

## Nationalism and Anti-Semitism before 1914

There was no 'Fascism' anywhere in Europe before the end of the first world war. Without the slightest doubt, it was this great upheaval, the destruction and the crises resulting from it, and the fear of 'red' revolution which arose in many European countries, that brought forth the movement which—after the Italian example—we call 'Fascist'. In comparison with the world after 1918—a world torn by bloody conflicts, political hatred, civil wars, revolutionary and counter-revolutionary convulsions—the world of the years before 1914 was a haven of peace. Nowhere in western and central Europe were law and order seriously threatened. Prosperity and economic progress were the order of the day. The proclamation of the *Commune* of Paris in 1871 did not inaugurate a new era of revolutions in Europe, but was the last of the revolutionary events of the nineteenth century, however this rising of the Paris proletarians may have been interpreted by Marx and his disciples. It was only in Tsarist Russia that a new violent revolution broke out in 1905 at the end of the lost Russo-Japanese war—the harbinger of things to come. It had no repercussions in other European countries. There the security of the governing orders, the economic and social system, the prosperity of the middle classes seemed established for all eternity. Colonial expansion and the partition of other continents contributed to this prosperity, in spite of the conflicts which resulted from them. The ever-growing expenditure on armaments on land and at sea—ominous in retrospect—created more employment and brought in vast profits. If there were clouds on the European horizon, they did not seem very threatening.

One of these clouds was a result of the economic development itself. The position of the lower middle classes, which in most towns formed the bulk of the population, was threatened on the one hand by the

process of concentration in industry and trade, the foundation of larger and larger enterprises, and on the other hand by the rise of the working classes and their vociferous demands for equality and political rights. At least in some western countries—Italy, for example, or France—there were truly revolutionary movements of the extreme Left, and everywhere there were strong socialist parties and trade unions. Marx had prophesied that the large majority of the middle and lower middle classes would be pushed down to the level of proletarians; even if this prophecy turned out to be incorrect, many of their members feared lest they would lose their safe and privileged positions. This could also be threatened by newcomers and immigrants and, in many areas of central Europe, by the rise of new or less favoured nationalities which, until recently, had not possessed a middle class of their own. In a world which was becoming far more competitive the Jews, but recently emancipated, provided such a threat in many a country; but the advance of other minorities—Protestants, Czechs, or Poles, as the case might be—could cause similar fears among those who thought their positions undermined, or their traditional ways of life eroded. Their reaction to real or imagined threats did not bring about ‘Fascism’, but it created the pre-conditions for the development of ‘Fascist’ movements after the world of the pre-1914 years had been destroyed by an earthquake. It is for this reason that we must, in the first instance, look at these groups as they developed in several European countries. Before 1914, they had no chance of coming into power; their influence was confined to comparatively small minorities, to the disinherited and the disgruntled. Yet their ideologies were to be carried over into the post-war period when they were to thrive in a far more promising climate. And their members—and in some important cases their leaders too—remained active and provided a coherent link between the pre-war and the post-war worlds.

Although these movements differed widely from country to country, there were certain features which they had in common. They were violently nationalist—a nationalism very different from that of nineteenth-century conservative or liberal groups, so much so that the term ‘the *new* Right’ has been coined to describe them. They were also, in most cases, strongly anti-Semitic, using the Jews as a convenient scapegoat for the ills of capitalist society. Finally, they were appealing not only to the middle and lower middle classes, but also to the lower classes, attempting to wean them from the ideals of socialism and internationalism, and to provide a popular basis for the new move-

ments. This was not yet the era of mass democracy, but the leaders clearly recognized that such a mass basis was essential if the ideas of liberalism and democracy, of socialism and syndicalism, were to be opposed with any chance of success.

### *France*

France had been defeated in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870–71 and had lost Alsace and Lorraine to the victor. The result was an upsurge of nationalism—by no means confined to the political Right—and a demand for revenge. In the 1880s the movement of General Boulanger—‘General Victory’ who would march across the Rhine and free the lost provinces—had for the first time posed a clear threat to the Republic from the Right. Paul Déroulède and his ‘League of Patriots’ constituted an extreme right-wing organization preparing a *coup d’état*, fanning the embers of discontent and eager to lead the General to the Élysée; but the movement collapsed ignominiously, Boulanger fled the country, and the Republic was saved. Yet only a few years later the collapse of the Panama Company and the resulting scandal provided new food for vehement attacks upon the Republic and, more specifically, upon the Jewish financiers responsible for the scandal.

It was then that a new journal was founded to fight the influence of ‘international Jewish finance’, *La Libre Parole*, and that this journal and its editor leaped into prominence. This was Edouard Drumont who, in 1886, published a book that was to make him famous: *La France juive*, which soon sold many thousands of copies. It painted an idyllic picture of the old France, a France that had been destroyed and conquered by the Jews. It was an attack on modern civilization which debases and humiliates man, on the world of the *bourgeoisie*. It appealed to the economic fears and resentments of the middle classes: the Jew, detested by the small shopkeepers, businessmen and artisans, became the symbol of financial power, of the capitalist order. ‘The only one who profited from the Revolution was the Jew.’ Jewish immigrants, such as the Rothschilds, had amassed vast fortunes in France: their wealth caused all the evils from which France was suffering. Jews had committed many other crimes throughout history; they were the devil from whom France must be delivered. But Drumont included in his attacks leading politicians and financiers, the Pope, the bishops and the Catholic Church, great noblemen and members of the

royal family, all those who in his opinion aided or courted Jews. The Panama scandal provided him with the material he required. He was the founder of organized anti-Semitism in France, and he gave it a definite anti-bourgeois tinge. In anti-Semitism he discovered an issue which had a mass-appeal.

Other forces in the France of the late nineteenth century were strongly opposed to the Republic as such and to the traditions which it incorporated, those of the French Revolution and the Enlightenment, of rationalism and liberalism. An open clash between the pro-republican and the anti-republican forces, which shook the very foundations of the established order, occurred at the very end of the century over the question whether Captain Alfred Dreyfus, accused of espionage on behalf of Germany, was innocent or guilty. It so happened that Dreyfus was a Jew—a fact not unconnected with the suspicion that fastened upon him, and with his degradation and sentence to life imprisonment by a court-martial. During the following years the agitation for a retrial slowly mounted; at the beginning of 1898 Émile Zola published his famous *J'Accuse* in defence of Dreyfus. Soon after, it was established that the principal document on which the prosecution and condemnation of Dreyfus rested was a forgery; and the officer responsible for this forgery, Colonel Henry, was arrested and committed suicide. Yet these events did not bring about the end of *L'Affaire Dreyfus*, nor did they silence his numerous enemies. Too many people in prominent positions were involved, and too many strongly established prejudices were at stake.

In the spring of 1898—a few months after Zola's *J'Accuse* and the foundation of the *Ligue des Droits de l'Homme* in response to his appeal—two young men, who were sickened by these events and by the plight of France, founded a *Comité d'Action française*. These were Maurice Pujo, the twenty-six-year-old editor of a literary review founded by him, and Henri Vaugeois, a philosophy teacher aged thirty-four. The committee's appeal presented the campaign of the *Dreyfusards* as a revival of the Panama scandal, serving only the interests of corrupt politicians and financiers. At the end of the year Pujo in an article, *L'Action française*, sharply attacked parliamentarianism and individualism; France must become as strong as she had once been, must be 'remade . . . into a state as organized at home, as powerful abroad, as she had been under the *Ancien Régime*', before the Revolution of 1789. In June 1899 Vaugeois lectured on the *Action française* to the nationalist public, deeply stirred by the *Affaire Dreyfus*;

soon after, the first issue of its bulletin appeared. The movement was launched. Its leaders were a group of intellectuals, busy with interminable discussions and determined to fight against the ideas of the French Revolution and all it stood for. The leading spirit among them was Charles Maurras, a writer who was then hardly thirty years old.

Maurras was born in the south of France, in a royalist family which had adhered to Napoleon III; to him the Republic was the last stage of French decadence. He was firmly convinced of the justice of the verdict passed on Dreyfus, but that was not the main issue: even if Dreyfus were proved innocent, it would not excuse the agitation which divided France, weakened the army and jeopardized the existence of the country. In his opinion, Colonel Henry had been murdered in prison, he was a hero, and his blood must be avenged; Germany was and remained the national foe. But Maurras' enemies were not only the Germans and the British—Frankfurt and London were the two capitals of international finance which personified the two hostile nations—but even more so the Jews, freemasons and Protestants, the protagonists of a devilish conspiracy directed against France and Catholicism. Four interconnected Estates made up what Maurras called 'anti-France': the Jews—foreigners in France; the Protestants—Frenchmen who accepted the non-French ideas of Germany, Switzerland and England; the freemasons and other anti-clericals—who agreed with the ideas of their anti-French allies; and finally the *métèques*—a term borrowed from ancient Athens, signifying resident foreigners. All fattened on the wealth of the country. All were equally hostile to a strong army, to French tradition and to its core, Catholicism.<sup>1</sup> The spirit of 'anti-France' in Maurras' opinion pervaded the teaching of history in French schools and universities which were dominated by the four hostile Estates; hence so many intellectuals were on the side of Dreyfus. The Jews were an element of disintegration; their tradition forced them to be hostile to that of France, while the Huguenots, centuries ago, had cut themselves off from the true national tradition; the loyalty of all these groups was not to France, but to foreign authorities.

To Maurras France was a Goddess, 'the miracle of miracles', the beautiful par excellence, and she demanded absolute devotion. He

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from Maurras' *La Démocratie religieuse*, p. 90, by D. W. Brogan, 'Nationalist Doctrine of M. Charles Maurras', *French Personalities and Problems*, London, 1946, p. 69; and from *L'Enquête sur la monarchie*, pp. 535-6, by E. R. Tannenbaum, *The Action Française*, New York, 1962, p. 73.

venerated the *Ancien Régime* and hated the French Revolution and the Enlightenment which had brought disorder and decline to the country. 'The fathers of revolution are in Geneva, in Wittenberg, and in earlier times in Jerusalem; they derive from the Jewish spirit and from the varieties of an independent Christendom which raged in the oriental deserts and the primeval forests of Germany, the different centres of barbarity.'<sup>2</sup> Democracy was equal to anarchy; it lacked the manly principles of action and initiative; it made the state the prey of rapaciousness and group interests; it was feminine, weak and evil. If France was to become as strong as she had once been, the monarchy must be reestablished; for only a hereditary monarchy could give the nation unity, stability and authority, without which it would break to pieces. Among the leaders of the *Action française* Maurras was at first the only monarchist, but he succeeded in converting the others—at a time when royalism was declining in France. The monarchy must be restored by force; against this, the government would be powerless, unable to organize its own support; it could thus be overthrown by a 'conservative revolution'.

The task of the *Action française* was the formation of this minority, 'which will make history and which the crowd will follow', of an élite which would become the ruling group of the new France.<sup>3</sup> This élite, in Maurras' opinion, would be formed by 'the best' from all trades and professions, the best officers, the best writers and philosophers, the best civil servants, it would be an intellectual élite. Thanks to Maurras, the *Action française* acquired a doctrine, which the other groups of the French Right lacked, and thanks to this doctrine it was able to grow and to survive. But at the same time it was too conservative and traditionalist, too exclusive and intellectual, and—with its royalism—too old-fashioned, hence unable to appeal to the masses, especially the industrial workers. The middle-class origin of its leaders and their intellectual pursuits made them unfit to become the leaders of a revolutionary movement.

At the beginning of 1906 the Institute of the *Action française* was opened. There Maurras held the chair of political science, and courses were given in politics, history, foreign relations, nationalism and social sciences, courses which were later published in book-form. A few months later the *Cour de Cassation* annulled the verdict against

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from the preface to *Romantisme et Révolution, Œuvres Capitales*, II, p. 33, by Ernst Nolte, *Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche*, Munich, 1963, p. 170.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted from *L'Enquête sur la monarchie*, pp. 469, 500, 509, *ibid.*, p. 179.

Dreyfus and declared him innocent; but the *Action française* refused to accept his acquittal and revived its agitation against the *Dreyfusards*. Young royalists attacked and mutilated the statues of men who had supported the campaign for a revision of the sentence. In 1908 the *Action Française*—first issued as a *Revue* every other week—became a daily paper, with money provided by the writer Léon Daudet and by public subscriptions. But many more copies were printed than could be sold, and heavy losses were incurred; there were in addition frequent expensive court actions, and heavy fines to be paid by the paper. The influence of the *Action française* was growing, especially among intellectuals and in the universities. In May 1908 it fomented riots against a professor of the Sorbonne because he had taken a student group to Germany during the holidays to promote better understanding between the two countries: he was forced to suspend his lectures. Early in 1909 rioters disrupted the lectures of another professor who had expressed ‘anti-national’ opinions on the subject of Joan of Arc; pitched battles were fought inside and outside the Sorbonne. The young nationalists began to dominate the university district. Jewish teachers became the victims of similar campaigns.

In these street battles and disturbances a leading part was played by an organization which had been founded in 1908 to sell the new daily paper: the *Camelots du Roi*. They were the militant wing of the *Action française*, animated by a military spirit, fighting a ‘holy war’ against the old order, the Jews and their other enemies. The organization was hierarchical and para-military. Its composition was allegedly ‘classless’, but in reality few workmen became members. Within twelve months there were 600 *Camelots* in Paris alone, and sixty-five sections outside the capital; but only a minority were active members. In 1910 an élite formation was organized within the *Camelots*, the *Commissaires*, who were armed with clubs and similar weapons and had to guard the party’s offices and leaders, to protect its parades, to disrupt public functions, and—like the *Camelots*—engaged in frequent riots and deeds of violence. These assumed such proportions that the Duc d’Orléans, the royalist candidate for the throne, publicly dissociated himself from the violence of the *Camelots*. The leaders of the *Action française* had to promise to give up ‘the politics of the barricades’ and of street violence, but their paper passionately denounced the duke’s ‘evil counsellors’ who were sowing discord among his supporters and splitting their ranks.

At the third *Action française* congress, held in December 1910, all

important reports had to be submitted in advance to Maurras, who more and more became the movement's acknowledged leader, and were approved without discussion. There was mounting enthusiasm, of which not the royalist idea, but Maurras and his closest associates were the true focus. In all 300 delegates attended the congress, representing over 200 sections, but only sixty to sixty-five were from the provinces. The party's support came above all from army officers, members of the professions, especially lawyers, teachers and priests, but there were also many white-collar workers, commercial travellers, insurance agents, etc.: the lower middle classes were strongly represented. They detested the republican régime which had brought no glory to France and did not help them to overcome their economic difficulties, while many priests and monks resented the 'monstrous Judeo-Masonic régime' that had brought about a separation of Church and state and severely curtailed the influence of the Church on education. In this struggle the *Action française* strongly supported the Church and the Catholic hierarchy from which it received much valuable help, not only in money. In response to the demands of its lower-middle-class followers the *Action française* proposed to replace the system of economic liberalism by a corporate order, in which labour was to be organized in guilds.

Yet persistent attempts to win over the industrial workers met with little success. The anti-Semitic propaganda, the shrill denunciations of 'Judeo-Masonic conspiracies', which identified bankers, rapacious employers and trade union leaders with the Jews, did not attract the workers. Nor were attempts to reach an understanding with certain syndicalist leaders, above all Georges Sorel, more successful. The militants of the extreme Left also hated the existing régime, but they had too little in common with the *Action française* leaders to make more than mere flirtations possible. In spite of all the verbal attacks on certain features of capitalism the *Action française* maintained close links with capitalist and industrialist circles, and Maurras showed a marked deference to big business; his movement depended on the support of these groups and on that of the Church, and they were anathema to the radical Left. During the war years Maurras emerged as a veritable champion of the Catholic Church, defending the Pope and the clergy and attacking their critics in many articles which were published as a book in 1917. It was these traits which marked the *Action française* clearly as a movement of the Right and decisively separated it from the revolutionaries of the Left.



Long before 1914 the *Action française* showed many of the characteristics which later distinguished Fascist movements. Its hatred of liberalism, democracy and the parliamentary system, its glorification of power and violence, which it did not hesitate to use against its enemies, its advocacy of strong leadership, its marked anti-Semitism and anti-Freemasonry were features which we shall find time and again among the Fascist groups of the post-war period. Yet for the time being Maurras exercised little influence outside France, and even inside the country the virulent attacks in which he and his followers specialized made little impression on the Third Republic. Maurras was no Mussolini, and no Hitler. The *Action française* was and remained the movement of a small minority, and its ideology orientated towards the past rather than the present.

### *Italy*

Like Germany, Italy was united only in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, between 1860 and 1870, and there was little that was 'natural' or 'inevitable' about this unification. While Germany was welded together by three victorious wars, a spectacular growth of prosperity, and a rise to the status of a great power, Italy remained desperately poor. Even in the military field, it was only thanks to the good services of the French and the Prussians that she had become united at all. After Cavour's untimely death in 1861, the Italian governments proved weak and inefficient. But it was the economic question which bedevilled the existence of the new state, and it was in this field that the failure of the government was most clearly marked. While there was no knowledge of economic issues in the kingdom, a glowing optimism about the country's resources was prevalent; it was considered the 'garden of Europe', overflowing with wealth. In reality, the mountain and hill areas were arid, the plains often marshy and malarious; the soil was exhausted; agricultural methods were primitive; the rivers and streams carried the top soil down to the sea. Soil erosion was a problem no one was able to master. While Germany had vast coal and mineral deposits, these were absent in Italy and all essential raw materials had to be imported. Industrialization had barely started and no capital was available for investment.

These problems were much worse in the south. Its economic life had been disrupted by the removal of trade barriers between the north and

the south as a result of unification; its protected industries and its system of trade had been destroyed. Many peasants were practically serfs, the victims of malaria, usury and rack-renting, and brigandage was endemic. A southern Italian bitterly described the south as 'a kingdom apart and isolated, a kingdom of discontinuity, with confused labyrinths of broken mountains, with wild torrents in place of rivers, with great expanses of desert neither irrigated nor capable of irrigation, deserts over which malaria reigns supreme. . . .'<sup>4</sup> From the north, as a result of unification, the heavy northern system of taxation and a new bureaucratic and political machine had been imported into this arid area, which had no industry and no middle class, but a rate of illiteracy of over ninety per cent.

In this poor and backward country, parliamentary government and institutions rested on a very weak basis, and the masses were utterly uninterested in politics. Until 1882 only 600,000 out of a total population of more than twenty-five millions were entitled to vote, and of these the majority usually abstained, so that deputies were elected by very small numbers. Then the property qualification was replaced by a test of literacy, or the proof of the payment of a certain sum in direct taxes; in addition, officials and those who had been decorated were enfranchised, increasing the electorate to over two millions, about eight per cent of the population. It was only in 1912 that all men aged thirty years or more were enfranchised. Governments were frequently changing; widespread corruption in governing circles did not increase the respect for the new institutions, which did not rest on any traditions and were widely distrusted.

Yet the kingdom, with its weak economic and political structure, indulged in ambitious dreams of great-power politics. At home, there were the 'unredeemed' areas of the Alto Adige (South Tyrol) and of Trieste which had remained under Austria, but were considered Italian by the large majority of the Italians, although only part of their inhabitants spoke Italian. The Speaker of the Italian Chamber publicly referred to 'our Trento', and government's funds were used to assist the Italians in the Trieste municipal elections. Yet politically Italy remained linked to Germany and Austria by the Triple Alliance, which had been concluded in 1882 and was periodically renewed. In reality, there was strong enmity, if not to Germany, then at least to Austria. The dreams of conquest and expansion went much further, and were

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Margot Hentze, *Pre-Fascist Italy—The Rise and Fall of the Parliamentary Régime*, London, 1939, p. 225.

in particular directed towards the northern shores of Africa just across the Mediterranean. In the 1880s the Italians established themselves at Assab and Massawa on the Red Sea. In 1887 Francesco Crispi became prime minister and extended the Italian zone of influence in north-east Africa into the colony of Eritrea; but he aimed at establishing a protectorate over the whole of Ethiopia, where an Italian protégé was established as emperor. In 1896 Crispi ordered the Italian army to occupy Tigré, to the south of Eritrea, and to march into the Ethiopian highlands. There at Adowa it was disastrously defeated by the Ethiopian forces. Crispi fell from power; but one of the few who ardently defended 'the hero, the only true Italian' was the young writer and teacher Enrico Corradini (born 1865).

Seven years later, in 1903, Corradini founded a nationalist journal, *Il Regno*, which was anti-parliamentarian, anti-democratic and anti-socialist and denounced 'bourgeois' society as cautious, unheroic and pacifist. In juxtaposition to it he asserted the moral values of war and imperialist expansion. The Italian nationalists were fascinated by foreign examples, especially those of Germany and Japan; these they considered the rising nations whose example Italy must follow; they thought of Britain and France as conservative powers, merely defending their possessions. Germany and Japan with their half-autocratic régimes also furnished proof that there was a modernity entirely different from liberal democracy which evoked the ideas of 1789. To Corradini, nationalism was the antithesis of democracy; liberty and equality should be replaced by obedience and discipline. At the end of 1910 the Italian Nationalist Party, *Associazione Nazionale Italiana*, was founded at Florence. Its foundation conference was addressed by Corradini who emphasized the poverty of Italy and its lack of natural resources: its misery could only be overcome by greater efforts.

The main theme of his speech, however, was that, exactly as there were proletarian classes which had adopted socialism, so there were proletarian nations which must adopt nationalism: 'nations, that is to say, whose living conditions are disadvantageously lower than those of other nations. . . . As socialism teaches the proletariat the value of the class struggle, so we must teach Italy the value of the international struggle. . . . But if the international struggle means war, well then, let there be war!'<sup>5</sup> Hence the programme of the new party advocated an increase in the strength of the army and colonial conquests; the

<sup>5</sup> Quoted by Hentze, *op. cit.*, p. 286.

Italians were to be reawakened to a consciousness of the greatness of Rome and the Roman Empire. Parliamentarianism and democracy, freemasonry and international socialism were denounced as the enemies of the nation. Indeed, the second party congress, held in 1912, decided that freemasonry and all universal ideas—pacifism, internationalism, egalitarianism—were incompatible with nationalism.

At the first party conference, too, Luigi Federzoni (who in 1922 became Mussolini's minister for the colonies) called for an invasion of Libya, at that time still under Turkish suzerainty. Corradini promised that Libya would fall without a shot being fired, and that the African desert would bloom. To him, the Arabs were mere beasts who should be whipped and hanged if they dared resist. This propaganda for once was successful. A few months later Libya was invaded by the Italian army, but the war—far from being a walk-over—was very protracted and costly. In the end an army of 100,000 men was required, and the Senussi tribes continued their fierce resistance for many years. Italian control remained limited to the coastal area, and the number of Italian settlers who were established there was very small. Imperial conquest did not prove rewarding to the country; but Corradini continued to speak of the Libyan and Balkan wars as the struggles of proletarian nations against 'European plutocracy'. The most plutocratic nation to him was France, dominated by democrats and freemasons, who had prevented Italy from gaining Tunisia. As with the *Action française*, the influence of the Italian Nationalist Party remained small, mainly confined to intellectual circles. At the elections of 1913 only three Nationalists were elected to the chamber. The propaganda in favour of conquest and expansion had not aroused any mass enthusiasm.

The most violent opposition to the war in Libya came from the extreme left-wing Socialists, while some moderate Socialists, Bonomi and Bissolati, supported the war and for that reason were expelled from the party. The most vociferous opponent of Bissolati within the party, and of any reformist tendency as such, was the young Benito Mussolini, then the local leader in the area of Forlì where he had been born in 1883, the son of a village smith and a village school teacher. 'In case of war,' he proclaimed, 'instead of hastening to the frontiers, we shall foment rebellion at home.' And after the outbreak of the war: 'The Arab and Turkish proletarians are our brothers, and the Turkish and Italian *bourgeois* our irreconcilable enemies.'<sup>6</sup> Mussolini was a con-

<sup>6</sup> Quoted from Mussolini's *Opera Omnia*, iii, p. 137, and iv, p. 130, by Nolte, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

vinced internationalist and revolutionary, violently opposed to parliamentary activities and to the Socialist acceptance of parliamentary procedure. For his violent agitation against the Libyan war of 1911 he was sentenced to five years' imprisonment, but actually only served five months of the sentence.

In 1912, at the congress of Reggio Emilia and on the motion of Mussolini, the right-wing leaders were expelled from the party; Mussolini himself was appointed the editor of the party paper, *Avanti!* His revolutionary fervour was in no way dampened by this promotion and he continued to despise the intellectuals who led the party. He advocated the use of force in the class struggle against the landowners and the Church, but he nourished the same hatred against the reformist leaders of his own party. Soon after Reggio Emilia, Angelica Balabanoff remembers, Mussolini stopped near some trees on his way home and declared: 'One day we shall hang Turati and other reformists on one of these trees.'<sup>7</sup> Filippo Turati was the man who, in the 1890s, had founded the Italian Socialist Party. Mussolini's hero was the French revolutionary leader Blanqui, 'the man of the barricades', the organizer of revolutionary violence. From another French revolutionary, Gustave Hervé, Mussolini took over the slogan: 'To us the national flag is a rag to be planted on a dunghill.' It was his love of violence in word and deed which made Mussolini conspicuous among his fellow-Socialists. He believed in a 'state of permanent war between bourgeoisie and proletariat' that 'will generate new energies, new moral values, new men who will be close to ancient heroes'.<sup>8</sup>

If Italian socialism, in the form it was preached by Mussolini, was more radical and violent than its French and certainly its German counterparts, Italian nationalism had much in common with that of the *Action française*. It was equally anti-liberal and anti-democratic, its aim too was power and the exercise of power, it too dreamt of 'action', action by an élite. Corradini proclaimed that with a hundred men ready to die he would give new life to Italy. But the emphasis was much more on war, the glorification of war, and the conquest of colonies than was the case in France, which possessed a large colonial empire, and in Corradini's eyes was the most 'plutocratic' country. There was a marked affinity of his thought with that of the Socialists in his

<sup>7</sup> Angelica Balabanoff, *Erinnerungen und Erlebnisse*, Berlin, 1927, p. 84. At that time she was a leading Italian Socialist and personally close to Mussolini.

<sup>8</sup> From a review of Sorel's *Réflexions sur la violence* written by Mussolini in *Il Popolo*, which he edited at Trento in 1909, and quoted by Laura Fermi, *Mussolini*, Chicago, 1961, p. 77.

definition of Italy as a proletarian nation, engaged in a struggle against the 'plutocratic' nations of Europe. It was the class struggle elevated to the international plane. All these ideas were to exercise a profound influence on the later Fascists.

One characteristic trait, however, which we have noticed in France, and shall find again in Germany, Austria and elsewhere, was absent in Italy: anti-Semitism. It was to be absent too in Italian Fascism until it was imported from Germany in the course of the second world war. This may perhaps be explained by the fact that Jews were much less wealthy and less prominent in Italian economic and intellectual life than they were in the more northern countries. In Italy the Jews were hardly more than 0·1 per cent of the population, about 45,000 in all; nor were they conspicuous. Thus 'racialist' ideas made little headway in a country where Jews and Gentiles looked hardly different. As late as 1943 Mussolini himself had to admit to Kállay, the prime minister of Hungary, that there was virtually no anti-Semitism in Italy, and that the number and the position of the Italian Jews were quite insignificant.

### *Germany*

Compared with the poverty-stricken Italy, and even with the defeated France of the Third Republic, the German Empire founded by Bismarck was a country of great strength and energy. There was rapid economic progress, especially in heavy industry, railway building and banking. The 1870s were a time of tremendous boom, interrupted by two short depressions caused by too rapid expansion. Between 1870 and 1900 many towns more than doubled their population; Berlin grew from a city of 775,000 to one of 1,888,000 inhabitants. While in 1870 only thirty-six per cent of the Germans had lived in towns, by 1900 the percentage had increased to 54·4, with a corresponding increase of the numbers employed in industry and trade. Germany—with her great deposits of coal and metals in the Ruhr, the Saar and Upper Silesia—was becoming a country of factory chimneys, mines and large urban conglomerations. The working-class quarters of Berlin and many other towns acquired their endless dreary streets of *Mietskasernen* (literally, 'barracks for hire', likening them to military barracks). There, in spite of all prosperity, numerous working-class families lived in poverty and squalor. The industrial and other workers began to

organize themselves into trade unions, and a Social Democratic Party became the opposition party on the Left. It grew quickly after 1875—when several rival factions combined into one party; but it polled less than half a million votes in the general elections of 1877, and only gained twelve seats in the German parliament.

The German Empire was neither democratic, nor particularly liberal, but rather conservative, a country in which the old authorities—the princes, the army, the bureaucracy—retained much of their power; hence there was no place in it for a party of the type of the *Action française*, with its right-wing extremism directed against the republican régime as such, and hardly any place for a party of the ‘new Right’. The first attempt in this direction was made in 1878 when the court preacher Adolf Stoecker in Berlin attempted to found a ‘Christian-Social Workers’ Party’. This was not a radical party, for it emphasized its ‘love of king and fatherland’, and its main endeavour was at first directed towards winning over Social Democrats: the working class was to be induced to make its peace with the Church and the existing state. But when Stoecker tried to address the Berlin workers the meeting ended in complete failure and a triumph for the Social Democrats. In the following year, however, Stoecker discovered in anti-Semitism a new weapon which made a strong appeal—not to the workers, but to the lower middle classes of the capital which were politically entirely loyal and much closer to his own world of ideas.

The German Jews had been emancipated in the early nineteenth century and were often active in trading and in finance; but they had also entered the professions and were prominent in politics, especially in the different liberal parties and in journalism, and they were particularly prominent in the capital. In 1879 Stoecker proclaimed that their temple was the stock exchange, that they were not clothed with the mantle of the prophet but with the finery of mammon; they were an irreligious power, and through their wealth they were making Berlin a Jewish town and themselves into the new aristocracy. Small traders, craftsmen, shopkeepers and other groups which suffered under the *laissez-faire* policy of the ‘liberal era’ and felt threatened by the growth of capitalism provided Stoecker with a mass following. But, according to police reports, in addition many officers and educated people attended his meetings. Stoecker was determined to ‘demonstrate to the people the roots of its misery, the power of finance, the spirit of mammon and the stock exchange’, to make known ‘the sighs of the peasants and craftsmen who are writhing under the Jews’.

There was tumultuous applause when he proclaimed at a mass meeting in 1883: 'We offer battle to the Jews until final victory has been gained, and we shall not rest here in Berlin until they have been thrown down from the elevated platform which they have occupied into the dust where they belong.'<sup>9</sup> He demanded administrative measures to curtail the Jewish advance in the fields of education and law, and wanted to gain protection for the workers and the middle classes by social legislation. He soon acquired tremendous popularity.

That Stoecker's propaganda was falling on fertile soil soon became evident. In April 1881 an 'Anti-Semite Petition' was submitted to Bismarck signed by 225,000 people. It demanded the prohibition of any further Jewish immigration from eastern Europe, the exclusion of Jews from the teaching profession and certain high offices, the limitation of their number in secondary schools and the legal profession; it ominously referred to the Jews as a 'race', while Stoecker desired to bring about their baptism and assimilation. In Pomerania in the same year there were anti-Jewish riots; crowds, shouting the anti-Semitic cry of 'hep, hep!', stormed Jewish shops; the police who tried to intervene were stoned, so that the military had to be brought in to reestablish order. In the opinion of the provincial governor it was Jewish money-lending and price-cutting, and Jewish competition in general, that had caused the troubles. In Neustettin the synagogue was burnt down. On New Year's Eve 1881 masses demonstrated in the centre of Berlin and shouted, 'Kick out the Jews!'. Dresden, the capital of Saxony, became another centre of anti-Semitic propaganda.

There were earlier examples of a more violent and racial anti-Semitism in some literary productions. In 1868 Hermann Gödsche, a journalist on the staff of the conservative *Kreuzzeitung*, published a novel which described a meeting of Jewish conspirators in the ancient Jewish cemetery of Prague, where they plotted to take over the world: an early version of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* which were to furnish 'proof' of a Jewish world conspiracy. In 1871 August Rohling, a teacher at a Prague church seminary, produced an edited version of the Talmud to prove that their doctrine commanded the Jews to commit ritual murder. This book was then edited by Edouard Drumont in a French version, and with his preface published in German. In

<sup>9</sup> Quoted by Walter Frank, *Hofprediger Adolf Stoecker und die christlichsoziale Bewegung*, 2nd ed., Hamburg, 1935, p. 84. The other quotations, *ibid.*, pp. 77-8. In 1880 about 54,000 Jews were living in Berlin, less than five per cent of the population.