselves as a defense against their opposition. Both the Italian Fascists and the German Nazis had environments where paramilitary activities were not uncommon. Indeed, continental Europe was a landscape ripe for successful political violence. The experiences of WWI shaped the worldviews of young men who craved the "adventures" of war.[20] In the case of the Fascist *Squadrismo* and the Nazi *Sturmabteilung,* it was not difficult to justify violence against the "other." The *Squadrismo* acted largely unrestrained by police or military all the way up until Mussolini's rise to power. To a similar extent, the Nazi SA attacked enemies of the state, gaining votes in the process. Events such as the leftist revolutions in Germany from 1918-1919, and the rise of a socialist state in Bavaria, helped legitimize the presence of ultra-nationalist right-wing paramilitaries like the *Freikorps,* or of course, the SA. The BUF, however, only succeeded in stoking fear in the hearts of the British. One article that year titled, "Mosley March Fears," reported that "fear of violence and even bloodshed, is spreading through South-east London following the announcement of a Fascist march through Southwark and Bermondsey on October 3."[21] Instead of providing a sense of

[18] "A Communist Fiasco." *Truth,* Sept. 12, 1934.
[19] MEPO 2/3117. The National Archives.
[20] Siemens, p. 76.
[21] "Mosley March Fears." *Reynold's Newspaper,* Sept. 19, 1937.

security and safety to surrounding communities, the presence of their goose-stepping Blackshirts only wrought dismay and uncertainty. By 1936, a year prior to the publication of the article, BUF meetings, though in places more popular than they ever were otherwise amongst British fascists, were also constantly raided by a bold anti-fascist opposition that was all too willing to fight. At Barker's Pool on October 2, 1936, some 2,000 communists rallied against Mosley and his BUF.[22]

Anti-fascists relentlessly terrorized Mosley and his BUF members. In a way, this was a notable advantage for the BUF's situation. Like the *Squadrismo* or the *Sturmabteilung*, the BUF's Blackshirts had the potential to legitimize themselves and their party's anti-communist rhetoric. They had the presence of a powerful and extremely willing enemy for them to antagonize and manipulate. However, Mosley was seemingly more successful in uniting the left against him as opposed to growing his own base (as his numbers always remained small). Anti-fascist resistance climaxed on October 4, 1936, in the streets of East End London. The "Battle of Cable Street," as it became known, saw thousands of police, Blackshirts and anti-fascists violently clash throughout the day. The aftermath of the conflict led to the British parliament passing the Public Order Act of 1936. This law banned paramilitary uniforms, effectively ending any viability the Blackshirts had left. Though Mosley claimed the Blackshirts were for self-defense, he never managed to justify violence against the left in a way that was palatable to his chosen audiences, conservative elites, the police, or military for that matter. The British public had not been convinced that fascist violence was justified and necessary to stop what Mosley and his fascists believed to be an immediate communist threat to British society.

[22] "Communist Meeting in Barker's Pool." *Sheffield Independent,* Oct. 2, 1936.

The Bund Brownshirts

The Bund had limited success with political violence. The Bund's paramilitary violence was usually random and chaotic, with their SA's quarrels always being depicted in headlines as clashes wrought by thugs. One segment from *Florence Morning News* reads, "a Bund membership drive in Trenton, N.J., March 20 was howled down when organized group booed speaker. Blood spilled April 20 when about 100 veterans…clashed with N.Y. Bundsmen celebrating Hitler's birthday."[23] Bund violence usually only ended in poor favor in the media. One article from the *Hamilton Daily News Journal* provides a particularly enthusiastic response to the Bund, demanding that "the German-American bund business had better be handled by the United States without gloves and that right promptly." The writer continues to state, "this is a free country – but it is NOT FREE for racial radicals to set up a program 'patterned after Hitler."[24]

[23] *Florence Morning News,* May 2, 1938.
[24] "The German-American Bund." *Hamilton Daily News Journal,* Nov. 22, 1938.

Figure 20. "Seven Men 'Wounded' in Battle with German Bund." *Albert Lea Evening Tribune*, May 2, 1938.

As the Bund grew more relevant in numbers and/or in public depiction, so did their opposition. On March 13, 1937, "fifty persons describing themselves as the anti-nazi federation of Detroit picketed the office of the German consulate today carrying placards and banners reading 'Out with nazi spies' and 'Out with Kuhn!'"[25] In a way, Kuhn's initial efforts to popularize the Bund as a Nazi army in America worked, as the effort was followed by "charges in Washington that Fritz Kuhn…is head of a uniformed army of 200,000 Germans in the United States."[26] One paper even commented on this idea, stating "why should he [Kuhn] spoil the effect of such flattering advertising?"[27] Also, in 1938, Frank Miles, editor of the *Iowa*

[25] "German Consulate in Detroit Is Picketed by 50." *Nevada State Journal*, March 14, 1937.
[26] "German Consulate in Detroit Is Picketed by 50." *Nevada State Journal*, March 14, 1937.
[27] *Syracuse Herald*, March 24, 1937.

Legionaire, stated confidently that "a German-American bund movement in Iowa will be bitterly opposed by World War veterans."[28] Of the anti-fascists, WWI veterans were one group particularly opposed to the Bund. Given they had just emerged from a war against Germany, it made sense why they would be against a movement promoting German ultra-nationalism.

The BUF and the Bund both fell short of their goals, not only because of their struggle to utilize populist strategies, but because of their lackluster ability to legitimize political violence in the public eye. Though Hitler did not utilize political violence frequently after the failed Putsch of 1923, the SA were deemed necessary by many to fight against the "November Criminals," and other so-called enemies of the nation. Likewise, Mussolini's *Squadrismo* bullied, murdered, and conquered socialists, drawing favor from conservatives, business owners, and rural landowners who had long been against the Kingdom of Italy's leftist government. The success of right-wing political violence in these two instances was owed in-part to the political environments of the post-war nations in Central Europe. The German Revolution of 1918-1919 saw rampant political violence amongst the right and the left, with the *Freikorps* murdering Poles and other racial enemies in the streets, while leftists in Bavaria fought to form their own autonomous state. The interwar environment of Italy was suitable to a similar extent. The Italian people were tired of the non-functioning government, the economy was worsening, and Italy had gained nothing from their hard-fought victory during the First War. Mussolini's *Squadrismo* was the spark that ignited the weary hearts of those who had come to hate their government.

In the case of the BUF and the Bund, their use of political violence arguably backfired. Mosley had a fierce and willing opponent in the form of the Communist Party, but never gained

[28] "Attempts To Start Bund Movement Opposed." *Mount Pleasant News,* May 4, 1938.

enough political legitimacy to justify his Blackshirts' attacks against them. Likewise, Kuhn had anti-fascist opponents, but never managed to convince the American public that the Bund's Brownshirts were a necessary form of self-defense against them. Rather, the BUF and the Bund's paramilitaries were frequently criticized for their violence, and only exacerbated public disdain for their political activities.

CHAPTER VII: DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND THE LIMITS OF FASCIST POLITICS

Successful fascist parties like the Italian Fascists and the German Nazis had strong leadership and organization. They also used effective populist strategies and political violence. That said, these parties were most successful because they operated in countries whose political environments and cultures were ideal for fascist appeal. The Italian Fascists and German Nazis were able to legitimize themselves by appealing to the people of nations whose governments and economies were in shambles. They also had clear avenues to seize power legally. When Sir Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists and Fritz Kuhn's German American Bund were founded in 1932 and 1936, they were unable to establish mass followings to the same extend their models were. This was because the BUF and the Bund operated within democracies, which, although providing them with a foothold for appeal, nonetheless limited their ability to seize power. This chapter will explore the political environments and cultures of Italy, Germany, Britain, and the United States to explain the advantages and disadvantages both the BUF and the Bund faced in comparison to their models.

The Kingdom of Italy and the Rise of Mussolini

For a fascist party to find mass appeal, it needed legitimacy. "The people" must be convinced that the fascist leader is a national savior against the tides of degeneracy.[1] This aspect of fascism worked particularly well if the subject nation faced economic and political disasters,

[1] In terms of fascist ideology, "the people" are those (i.e., White Americans in the United States, or "Aryan" Germans in Germany) considered to be the "founding stock" of the nation.

all of which confronted the Kingdom of Italy after a costly war of unification fought against French and Piedmontese forces in 1859. Post-unification, the Kingdom of Italy was faced with a massive debt.[2] By 1913, the cost of living raised four times, and the economy faced mass recession. During World War I, Italy's economy continued to struggle. Though industrial production expanded from 1915-1918, the lack of international trade and raw materials weakened Italy's post-war economy.[3] Furthermore, with the armistice came the demobilization of troops. Returning Italian veterans drove "unemployment to 2 million" by the end of the year.[4]

Moreover, though the Kingdom of Italy helped win the war, the Allied treaties were considered problematic. In the case of Germany, it is a common understanding that the rise of Hitler was partly owed to the harshness of the Treaty of Versailles and Article 231. The so-called "War Guilt Clause," pinned Germany as the soul catalyst of World War I, demanded unpayable reparations to the Allies, stripped away its colonial influence, and weakened its military.[5]

The Kingdom of Italy also believed itself a victim of Allied treaties. During World War I, the Allies managed to recruit Italy with the Treaty of London. Drafted in 1915, the Treaty promised Italy territories after Allied victory. Article 4 stated Italy would receive the following territories:

> the Trentino, Cisalpine Tyrol with its geographical and natural frontier, as well as Trieste, the countries of Gorizia and Gradisca, all Istria as far as the Quarnero and including Volosca and the Istrian islands of Cherso and Lussin, as well as the

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[2] De Grand, Alexander. *Italian Fascism: Its Origins & Development*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982. Pg. 5.
[3] De Grand, p. 22.
[4] De Grand, p. 22.
[5] Knox, Philander. *Treaty of Versailles.* Washington Government, 1919.

> small islands of Plavnik, Unie, Canidole, Palazzuoli, San Pietro di Nembi, Asinello, Gruica, and the neighboring islets.[6]

Likewise, Article 5 promised "the province of Dalmatia," and Article 6, "full sovereignty over Valona."[7] So, when the nation entered the war May 24, 1915, it was under the assumption of the Treaty of London's terms. When the Treaty of Versailles was drafted in 1919, Italy expected those promises to be upheld. Though some of the land was provided, not all the promised acquisitions were given. This "betrayal" would eventually become one of Mussolini's talking points. His advocacy for territorial expansionism, or *spazio vitale*, called for the return of the Roman Empire. This concept shares similarities with German *lebensraum*, or "living space," which Hitler used to justify German expansion Eastward into Russia.

Although Italy enjoyed victory, its discontent with World War I's results were extensive. The loss of empire was particularly frustrating for Italian nationalists, considering the country's imperialist failures in Africa. On March 1, 1896, Italy was defeated by Ethiopian forces at Adwa, an embarrassment that would not be "righted" until Mussolini's revenge invasion in 1935. The Italian Fascists were aware of frustrations amongst nationalists who believed the Kingdom of Italy was a failed colonial power. On March 23, 1919, at Milan, Mussolini addressed the importance of empire. Along with envying the French, English, and other European powers, Mussolini spoke of imperialism as "the base of the life of every people which desires economic and spiritual expansion."[8] The failures of the Kingdom of Italy to receive the land promised to

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[6] *The Treaty of London (1915)*. World War I Document Archive. (n.d.). Retrieved January 11, 2023, from https://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/The_Treaty_of_London_(1915).
[7] *The Treaty of London (1915)*. World War I Document Archive. (n.d.). Retrieved January 11, 2023, from https://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/The_Treaty_of_London_(1915).
[8] Mussolini, Benito, and Quaranta di San Severino, Bernardo, Barone. *Mussolini as Revealed in His Political Speeches (November 1914-August 1923)*. Project Gutenberg, n.d. Pg. 90.

them gave the Italian Fascists a sense of legitimacy amongst those who felt betrayed by the Allies. In this way, Mussolini weaved discontent into an opportunity for his own benefit.

Those who flocked to Mussolini were not only drawn by his expansionist rhetoric. Since the nation's development in 1861, there were, according to De Grand, widening gaps between "political, social, and economic elite groups, who created the unified state, and the mass of society, which was poor, illiterate, and excluded from meaningful participation in national politics."[9] So, after the war, when unemployment was high, and industrialists continued to fight against raising wages to a living standard,[10] "large segments of Italian society no longer responded to traditional means of political control." By 1912, men over the age of 30 were given the right to vote, and by the elections of 1913 there was a new political system that put an emphasis on public participation in politics.[11]

In the first election after World War I, on November 16, 1919, postwar ambitions for change brought forth a left-wing parliament.[12] Despite this new political era, gridlock consumed the Kingdom of Italy's parliament. The Marxist Socialista Italian (PSI) held a third of the seats, while the Catholic Party held another third.[13] Democratic Catholics and leftists, even when in agreement over issues such as tax and land reform and/or class solidarity, failed to find common ground over religion in the education system. Because of this, no compromise was possible, even with a left majority.[14] This was one of the issues which Mussolini capitalized upon on October 6, 1922, at the Sciesa in Milan. Here, Mussolini provided a speech for Italians complaining about

[9] De Grand, p. 3.
[10] De Grand, p. 22.
[11] De Grand, p. 23
[12] Paxton, Robert. *The Anatomy of Fascism*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2004. Pg. 88.
[13] Paxton, p. 88.
[14] Paxton, p. 88.

the decadent state of the Italian parliament. Along with suggesting that the government in Rome was suffering from "softening of the brain," Mussolini argued:

> Now the Liberal State is a mask behind which there is no face, it is a scaffolding behind which there is no building. There is force but there is no spirit behind them. All those who ought to uphold it feel that it is approaching the extreme limits of incompetence, impotence, and absurdity.[15]

When Mussolini claimed Italy's parliament had failed, he was in many ways right. Deadlock brought a devastating halt to any sort of progress in legislative action that would help Italy's dwindling economy or reduce class conflicts. This would lead to further legitimization of his right-wing revolution, one which the Italian government was practically unable to stop.

The fragility of the Italian government led to the formulation of one of the greatest myths of interwar fascism: the notion that the March on Rome was a demonstration of fascist power. In a speech at Milan, twenty-one days before the March on Rome, Mussolini outlined fervently his beliefs that nothing stood in his way. He explained:

> I do not think that our enemies will place serious obstacles in our way. Bolshevism is defeated. Look at the Congress of Rome. What a pitiful sight! When the leader of a congress behaves like the lawyer of Busto, then you understand that we are upon the bottom rung of the ladder. There was one Socialism, to-day there are four, and there is a tendency towards further divisions. And not only this, but each of these divisions claims to represent the authentic party. It is no wonder that the proletariat scatters, discouraged and disgusted by the attitude of Socialism. As I have already said, the day of Socialism is not only past as a party, its philosophies and doctrine no longer stand.[16]

Mussolini convinced Italians that the age of weakened democracies and socialism was over, and that *fascismo* faced "no great obstacles to overcome, as the nation is waiting us."[17] His words

[15] Mussolini, p. 165.
[16] Mussolini, p. 167-168.
[17] Mussolini, p. 166.

certainly inspired Hitler. In 1923, Nazis attempted what is now known as the Beer Hall Putsch, which resulted in humiliating failure and Hitler's arrest.

Despite Mussolini's words, however, the March on Rome was not won out of fascist might. In Paxton's words, it was a "gigantic bluff that worked."[18] As mentioned earlier, the left majority was "divided into two irreconcilable parts" that could not govern.[19] This aided in garnering Mussolini supporters to his movement. However, it would be inaccurate to suggest the government's deadlock alone brought Mussolini to power. Even more, it would be inaccurate to claim that the government was without agency to prevent a militant fascist revolution. Before the March on Rome (1922), Prime Minister Luigi Facta worked with the King's approval to reinforce Rome's garrison with five battalions of Italian soldiers.[20] These countermeasures were nearly successful. Trains carrying fascists to Rome were stopped by police. At three checkpoints – Civita Vecchia, Orte, and Avezzano – some twenty-thousand fascists were arrested.[21] For a moment, it was completely plausible that Mussolini's fascists could be repelled, and a Fascist takeover prevented by police and the trained battalions at Rome.

Despite this, King Victor Emmanuel III refused to utilize Italy's available resources to fight Mussolini.[22] Even though Rome was well-defended, and conservatives such as Antonio Salandra had finally agreed to work with Facta and other socialists to form a coalition government, Emmanuel III appointed Mussolini as prime minister.[23]

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[18] Paxton, p. 90.
[19] Paxton, p. 88.
[20] Paxton, p. 88.
[21] Paxton, p. 89.
[22] Paxton, p. 90.
[23] Paxton, p. 89.

This was done undemocratically and according to Emmanuel III's powers as King of Italy. The *Statuto Albertino*, the foundational Constitution of Italy, granted the king several powers. Article 3 and 5 granted legislative and executive abilities to Emmanuel III, of which only the legislative roles were given to the Senate and Chamber of Deputies.[24] Most notably, the *Statuto Albertino* ratified the king's right to appoint state officials.

Unlike Franco, who had established his fascist state in Spain violently and through revolution, Mussolini followed a legal road to power. This required Mussolini to gauge the weaknesses of Italy's Constitution. The presence of an easily abused legal state, combined with the gridlock present within parliament, allowed him and his followers the room they needed to find popularity and control. Without these pre-existing factors, it would have been harder, or perhaps impossible, for Mussolini to legally find a position of power which allowed him to legislatively modify Italian society according to his fascist vision. When he became Prime Minister in 1923, Mussolini passed laws to legally corrode democracy. In November 1923, the Italian parliament passed the anti-democratic Acerbo Law, which allowed any party with 25% of the votes to receive a two-thirds majority in parliament. This allowed Mussolini's *fascisti* to assume a majority despite its previous minority status.[25]

The Weimar Republic and the Rise of Hitler

[24] "Statuto Albertino - Quirinale." Accessed October 24, 2022. https://www.quirinale.it/allegati_statici/costituzione/Statutoalbertino.pdf.
[25] Paxton, p. 109.

Defeat at the hands of the Allies was difficult for many Germans to accept. Throughout the Weimar Republic's lifespan, conspiracies arose to justify the loss of World War I. It was commonly believed by Germans that the "November Criminals" had stabbed the *Kaiserreich* in the back, resulting in the humiliating loss.[26] This antisemitic myth painted Jews and leftists as the cause for German defeat, a sentiment repeated in Hitler's *Mein Kampf.* [27] In his manifesto, the would-be Führer argued that anti-Aryan agents, the Jews, "smashed the German Army by striking at it from the rear."[28] These ideas were also present in right-wing media at the time. The 1924 propaganda piece below, "Deutsche, denkt daran," depicts Scheidemann, a social democrat, and other politicians bearing traits associated with "Jewishness" (i.e., obesity, crooked noses) as stabbing German soldiers in the back.

[26] *Kaiserreich* refers to the German Empire.
[27] The "November Criminals" was an antisemitic myth that suggested Germany had not lost the war. Rather, it was certain German citizens - government leaders, Jews, and socialists – who manipulated the German Empire's surrender to the Allies.
[28] Hitler, Adolf. *Mein Kampf*. Jaico Publishing House. 2006. Pg. 244-5.

Figure 21. Propaganda illustration of the "November Criminals" stabbing German soldiers in the back. "Deutsche, denkt daran!" 1924.

More so than Italians, Germans were fiercely discontent with the Treaty of Versailles. Unlike Italy, Germany had not enjoyed a victory. Worse, Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles forced Germany to accept responsibility "for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies."[29] The forced reparations crippled Germany, while myths at home surged to create a mass victimhood mentality easily abused by the Nazis. Even before adding the economic issues that faced the Weimar Republic, the conditions for fascist appeal were forming. In 1923, France and Belgium, upset by Germany's defaulting on reparation payments, initiated an occupation of the Ruhr, a western

[29] Knox, Philander. *Treaty of Versailles.* Washington Government, 1919.

industrial region of Germany.[30] France and Belgium hoped the occupation would force Germany to continue reparations. This had the reverse effect. Instead of paying, the Weimar government printed money to support striking workers in the Ruhr.[31] This is what began Germany's runaway inflation in the early 1920s. In 1914, "4.2 marks equaled $1; in 1919, it was 8.9 marks to the dollar." However, "by November 1, 1923, the ratio had reached 130 billion to 1, and by the end of November of the same year it had skyrocketed to an unbelievable 4.2 trillion."[32]

Figure 22. 50 *milliarden* (billion) mark, 1923.

In 1924, Charles Dawes, an American banker and Republican member of the Allied Reparations Commissions in 1923, assembled the Dawes Plan. This plan reduced Germany's owed reparations.[33] Loans granted by the Dawes Plan were also put towards public works, including "roads, stadiums and town halls."[34] By 1928, then, Germany enjoyed a brief period of

[30] Spielvogel, Jackson. *Hitler and Nazi Germany.* Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005. Pg. 29.
[31] Spielvogel, p. 29.
[32] Spielvogel, p. 29.
[33] Spielvogel, p. 30
[34] Spielvogel, p. 30

stability, also known as the Golden Years. German foreign relations also improved. In 1925, the new chancellor, Gustav Stresemann, signed the *Traité Entre L'Allegmagne La Belgique, La France, La Grande-Brretagne, Et L'Italie*.[35] These "Locarno Treaties" guaranteed Germany's western borders with France and Belgium.[36] For a time, Germany was recovering.

The Golden Years did not last long. On Black Tuesday (Oct. 29, 1929), the U.S. stock market crashed, ushering in a decade of global economic decline. The effects of this hit Germany the hardest. U.S. loans supporting Germany's still-recovering economy were now being retracted by closing banks that could no longer afford them. As a result, German industry slowed, and businesses were forced to lay off workers. By March 1930, unemployment surged to three million. By December that same year, that number reached 4.38 million.[37] It was a perfect storm of economic failure. What made this an opportunity for fascists, however, was the fact that the Weimar government was unable to do much about it.

The Weimar Republic was founded in November 1918. Like the Kingdom of Italy, the Weimar Republic suffered from an unstable political environment. Despite most Germans supporting the new democracy in its beginning years, dissatisfied right-wing and left-wing revolutionaries sought to end the republic. The German Communist Party (KPD), for example, was inspired by the communist revolution in the Russian Empire. From 1918-1919, leftist revolutions erupted throughout Germany. In Berlin, an uprising was attempted and crushed by the *Freikorps*. In Bavaria, too, a temporary far-left state was erected before also being ended by a

[35] "Locarno" derives from the Locarno Pact's place of signature: Locarno, Switzerland.
[36] *Locarno Treaties: Treaty between Germany, Belgium, France, Great Britain and Italy*. Oct. 16, 1925. https://www.loc.gov/item/2021667899/.
[37] Spielvogel, p. 30.

coalition of *Freikorps* and military units.[38] In 1920, a right-wing attack on the Weimar Republic was led by Wolfgang Kapp and a former *Kaiserreich* general, Walther von Luttwitz. The attempt was made to overthrow the Weimar government and to install a conservative dictatorship. However, like the Beer Hall Putsch of 1923, it failed. In this case, it was due to striking trade unions crippling their ability to act.[39]

Like the Kingdom of Italy's parliament, the Weimar Republic's Reichstag was made up of many parties, not the typical two-party system seen in the United States or Great Britain. With so many party fragments in the Reichstag, it became necessary to form unstable coalition governments. However, because German political parties were, in Spielvogel's words, "tightly knit organizations that cared primarily about the specific interests of the people represented by them," they made little attempt to appeal to others.[40]

Part of this division came because of the deep political divides amongst Germans themselves. With the establishment of the Weimar republic, and its first left-wing Reichstag, came a cultural revolution that brought forth a "climate of freedom and encouragement for artists and intellectuals unlike that in any other European government."[41] However, conservatives, favoring authoritarianism, hated the new political and cultural freedoms offered by the Weimar Republic's new democracy. To them, "modernity" and liberalism were decadent.[42] Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West,* published first in 1918, stimulated these attitudes. In his work, Spengler argues the West was successful because of its "Faustian" culture. "Faustian"

[38] Spielvogel, p. 25.
[39] Spielvogel, p. 25.
[40] Spielvogel, p. 24.
[41] Spielvogel, p. 31.
[42] Spielvogel, p. 31.

references Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust,* in which the character, Johann Faust, a successful man, yearns for meaning and makes a pact with the Devil. "Faustian," then, refers to a limitless thirst for power or knowledge, which Spengler defines as uniquely "Western." To be Western, or "Faustian," was to be of "pure and limitless space, and whose 'body' is the Western Culture that blossomed forth with the birth of the Romanesque style."[43] Spengler believed the Weimar Republic's political and cultural freedoms were detrimental to this traditional Western value.

Deep ideological rifts between the left and the right created a recipe for political disaster. What would eventually come to aid the Nazis was this very political environment. Division led to more division. Larger parties ruptured and split into smaller ones, leading to even more parliamentary chaos.[44] During the Golden Period (1923-1929), splinter parties doubled in votes. The Economy Party, established in 1924 to represent artisans and shopkeepers, rose from 17 seats to 23.[45] Because of these splinter parties, the Weimar Republic's political sphere became increasingly dysfunctional.[46] During this period, the Nazi Party was yet another small faction. From 1924-1928, the NSDAP only held around 2.6 of the popular votes.[47] This would change as the Nazis improved their strategies and once Hitler garnered coalition majority with the DNVP conservatives in 1933.

The Nazis excelled at manipulating the fears of their audiences. In Nazi writings, all these conditions were criticized and exploited for the purposes of growing their popularity. In *Mein*

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[43] Spengler, Oswald. *The Decline of the West.* A.A. Knopf. Edited by Charles Atkinson. Pg. 183.
[44] Landau, Ronnie. *The Nazi Holocaust.* I.B. Tauris, 2006. Pg. 103.
[45] Landau, p. 103-104.
[46] Landau, p. 104.
[47] Landau, p. 103.

Kampf, for example, Hitler wrote about the importance of an authoritarian state to combat feeble democracies:

> The wonderful might and power of the old Empire [*Kaiserreich]* was based on the monarchical form of government, the army and the civil service. On these three foundations rested that great strength which is now entirely lacking; namely the authority of the state. For the authority of the state cannot be based on the babbling that goes on in Parliament.[48]

The Nazis, like the Italian Fascists, offered a departure from the perceived failure of democracy. Especially during the Great Depression, these ideas soared in popularity amongst youth, white collar workers, rural farmers, and conservatives. Nazis understood that, in order to gain popularity, they needed to cater to the emotions of disillusioned Germans.[49] Joseph Goebbels, the chief propagandist of the National Socialist party, excelled at capitalizing on prevalent public fears, hatreds, and frustrations. It was under these strategies that the Nazis became flexible. Nazi rhetoric changed from region to region. Where antisemitism was popular, Nazis would push the stab-in-the-back legend or other Jewish Bolshevism conspiracy theories. However, where antisemitism was less prevalent, the Nazis would focus instead on defending religious or nationalist values.[50]

One speech by Hitler made in December 1922 in Munich demonstrates the Nazi's political stratagem, and in doing so, illustrates some of the issues (perceived or not) facing the Weimar Republic throughout the 1920s. For one, Hitler highlighted discontent with the Treaty of Versailles, stating: "the government does what the Entente wants, even if it is dishonorable."[51] Secondly, he complained about the political gridlock and/or ineffectiveness of the Reichstag,

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[48] Hitler, Adolf. *Mein Kampf.* Jaico Publishing House, 2012. Pg. 204-205.
[49] Sax, Benjamin; Kuntz, Dieter. *Inside Hitler's Germany: A Documentary History of Life in the Third Reich*. Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1992. Pg. 59.
[50] Sax and Kuntz, p. 61.
[51] Sax and Kuntz, p. 68.

suggesting "the People's Party is full of Jews and is to be compared to the DDP [German Democratic Party]; the DDP is worth as much as the SPD [Social Democratic Party] and is totally full of Jews."[52] And of course, he claimed that Germany was "drifting closer to Bolshevism," and that it needed a strong man to save it.[53]

The Great Depression's effects aided the Nazis in the Reichstag. In December 1924, the National Socialist party held a mere 3% of the seats, while in 1932 they held 37.4%. But popularity alone could not save the National Socialists. Despite their rising popularity, they were still a minority. Like in the case of Mussolini, coming to power legally would require Hitler to exploit the wound in the heart of the Weimar democracy: its Constitution. After Friedrich Ebert's death in 1925, Paul von Hindenburg, a WWI war hero, was elected president of the Weimar Republic until his death in 1934. As a conservative, Hindenburg hated democracy, especially social democrats (SPD). That said, his presence as a beloved veteran at the head of the burgeoning democracy created, in Spielvogel's words, "a grudging acceptance" of the Weimar Republic.[54] During the Great Depression, however, Hindenburg authorized Chancellor Heinrich Brüning to dissolve the Reichstag on the basis that it was uncooperative. So, instead, the President used his constitutional powers to command actions undemocratically.[55]

The presence of laws allowing presidents and chancellors to suspend democratic governance was the greatest weakness of the Weimar Republic. To help build popular legitimacy for a conservative nationalist government and combat the KPD and SPD, Nazi victory was

[52] Sax and Kuntz, p. 69.
[53] Sax and Kuntz, p. 69.
[54] Spielvogel, p. 30
[55] Spielvogel, p. 31.

possible. While chancellor, Hitler was able to manipulate the Conservatives and stoke fears of a communist revolution in the public after the burning of the Reichstag in 1933. This allowed Hitler to push anti-constitutional laws. The Reichstag Fire Decree, passed a day after the Reichstag fire, allowed Hitler to legally suspend German civil liberties and make arrests against political opponents on the left. The subsequent Enabling Act also allowed the government to pass laws without consent of the Reichstag. These anti-democratic laws were passed using Article 48, an act of the Weimar Republic's Constitution which President Hindenburg had previously used to temporarily suspend democracy. Article 48 stipulated the following:

> If a state does not fulfill the duties imposed upon it by the Constitution or the laws of the Reich, the Reich President may enforce such duties with the aid of the armed forces. In the event that the public order and security are seriously disturbed or endangered, if necessary, with the aid of the armed forces. For this purpose he may temporarily abrogate, wholly or in part, the fundamental principles laid down in Articles 114, 115, 117, 118, 123, 124, and 153. The Reich President must, without delay, inform the Reichstag of all measures taken under Paragraph 1 or Paragraph 2 of this Article. The Reichstag may vote to annul these measures.[56]

Though the Reichstag could vote against measures from Article 48, a coalition majority gave the President theoretically unlimited power. Hitler used this law to eliminate most civil rights otherwise guaranteed under the Weimar Constitution. So, both with the chancellorship and presidency, there were clear paths that could be taken to eliminate democracy in the Weimar Republic. This was its democratic institution's greatest weakness.

Great Britain and the Founding of the B.U.F.

Italy and Germany had democratic institutions weak enough for fascists to come to power legally. Mussolini and Hitler's successes, of course, inspired others to follow. Sir Oswald

[56] Article 48. *German History in Documents and Images.* Accessed through https://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/ viewed February 23, 2023.

Mosley, an ex-Conservative, ex-Labour politician, believed fascism was the way forward for Britain. His British Union of Fascists was founded with the explicit intention of modeling the tenants of Mussolini's Italian Fascism. However, Britain was a far different country than the struggling Kingdom of Italy or the Weimar Republic and operated within different circumstances. There were several elements of Britain's political environment which disadvantaged Mosley's efforts for his desired "Greater Britain."[57]

As explained prior, Italy and Germany shared disdain for the Treaties following World War I. In Britain, attitudes were different. One of the unifying opinions amongst many Allied nations after the war was a demand for peace through retribution. In Britain and France, there were strong desires to exact punitive punishment against Germany.[58] For one, there were calls for the hanging of Kaiser Wilhelm II. According to an article from the British newspaper, the *Globe,* James Sexton, a trade unionist, and politician, believed peace was impossible without punishment. He argued, "there shall be no peace or talk of peace until the Kaiser and his associates and all who agree with him are hung from a lamppost without judge or jury."[59] First Lord of the Admiralty, Eric Geddes, during a speech at Cambridge, also reportedly wished to "squeeze the German lemon until the pips squeak."[60] These sentiments were also shared by Prime Minister Lloyd George, who repeated Geddes' lemon analogy alongside his wish to hang the Kaiser and hold Germans accountable for the war.[61] To note, there were those, such as Philip Kerr, who believed the antagonistic treatment of Germany was regressive and would not create the better world the Treaty promised to create under the influence of Woodrow Wilson's 14

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[57] Mosley, Oswald. *The Greater Britain*. B.U.F. Publications, Ltd. 1932.
[58] Henig, Ruth. *Versailles and After, 1919-1933*. Florence: Routledge, 1995. Pg. 2
[59] "Hang the Kaiser!" *Globe,* Sept. 18, 1919.
[60] "Sir Eric Geddes: 'The Pip-Squeak Man." *Cambridge Daily News,* March 1, 1920.
[61] "Notes and Comments." *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette,* May 22, 1929.

Points.[62] This, however, was the extent to criticism of the Treaty of Versailles. Like the United States, Britain had been a victor, and unlike Italy or Germany, it had not been lied to or robbed.

The belief that one's group is a victim to some outside force, such as the Treaty of Versailles and the Allies, was important to fascists. [63] The scarcity of this in relation to the Treaty of Versailles created challenges for Mosley, who modeled Mussolini's fascism, which was founded on a "return to empire" appeal. Mosley's admiration for Italian Fascism is transparent in *Fascism: 100 Questions Asked and Answered.* Here, he attempts to tie the *fasces* of Rome to Britain, claiming:

> The symbol was brought to Britain by our Roman ancestors, who were here for four centuries and their stock remained for ever. The Fasces were the symbol of the Roman Empire. What more fitting than that they should be used by the Empire which succeeded and surpassed the Roman Empire?[64]

Mussolini had appealed to the Italian public by promising a return to empire, a supposed Italian identity and destiny stolen by Allied treaties. But after World War I, Britain still held its crown jewel, India (which would not gain independence until 1947). Britain, like the United States, remained a strong colonial power, even with the Statute of Westminster 1931 giving Dominion territories legal autonomy.

In addition, Britain did not face economic troubles to the same extent Italy or Germany did. As George Tavlas argues in his essay, "New Perspectives on the Great Depression," prior to World War I, Britain was the unchallenged leader of the "international financial centre; and the

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[62] Lovin, Clifford. *A School for Diplomats: The Paris Peace Conference of 1919*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997. Pg. 96.
[63] Paxton, p. 41
[64] Mosley, Oswald. *Fascism: 100 Questions Asked and Answered*. B.U.F. Publications, Ltd. 1936. Pg. 8.

pound was the leading international currency."[65] Though the economy wavered from 1914-1918, it made a recovery from 1923-1924, which was "largely due to the artificial stimulus to production created by the French occupation of the Ruhr cutting off the flow of German exports."[66] Despite this, Britain's political landscape faced complications in 1924 and beyond.

After the 1923 general election, the first Labour government was formed in January 1924, with James MacDonald serving as both Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary.[67] This government was short-lived, however. On October 25, 1924, an article titled "Civil War Plot by Socialists' Masters" by the *Daily Mail* was published. This document, commonly known as the Zinoviev letter, was a supposedly "very secret" letter of instruction from Moscow, which revealed a "great Bolshevik plot to paralyse the British Army and Navy and to plunge the country into civil war."[68] The *Daily Mail* claimed that these orders were "delivered to the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, and the Home Secretary, Mr. Arthur Henderson, immediately after it was received some weeks ago." The article also claimed that "copies were officially circulated by the Executive authorities to high officers of the Army and Navy."[69]

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[65] Tavlas, George S. "New Perspectives on the Great Depression: A Review Essay: New Perspectives on the Great Depression." International finance (Oxford, England) 19, no. 3 (2016): 353–374. Pg. 364.
[66] Bruley, Sue. *The Women and Men of 1926: a Gender and Social History of the General Strike and Miners' Lockout in South Wales*. The Women and Men of 1926. 1st ed. Vol. 48419. Cardiff: NBN International, 2010. Pg. 1.
[67] "Russia and the British voter: the 'Zinoviev Letter', 'Red Scare' and 1924 general election." The University of Warwick. Accessed February 14, 2023. https://warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/archives_online/digital/russia/zinoviev/.
[68] "Civil War Plot by Socialists' Masters." *The Daily Mail,* Oct. 25, 1924.
[69] "Civil War Plot by Socialists' Masters." *The Daily Mail,* Oct. 25, 1924.

Daily Mail Oct. 25/1924 SATURDAY. The Daily Mail OCTOBER 25, 1924. 9

CIVIL WAR PLOT BY SOCIALISTS' MASTERS.

MOSCOW ORDERS TO OUR REDS.

GREAT PLOT DISCLOSED YESTERDAY.

"PARALYSE THE ARMY AND NAVY."

AND MR. MACDONALD WOULD LEND RUSSIA

paign of disclosure of the foreign policy of MacDonald.

ARMED INSURRECTION.

The IKKI [Executive Committee, third (Communist) International] will willingly place at your disposal the wide material in its possession regarding the activities of British imperialism in the Middle and Far East. In the meanwhile, however, strain every nerve in the struggle for the ratification of the Treaty, in favour of a continuation of negotiations regarding the regulation of relations between the S.S.S.R. and England. A settlement of relations between the two countries will assist in the revolutionising of the international and British proletariat not less than a successful rising in any of the working districts of England, as the establishment of close contact between the British and Russian proletariat, the exchange of delegations and workers, etc., will make it possible for

With Communist Greetings,
President of the Presidium of the IKKI,
ZINOVIEV.
Member of the Presidium,
McMANUS.
Secretary, KUUSINEN.

FOREIGN OFFICE PROTEST.

REPLY WITHOUT DELAY REQUESTED.

£5,000 OR £5 A WEEK FOR LIFE.

"DAILY MAIL" ELECTION COMPETITION.

POST FORMS NOW.

DE VALERA ARRESTED.

ULSTER POLICE ACTION.

PEKING CHANGES HANDS.

COUP WHILE CITY SLEPT.

GATES OPENED BY PLOTTERS.

CHRISTIAN GENERAL'S IRONSIDES.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.

Figure 23. "Civil War Plot by Socialists' Masters." *The Daily Mail,* Oct. 25, 1924.

Because of the Zinoviev letter, the Labour Party was accused of communist influence and of plotting to destroy the nation's institutions. A 1924 article from *The Scotsman,* aptly titled "The Communist Peril," provides a transcribed address by Professor Charles Sarolea, a "well-known authority on Russia, and Professor of French in the University of Edinburgh." During his address at Central Hall, Tollcross, Sarolea claimed that the Zinoviev letter did not come as a surprise.[70] Sarolea argued:

> Let us not be duped, continued the speaker [Sarolea], by the argument that the present Labour leaders are moderate. Even if they were…we know full well that revolutions began as moderate movements. They started with an andante. They ended with a furioso. The moderate, M. Kerenski, was the prototype of the moderate Ramsay MacDonald. Revolutionary leaders always began by making sentimental professions and by abolishing the death penalty. They always ended by sending to the scaffold everyone who did not agree with them.[71]

Sarolea also suggested communism in Britain was more successful than otherwise believed. He urged listeners not to "be duped by the other argument that the Communists in Great Britain

[70] "The Communist Peril." *The Scotsman,* Oct. 28, 1924.
[71] "The Communist Peril." *The Scotsman,* Oct. 28, 1924.

were only an insignificant minority." He further stated, "not only was this country not immune against an outbreak of Bolshevism, but the consequences of such an outbreak would be very much more catastrophic with us than ever in Russia."[72]

The Red Scare wrought by the infamous Zinoviev letter, in Sue Bruley's words, "created an atmosphere of increased suspicion of trade union power and fear of communist activity."[73] This "brought about the downfall of MacDonald's minority Labour government in October."[74] The British Union of Fascists would later attempt to capitalize on these fears in the 1930s. In 1936, *The Blackshirt* produced the propaganda piece, "A Fascist New Year," which depicts communists as hunchbacked, dirty, rag-clothed peasants scared off by the might of British fascism, depicted as a woman clad in Greek spartan armor, bearing a Union Jack shield.

[72] "The Communist Peril." *The Scotsman,* Oct. 28, 1924.
[73] Bruley, p. 1.
[74] Bruley, p. 1.

Figure 24. "A Fascist New Year." *The Blackshirt,* 1936.

Aside from growing political uncertainty wrought by the Zinoviev letter, Britain also faced economic troubles during the mid to late 1920s and beyond. As mentioned earlier, Britain's interwar economy fared better than some other nations because of World War I. However, that is not to say that the nation did not face any economic troubles. Where Weimar Germany suffered from an overinflated Reichsmark, England, albeit to a lesser degree, was impacted by an overvalued pound and high unemployment throughout the 1920's. British parliament debated solutions to this issue. In 1925, Chancellor Winston Churchill argued for the return of the gold standard, which had originally been dropped by England in 1914. Churchill believed that its return would bolster the faltering British economy:

> A return to an effective gold standard has long been the settled and declared policy of this country. Every expert Conference since the War – Brussels, Genoa – every expert Committee in this country, has urged the principle of a return to the gold standard. No responsible authority has advocated any other policy. No British Government – and every party has held office – no political party, no previous holder of the Office of Chancellor of the Exchequer has challenged, or so far as I am aware is now challenging, the principle of a reversion to the gold standard in international affairs at the earliest possible moment.[75]

Indeed, in February 1925, the Chamberlain Bradbury Committee "advised that the value of sterling against the dollar was nearly sufficient to justify a return to the gold standard."[76] This resulted in a brief period of "relative stagnation as the high value of sterling reduced exports and jobs were lost." These effects were worsened when "other European countries such as France, Belgium and Germany returned to the gold at lower rates, making their exports more competitive."[77] Because of increased unemployment, hunger marches, mass strikes and protests by workers, became more popular.[78]

The General Strike of 1926 was one of the nation's largest protests in history. From May 4 to May 12, 1926, nearly two million British coal miners, supported by the Trade Union Congress, mobilized a strike to protest lessening pay and worsening work conditions. During the days of the strike, workers mobilized, and, according to local newspapers, eight men even went so far as to derail the *Flying Scotsman* on May 11.[79]

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[75] "Ways and Means." Hansard, 5th Series, Volume 183, cc57, April 28, 1925. Pg. 53.
[76] "Economic Slump." The National Archives, Kew, Surrey TW9 4DU, November 28, 2008. https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/cabinetpapers/themes/economic-slump.htm.
[77] "Economic Slump." The National Archives, Kew, Surrey TW9 4DU, November 28, 2008. https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/cabinetpapers/themes/economic-slump.htm.
[78] Hunger marches were protests by men and women in areas of Britain where unemployment was highest. These protests were popular internationally during the Great Depression.
[79] "Derailment of the Flying Scotsman." *Dundee Courier*, July 2, 1926.

LONDON EXPRESS WRECKED: DASTARDLY OUTRAGE IN NORTH.

DAILY GRAPHIC

ENGLAND SEES IT THROUGH.

No. 11,346. TUESDAY, MAY 11, 1926. ONE PENNY.

EXCLUSIVE PICTURES OF WRECKED EXPRESS.

Figure 25. "London Express Wrecked: Dastardly Outrage in North." *The Daily Graphic*, May 12, 1926.

Printers also joined the strike, which forced the government to publish their own short-lived newspaper, the *British Gazette*. Churchill, a writer an editor of the paper, espoused the movement as a "terrible menace which is levied upon us."[80] Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, who had declared a state of emergency because of the strike, also denounced the protestors. Baldwin stated the following, as transcribed in the *British Gazette* on May 6, 1926:

> Constitutional Government is being attacked. Let all good citizens whose livelihood and labour have thus been put in peril bear with fortitude and patience the hardships with which they have been so suddenly confronted. Stand behind the Government, who are doing their part, confident that you will co-operate in

[80] *British Gazette,* May 6, 1926.

> the measures they have undertaken to preserve the liberties and privileges of the people of these islands. The laws of England are the people's birthright. The laws are in your keeping. You have made Parliament their guardian. The General Strike is a challenge to Parliament and is the road to anarchy and ruin.[81]

Though it was a week of collaboration amongst workers, the strike was officially called off by the TUC on May 12, 1926.

In the 1920s, Britain faced political crisis. The Labour government had collapsed out of public fear against foreign communist influences, and by 1925, British industry continued to struggle under the pressures of economic decline. Much to Mosley's own dissatisfaction, the "government announced in April a return to the pre-war gold standard, rendering British exports overvalued and hence even more unprofitable."[82] It was at this moment, beginning in 1924, when fears had grown to the point fascist appeals could gain support. Mosley's critique that the gold standard was "a fetish used for its own purposes by international finance" had potential appeal amongst disillusioned workers who were tired of the government's inability to solve the growing issues of rising unemployment and plummeting wages.[83]

In England, a government is formed when a political party (usually Labour or Conservative) wins the most seats in the general election. The new government, with its Prime Minister elect, is then responsible for running the country for up to five years. Up to 1931, Mosley made an identity for himself by criticizing the return to the gold standard, and the Labour government's seeming inability to quell poverty and unemployment. But Mosley's attempts at rallying the British public under a fascist banner beginning in 1932 were too little too late. When the Labour government collapsed in 1931, King George V asked Prime Minister Ramsay

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[81] *British Gazette,* May 6, 1926.
[82] Bruley, p. 2.
[83] Mosley, Oswald. *Fascism: 100 Questions Asked and Answered*. B.U.F. Publications, Ltd. 1936. Pg. 20.

MacDonald to form a new government, composed of men from Conservative, Liberal, and Labour Parties.

In a landslide vote on October 27, 1931, Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald did something that neither the Weimar Republic nor Kingdom of Italy could with their gridlocked coalition parliaments. MacDonald formed Britain's first ever National Government, which, on September 21, 1931, abandoned the gold standard. Britain's economy continued to struggle during the Great Depression. However, in Ben Bernanke's words, it became "one of the first countries to recover."[84] Though Mosley would continue to voice his critiques of the government until 1940, stoking antisemitic and anti-communist fears where he could, it was with a whimper. The 1936 Public Order Act established several laws that banned "uniforms in connection with political objects." According to clause c.6, section 1, "subject as hereinafter provided, any person who in any public place or at any public meeting wears uniform signifying his association with any political organisation or with the promotion of any political object shall be guilty of an offence."[85] This effectively banned Mosley's Blackshirts and other paramilitary organizations. In 1940, the BUF was outlawed entirely.

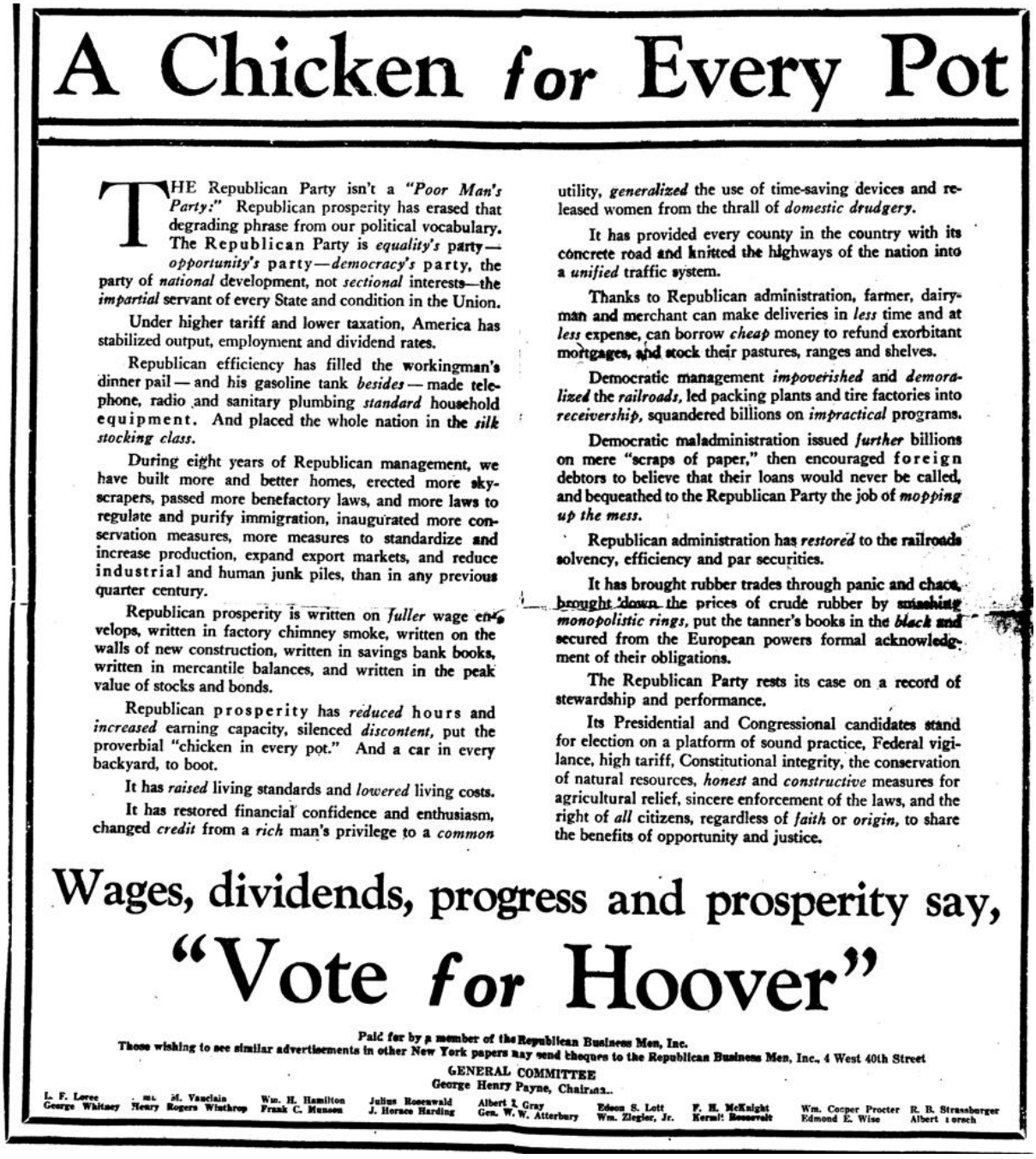
The United States and the Founding of the Bund

Prior to World War I, the United States, like Britain, enjoyed a long period of economic stability. According to David Kennedy, the U.S. experienced "nearly three decades of barely punctuated economic growth, capped by seven years of unprecedented prosperity."[86] Even after 1919, this hopeful optimism continued through the Roaring Twenties. The 31st President of the

[84] Bernanke, p. 63.
[85] "Public Order Act 1936." The National Archives.
[86] Kennedy, David. *Freedom from Fear*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. Pg. 11.

United States, Herbert Hoover (1929-1933) was as confident as those who supported him. His infamous statement, "we in America today are nearer to the final triumph over poverty than ever before," reflected the "national temper" of the 1920s.[87] This attitude was reflected in political propaganda as well. During the 1928 presidential campaign, the GOP ran a political advertisement titled, "A Chicken for Every Pot." The advertisement boasted the successes of the GOP in handling the U.S. economy throughout the early 1920s, stating "Republican efficiency has filled the workingman's dinner pail – and his gasoline tank *besides* – made telephone, radio and sanitary plumbing *standard* household equipment. And placed the whole nation in the *silk stocking class."*[88]

[87] Kennedy, p. 10.
[88] "A Chicken for Every Pot," *The New York Times.* Oct. 30, 1928.



A Chicken *for* Every Pot

THE Republican Party isn't a *"Poor Man's Party:"* Republican prosperity has erased that degrading phrase from our political vocabulary. The Republican Party is *equality's* party—*opportunity's* party—*democracy's* party, the party of *national* development, not *sectional* interests—the *impartial* servant of every State and condition in the Union.

Under higher tariff and lower taxation, America has stabilized output, employment and dividend rates.

Republican efficiency has filled the workingman's dinner pail — and his gasoline tank *besides* — made telephone, radio and sanitary plumbing *standard* household equipment. And placed the whole nation in the *silk stocking class.*

During eight years of Republican management, we have built more and better homes, erected more skyscrapers, passed more benefactory laws, and more laws to regulate and purify immigration, inaugurated more conservation measures, more measures to standardize and increase production, expand export markets, and reduce industrial and human junk piles, than in any previous quarter century.

Republican prosperity is written on *fuller* wage envelops, written in factory chimney smoke, written on the walls of new construction, written in savings bank books, written in mercantile balances, and written in the peak value of stocks and bonds.

Republican prosperity has *reduced* hours and *increased* earning capacity, silenced *discontent,* put the proverbial "chicken in every pot." And a car in every backyard, to boot.

It has *raised* living standards and *lowered* living costs.

It has restored financial confidence and enthusiasm, changed *credit* from a *rich* man's privilege to a *common* utility, *generalized* the use of time-saving devices and released women from the thrall of *domestic drudgery.*

It has provided every county in the country with its concrete road and knitted the highways of the nation into a *unified* traffic system.

Thanks to Republican administration, farmer, dairyman and merchant can make deliveries in *less* time and at *less* expense, can borrow *cheap* money to refund exorbitant mortgages, and stock their pastures, ranges and shelves.

Democratic management *impoverished* and *demoralized* the *railroads,* led packing plants and tire factories into *receivership,* squandered billions on *impractical* programs.

Democratic maladministration issued *further* billions on mere "scraps of paper," then encouraged foreign debtors to believe that their loans would never be called, and bequeathed to the Republican Party the job of *mopping up the mess.*

Republican administration has *restored* to the railroads solvency, efficiency and par securities.

It has brought rubber trades through panic and chaos, brought down the prices of crude rubber by smashing *monopolistic rings,* put the tanner's books in the *black* and secured from the European powers formal acknowledgment of their obligations.

The Republican Party rests its case on a record of stewardship and performance.

Its Presidential and Congressional candidates stand for election on a platform of sound practice, Federal vigilance, high tariff, Constitutional integrity, the conservation of natural resources, *honest* and *constructive* measures for agricultural relief, sincere enforcement of the laws, and the right of *all* citizens, regardless of *faith* or *origin,* to share the benefits of opportunity and justice.

Wages, dividends, progress and prosperity say,

"Vote *for* Hoover"

Paid for by a member of the Republican Business Men, Inc.
Those wishing to see similar advertisements in other New York papers may send cheques to the Republican Business Men, Inc., 4 West 40th Street

GENERAL COMMITTEE
George Henry Payne, Chairman

L. F. Loree ... M. Vauclain Wm. H. Hamilton Julius Rosenwald Albert J. Gray Edson S. Lott F. H. McKnight Wm. Cooper Procter R. B. Strassburger
George Whitney Henry Rogers Winthrop Frank C. Munson J. Horace Harding Gen. W. W. Atterbury Wm. Ziegler, Jr. Kermit Roosevelt Edmond E. Wise Albert Lorsch

Figure 26. "A Chicken for Every Pot." *The New York Times*, Oct. 30, 1928.

This, in addition to the victory of World War I, added to a period of strong American pride. Where Germany and Italy bemoaned the Allied treaties and suffered under victimhood and

feelings of betrayal, the U.S., like Britain, had not. To the same extent Britain debated over retributive peace, Republicans and Democrats argued over the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles. Eventually, it was not ratified because the GOP believed Article 10 would establish the U.S. as a part of the League of Nations.[89] This was the extent to the discontent over the post-war treaties in the United States, however.

For many U.S. citizens, the Roaring Twenties was an optimistic time. Although there was an agricultural crisis, the United States still emerged from World War I as one of the world's greatest economies.[90] When the Great Depression did hit, however, the U.S. suffered greatly. "At the height of the Depression in 1933, 24.9% of the nation's total work force, 12,830,000 people, were unemployed. Wage income for workers who were lucky enough to have kept their jobs fell 42.5% between 1929 and 1933."[91] At the same time, consumer prices fell 25%. From 1930 to 1932, "more than 5,000 banks, accounting for more than $3 billion in deposits (about 7% of total deposits) suspended operations. In 1933, another 4,000 banks, accounting for more than $3.5 billion in deposits, would close. In all, about one-third of the national banks suspended operations from 1930 to 1933. By the time that Roosevelt assumed the US presidency on 4 March 1933, 'the financial system had ceased to function.'"[92]

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[89] "Senate Rejects the Treaty of Versailles." U.S. Senate: Senate Rejects the Treaty of Versailles, February 26, 2021. https://www.senate.gov/about/powers-procedures/treaties/senate-rejects-treaty-of-versailles.htm.
[90] Kennedy, p. 17.
[91] "Great Depression Facts." FDR Presidential Library & Museum. Accessed October 17, 2022. https://www.fdrlibrary.org/great-depression-facts#:~:text=throughout%20the%201920s.-,At%20the%20height%20of%20the%20Depression%20in%201933%2C%2024.9%25%20of,economic%20disaster%20in%20American%20history.
[92] Tavlas, p. 354.

Crisis after crisis piled on each other, leaving millions of Americans in destitution. Gone were the hopeful years of the Roaring Twenties. Likewise, Hoover's public image shifted. By the 1932 presidential election, the Republican Party and Hoover were criticized for their boastful promise of providing Americans with "A Chicken for Every Pot," as advertised in the 1928 political advertisement. This line was subject to ridicule in newspapers as well. Writers' comments from the *Louisville Courier-Journal,* as quoted in the *Carolina Watchman,* illustrates these attitudes. One writer poked fun at Hoover, claiming "the chicken in every pot has come to roost," while another similarly teased that "President Hoover's "chicken-in-every-pot" promise has now gone through a strange transformation. It has become a pretty kettle of fish."[93] The *San Antonio Light* also criticized the GOP's strategy. The article, "G.O.P. Strategy Turns to 'Gospel of Fear'" profoundly lambasted the Republican "orgy of speculation, of misdirected credit inflation, of governmental sympathy for the favored few."[94] The writer also mocked the infamous chicken analogy. A segment from the story reads: "a chicken for every pot; a job for ever worker. How empty the worker's pot now rings!"[95]

[93] *Carolina Watchman.* Oct. 28, 1932.
[94] "G.O.P. Strategy Turns to 'Gospel of Fear.'" *San Antonio Light.* Oct. 18, 1932.
[95] "G.O.P. Strategy Turns to 'Gospel of Fear.'" *San Antonio Light.* Oct. 18, 1932.

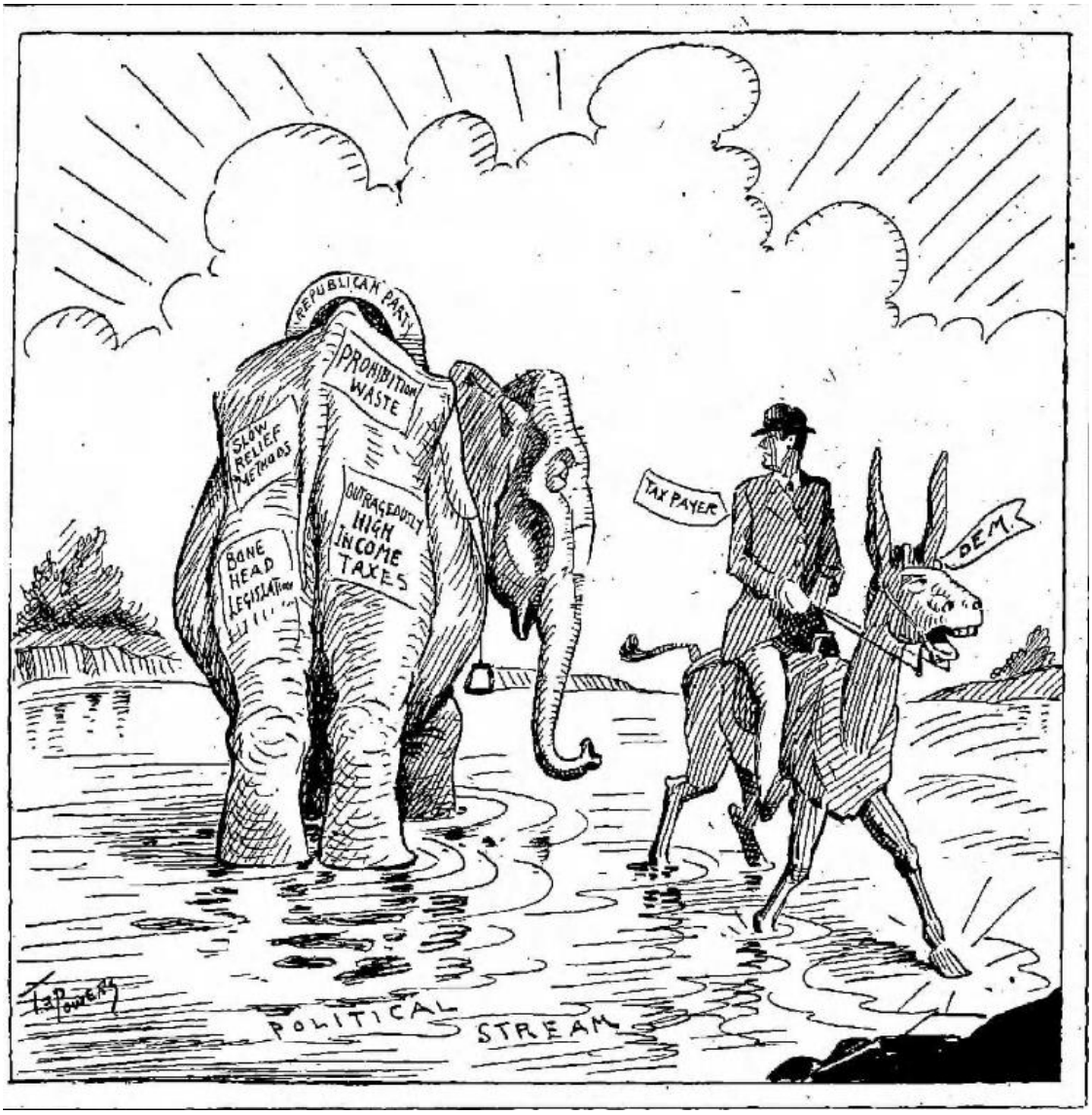

Figure 27. "G.O.P. Strategy Turns to 'Gospel of Fear.'" *San Antonio Light*, Oct. 18, 1932.

Hoover was viewed, in Robert Goldstein's words, "as an uncaring President unwilling to address the dire economic situation of many Americans."[96] The United States, like Britain, Germany, and Italy, had entered a depression; an age of "Hoovervilles" and hopelessness that, in this interwar moment, a populist strongman promising a revitalized nation may have found

[96] Goldstein, Robert. *Little 'Red Scares': Anti-Communism and Political Repression in the United States, 1921–1946*. 1st ed. Farnham: Taylor & Francis, 2014. Pg. 27.

success.[97] This could have been Fritz Kuhn. Unfortunately for him, he would not come to lead the German American Bund until 1936, seven years after the start of the Depression, and three years after the First New Deal was put into action to end it. Of the radical movements in the United States, it was the Communists who found some success. Prior to FDR's presidency, faith in capitalism was faltering. What is more, some Americans, according to Goldstein, began to openly question the "traditional tenets of limited government."[98] This is how the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) found legitimacy as an political alternative from the Republicans and Democrats.[99]

When Franklin Roosevelt was first elected president in 1932, he was met with the full force of the Great Depression. His predecessor, Herbert Hoover, had done little to save the United States' dwindling economy, largely because of his Republican belief that "government should not play an aggressive role in an economic bailout impeded action."[100] In Germany, the Weimar government similarly failed to impact the Depression's effects. However, the United States in 1932, with its Democratic trifecta in both the House, Senate, and presidency, was able to avoid any potential gridlock with the Republican party. With majority control over the government, Roosevelt managed to pass the First New Deal (1933-1934) and, later, the Second

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[97] Goldstein, p. 27.
[98] Goldstein, p. 28.
[99] The CPUSA's popularity rose during the Great Depression, especially amongst racial minorities. "Running with the Reds: African American Women and the Communist Party during the Great Depression," by Lashawn Harris and *Communists in Harlem During the Great Depression* by Mark Naison are two useful works for understanding how the Communist Party engaged with minority groups – namely black Americans during the 1930s – to achieve popularity as a movement.
[100] Winkler, Allan. "The New Deal: Accomplishments and Failures" Miami University. Accessed October 19, 2022. https://www.banking.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/WinklerTestimony33109TheNewDealSenateTestimony.pdf. Pg. 2.

New Deal (1935-1936). These efforts, though imperfect, addressed many of economic concerns that Hoover and the GOP either failed or refused to.[101]

The chaos and dread of the Great Depression was an attractive time for populist strategies. In Italy and Germany, both Mussolini and Hitler promised to restore the economy amidst their unique economic crises by overturning what many believed to be failed liberal democracies. In Britain, Mosley promised to defeat the perceived agents of "international finance," the Jews. The United States, too, was left with a decent opportunity for a fascist leader to legitimate himself by promising to end the Depression. As mentioned earlier, Fritz Kuhn could have fit this role. In Bund propaganda from the mid to late 1930s, he and his followers published works which emphasized the role Jews and other undesirable races played in the stealing of American jobs. At Madison Square Garden in 1939, the bundsman, Wilhelm Kunze, referenced undesirable races, such as Jews, as "job-taking" in a time where job security was a prevalent issue for many Americans.[102] The Midwestern Department leader, Georg Froboese, also refers to economic problems granted by the Great Depression, but with an anti-communist, anti-Jewish flare. In his "Labor, Economics, Finance" address, Froboese explains that the economic decline of the United States could be prevented by combating the "cunning of the Jew Karl Marx-Mordecai" and his agents of Communism.[103]

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[101] *The New Deal: A Global History* by Kiran Patel is an excellent work which explains the New Deal, its creation, and policies, from a global perspective.
[102] Kunze, Wilhelm. "Race, Youth" in *Free America! Six Addresses on The Aims and Purposes of the German American Bund*. A.V. Publishing Corporation, Inc., Feb. 20, 1939. Pg. 13.
[103] Froboese, Georg. "Labor, Economics, Finance" in *Free America! Six Addresses on The Aims and Purposes of the German American Bund*. Delivered at Madison Square Garden, New York City, Feb. 20, 1939. Pg. 4.

What benefited the Bund was its theoretical ability to meld with the social values of White Americans. As the Kunze explains in his address, the Bund did nothing that was explicitly anti-American:

> We are decidedly NOT preaching un-Americanism or anything basically new! American law-makers generations ago, promulgated laws forbidding intermarriage between White and Black, Yellow, Brown or Red Inhabitants in twenty-eight of these United States! We have an Asiatic Exclusion Act, 'Jim Crow' Laws, and a complicated System of Immigration Quotas, differentiating between the various White Peoples! It has then always been very much American, wherever a Race-Problem became acute, to instinctively attempt to create Legislation designed to protect the Aryan Character of our Nation![104]

Even so, the Bund arrived in the U.S. political scene too late. Years prior, in 1932, a new leading figure took to the stage, using Fireside Chats to cater to the needs of an unheard and hurting people. President Franklin Roosevelt did more than fear monger against the "other." He offered a plan. His New Deal(s) addressed unemployment. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration assisted the unemployed by creating the Works Progress Administration, which created millions of jobs through public works projects.[105] Farmers also benefitted from the Agricultural Administration, created by the New Deal, which paid farmers to produce less, thus stabilizing volatile food prices.[106]

All was not perfect, however. The United States, historically, has held a long tradition of individualism and democratic values; for better or worse. Although Roosevelt's policies were well-effective and supported by many, some critiqued the New Deal as unconstitutional and detrimental to individual liberty.[107] Part of this reasoning was in response to Roosevelt's plans

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[104] Kunze, p. 13.
[105] Winkler, p. 3.
[106] Winkler, p. 3.
[107] Mason, Robert. *The Republican Party and American Politics from Hoover to Reagan*. Cambridge University Press, 2012. Pg. 42.

for the Supreme Court. The Judiciary Act of 1869 had established that the U.S. Supreme Court would consist of nine justices. During his second term, in 1936, Roosevelt announced his plans for a reorganization of the court. Roosevelt was frustrated with the Supreme Court's ability to overturn laws and programs that were crucial for the United States' economic recovery. So, he hoped to make the Supreme Court more favorable to his New Deal.[108] This desire led to backlash from both Republicans and Democrats who viewed the action as a step away from democracy. As reported in local papers such as the *Alden Times,* Roosevelt's court-packing plan called "forth opposition from both of the major political parties. In other words, the opposition to the President's move is probably nonpartisan to a greater extent than any issue before the American people in the last 50 years."[109]

Figure 28. "Do We Want a Ventriloquist Act in The Supreme Court?" 1937.

[108] Savage, Sean J. *Roosevelt, the Party Leader 1932-1945*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1991. Pg. 32.
[109] "President and Cummings Defend Court Plan." *Alden Times*, April 1, 1937

Ultimately, Roosevelt's court-packing plan, the Judicial Procedures Reform Bill of 1937, failed. This controversy demonstrates an important difference between the political culture of the United States and those of Italy or Germany during the interwar period. Anything deemed authoritarian was fiercely opposed in the United States. When the German American Bund came to the scene in 1936, Kuhn had a moment of opportunity during which he could have successfully criticized Roosevelt's overstretching in power. However, the Bund failed to capture the hearts of Americans whose allegiances were to their conceptions of individual liberty. Newspapers from the mid-to-late 1930s reflect these attitudes towards the Bund. For instance, one segment from the *Cleveland Gazette* in 1938, reads: "Fritz and his Ku Klux Klan kind ought to be run out of the country. There ought not to be any room here for his kind. He should be shipped to Germany or Italy, pronto."[110] Another piece from *Hamilton Daily News Journal* that same year demonstrates similar disdain for the antisemitic aspects of Nazism:

> When its leader [Fritz Kuhn] makes a public statement that HIS bund intends to rid this nation of Jews – American citizens if you please – then it is about time the nation rids itself of Fritz Kuhn and his German-American bund. Ship Fritz and the sympathetic members of his bund over to Hitler where they can feel more at home.[111]

Ultimately, even though U.S. culture promoted every element of Nazism (i.e., White nationalism, patriarchy, eugenics, segregation), fascism's overt authoritarian elements were never attractive to Americans, even during economic crisis.

Both Britain and the United States had interwar environments which were simultaneously vulnerable to and resistant to fascist movements. Both the interwar political cultures of Britain and the United States were susceptible to the conservative values of fascist ideology. However,

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[110] *Cleveland Gazette*, Nov. 26, 1938.
[111] "The German American Bund." *Hamilton Daily News Journal*, Nov. 22, 1938.

Mosley and Kuhn found themselves leading fascist movements that came too late. If Mussolini had founded his party seven years after 1919, for instance, it is difficult to say he would have found as much success, considering the issues he spoke about were immediate. If the political and economic state of Italy had been given time to improve, his appeal, legitimacy, and exploitation of the government would have been very different or perhaps non-existent. Hitler's failed Beer Hall Putsch in 1923 is just one such demonstration of how important it is for fascist movements to acknowledge their political environments. Without the Great Depression, for example, Hitler and his Nazis might never have seen their 37% vote in the 1933 elections. So, the BUF and the Bund misplaced themselves. If Kuhn had made a voice for himself and his movement prior to FDR and his New Deal(s), or Mosley had founded his party before Britain left the gold standard in 1931, or during the economic recession and workers' strikes following 1926, they would have at least enjoyed more legitimacy as movements seeking real change.

CHAPTER VIII: CONCLUSION

Much of the discussion of fascism in the past two decades has revolved around defining it. Scholars including Robert Paxton, Michael Mann, Julie Gottlieb, Richard Bosworth, and many others have characterized fascism as either a political practice or ideology, or both. Broader discussions of what fascism was, however, are not sufficient to explain why some fascist movements, despite their successes, failed to seize power. Democratic nations like Britain or the United States were by no means immune to fascist ideologies and movements. Both countries, despite possessing long-established democratic institutions, had fertile political environments in the interwar period for fascist appeals.[1] Nonetheless, by measuring the practices of the BUF and the Bund comparatively, it can be assessed that there were clear limits to their successes, which can be evaluated using four metrics of success: leadership in the form of a strong authority figure, centralized organization, populist appeals, and use of political violence.

Sir Oswald Mosley was well-experienced and wealthy, making him an ideal leader for the BUF. Fritz Kuhn, on the other hand, was a nobody. He was a German immigrant with a thick accent that was unappealing to most Americans. Kuhn was, however, popular amongst his own members. In terms of organization, the BUF had a solid structure with a weak foundation. By the mid-1930s, he found himself at the head of a party that was quickly radicalizing out of his control. He was forced to purge many of his own members, something Kuhn never struggled

[1] In the context of global politics of the 1930s, both the U.S. and Britain were democracies. However, considering 21st century understandings of what makes democracies free, as demonstrated by organizations like Freedom House, neither the United States nor Britain would have met these standards.

with because of his legitimacy as head of the Bund. In short, the BUF had a viable leader and fragmented organization, while the Bund had a weak leader and strong organization.

In terms of using populist appeals to garner support, both the BUF and the Bund struggled. Mosley made a name for himself as a politician who criticized the government for its inability to solve unemployment and poverty. He also criticized Britain's return to the gold standard. However, by the time he founded the BUF in 1932, Britain had already established a National Government, which abandoned the gold standard and began implementing programs to solve the issues Mosley criticized. Conditions in Britain were not nearly bad enough that Mosley's BUF was deemed a necessary alternative to traditional politics. The Bund also struggled to maintain legitimacy. Kuhn tried to appeal to German-Americans, who were largely unreceptive to his ideals. He amassed a modest following of White supremacists, but he had very little understanding of American politics or culture. This ultimately served as a detriment to the Bund's abilities as a populist movement.

Lastly, both movements struggled to utilize political violence effectively. Mosley argued that his Blackshirts were necessary for protection at BUF rallies, where anti-fascists would frequently protest and brawl with fascists. However, Blackshirt violence expanded beyond rallies. BUF radicals would brawl with political opponents in the street, which was not looked upon positively by the media or the public. Likewise, Kuhn's Brownshirts would beat opponents – including veterans – in the streets, which warranted them a negative public opinion. Neither the BUF nor the Bund had the precedence necessary for their violence to be accepted as a necessary form of "self-defense" against the "other."

Beyond the metrics of success, the success of the BUF and the Bund was also limited by their respective national political environments, neither of which were ideal for fascist growth.

Success for Hitler's Nazis and Mussolini's Fascists was contingent upon taking advantage of specific political opportunities. The Italian and German governments were gridlocked, and both nations faced steep economic decline. Moreover, both nations faced varying degrees of humiliation from the Treaty of Versailles. So, the both the German Nazis and the Italian Fascists took advantage of citizens who were disillusioned with democracy.

Without these conditions, the Nazis would have likely failed under the weight of bankruptcy and declining support, which occurred during 1933, when parliamentary votes for the Party fell by two million. What is more, Hitler would never have had the opportunity to pass the Reichstag Fire Decree or the Enabling Act once he was in office if it were not for the Conservative elites and their fear of the left. Likewise, had Italy's economic situation been given time to improve, Mussolini might not have been as popular, or his *Squadrismo*'s violence as well supported by rural farmers disillusioned with the socialist order. Italian Fascists worked with local law enforcement to oust government officials, as well with conservative business owners. Without these conditions, Mussolini would not have been given power by King Victor Emmanuel III. The Kingdom of Italy's government was not entirely useless, after all. By October 1922, when the March on Rome occurred, Prime Minister Luigi Facta had rallied five battalions to counter the fascists during their infamous march. For a moment, it was completely plausible that Mussolini's fascists could be repelled. Thousands of fascists had already been arrested in the days leading up to the event. Without the King's decision to appoint the upstart fascist, Mussolini's bluff surely would have failed, regardless of the success he found in the Po Valley or elsewhere.

The point of this comparative analysis is to demonstrate that, even if the BUF or the Bund had succeeded with all metrics, they still would have faced intrinsic political problems out

of their control. Neither the United States nor Britain had democratic institutions weak enough to be taken advantage of by fascist movements. For one, neither the U.S. nor Britain had post-war environments making paramilitary action common or justified, as was the case in many continental European nations after World War I. Nazi paramilitary violence, for example, was not alien to the political/cultural landscape of Weimar Germany. In the words of Daniel Siemens, the SA began as "a typical product of the 'transnational zone of paramilitary violence' that emerged in central Europe after the First World War."[2]

Second, U.S. and British representative institutions were not paralyzed by splintered and ineffectual political parties. Simply put, the democratic institutions of interwar Britain and the U.S. were stronger and more resistant to fascist movements than either those of the Weimar Republic or the Kingdom of Italy. Moreover, neither the U.S. nor Britain had Constitutions weak enough to be taken advantage of by authoritarian parties. The Kingdom of Italy and the Weimar Republic both had clear avenues available for fascists to take power and dismantle democracy legally. The Fascist Acerbo Law and the Nazi Reichstag Fire Decree and Enabling Act were three legislations passed because of the weaknesses of the Italian and Weimar Constitutions.

Even with all of these environmental disadvantages, the BUF and the Bund did not fail as organizations. They may have had clear limits to their success, but neither disbanded willingly. Somewhat paradoxically, operating in democratic nations gave them advantages to exploit. For example, although the Bund was unpopular, some Americans believed "that any ban on acclaim to a foreign raler [sic] would be a dangerous precedent for the suppression of free speech."[3] The

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[2] Siemens, Daniel. *Stormtroopers: A New History of Hitler's Brownshirts*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017. Pg. 3.
[3] *Bradford Era,* March 24, 1937.

Bund's greatest opposition was from the U.S. government, and its consistent legal attacks against the organization prior to and after the outbreak of WWII. After the U.S. entered WWII in December 1941, the Bund was outlawed, and many of its remaining members were interned.[4] In the case of the BUF as well, their membership numbers never fell to a point where it was forced to disband. By 1939, it still maintained some 20,000 supporters, 15,000 more than its all-time low of 5,000 in 1934 after Olympia.[5] After entering WWII, however, Britain banned the organization altogether using the Emergency Defense Act.

In summary, the BUF and the Bund were both movements whose respective democratic political environments simultaneously gave them opportunities to build support, while ultimately inhibiting their ability to seize power politically. So, the BUF and the Bund were not failures. Throughout their existence, they were well established movements that had significant numbers backing them. Moreover, they were deemed to be threats to democracy, so much so that the British and U.S. Governments felt the need to ban them entirely during wartime.

Although these conclusions pertain specifically to interwar fascism, that is not to say they are not relevant to extreme right-wing populist movements beyond the interwar period. The early 21st century has seen a surge in works dedicated to understanding fascist ideology particularly beyond its interwar context. Scholars such as Robert Paxton and Jason Stanley have argued that the lessons learned from interwar fascism remain relevant in the present.[6] In the United States,

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[4] "German American Bund." United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Accessed Nov. 1, 2022. https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/german-american-bund.
[5] Webber, G. C. "Patterns of Membership and Support for the British Union of Fascists." *Journal of Contemporary History*. Sage Publications, Inc., 1984. Pg. 577.
[6] In November 2021, Robert Paxton authored the short article, "I've Hesitated to Call Donald Trump a Fascist. Until Now." Another academic, Jason Stanley, author of *How Fascism Works* (2018), has applied the themes of fascism to 21st century U.S. political trends on the right.

recent national trends and events in the past decade can be understood within the framework of fascism studies. The racist and antisemitic "Unite the Right" rally at Charlottesville in 2017, the anti-democratic insurrection invoked by former President Trump against the U.S. government on January 6th, 2021, the overturning of Roe V. Wade in 2022, and the reactionary policymaking against people of LGBTQ+ identities within Florida, Texas, and other conservative U.S. states all bear witness to the continued relevancy of populist, extreme politics.

Moreover, the growing popularity of radical conservativism in the 21st century does reveal flaws with two-party systems. The United States and Britain were resistant to fascist groups like the Bund and the BUF during the interwar period in part because of their pre-established political parties. However, that does not mean two-party systems are inherently exempt from fascist influence. As Daniel Ziblatt and Steve Levitsky argue in *How Democracy Dies*, all democracies are fragile, and may die at the hands of those – presidents, prime ministers, and other representatives – who are elected to defend them.[7]

Bad actors within political establishments are the greatest threats to a nation's democratic institutions. The French Boulanger affair of the late 19th century is an apt demonstration of this point.[8] This is why, as a leader, Oswald Mosley was potentially more dangerous than Fritz Kuhn, or even Adolf Hitler. As charismatic as he was, Hitler was poor, an outsider, and had no

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[7] Levitsky, Steven & Daniel Ziblatt. *How Democracy Dies.* Crown Publishing Group, 2018. Pg. 3.

[8] Georges Ernest Jean-Marie Boulanger (1837-1891) was a French general and politician during the Third Republic. Using populist appeals, he won elections by running for several different constituencies across France. His attempts at installing himself via electoral fiat as dictator ended, however, after rumors of his arrest from the Republican regime in 1889 sent him into exile. In 1891, Boulanger shot himself, and what remained of his Boulangist movement died with him. Irvine, William. *Boulanger Affair Reconsidered: Royalism, Boulangism, and the Origins of the Radical Right in France*. Oxford University Press, 1988. Pg. 4.

experience or connections in German politics prior to co-founding the Nazi Party. Mosley, however, was an aristocratic politician who was loved by many. If he had managed to cooperate with the Conservative Party, he could have left a lasting and devastating impact on Britain's democratic institutions.

These considerations remain relevant in the 21st century. Internationally, extreme right-wing populist politicians have emerged in the mainstream political parties of their respective nations. Donald Trump, as mentioned before, has encouraged, and bolstered Christian White nationalism in the United States through the Republican Party. Likewise, Andrzej Duda, President of Poland, and Viktor Orbán, Prime Minister of Hungary, have likewise demonized and legislated against peoples whose identities they deem incompatible with Christian conservative values. Utilizing fascist rhetoric as representatives of popular political parties, these leaders have eroded civil liberties through anti-democratic legislations in their respective nations. Although democratic institutions have demonstrated resistance to fascism in the past, that does not mean they are immune to its effects now or in the future.

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