THE BRITISH PRESS AND ITALIAN FASCISM, 1922 - 1932

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ABSTRACT

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By

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During the four years after the First World War, Great Britain and Italy experienced similar difficulties. For both countries the cost of the war proved greater than any had expected at the beginning. The economic hardships caused by the reversion from a war to a civilian economy were severe in Great Britain and Italy. Demobilized soldiers returned home at the same time that gross national product and overseas trade declined steadily. Massive unemployment ensued. During the war, politicians in both countries had made extravagant promises of a brave new postwar world; unemployment and inflation were a rude awakening to reality. Among the Italians the belief that they had been cheated of adequate territorial compensation at the peace settlement gained widespread credence. Politics in both countries were strongly affected by the existence of a Marxist regime in Russia. The fears which strikes, disorders, and Bolshevism aroused were similar among propertied Britons and Italians.

On October 28, 1922, Mussolini came to power in an Italy badly shaken by the demands of the war. After assuming power, the Fascist regime ended the political and civil strife that had plagued Italy. The leisurely pace of Italian life was accelerated, and for the first time Italy's

trains ran on schedule. From a government with a Right-wing orientation, Fascism was transformed into an all-embracing regime which subordinated the interests and liberties of the Italian people to the State. Under the Corporate state legislation, the economy was regulated. Fascism had instilled in Italians a new national pride. Touted by its creator as the twentieth century's predestined way of life, as the irresistible wave of the future, Italian Fascism gained the attention and interest of the British press.

The response of the British press to the first ten years of Italian Fascism may be divided into three broad classifications: conservative, moderate Left-wing, and extreme Left-wing. The Times, Morning Post, Observer, and Spectator offered the most useful and penetrating sources for understanding the conservative press's view of Fascism. Other moderately conservative publications such as the Economist, Fortnightly Review, Nineteenth Century and After, and Punch also addressed themselves to Fascism, though their comments tended to be infrequent. How the moderate Left-wing press responded to Mussolini and Fascism can best be seen in the Manchester Guardian, New Statesman, Nation and the Athenaeum, and less frequently, in the Contemporary Review. What the extreme Left-wing papers thought was put forth in the Daily Herald, Glasgow Forward, New Leader (the Labour Leader before November, 1922), and after January, 1930, the Daily Worker.

Against a background of political and economic

uneasiness in Great Britain brought about by the industrial strife and unemployment following the war, the "general strike" of 1926, and the Depression, the British press often voiced its own prejudices and political values when reporting on developments in Fascist Italy. The prospect of Bolshevism spreading to the British Isles raised the anxiety of many in middle- and upper-class circles, and conditioned the conservative press to view Italian Fascism with tolerance due to its alleged role in halting the spread of Communism. Conversely, the destruction of Socialist forces in Italy and the fear of a similar fate befalling the British Labour movement earned Mussolini the unending enmity of the extreme Left-wing press.

The bewilderment and uncertainty of the Depression years exerted even stronger pulls of polarity among British people than existed in the aftermath of the war. This was reflected in conservative papers which evinced admiration for Mussolini's public works projects and reconstruction schemes. Praise for Mussolini and a belief that declining capitalism would seek its rebirth in Fascism, stimulated the extreme Left-wing press to increase its criticism of Fascist Italy, and to describe conditions there in the blackest of terms. While the moderate Left-wing press commented favorably on Mussolini's welfare projects, it held that the freedoms enjoyed by the British people would make it intolerable for them to live in a Fascist state.

Besides these prepossessions toward Italian Fascism, the British press appeared handicapped by a deep-seated

inability to grasp imaginatively what could happen on the Continent. The British press simply could not conceive that the government of a great and civilized country seriously thought in terms of a philosophy which claimed to explain everything in terms of "battles," "obedience," and "bloodshed"; and sought to create a state from which all divisive, and thus subversive, elements were eliminated. The British socialist and communist organs thought that they had a monopoly on revolutionary and utopian thinking; the moderate Left-wing press did not think that man really behaved in such an irrational way; and conservative papers thought that Mussolini was capable of restraining the extremists in a regime which already showed the expected signs of moderation.

In addition, the British press failed to understand some of the totalitarian aspects of Mussolini's regime and how it differed from previous dictatorships. As such, the British press was largely ill-prepared to appreciate the Nazi movement in Germany. In fact, the obvious surface resemblances between the two movements may have influenced the British press to consider them similar. All Mussolini's saber rattling had not led him to provoke war or to challenge Great Britain or France on any vital issue. Since the British conservative and moderate Left-wing press judged Mussolini tamed by international politics, they felt safe to hope that Hitler would follow in the steps of his Italian precursor.

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THE EMERGENCE OF FASCISM AND THE MARCH ON ROME

By 1922 the profound effects of World War One were making themselves felt in Great Britain. Events of the immediate postwar years had tended to obscure the problems that were to plague Great Britain and Europe for years to come. Victory and relaxation of the anxiety of the war years had produced a feeling of euphoria. The "war to end wars" had been fought and won. Generations had now only to look forward to endless years of unbroken peace. Democracy had triumphed; Prussianism and militarism had been vanquished. Surely, Great Britain in 1918 stood at the dawn of a new era. Yet within four years the mood of the British people would undergo a great change. Elation and release would give way to despair and disillusionment. Whatever sense of achievement men had experienced at the end of 1918 had been dissipated by 1922. Lloyd George's appeal had turned sour; reconstruction and "homes for heroes" were a faded mockery; the British Empire was tormented by unrest and violence

in Ireland, India, and Egypt. The peace so warmly desired by Britons had nearly evaded them during the Chanak crisis. By 1922 the country was disillusioned and bored with international crises and in an escapist mood.

> The Peace Conference news had roused little popular interest by comparison with events of a more happily prewar flavour, such as the resumption of racing and prospects of seaside holidays.[1]

Disillusionment with postwar conditions was widespread. "Attitudes towards the war among the educated had passed rapidly from innocent romanticism through stunned despair to angry disgust."[2] The sense of mental and spiritual exhaustion which lay behind the social and political apathy of the twenties was expressed best by T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land, published in 1922. The disillusion that Eliot expressed was "not the Byronic melancholy and the Sorrows of Werther which had been in fashion after the Napoleonic Wars, but a hard, cynical, gay disillusion."[3] This disillusionment was more generally

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[1]Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, The Long Week-End (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1940), p. 29.

[2]L. C. B. Seaman, Post-Victorian Britain, 1902-1951 (London: Methuen and Company, 1966), p. 153.

[3]Graves and Hodge, p. 127.

expressed in derisive contempt for the values and standards of a society that was alleged to have led the young into war by exploiting their nobler impulses and to have cheated those who survived of the promised benefits of peace. Among the most brilliantly cynical books to incorporate some of these feelings was Lytton Strachey's Eminent Victorians.[4]

But disillusionment was not the only effect of the war which manifested itself in the British Isles in the years following the peace settlement. Despite the heavy burden of lost blood and treasure borne by the British people during the war, little had been accomplished in the way of alleviating domestic ills in the years following the peace. In fact, the country seemed to be full of demobilized heroes and expectant civilians for whom peace alone was not enough of a reward. It soon appeared that the losses and dislocation were too extensive for a prompt transition to a peace of goodwill and plenty.[5] During the war there had been little unemployment, and welfare services had greatly increased. Wages,

[4] Seaman, p. 155.

[5] W. N. Medlicott, Contemporary England, 1914-1964 (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1967), p. 73.

which had nearly caught up with the cost of living in the summer of 1917, slipped behind once more when prices ran away in the postwar boom.

The greatest material loss had been in shipping, and much of this had been replaced in the last year of the war. Soon ship owners were complaining that they had too many ships. Also the stoppage of many peacetime activities had a damaging effect. The building of houses had ceased by the end of 1914. The need for private dwellings had become acute. Railroads were in need of new equipment; they had been overworked during the war. This was also true of the coal mines where the immediate demands of war had often caused wasteful extracting methods to be used. Yet after the war, much new capital was poured into the old pattern of production. Steel works and shipbuilding yards were producing in quantities that greatly exceeded peacetime needs. The war had furthered the expansion of industries of which Great Britain already had too many and neglected valuable industries of the future. Great Britain's financial position in the world was also seriously damaged; she entered the war as a creditor nation and left it as a debtor. Before the war the City of London had been the investment capital

of the world. After the war this activity passed to the United States, never to be regained by Great Britain.[6]

These circumstances constituted the root causes of Great Britain's failure to maintain prewar levels of exports, though even before the war the annual rate of increase of exports was falling. The war helped to accelerate this trend. The crisis, however, did not become apparent until the end of the short replacement boom which followed the Armistice. From about March 1919 to April 1920, there was an astounding demand for goods. On the one hand, this was due to the fact that the international community had money to spend and, on the other, to the fact that for so long it had been unable to buy. The collapse came when the worst shortages had been removed, and the most urgent tasks of restoring and reconditioning the country's industry had been completed. As food and raw materials began to arrive more plentifully in Europe from overseas, supply surpassed demand. The fall of prices in 1920 was followed by widespread unemployment.[7]

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[6]A. J. P. Taylor, English History, 1914-1945 (Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 120-23.

[7]Medlicott, pp. 90-92.

While the immediate postwar boom helped to cushion the dislocating effects of demobilization, the ensuing economic slump set the pattern of the years following the end of the war. Even before the end of the boom, Great Britain had experienced a rash of strikes and disorders. Now, the slump tended to worsen relations between employee and employer. The latter, in order to increase sales, which had been falling off in the early 1920's, tried to cut costs by reducing wages. Workers thought wages were already too low and opposed reduction by strikes or the threat of them. A general strike was narrowly averted in 1921 when the railway men and transport workers planned to act in sympathy with the miners. Instead the Triple Alliance of these three groups once again drew back and there was no "general strike" until 1926. The eventual defeat of the miners began a round of wage reductions for many other laborers.

During 1921 nearly 86,000,000 working days had been lost in strikes. Though 1922 saw a substantial reduction in lost working days, it also saw a steady drop in real wages. From the summer of 1921 onwards, the major industrial problem ceased to be the battle between organized employees and their bosses and became that of

large-scale unemployment.[8] Under these conditions, the propertied classes viewed the mass of unemployed with alarm, suspecting it of being a potential threat to the established order. Nor could the governing class find any solace in imperial and foreign affairs. The Bolshevik success in Russia was disconcerting, as were disorders throughout the Empire. Great Britain had emerged from the war with enlarged imperial possessions. Particular satisfaction could be taken in having not only acquired so many new territories but in having closed the gap between the Indian Ocean and Suez as a result of the paramount place British power had achieved in the Arab world. But in 1922 this pleasing illusion began to fade. The resurgence of Turkey was a setback to Great Britain's Near Eastern position.[9]

Of more immediate menace to the Empire was the stirring of nationalism and revolt in Ireland, India, and Egypt. India had become a liability with the National Congress Party making strident demands for

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[8]Seaman, pp. 110-15.

[9]René Albrecht-Carrié, The Meaning of the First World War (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1965), p. 161.

responsible government, as had been promised in 1917. Instead of buying large quantities of cotton goods from Lancashire, India was now manufacturing her own and buying from Japan. While yet not as articulate as India, Egypt too began to clamor for true independence. In an attempt at the pacification of Egypt, Great Britain recognized her as a nominally independent kingdom in 1922. Ireland presented the gravest problem. After the war the Irish problem reached its most acute phase, though the problem had confronted British politics for more than a century. Finally, peace was achieved in Ireland, and the last British troops left in December of 1922.[10]

It was easy then for many to see strikes and colonial nationalism as manifestations of Communism. To some the spread of Bolshevism was an ever-present threat. In the press the place of the "Hun" was gradually being taken by the "Red," and he was described in a similar manner.[11] And Government dealings with even organized industrial workers were characterized "as a straight

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[10] Taylor, pp. 152-5.

[11] Raymond Postgate and Aylmer Vallance, England Goes to Press (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1937), p. 304.

fight between the employing class, which it deemed to be patriotically undisciplined, monstrously acquisitive, and liable, owing to their innate stupidity, to be led into ways of revolutionary violence by socialist and trade union 'agitators' in the pay of Moscow."[12] Even the Labour Party was not considered completely trustworthy by all, despite the fact that it repeatedly refused to affiliate with the Communist Party of Great Britain, which was formed in 1920. The social gap between the British governing and governed classes had narrowed as a result of the war.[13] Not many could think of the class-war that Karl Marx had prophesized except as a figure of speech.

> Yet the class-war as it had been waged in Russia was real, and the Bolshevists were undeniably Socialists; and for Labour to be in any way associated in the popular mind with a massacre of nobility and gentry was most damaging to its cause.[14]

According to the conservative press the Bolshevists were murderers, ruffians, and enemies of private property, as

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[12]Seaman, p. 108.

[13]Arthur Marwick, The Deluge: British Society and the First World War (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1965), p. 293.

[14]Graves and Hodge, p. 152.

well as being atheists who had "nationalized women for sexual purposes."[15] A Daily Mail story gave a typical portrayal of Communists at the time:

> Eighty-two Russian Bolsheviks and convicted criminals were deported from England yesterday and placed in the steamer Oratava for Odessa, where they will be disembarked under the protection, if necessity arises, of British guns. These men lived for the most part in the East End of London, but a few came from the provinces. They are all either Reds of the most dangerous type--enemies to every country, even their own--or burglars, thieves, passport forgers, and others steeped in the worst forms of degradation.[16]

Several developments contributed to the fear that Bolshevism would spread to Great Britain. During the violent "general" strike in 1920 in Glasgow, the Red Flag was flown from some buildings and troops with machine-guns and tanks were brought into the city.[17] The spate of strikes that followed in the next few years further increased uneasiness among the governing class. More to the point was the sympathy shown to the Soviet Union when on May 10, 1920, London dockers refused to load munitions bound for Poland onto the Jolly George. Later in the

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Daily Mail, May 3, 1919, quoted in Postgate and Vallance, p. 304.

[17] Seaman, p. 110.

the summer when the Lloyd George government seemed ready to intervene with France on behalf of Poland against Russia, Labour acted in solid resistance. In many towns, Councils of Action were established and the National Council of Labour made plans for an immediate general strike. The need for British intervention ended almost overnight. Poland rallied and managed to save herself.[18] While the opposition to intervention and possible war with Russia stemmed more from war weariness, it was disconcerting to some to see such blatant sympathy for Soviet Russia.

Faced with the spread of Bolshevism on the Continent and its possible disruptive repercussions within Great Britain, British people kept an especially watchful eye on Communism in Italy. Along with this general concern, it should be noted that the British people had had a long and deep interest in Italy. When the Industrial Revolution had begun to increase the wealth of the middle class in Great Britain, the parvenus often sent their sons on Grand Tours to Italy to acquaint them with its art and civilization.[19] Many English writers held a special

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[18] Taylor, pp. 143-44.

[19] J. H. Plumb, The First Four Georges (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1967), pp. 34-5.

fondness for things Italian, and the English cemetary in Rome still had the remains of Keats and Shelley. Garibaldi and the Risorgimento had caught the fancy of the British people.[20] Those who could afford the expense of a Continental holiday were attracted to Italy and were familiar with its people as well as its art and its ancient monuments.

In 1915 Italy joined the Allies in the war against the Central Powers. When in 1917 the secret treaties were published, the evidence cast an unfavorable light on Italian statesmen who had bargained long and hard to gain their ends before joining the Allies. Italy was promised territories populated by peoples which had no affinity with Italians. They were German, Slav, Turk, and Greek. This left an unpleasant impression on the British, especially because the Italian leaders continued to haggle throughout the war and during the peace conference.[21]

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[20]E. L. Woodward, The Age of Reform, 1815-1870 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), pp. 303, 615.

[21]David Lloyd George, Memoirs of the Peace Conference (New Haven: Yale University Press, Vol. II, 1939), pp. 504-5.

Side by side with this impression was the wartime belief that Italy was not "pulling her full weight in the alliance." It was difficult to secure from Italy support for any enterprise which was not strictly beneficial to Italy. It was left to Great Britain and France to supply almost all the forces for the Salonica expedition to keep the Balkans and Greece from falling entirely into the hands of the Central Powers. The burden of attacking Turkey fell mainly to the British Army, though Italy was to receive a large slice of Turkish territory.[22] The Italians' lack of success within their own theater of operations only heightened the feeling that they were not pulling their weight. In the years immediately following the war, British readers of military history were likely to have read James Edmond's account of the Italian theatre. In Edmond's view, British and French efforts in Italy had been ignored, and if

> a true account were given it could not be overlooked that the British were the first to cross the Piave, and that they received the surrender of the Austrian forces in Trent before Italian troops arrived.[23]

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[22] Ibid.

[23] James E. Edmonds, History of the Great War, Military Operations, Italy (London: Macmillan, 1923), p. 358.

There were also doubts as to the martial qualities of the Italians themselves. Lloyd George wrote eloquently on the bravery of the Italian soldier but added that "the dangers of a retreat are not so great amongst the stolid races of the North as in the armies of a quick, imaginative, susceptible people such as the Italians."[24] Personal accounts of British soldiers in Italy, such as Hugh Dalton's Call Back Yesterday, failed to record Italian combat expertise.[25] Thus Italy's disappointing contribution to the Allied war effort and her insistence on fulfillment of the promises contained in the secret treaties led some to conclude that the shabby treatment Italy received at Paris was only natural.[26]

For a country ill-prepared and ill-equipped for modern warfare, as Italy was, the conflict had been difficult and harsh. But the peace in many ways proved worse.

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[24]David Lloyd George, War Memoirs (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, Vol. IV, 1934), p. 486.

[25]Hugh Dalton, Call Back Yesterday (London: Frederick Muller, 1953), pp. 87-100. With British Guns in Italy (London: Methuen and Company, 1919).

[26]H. Stuart Hughes, "The Early Diplomacy of Italian Fascism, 1922-1932," The Diplomats, 1919-1939, ed. Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert (New York: Atheneum, 1967), II, p. 214.

President Wilson of the United States refused to accept the provisions of the Treaty of London. Instead, he supported the claims of the new Yugoslav monarchy in the Adriatic. Italy made important gains, such as the Trentino and Alto Adige, but not all the gains for which she had entered the war. Dalmatia remained in Yugoslav hands; the port of Fiume was left to an international commission. To those Italians who weighed territorial acquisition in the balance against casualties, this seemed too small a compensation for 750,000 dead and 1,000,000 wounded.[27]

The morrow of the Italian victory was full of disillusion, uncertainty, and confusion which was not dissimilar from that of Great Britain. In Italy demobilization and the closing of war factories threw thousands of unemployed into the streets. Wartime inflation continued to soar. There were strikes, violence, and bloodshed. Demobilized veterans echoed the nationalist complaints about the Allies' treatment of their country. Peasants took over the great estates; strikes and riots brought about confusion in industry and cities.[28] Only a government

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[27]Dennis Mack Smith, Italy: A Modern History (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1959), pp. 316-19.

[28]Eugen Weber, Varieties of Fascism (New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1964), pp. 70-71.

possessed of courage, vision, and popular approval could have met such a situation. But once again there was the inevitable parliamentary paralysis in which no government had a reliable working majority, and politicians resorted to unprincipled maneuverings to secure day-to-day parliamentary support. The worn formulaes to which old parties clug held no more meaning for the new mass public. The prewar Socialist leadership was discredited by its acceptance of the war. The Socialist Party, which joined the Communist International in 1919, aroused the fears of devoted Catholics and of the propertied classes. By ill chance, Mussolini had the correct combination of ability, charisma, and unscrupulousness to exploit this situation to the utmost.[29]

Though nineteen-twenty-two was the first orderly year which Great Britain had known since the outbreak of war, the fear of Bolshevism remained alive.[30] A later witness to this fear is the stir caused by the Zinoviev letter in the autumn of 1924. So it was that when a government came to power in Italy proclaiming itself the savior of that country from Communism, the British press

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[29]Smith, p. 322. [30]Taylor, p. 163.

and public were naturally interested. Here at last was a government predicated on staunch anti-Communism. To some, a party that had succeeded in wresting the controls from a liberal and parliamentary government while at the same time heading off any possible control of Italy by what was considered at the time one of Europe's strongest Communist Parties was worthy of attention. To others a movement which wiped out internal political freedom, seized the property of organized labor, and consolidated its position by killing its most dangerous Socialist opponents naturally aroused great concern. The seizure of power by the Fascist Party, therefore, raised questions of class interest as well as of abstract political and social principle among the British press and its readers. Initially, however, the attention of the press was focused on Fascism's triumph over Socialism and parliamentary government. Because the years from 1918 to 1922 resembled a journey through chaos in Great Britain, it is of primary interest to reflect on how the British press regarded Mussolini and Fascism--whether as the savior of Italy from Socialism and anarchism or as a Metternich returned in the guise of an Italian patriot.

For the most part, the opinions of the British people were shaped by their press. The press's points of view reached the British public by news coverage, editorials, cartoons, letters to the editor, and special reports. But in order to arrive at a more just appreciation of press reactions to events in Italy, it is desirable to consider certain features of the British press of the period. It is obvious, in the first place, that the press may at once try to mirror public opinion and to mould it. Also it is probable that both the editorial approach and the selection of news are the result of a complicated interaction between these two processes. How much the British press moulded opinion or merely reflected it is a difficult question to answer.

In one sense there can be little doubt that the British press had acquired a status greater than at any previous time. The gathering and distribution of news had become a major industry. It was determined by a UNESCO survey for 1952 that 611 newspapers were sold each day for every 1,000 inhabitants of the British Isles, the highest ratio in the world and nearly twice that in the

United States.[31] The power of the press increased during those years when Lloyd George sought the support of the press by making every newspaper owner, who so wished, a member of the House of Lords, and the three greatest of them--Lord Beaverbrook, Viscounts Northcliffe and Rothermere--members of the government. The press was widely believed to be a powerful and potentially dangerous political instrument--and this in itself, whether true or not, gave it power. The importance of the newspaper proprietors was recognized not only by Lloyd George but by all British prime ministers in the period between the two world wars.[32] And the press lords truly enjoyed great days. In 1924 the Daily Mail's "Red Letter" campaign may have widened the margin of votes against the Labor Government. It is even probable that the continued attacks of Rothermere's Daily Mail and Beaverbrook's Daily Express may have hurt the Conservative Party in the 1929 election. So piqued was Baldwin that he took up the battle with the newspaper lords in 1930. And in the following year a vulgar attack by the Daily Mail elicited Baldwin's passionate

[31] William Albig, Modern Public Opinion (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1956), pp. 66-67.

[32] C. J. Hambro, Newspaper Lords in British Politics (London: Macdonald and Company, 1958), p. 5.

denunciation of press behavior--"What the proprietorship of these pages is aiming at is power, and power without responsibility--the prerogative of the harlot throughout the ages."[33]

It would be inadvisable, however, to over-stress the power of the press and its relationship to the government. The same caution must be applied to the relationship between the press and the public. There is evidence to show that the press neither represented nor was likely to influence a great proportion of its readers. For while editorials of The Times were normally read by over half of its readership, there is also evidence that a national newspaper would have a substantial proportion of readers whose politics differed explicitly from its own. For example, it is likely that at one point a quarter of the Daily Mail readership and a third of that of the Sunday Dispatch consisted of Labour Party supporters, while a fifth of those who bought the News Chronicle were declared Conservatives.[34]

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[33] Ibid., pp. 45, 49.

[34] Charles Madge and Tom Harrisson, Mass Observation: The Press and its Readers (London: Penquin Books Limited, 1949), p. 49.

There are excellent reasons, therefore, why a study such as this cannot be expected to yield any startling discoveries of press influences on government actions or on public attitudes, and why any conclusion reached here can only be properly evaluated if related to this background. On the other hand, it would be equally incorrect to minimize the status of the press as a British institution. If it only partially represented the opinions of its readers, it did to that extent represent them, and no government failed to pay some attention to the varying voices of British public opinion. Many people probably did think of the press as expressing the varying voices of British public opinion. And in this, there was, after all, some truth. Much more important was the fact that the rest of the world inevitably tended to equate the British press with the British people. Above all, it must be remembered that great numbers of people obtained their information and impressions from the papers they read.

It is the chief purpose of this study to ascertain the various reactions of the British press toward developments in Fascist Italy, and to determine the likely judgment of a contemporary reader on several features of

Italian Fascism. What British readers thought during the twenties and early thirties of Mussolini and Fascism was important in itself, as well as for its preparation for Hitler and Nazism in Germany.

The response of British papers to the first ten years of Italian Fascism tended to fall into one of three broad classifications: conservative, moderate Left-wing, and extreme Left-wing. There were naturally exceptions to this pattern, but these proved to be only temporary. On occasion some publications attempted, in the interest of providing a balanced account, to present views contrary to their editorial policy. At other times a publication was momentarily caught off balance by a new or different twist in developments in Italy. As a result, its initial remarks may not have expressed the opinions of its readers or even remained consistent with past editorial policy. Usually subsequent editorials corrected this temporary aberration.

It will be useful, as a basis for subsequent discussion, to say something about the sources used in this study. The Observer, Manchester Guardian, and The Times provided the most detailed and sustained coverage of

events. Quite aside from their varying political slants and their equally varying explanations, it was those three which, taking the period as a whole, provided the fullest and most accurate accounts. The Times had a strong tradition of restraint and a distaste for anything savoring of sensationalism in politics or journalism. While holding mildly conservative views, it held an unchallenged position as the best informed journal in Great Britain. The Times continued to print editorials favorable to Mussolini right through the period in question. It did, however, show some alarm by November, 1925 at "the arbitrary and unconstitutional character of the Fascist system."[35] The Observer, also a conservative paper, tended to follow the pattern set by The Times, though its treatment of Italian Fascism was peculiar. Although it attacked Mussolini's suppression of the Italian press as strongly as those publications further to the political Left, the Observer gave a most favorable presentation of Fascist efforts to alleviate distress in Italy during the Depression. On the other hand, the Manchester Guardian had a strong dislike of any kind of Right-wing or authoritarian

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[35] The Times, November 18, 1925, p. 15.

government. This paper was the most articulate voice of the moderate Left-wing press. It had begun to characterize Fascism as a dictatorship in the spring of 1923.[36] Other publications used in this study deliberated less on developments in Fascist Italy than did The Times, Observer, and Manchester Guardian.

What the extreme Left-wing press thought of Mussolini and Italian Fascism was voiced in the pages of the Daily Herald, Glasgow Forward, New Leader (the Labour Leader before November, 1922), and the Daily Worker. Though the Daily Herald was considered the official organ of the Labour Party, its editors and writers at times displayed their own opinions which were not necessarily those of Labour. The Glasgow Forward also manifested a Socialist viewpoint, but its coverage of Fascist Italy was scanty. Like the Glasgow Forward, the Independent Labour Party's publication, the New Leader, proved a poor source for this study. Usually they tended to show more interest in British domestic affairs than in Fascist Italy. The Daily Worker, when it appeared in January, 1930, expressed itself in strict Marxist rhetoric. As the official voice of the Communist Party of Great Britain,

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[36] Manchester Guardian, April 20, 1923, p. 8.

it gave only a narrow Communist interpretation to developments in Mussolini's Italy.

In addition to the Manchester Guardian, the moderate Left-wing press's views were taken from two weeklies--the New Statesman and the Nation--and a monthly, the Contemporary Review.[37] While the latter publication only provided an occasional reference to Fascist Italy, the New Statesman and Nation printed frequent and radical remarks.

Besides The Times and the Observer, readers of the British conservative press gained their impressions from a variety of other publications. The Spectator, a weekly journal, appealed to enlightened Conservatives. It often praised Mussolini's efforts to reconstruct Italian industry and agriculture. Yet it showed alarm at his anti-democratic methods. The Economist usually dwelled on economic aspects of the Fascist regime, although like the Spectator it came out against Fascist methods. The Fortnightly Review, Nineteenth Century and After, and Punch were not as strongly political as were

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[37]The Nation's full title was The Nation and the Athenaeum until February 21, 1931, when it merged with the New Statesman.

many of the daily papers. Whereas these publications, such as the Morning Post, reflected a conservative point of view, their observations tended to be balanced. Of all conservative publications used in this study, only the Morning Post, a national daily newspaper, remained staunchly pro-Fascist throughout the period in question.

On October 28, 1922, Mussolini and the Fascist Party came to power in Italy. The times were uneasy and this uneasiness was reflected in the response of the British press. The initial reception of the March on Rome in the British press was mixed. On the concise question as to whether Fascism saved Italy from Communism or anarchy, some of the papers adopted first impressions from which they deviated little in the next ten years. Others changed their opinion of Fascism within a few weeks; yet others took longer. And still others, such as the Daily Mail, temporarily ignored the event until a later date. That newspaper was "too busy assailing 'Bolshevist' Arthur Henderson and his associates" to carry an editorial on the March on Rome.[38] News coverage of events in Italy also had to compete with the residue

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[38]Graves and Hodge, p. 249.

of the Chanak Crisis and the disintegration of the Lloyd George Coalition Government.

Neither the daily press nor the weekly journals were eager to endorse the new regime in Italy. The mood was one of caution and watchful waiting. Not even The Times, which was shortly to become one of Mussolini's chief supporters among the press, was pleased with the Fascist record of violence and unconstitutional seizure of power. Yet it was more than ready to applaud Fascism's triumph over Communism.

> There are very wholesome and very evil elements in Fascismo . . . . Their proclamation is not a reassuring document; it is menacing and vague. If the sounder elements in the party prevail, Fascismo may ultimately develop into a party of middle-class, working-class and peasant Conservatives to the immense gain of the Italian State. The old Italian parties are effete, and for years past they have not had any real grip on the nation. The Fascisti are a new organization representing new and vigorous forces in Italian national life. They are the outcome of a healthy reaction against the attempt to spread Bolshevism in Italy.[39]

The Morning Post, which represented staunch Conservatism, was even more hesitant in its initial assessment of Fascism in Italy. The first reports about the new government were confined to a summary of events, though the

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[39] The Times, October 30, 1922, p. 13.

impression given by the Morning Post was that Fascism had been universally received with enthusiasm by the Italian people.[40] The role of Fascism crushing Left-wing movements was not discussed until later. When this aspect of Fascism's triumph was considered, the Observer obviously approved of Fascist actions, and its remarks typified the conservative press's viewpoints.

> This summer, when the extreme Socialists and Communists organized their criminal strike and the Fascists delivered their final demolishing blow, which not only broke the strike but scattered Socialist organisations to the winds . . . . This is where Fascism has won the admiration of Italy.[41]

The Spectator, which also represented moderate conservative opinion, was the first to link events in Italy to political movements in Great Britain. The editors expressed apprehension that Fascism would provide a model for Leftist action in Great Britain. The Spectator envisioned Labour using Fascist methods.

> We shall mark carefully the reactions of Fascismo in this country. British Labour has set its foot on the slippery slope of Direct Action. We have heard less of Direct Action lately, and the reason may be that Labour

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[40] Morning Post, October 30, 1922, p. 7.

[41] Observer, November 12, 1922, p. 8.

> leaders do not like the look of what they see at the bottom of the slope.[42]

The reason for the Spectator's concern can no doubt be found in the violence and fear of revolution that was so much a part of postwar Britain, especially the "Hands off Soviet Russia" agitation in May, 1920.[43] The editors were probably reflecting their own anxiety that the violent methods of Italian Fascism would be employed by the discontented sections of the British population to realize their goals.

The Fortnightly Review was tardy in its comments; not until May, 1923, was any substantial mention made of Fascism. In an article entitled, "Mussolini and His Methods," Vladimir Poliakoff stated that:

> . . . he [Mussolini] poses the issue: Fascism against Communism. For him Fascism is a name for the conservation of the race which demands respect for tradition, for duty and honor, for individual effort and for property . . . . In our country Mussolini would be called a Conservative.[44]

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[42] "News of the Week," Spectator, CXXIX (November 4, 1922), p. 623.

[43] Seaman, p. 153.

[44] Vladimir Poliakoff, "Mussolini and His Methods," Fortnightly Review, CXIII (May, 1923), p. 745.

The remarks of Poliakoff illustrated the tendency on the part of the conservative press to believe that there was much in common between Italian Fascism and British Conservatism.

The conservative press generally apprehended the political nature of the new Italian government and aligned itself on the anti-Socialist side, whereas Left-wing publications were slower to develop their views and showed some bewilderment in doing so. What was regarded as the voice of Labour, the Daily Herald, defied all expectation. It gave a surprisingly mild suspended judgment of Mussolini's coup, which must not have expressed Labour's real feelings. Labour was evidently horrified at events in Italy, as later pages of the Daily Herald showed. For a short time, however, the editorship of the Daily Herald had passed to H. H. Fyfe and he was pursuing a highly eccentric policy.[45] Though the paper gave details of Fascist attacks on Communist and trade union members, its main article of October 31, 1922, is not what one would expect from Great Britain's largest circulating working-class organ.

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[45]Postgate and Vallance, p. 312.

> Whether the Italian Fascisti are enemies to the point of view of the workers in this country is not yet clear. Many of their proceedings suggest that they are. On the other hand, they have lately shown a disposition to combine with some sections, at any rate, of the Italian workers, and it is possible that they may show themselves in future to be more open-minded and forward-looking than they have seemed to be hitherto. . . . It is impossible not to feel a certain amount of admiration for this man Mussolini who has organised what he calls a bloodless revolution, even though the aims of it appear to be entirely opposed to those which the workers of this country set before them.[46]

Like the Daily Herald, the New Leader, another organ of the Left, was confused as to the real intent of Fascism, even going so far as to see it as a disguised force of Bolshevism.

> Fascismo may be good or bad, but its vitality is the most obvious thing. And it is essentially practical. The Fascisti produce the goods. Wherein probably lies the secret of their popularity with the people, tired to exasperation with eternal talk . . . . It is suggested in Italy that Mussolini has conceived the idea of carrying a red or reddish programme, with the aid of a black-shirted army organized and equipped by white money.[47]

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[46] Daily Herald, October 31, 1922, p. 4.

[47] New Leader, November 3, 1922, p. 6.

The Manchester Guardian, while giving extensive coverage to events in Italy, failed to voice any strong editorial comment for nearly five months. Its first report of the Fascist seizure of power merely gave a summary of the events.[48]

As with other publications of the Left, the New Statesman's first article, "The Fascist Revolution in Italy," by J. C. Powell, made some remarks that were not only out of line with the subsequent position but showed an imperfect grasp of the realities of Fascism:

> The coup d'etat of last week . . . spells revolution, as might be inferred from what the world has heard of the record of Fascismo. On the contrary, the revolution contemplated by Mussolini is a political and social reconstruction on essentially democratic lines. Having eliminated the irreconcilable element of Maximalism, and in the process of doing so kindled up and down the country a great fire of patriotic feeling, his idea is to unite and coordinate all classes in the service of their country. It is an ambitious project; but Mussolini is a remarkable man.[49]

Confusion about Fascism's nature and semi-approval of its program and methods were not universal among publications

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[48] Manchester Guardian, October 30, 1922, p. 8.

[49] J. C. Powell, "The Fascist Revolution in Italy," New Statesman, XX (November, 1922), p. 170.

of the Left. While the Glasgow Forward gave only scanty coverage to Italian politics, there is no question that it regarded Italian Fascism from the start as a reactionary force directed against the working-class interests.[50]

Generally speaking, the British press initially greeted Fascist control of Italy with circumspection and caution, which reflected the times. In Europe four ancient dynasties had been destroyed by the war: the Romanovs, the Hapsburgs, the Hohenzollerns, and the Osmanlis. The new regime in Russia filled many Britons with apprehension. And the new leader of Turkey, Mustapha Kemal, had nearly involved Great Britain in a new war. Events in Great Britain also raised fears. Though the number of strikes was decreasing in 1922, the anxiety of Bolshevism spreading to the British Isles remained in many middle- and upper-class circles. Naturally the press at first looked on the new government in Italy with caution, especially as some of Mussolini's pronouncements before the March on Rome were hostile to Great Britain.[51] What

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[50] Glasgow Forward, April 1, 1922, p. 7.

[51] The Times, October 10, 1922, p. 11.

can be determined from the first reports of the press is that conservative publications tended to see Fascism as a reaction against Socialism and, as the following pages will show, moved to express support for Mussolini. Liberal and Labour opinion was slower to crystallize--the slower because Mussolini's dictatorship was made absolute by slower steps than Hitler's. That Mussolini had been a Socialist before the war and that Marxism had lived on in him until his death, should be considered before judging harshly the Left-wing press.[52] Nor did the Daily Herald or the New Leader have correspondents in Italy; they had, therefore, to rely on Reuter or the news services of other British papers for information.

As time passed, an important trend in the press was witnessed concerning the role of Fascism in the defeat of Communism in Italy. The Morning Post and the Daily Herald discussed events in Italy in light of what they advocated or feared in contemporary Great Britain. From the first appearance of the Fascist Government, the Morning Post slanted its articles in favor of Mussolini and his party. Soon this slant grew to be an open

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[52]Ernst Nolte, Three Faces of Fascism (New York: Holt, Rhinehart, and Wilson, 1966), p. 241.

endorsement of Fascism and its methods, not only for Italy but for Great Britain as well.

> We see that our Communist contemporaries are excessively alarmed by the growth of the Fascismo in the Western world . . . . We suggest to our Communist friends that the best way to stop the Fascists coming to England is to stop agitating for a Revolution. For some time past the Communists have been establishing a reign of terror in various industrial centers. In some parts of London it is impossible to hold a Conservative meeting . . . . If this sort of thing continues it may be regarded as certain that decent Britons will organize themselves for their own defense on Fascisti lines.[53]

The Daily Herald also anticipated the importation of Fascism from Italy, and viewed this prospect with alarm.

> Fascismo is spreading. And our ruling classes are looking eagerly for some weapon wherewith to combat Democracy and Socialism. To-day they are only flattering Mussolini. Tomorrow they may be organizing to imitate him.[54]

Along with the Daily Herald, the Glasgow Forward attacked the Morning Post for its endorsement of Fascism and espousal of it as "a saving gospel" for Great Britain. With a reference to what it conceived as the similarities

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[53] Morning Post, December 23, 1922, p. 6.

[54] Daily Herald, December 20, 1922, p. 1.

of Fascist Italy and Great Britain, the Glasgow Forward concluded that Fascism was "just our Capitalist system minus law plus a White Guard recruited from the criminal and parasitic classes."[55]

A second, no less important, trend in the press nearer the center of the political spectrum began first to appear in early 1923. Moderate conservative and Left-wing papers began to doubt the necessity of Mussolini's coup to deliver Italy from Red revolution. More objective investigations of pre-Fascist Italy convinced the press that Bolshevism was dead even before the March on Rome. The climax of the Socialist movement had been reached in 1920, when militant workers occupied the metallurgical factories in northern Italy. From that time forward, revolutionary Socialist influence began to lose its grip on the Italian people.[56] The British moderate press acknowledged this fact. To the Spectator, "Bolshevism was collapsing in Italy owing to the awful example of Russia before Signor Mussolini took to the

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[55]Glasgow Forward, April 4, 1923, p. 1.

[56]Nolte, p. 196.

field."[57] In a myth-exploding article, "The Fascist Legend," the New Statesman held that by October, 1922,

> the so-called Bolshevist crisis had already been overcome. The strike mania had passed so that the last political strike foolishly ordered by the Socialists in the summer of that year had ended in a great fiasco . . . . Italy, even without the Fascist government, was reassuming its normal life.[58]

Since the threat of Bolshevism to Italy could no longer be used to justify support of Mussolini's regime, conservative papers sought other reasons. The instability of Italian parliamentary institutions and the hope that the necessity for dictatorship would be short-lived are the two most common explanations. The Times illustrated this point of view:

> Although a strong hand was necessary to stop the beginnings of economic ruin, Socialism was broken before even the Fascists marched on Rome. Their overthrow of the Government was not necessary to save the country from Bolshevism, but was merely the quick way to purge Italian politics, and should be justified on that score alone.[59]

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[57] "News of the Week," Spectator, CXXVI (January 20, 1921), p. 90.

[58] "The Fascist Legend," New Statesman, XXVII (May, 1926), p. 104.

[59] The Times, January 12, 1923, p. 9.

Of those publications which chose to discuss Fascism's triumph over Italian Socialism, nearly all concluded that the Fascist coup was not necessary to stave off a Bolshevik revolution. The only notable exception was the Morning Post, which maintained throughout the period under study that Fascism had "saved" Italy from Bolshevism. As time passed, the press stopped considering this issue and focused on other happenings in Italy. Of course, there were exceptions to this, such as an article published in the New Statesman in 1926, which tried to debunk some of the myths put out by the Fascist Government and its supporters.[60] There were also lapses the other way. For example, the Nation in 1925 made the statement that, "the Italian people were ready to condone some excesses on the part of a man who restored order to a country deeply agitated by the progress of revolutionary communism."[61] But as stated, these were exceptions. Even during the potentially revolutionary times of the 1926 "general strike" the British press did not reopen

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[60] "The Fascist Legend," New Statesman, XXVIII (May, 1926), p. 104.

[61] "Events of the Week," Nation, XXXVI (January 10, 1925), p. 512.

the issue of Fascism as the savior of Italy from Bolshevism.

Taken all together, the conservative press agreed that Fascism, at first, had received support from every section of the Italian population. Papers that tended to justify Fascism temporarily as essential to the solution of Italy's problems, such as The Times, and the Observer, indicated initially that Fascism had the support of all elements of the population.[62] Left-wing publications tended to stress the role played by conservative forces in the Fascist movement. The assessment of the Nation included all reactionary elements, and even the connivance of the Italian Government, in its account of the triumph of the Fascists.[63] Such extreme Left-wing papers as the Daily Herald and the New Leader, contended that Mussolini received support solely from big business interests.[64]

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[62] The Times, January 12, 1923, p. 9; Observer, November 17, 1922, p. 8.

[63] "The Black-Shirt Revolution," Nation, XXXII (November 4, 1922), p. 186.

[64] Daily Herald, November 23, 1922, p. 3; New Leader, November 10, 1922, p. 13.

Observations by the press that active support for Fascism came from the conservative forces of society were basically correct.[65] Hence the judgments of the British conservative press that all elements of Italian society supported Fascism, were less than correct. For example, The Times in its enthusiasm for Fascism was incorrect when it stated that Fascism had support from all classes, even "the labourers and workers, who like the Fascists regarded the members of the Government as a political class of weak and halting men who in four long years knew not how to give a Government to a nation."[66] Actually, the Italian Trade Unions were "too weak for effective opposition to the March on Rome."[67]

One section of the population which the press neglected to mention as active participants in the Fascist ranks was that of the middle-class youth. For them Fascism must have meant the transcending of middle-class society, something they yearned for in a blend of idealism, desire for adventure, and blind urge to action.[68]

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[65]John Weiss, The Fascist Tradition (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), pp. 4-8.

[66]The Times, October 30, 1922, p. 13.

[67]Weber, p. 73.

Perhaps the British press at that time failed to understand the attraction of radical creeds for the youth of the middle class. During the later 1920's and 1930's many of Great Britain's youth were drawn toward radical movements, especially Communism.[69] But the press of the early 1920's was as yet unfamiliar with this pattern.

Also lacking in the first reportage, and even in later reflections, was an accurate impression of the March on Rome itself. The press did not describe the rather comic aspects of the March and the marchers. No newspaper or journal adequately reported a true picture of the bedraggled columns of Fascists, miserably armed, some only with clubs, marching toward Rome. This band of only forty thousand men stopped, or was stopped, about thirty kilometers from Rome by a handful of Carabinieri. Unfed and worn out by continuous rain, they waited for orders to attack which never came.[70]

Consequently, Mussolini did not arrive in Rome at the head of a storming band of Fascists, but by courtesy of the Italian railways.[71] The British press of

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[68]Nolte, p. 201.

[69]Taylor, pp. 347-48.

[70]Nolte, p. 213.

[71]Weiss, p. 45.

both Left and Right political inclination for their own reasons seemed to emphasize Fascism's strength and discipline rather than its weakness and disorganization. Probably the conservative press wished to present Fascism as being spontaneously endorsed by all classes which were tired of the excesses of Socialism. And the British press of Left-wing views wanted to focus on the reactionary strength of Fascism in order to provide a warning to the British working class. Furthermore, the press did not direct any humorous barbs, which were so typical of its later comments on developments in Italy, toward the March or the new Italian government. Even Punch failed to carry any cartoons on the March. Nor were there any of the waggish or sarcastic remarks which became typical of later issues of the New Statesman.

Perhaps this stemmed from the open-mindedness of the British press and a desire to give the Fascists a chance to return Italy to some degree of normality after four years of instability. Perhaps also the British press was caught a bit off guard by the very strangeness of what appeared to be the first spontaneous reaction to Bolshevism in a country which had been on the winning

side in 1918. There was also more than a little curiosity about the future of the Fascist government expressed in varying degrees by all the press. The Times often referred to Fascist rule and its schemes as an experiment. Finally, the press probably refrained at first from making comic remarks toward Italian Fascism because the times in Great Britain were themselves anything but comic. Unemployment was widespread; disillusionment rife; and the lurking fear of revolution or counter-revolution was widely present. The period was one of uncertainty in Great Britain, hardly a time for joking at another country's new and untried form of government.

FASCISM: CONSTITUTIONAL DICTATORSHIP OR A NEW POLITICAL STRUCTURE?

In this chapter an attempt will be made to present the British press's conceptualization of Italian Fascism as a political formation. Many of the comments on the political nature of Fascism are scarcely separable from judgments on the restrictions placed on the civil liberties of the Italian people. It is difficult not to mention the attitude of the British press toward these restrictions when considering the political organization of Fascist Italy. The focus of this chapter, however, will be on the political conceptualization of Mussolini's regime. Reference to civil liberties in this chapter will only be made where it is necessary to the understanding of the Fascist government's controls over Italians. Press reaction to the suppression of civil liberties in Italy will be considered in the next chapter.

Because the views of the press changed as Fascism evolved, a brief chronological description of this development is necessary. To portray accurately these changes,

some arbitrary periodization will have to be established, though it is acknowledged that history does not rigidly confine itself to such a scheme. This is merely a convenience to illustrate better the changes of press interpretation. With respect to interpretations of the political structure, three general periods are clearly defined. Before seizure of power, British press reactions to Mussolini's movement were infrequent and confused. Between the coup d'etat and the summer of 1924, when Matteotti was killed, the press's views of Fascism crystallized. The third period extended to the rise of Hitler in Germany in January, 1933.

From initial impressions of Italian Fascism, the British press turned to a study of developments in Italy in an attempt to understand the new regime. This task was far from an easy one. Fascism was an unknown phenomenon in the early 1920's. In the first years following the March on Rome, Mussolini tried to remain uncommitted to any positive policy. His chief object between 1922 and 1924 was to entrench his party in power. After this period Fascist policy was built by a wholesale borrowing of ideas.[1] This unsystematic program accounts for much

[1]Smith, pp. 375-78.

of the confusion of the British press. Depending on the publication's viewpoint, Mussolini's regime was at first considered either a simple dictatorship or merely a strong government.

Subsequent developments of Fascism in the mid-1920's led the British press to re-evaluate its earlier conceptions. The realization that Italian Fascism was different from existing political formations prompted publications of wide circulation, such as The Times and the Manchester Guardian to make several attempts to define it. Publications of the Left were generally quicker and more consistent in their explanation of Fascism as a dictatorship directed against the interests of the working class. Because of circumstances in Great Britain the extreme Left-wing press, and for that matter that of the extreme Right, was unable to consider Italian Fascism with complete detachment.

The unsettling effects of the war were still making themselves felt in Great Britain as the 1920's unfolded. Uncertainty helped to create polarization of British society. Those attached to the old ideas clung to them even more tenaciously; those attracted to the new fought for them with great energy. To repel the supposed

advances of Socialism and Communism, some thought it necessary to organize fascistic groups in Great Britain. In 1923, Rotha Lintorn-Orman placed a series of advertisements in the Duke of Northumberland's paper, The Patriot, calling for recruits to form British Fascisti to act as an organized force to combat Red revolution. It was an opportune moment. The arrival of the Labour Party in office in January, 1924, was heralded as the beginning of Red revolution by frightened Tories, who found it difficult to distinguish between a Ramsay MacDonald and a Lenin. It seemed to thousands in secluded middle-class and upper-class homes the prelude to a Red terror.[2] The programs of the first Labour government did little to quiet the fears of the conservative-minded. Improvements were made in unemployment benefits; old age pensions were increased; and the Wheatley Housing Act subsidized the construction of houses.[3] Moreover, the appearance of two Communists in Parliament raised the alarm of Bolshevism, especially when both were elected

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[2]Colin Cross, The Fascists in Britain (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1961), pp. 57-8.

[3]Seaman, pp. 175-6.

with the assistance of Labour votes.[4] All of these events brought fascistic organizations aid from some conservatives--"notably landed proprietors, minor industrialists, a few Anglican clergy, and the usual assortment of retired officers from the armed services."[5] The full diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union by the Labour government in 1924 and the Zinoviev letter episode also gained members for the British Fascists. The "general strike" of 1926 prompted many to respond favorably to the Fascist cry for an end to "milk and water" conservatism.[6] Baldwin's government had no doubt that British and international Communist organizations were eager to take advantage of any major strike.[7] During the strike the British Fascists approached the Home Secretary, Sir William Joynson-Hicks, with an offer of help. He replied that he would accept the movement's help only if it dropped the name "Fascist" and abandoned its paramilitary organization. The British Fascists did help in the maintenance of essential services during the strike, although rarely in organized units.[8]

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[4]Taylor, p. 280. [5]Weiss, p. 78. [6]Ibid., p. 79.

[7]Medlicott, pp. 225-27. [8]Cross, p. 62.

There was little attempt to elaborate a Fascist policy in Great Britain. It would have been difficult to form one, since Italian Fascism was itself in a state of evolution.

> The British Fascisti stood simply on the basis of defending King and Parliament against the forces of Communism, Socialism, Anarchism, free love, atheism and trade unions, which the members tended to lump into a mysterious single entity.[9]

These fears did not, however, stop extremist groups breaking away from the British Fascists. By 1926, the British Fascists and splinter organizations declined rapidly.

Since Great Britain's early fascistic groups were of minor importance, the British press only infrequently connected them with the Italian Fascist movement. And this connection was usually made by publications on the extremes of the political scale. Such incidents as the stealing of a truck full of Daily Herald papers by three British Fascists in 1925, reinforced this tendency to see a connection between the two movements by extreme Left-wing papers. The New Leader carried an account of

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[9] Ibid., p. 58.

this occurrence in the same column as a report on the stifling of trade unionism in Italy.[10] On the other end of the political spectrum, the strongly conservative Morning Post argued that the Italian Fascist practice of forcing castor oil on opponents should be followed in Great Britain against British Communists, such as Walton Newbold, an MP from Motherwell.[11]

Whenever a paper strongly endorsed or disapproved of Italian Fascist practices, it usually received comments from other members of the British press. In reply to the Daily Mail's zealous approval of Mussolini, the Glasgow Forward carried a cartoon of Mussolini with a dagger between his teeth and carrying a bomb. The caption read: "Tory Ideal." Under this appeared a quote: "He is the greatest figure of our age--Lord Rothermere on Mussolini in the Daily Mail 28/3/28."[12]

An early article in the Glasgow Forward, "The Fascist Terror in Italy," by J. M. Macdiarmid, expressed what was probably the common Labour verdict on those British papers that supported Fascism:

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[10] New Leader, November 6, 1925, p. 8.

[11] Morning Post, December 23, 1922, p. 6.

[12] Glasgow Forward, March 31, 1928, p. 9.

> The London press with some honourable exceptions, and their provincial contemporaries, all under the "tail of the financial serpent," the haute finance, hailed Mussolini as the embodiment of all the virtues, the strong, clear-headed, courageous man whose policy of creating the Fascisti, Chevaliers sans peur et sans reproche, and by their means, in defiance of the Constitution, seizing illegally and by force the levers of government, thereby saved society and broke strikes. If the editors of these English and Scots journals had been more careful in their inquiries and less anxious to misrepresent Socialism, Liberalism, and democracy, they would have discovered that Mussolini is really one of a criminal class.[13]

To views hostile to Fascism, the Morning Post replied with regret that Mussolini's achievements were unappreciated. Its views, like those of the Glasgow Forward, are worth quoting in full since they convey the flavor of the British press's opinions at the extreme ends of the political spectrum.

> Had the Fascist restoration of Italy been achieved fifty or a hundred years ago, it would have been marked by historians as the most notable event, the Great War excepted, occurring in Europe since the French Revolution, to which convulsion Fascismo offers a strange contrast. But, happening under the eyes of the present generation, Signor Mussolini's extraordinary achievement is neither appreciated nor beheld in its true proportions.

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[13] Glasgow Forward, July 26, 1924, p. 8.

> In this country the Duce and his aims have been either sadly misrepresented or unaccountably ignored.[14]

The tendency of extreme Left- and Right-wing papers to view similarities between British imitators of Italian Fascism and Mussolini's movement lost some of their detachment when they considered the evolution of the Fascist political structure. It was not possible for them to study Fascism as an abstract development. The thuggery of British Fascists led the extreme Left-wing press to see only the similar tactics of the Italian movement. Hence it failed to understand the appeal of Fascism to many Italian people and to adequately comprehend its power over them. The extreme Right-wing press equated the British Fascists' ideals of love of king and country with Mussolini's movement. Consequently, it was blind to much of the wickedness of Fascism and the ultimate danger it posed to individual liberty.

Those publications nearer the center of the political spectrum generally did not connect Italian Fascism and fascistic organizations in Great Britain. They realized that British fascistic groups represented merely

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[14] Morning Post, April 29, 1926, p. 12.

a small radical fringe. From The Times, Observer, and Manchester Guardian, a contemporary reader was most likely to receive a thorough description of the development of the Fascist government--from a government with a Right-wing orientation to an all-embracing regime.

Before the March on Rome, the British press's concept of the Fascist movement was ill-defined. Needless to say, the fault did not lie entirely with the press. Italian Fascism was motivated more by reaction than by positive, well-thought-out beliefs. It possessed a program but no coherent philosophy. Even this program was capable of dramatic shifts. At first Fascists attacked the old reactionary classes and supported a number of the strikes that raged across northern Italy in 1919. In the November, 1919 parliamentary elections, Mussolini suffered total defeat. During the next year and a half, Mussolini demonstrated how well he had learned his lesson. He made a transition from being a passionate, Left-wing defender of revolutionary syndicalism to being a passionate defender of the property rights of the establishment, and he embraced the Italian conservatives' determination to oppose liberalism and Socialism. In sum, Mussolini

turned from revolution to counterrevolution.[15]

The British press was aware of this transition, but its coverage of the Italian political scene was generally restricted to spot reports of clashes between Fascists and Socialists, and of the instability of the Italian government. Once the press became aware of the threat that Fascism posed to the government, more interest was shown. Along with increased interest, the British press began to display a bias toward Fascism.

A reader of extreme Left-wing publications was informed that the Fascists were hardly better than thugs hired by big industrialists to "beat up Communists." The reader was uninformed of the large degree of support the Fascist movement enjoyed in Italy. In addition, the extreme Left-wing papers made almost no reference to the fact that the Fascist movement contained a parliamentary party. The remarks of the Daily Herald typified the impression of the extreme Left-wing press toward the Fascist movement before the March on Rome:

> The main body of the Fascisti were lounging about, smoking and flirting on the Cathedral steps . . . . They were villainous-looking,

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[15]Weber, p. 27.

> unshaven men, and were carrying short knotted cudgels.[16]

Conversely, the contemporary readers of conservative publications were told of the praiseworthy work that the Fascists were doing in destroying Bolshevism in Italy. The opinion of the Morning Post was characteristic of this viewpoint:

> One of the greatest successes of the action of the Fascisti has been the dissolution of numerous Red associations in the port of Genoa which held tyrannical sway, especially over the harbour labourers.[17]

The conservative press, however, made more of an attempt to convey to their readers an idea of how the Fascists were organized than did the extreme Left-wing publications. The Observer argued that the "Fascist party is essentially a big movement, including in its midst a Parliamentary group."[18]

For their part, the moderate Left-wing papers showed more alarm at Fascist violence than they did with regard to its political views. These publications tended

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[16] Daily Herald, July 20, 1921, p. 4.

[17] Morning Post, August 9, 1922, p. 9.

[18] Observer, June 25, 1922, p. 8.

to report the news of Socialist-Fascist clashes without reflecting a bias toward either movement. But while the reliance of the Fascists on violence was criticized, their political goals were often stated without comment. This point of view was typified by the Manchester Guardian:

> A resumption of Fascist violence, which is to be deplored, has provoked everywhere reaction among workers, resulting in fighting and some casualties. Generally the Fascists have attempted to usurp communal administration.[19]

The amount of coverage grew during the summer and autumn of 1922. While knowledgeable of the political cast of Fascism, the British press was less sure of the proper political designation, whether as "party" or as "movement." Naturally enough the bias of a publication often affected its conceptualization of Fascism. But for the most part, the press had a tendency to label the Fascist movement rather than analyze it. The Morning Post thought "the Fascisti a fine body of keen patriots."[20] The New Statesman considered the Fascists as the "White Guards of Italy."[21] This was also the opinion of the

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[19] Manchester Guardian, July 17, 1922, p. 7.

[20] Morning Post, August 9, 1922, p. 8.

[21] "Comments," New Statesman, XIX (July 22, 1922), p. 429.

Glasgow Forward.[22] The Labour Leader at first concluded that "the Fascisti are the equivalent to the Black-and-Tans."[23] A later issue of that paper observed that the Fascists were the "black bands of capitalism."[24] The Manchester Guardian characterized Fascist activities as anti-Communistic but offered little else in the way of comment.[25] Before the March on Rome, The Times described the Fascists as a parliamentary party.[26] On October 1, 1922, the Observer predicted that "in the very near future we may see a Giolitti-Mussolini Ministry."[27]

Before its seizure of power, the Fascist Party was one of several parliamentary parties in Italy. But Fascism was also a militia organized into squads for attacking its enemies. Using terminology suggestive of British parliamentary politics, when Fascism was relying more and more on violence, the British conservative press

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[22] Glasgow Forward, April 1, 1922, p. 7.

[23] Labour Leader, March 3, 1921, p. 3.

[24] Labour Leader, August 10, 1922, p.7.

[25] Manchester Guardian, August 9, 1922, p. 9.

[26] The Times, April 19, 1921, p. 9.

[27] Observer, October 1, 1922, p. 8.

revealed an inability to grasp the realities of the Fascist movement. It was by the use of "squadrism" that Mussolini not only destroyed the Italian Socialist movement but struck at other rival political parties, such as the Popalri, the Christian Democrats. While Fascist bands "conquered" towns and entire regions, the Fascist parliamentary party worked to paralyze government resistance. Mussolini's parliamentary skill enabled him to prevent the formation of a strong anti-Fascist coalition.[28] Though much of the British press correctly diagnosed the reactionary qualities of Fascism, it failed to understand the relationship between the "squadrists'" terror and the parliamentary party's maneuvers. It was the combination of these two methods that secured Mussolini his position as head of the Italian government in Rome.[29]

After the March on Rome, the British press was concerned at the failure of parliamentary government, and responded by seeking reasons for its collapse in Italy. Both the conservative and moderate Left-wing press were in agreement that parliamentary government was unsuited to Italy. In trying to comprehend why the

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[28] Nolte, pp. 209-10. [29] Ibid.

Italian people placed their faith in Mussolini's strong regime, the Nation suggested that "the Parliamentary method is suited to the English, but less suited to the Italian genius."[30] This line of thought was likewise expressed by the Observer:

> This may be shocking to an Anglo-Saxon, with centuries of Parliamentary life and tradition behind him, but a Latin country will instinctively prefer the reality of good government, careless of its label.[31]

The Times's position was similar:

> The first thing which the British reader who desires to form an opinion of Fascismo must grasp is that democracy means one thing in Italy, and another in Great Britain. In the latter democratic institutions have been evolved in the slow course of many centuries, and are working to-day because they are understood by the great mass of people. In Italy these institutions were not evolved but created; they were neither dignified in procedure nor efficient in practice.[32]

The extreme Left-wing press disagreed with views of conservative publications. The Daily Herald, Glasgow Forward, and New Leader held from the start that Fascism continued in power solely by the use of terror and

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[30] "Events of the Week," Nation, XXXII (February 10, 1923), p. 711.

[31] Observer, October 7, 1923, p. 7.

[32] The Times, April 7, 1924, p. 11.

violence.[33] Dictatorial actions in Italy only confirmed the opinions of these papers--that Mussolini did not satisfy genuine popular wishes. Therefore, they increased the bitterness of their attacks against Mussolini and Fascism. An account of the Fascist regime in the New Leader typified this response:

> Government by "decree" has become the order of the day. Never, it is said, was there a Government which has so much absolute power . . . . People are constantly banished from their native town or village. They are forced by violence or threats of violence to vote in a certain way, to join a Fascist organization, or to resign their posts. And these acts are perpetrated by bodies of men who have no recognized place in the legal constitution of the country. They are above the law--and yet they have the power to drag in the civic authorities and the judicial machinery to support them.[34]

The British press also tried to arrive at some conceptualization of the Fascist regime itself. As stated above, the Fascists seized power virtually without a program. Consequently, Fascism was in a state of evolution for most of the 1920's and it was only toward the end of the decade that it became possible to adduce

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[33] Daily Herald, November 23, 1923, p. 3; Glasgow Forward, April 14, 1923, p. 1; New Leader, November 3, 1922, p. 6.

[34] New Leader, March 28, 1924, p. 4.

Fascist principles. Those organs of the press which were not extremely hostile to the Fascist regime usually were aware of the evolutionary qualities of Fascism. The Times printed a number of articles and editorials with such titles as "The Evolution of Fascism" and "The Development of Fascism."[35] Similarly the Observer and the Manchester Guardian entitled articles, "Mussolini's New Phase" and "Fascism Develops."[36]

On the other hand, the perception of the extreme Left-wing press, which was highly critical of the Fascist regime, remained the same. The New Leader, Glasgow Forward, and the Daily Herald printed little or nothing on the growth of Fascism from a reactionary government to a totalitarian state. To them it was a reactionary dictatorship from its inception. Subsequent dictatorial acts, in their view, increased the power of the dictatorship but did not change the nature of its political structure.

The first few years of Fascist rule were, however, far from being totalitarian in any accepted meaning of

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[35] The Times, April 7, 1924, p. 11; October 31, 1923, p. 13.

[36] Observer, October 18, 1924, p. 8; Manchester Guardian, August 7, 1924, p. 6.

that term. The hopes with which Mussolini was welcomed were high and sincere. In the first year and a half of Mussolini's government the expectations of the Italian people were fulfilled. Order was restored, strikes ended, and trains ran on schedule. By their example of hard work and enthusiasm, the Fascists transformed the leisurely pace of the country. Neither special tribunals nor emergency laws were introduced, and the newspapers of the opposition continued to appear. Yet the course of Mussolini's thinking was reason enough to cause liberals some anxious speculation. The Fascist squads were institutionalized and turned into a party army, which swore allegiance only to the party leader. Mussolini made it plain that he intended to stay in power, and substantiated this by his first election law. Hence the elections of April, 1924 were largely a farce.[37]

The period from the March on Rome to the death of Matteotti marked a distinct stage in the development of Italian Fascism, and the British press's interpretation of it. In this period publications formed opinions of Mussolini and Fascism that generally remained constant

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[37]Nolte, pp. 214-5.

until the end of this study in 1932. The obvious improvements in the conditions of Italian life and the lurking undemocratic methods of the Fascist regime resulted in a number of different interpretations by the British press. In the summer of 1923, The Times called Mussolini a "constitutional Prime Minister," and added:

> It can now be perceived that Fascismo stands for nothing very new or very drastic; but it does stand for a definite school of political thought . . . . Signor Mussolini stands for something closely akin to Tory Democracy, a school which maintains its power and its right to do for the people what the Socialists claim people should do for themselves.[38]

Colin Coote writing in the Nineteenth Century and After arrived at a similar conclusion. "He [Mussolini] is showing himself, in short, the Tory Democrat, whose ready devotion to the cause of the underdog is tempered only by the stipulation that he himself must be the fons et origo honorum."[39] The Observer, which like The Times maintained a favorable impression of Fascism, offered two interpretations of Mussolini's government: either "it [Fascism] is gradually, but surely

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[38] The Times, August 27, 1923, p. 9.

[39] Colin Coote, "The Fascist Victory and After," The Nineteenth Century and After, XCIV (October, 1923), pp. 612-13.

evolving the most clearly defined Conservative Government that Italy has ever known," or "an experiment in functional democracy."[40]

In their analysis of Mussolini's regime, moderate and extreme Left-wing papers adopted a more critical attitude than that of the conservative press. The Glasgow Forward's interpretation of Fascism was indicative of the far Left-wing press:

> What is Fascismo? In plain English its meaning is: Put the working man in his place and keep him there, transfer the burden of taxation from the rich to the masses, suppress Democracy, Liberalism, Socialism, and Parliamentarism, treat these movements as out of date survivals of the stupid nineteenth century. It proposes to govern by means of an oligarchy of extra rich men, supported by an armed force under the control of the party chiefs.[41]

Moderate Left-wing papers followed the pattern set by the British socialist organs. The New Statesman held that Mussolini's regime was a "dictatorship of violence."[42] In April, 1924, the Contemporary Review printed an article, "The Fascist Rule," that also

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[40] Observer, December 30, 1923, p. 8.

[41] Glasgow Forward, April 5, 1924, p. 5.

[42] "Comments," New Statesman, XXIII (April 12, 1924), p. 4.

depicted Mussolini's government as a regime based on terror.

> One commonly hears it said that Fascism has re-established order, discipline, respect for the law, and it has pacified the country. It would be nearer the truth to say that Fascism has dominated Italy by the use of violence. One must not forget that Mussolini, besides controlling the police and the Army, has at his command 300,000 Black Shirts.[43]

From the March on Rome to the death of Matteotti, British conservative publications developed the tendency to equate Italian Fascism with Conservatism. In practice, Mussolini's government was mainly composed of conservative members. But it was not committed to Tory Democracy, as the British conservative press argued. In fact, Mussolini remained uncommitted to any political philosophy during the first year and a half of his regime.[44] Insofar as the use of violence remained after the seizure of power, it was generally employed against Italian Socialists. This accounts for much of the concern shown in the Left-wing press, and the lack of coverage in conservative publications, which were opposed

[43] "The Fascist Rule," Contemporary Review, CXXV (April, 1924), p. 434.

[44] Smith, pp. 376-77.

to the advances of Socialism. It was Mussolini's attacks on Italian Left-wing movements that earned him and Fascism the enmity of British Left-wing papers.

Mussolini's chief object in the years 1922-1924 was to entrench his party in power, but without acting so quickly that his enemies were frightened into stopping him. It was, therefore, important that the most revolutionary step of all should have been made not by decree but by parliamentary vote. This revolutionary step was the Acerbo Electoral Law passed at the end of 1923. It declared that the party or coalition obtaining the largest number of votes, provided this was at least 25 percent of the votes cast, should automatically have an absolute majority with two-thirds of the seats of the Chamber.[45]

The British press was keenly interested in the first electoral law and the April, 1924 election held under it. Even publications favorable to Italian Fascism were in no doubt as to the effects of the new law. That the new electoral law insured continued Fascist rule was a foregone conclusion. All the daily papers

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[45] Ibid., p. 378.

consulted, and some of the weekly journals gave full explanations of the mechanics of the law, providing examples and possible results. The only difference among opinions of the press was whether the ends justified these plainly undemocratic means.

After a lengthy explanation on the intricacies of the Electoral Reform Bill, a leading article in The Times concluded that, "a strong Government is no doubt essential to Italy, but manipulation of the electorate in this fashion savours, to use a phrase once famous among ourselves, of something that resembles 'organized hypocrisy.'"[46] The Observer argued that "no scheme of reconstruction can be carried out, while there is danger of constant changes of government."[47]

Demonstrating a better understanding of the realities of Italian politics, the New Leader contended that "the Italian Government is preparing in its new electoral law, to create a chamber after its own heart."[48] To the

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[46] The Times, March 4, 1924, p. 15.

[47] Observer, July 22, 1923, p. 6.

[48] New Leader, February 15, 1924, p. 4.

Daily Herald these were "mock elections."[49] At the time of the election the Manchester Guardian's editorial note typified the reaction of much of the British press. "The average elector doubtless understood little of it [the election law]. His business was simply to go to the polling station."[50]

By the use of force and intimidation throughout the election, the Fascists obtained their aim. These methods were reported in the British press, and raised a number of misgivings. Here again conservative papers showed their support for Mussolini by dwelling on the weakness of the opposition parties. The Times characterized the opposition as "laughable." Furthermore, The Times was "glad that Fascism will win because it is the only coherent party."[51]

It was up to the extreme Left-wing press to describe the debilitating effects that Fascist violence produced in opposition groups, and this response was typified in the Glasgow Forward:

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[49] Daily Herald, April 7, 1924, p. 3.

[50] Manchester Guardian, April 7, 1924, p. 8.

[51] The Times, February 14, 1924, p. 11.

> The silence which weighs on the country, like a cloak of lead, the result of Fascist terrorism, prevents the free expression of opinion on this quack scheme [the election law], and it is almost a foregone conclusion that the list of 356 candidates sent from the Fascist headquarters in Rome will be elected, thus giving an air of legality to all the infractions of the Constitution and the crimes committed by the ruling party.[52]

During the period before Matteotti's death, much of the British press developed the impression that in reality Mussolini acted as a restraining influence on the Fascist extremists, and his continued presence at the head of the movement was essential to law and order. While this assessment was most typical of conservative papers, even the Manchester Guardian held this opinion:

> Mussolini more than anyone else represents the effort toward cohesion, both in the party and in the country. Any diminution of his authority would be a step towards worse disorders.[53]

Although the atrocities of the "squadrists" could be regarded as spontaneous acts provoked by local circumstances, it is impossible to overlook the fact that for Mussolini these were also a political card which he desired to keep up his sleeve so as to be able to threaten

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[52] Glasgow Forward, April 5, 1924, p. 5.

[53] Manchester Guardian, June 4, 1923, p. 6.

or remove his enemies. He played this card to the fullest against Giacomo Matteotti, the Socialist deputy. Matteotti was killed because he voiced criticism of the Acerbo Electoral Law and the regime's use of terror during the election.[54]

The press and public outcry in Italy about the murder of Matteotti stunned Mussolini. However weakened and intimidated, a relatively free press, a vocal parliamentary opposition, and a somewhat independent judicial system might still, it appeared, mobilize enough dissident opinion to topple the regime. This drove Mussolini to conclude that he could not rule where modern liberal institutions could still oppose him. At this same time Mussolini was under attack from extremist leaders of provincial Fascism for his concessions to middle-class moderates, reactionary landlords, business interests, and military leaders. Mussolini was caught between the polarization of Left and Right social forces which had brought him to power. He had either to liberalize his regime or create what is now known as a one-party state. Mussolini opted for the latter course of action.[55]

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[54]Nolte, p. 215. [55]Weiss, p. 93.

That Mussolini's regime had been badly shaken by the Matteotti affair was recognized by the British press. Numerous statements attest to this. Immediately after learning of Matteotti's disappearance in June, 1924, and his probable death, it began to speculate on Mussolini's political future. Still imagining that Mussolini's regime was based on democratic principles, the British press advanced various methods which he would have to employ to remain in office. The Spectator's comments were typical of moderate conservative views:

> Signor Mussolini's Government has been greatly shaken . . . . Obviously Signor Mussolini will have to purge the Administration in order to restore confidence. We must hope for a purged and reconstructed Government, resting on the support of the Conservatives and moderate Liberals.[56]

The New Statesman felt that even more drastic action would have to be taken on the part of Mussolini to "find his feet again . . . on solid earth of a genuinely democratic mandate." This could only be accomplished by spending "some little time in the wilderness

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[56]"News of the Week," Spectator, CXXXII (June 21, 1924), p. 985.

of Opposition by resigning."[57] In the autumn of 1924 the Nation asked an even more impossible request of the Italian government. "Fascism can maintain its position only by ceasing to be Fascist."[58] It was left to The Times to assess correctly the internal tensions of the Fascist Party by pointing out that "the phrase 'normalization of Fascismo' is really a contradiction in terms in the eyes of a very large section of Fascists." For its part, The Times placed its faith in Mussolini and the Italian people:

> The key which alone can resolve the dead-lock is the trust and belief in Signor Mussolini personally of the masses who distrust Fascismo. This support by the non-political population, grateful for the cessation of industrial strife . . . is Signor Mussolini's real strength . . . . If it can be assumed that 50 percent of Fascisti are innately and essentially intransigent, but that Signor Mussolini himself is sincerely moderate, it follows that he will have to break his party. But this support by the non-political masses and by all that is best in Fascismo may yet give him the resolution to break it in order to remould it nearer to the hearts' desire of all good Italians.[59]

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[57] "Comments," New Statesman, XXIII (July 5, 1924), p. 366.

[58] "Events of the Week," Nation, XXXVI (November 29, 1924), p. 317.

[59] The Times, July 24, 1924, p. 13.

The impression gained from the British press during the summer and autumn of 1924 was the realization that a turning point in Fascism had been reached. Nearly all reports remarked on the possible alternatives now open to Mussolini. Either Mussolini must purge his party of extremists and lean on moderate elements, or he would fall and Italy would be plunged into anarchy. Only the Manchester Guardian believed that there was an alternative lying between Mussolini and anarchy or civil war:

> An idea seems prevalent in England that there is no alternative in Italy except anarchy, to Fascism and the arbitrary government of Signor Mussolini. This opinion has been carefully cultivated both at home and abroad, but it does not represent the true situation. Those Englishmen who have watched events on the spot throughout have evidently been struck by the moderation and restraint shown by the parties in Opposition. It is evident that a great deal of very able leadership is going on.[60]

The Manchester Guardian's article was an exception. Most of the British press felt Mussolini had to either liberalize Fascist control or Italy would be plunged into civil strife and anarchy. Yet the press did not foresee the other choice open to Fascism--the erection of a more authoritarian regime. With a long

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[60] Manchester Guardian, September 20, 1924, p. 10.

history of parliamentary government and basic liberties, it was inconceivable to British publications that the Italian people, who had had the experience of parliamentary institutions, would accept still further encroachments on their liberties.

The credit for inventing the totalitarian state often goes to Mussolini.[61] This undertaking followed no preconceived plan and was carried out in fits and starts, and took nearly to the end of the 1920's to complete. A new thrust was given it by each of the attempts to assassinate Mussolini. By 1927, the Italian press had been brought under Fascist control, opposing political parties outlawed, local government regimented and public employment reserved for party members. By the end of 1928, the Chamber of Deputies was hand-picked by the party leadership. In their entirety the Leggi Fascistissme gave Mussolini a position without parallel in modern constitutional history.[62]

The British press was sensitive to the growth of Fascist controls. But news from Italy had to compete with other events. Reportage of occurrences in France

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[61] Weiss, p. 92. [62] Nolte, pp. 218-19.

and Germany often eclipsed news from Fascist Italy. At other times information about Italy was confined to accounts of her foreign policy. The treaties with Albania in 1926 and 1927 and Mussolini's warlike outbursts, distracted the attention of the British press from an adequate study of Fascist domestic programs. Despite these handicaps, the British press offered explanations of the Fascist political structure.

Though the Fascist regime sought to control every facet of Italian life, the British extreme Left-wing press simply labelled Mussolini's government a dictatorship directed exclusively against the working class. There were extensions to include other classes, such as a description in the Daily Herald of how Fascism "gags the middle class and bludgeons the peasantry."[63] But generally speaking, the Daily Herald viewed Fascism as fundamentally anti-labor. Ample accounts of how Fascism exercised complete control over the lives of the Italian working class were given in the Daily Herald, but there were few attempts to categorize Fascism as anything other than a dictatorship supported by Italian

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[63] Daily Herald, October 9, 1925, p. 3.

industrialists and financiers.[64] The New Leader conformed to this pattern. It too visualized Mussolini as a dictator representing big business.[65] Likewise the New Leader frequently printed articles that listed the various means used by the Fascists to tighten their grip on the working class.[66] The Glasgow Forward tended to catalogue Fascist methods of suppression, particularly those of the Italian secret police. But it also believed that the Fascist Party was directed by business interests.[67] In 1931, the Glasgow Forward, called Fascism "a gigantic ogre," and added that "every year it sucks out of the Italian people more blood than the people can afford to give."[68]

The interpretation of Fascism as a dictatorship directed against the toiling Italian masses was the underlying theme of the Daily Worker. However, the Daily

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[64] Daily Herald, May 27, 1929, p. 6.

[65] New Leader, February 15, 1924, p. 4.

[66] New Leader, November 13, 1925, p. 8; New Leader, June 22, 1928, p. 11.

[67] Glasgow Forward, July 17, 1926, p. 12.

[68] Glasgow Forward, July 11, 1931, p. 3.

Worker in Great Britain proved a poor source for British Communist attitudes toward Italian Fascism. It did not begin publication in Great Britain until January, 1930. Consequently, only three years of its publications are applicable to this study. Even this disadvantage could have been minimal, had the Daily Worker focused on Fascist domestic policies. From 1930 to 1933, however, there appeared less than a dozen articles in the Daily Worker that related to Fascist rule in Italy. Most of the articles referring to Italy discussed its foreign policy and arms expenditures.

It seems only natural that publications representing or endorsing British labor movements would concentrate on the anti-labor policy of Fascism. In addition to the chronic unemployment of the period, there was the frustration of the Labour Party and its supporters of having been unable to implement much of its policy of social reform.[69] Labour's first time in office in 1924 had been too brief, and the second Labour government's efforts were submerged by the great economic Depression.[70]

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[69]Taylor, p. 195. [70]Ibid., p. 284.

British publications less closely tied to working-class movements sought to explain Fascism in terms other than anti-labor legislation. Some explanations likened Fascism to earlier despotic regimes. A leading article in the Manchester Guardian held that the antecedents of Italian Fascism were to be found in Roman times:

> Those who follow accounts of Mussolini's revolution will realise that it is not altogether new and that the idea by which he seeks to create a fresh and vigorous people resembles the idea by which Diocletian strove to check the exhaustion of the Roman Empire. The plan of making everybody a producer, taking all orders from the State and subordinating all life to such a discipline, then attempted was regarded as a landmark in the history of the decline of the Empire; it has been left to Mussolini to think of it as a life-giving force.[71]

Because so many of Mussolini's programs dealt with the relationship between the state and the means of production, a definition of Fascism in The Times stressed its economic aspects:

> It is a system aiming at the attainment of economic equilibrium and the maximum possible economic independence of the Italian people. To this end it has extended the powers of the State and has imposed a new form of legislative

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[71] Manchester Guardian, August 23, 1927, p. 8.

> organization resembling the Bolshevist system but admitting Capital on equal terms with Labour . . . . It represents an attempt to impose an understanding upon both Capital and Labour in the major interests of the nation as a whole.[72]

The Times was the most persevering of all British publications in attempting to conceptualize Fascism. As late as 1929, when most publications had long since formed a constant conception of Fascism, it was still trying to categorize it:

> Fascism is a political experiment which is very difficult to fit into any of the customary categories which political science has inherited from Plato and Aristotle. Democracy of course it repudiates, yet seems to be neither monarchy nor tyranny, neither aristocracy nor oligarchy, but a bewildering mixture of all four of these, the foundation of which is an oligarchy of a peculiar type founded neither upon caste nor upon wealth, but upon that vague and indefinable thing, party.[73]

Beginning in 1932, The Times occasionally used the term "totalitarian" when it referred to Fascism.[74] But the term was unaccompanied by any analysis or explanation so that readers were unlikely to have had their knowledge increased by its use.

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[72] The Times, May 28, 1928, p. 11.

[73] The Times, September 16, 1929, p. 13.

[74] The Times, November 30, 1932, p. 11.

At times, the British press referred to Mussolini's comments and actions as being inspired by Machiavelli's ideas. British papers did not express in detail how Machiavelli's concepts applied to Mussolini. Rather, they showed alarm at Mussolini's indifference to the use of immoral means for political purposes, which was characteristically Machiavellian.[75] The remarks of the Manchester Guardian, while more explicit than most publications, were typical of this reaction. The paper held that Mussolini's statements "at intervals" exhibited "a clumsy hash of a few of the patent sophistries which Machiavelli and some weaker imitators used to produce for the service of old tyrannies which the civilized world has outgrown."[76] But Machiavelli's political writings were less a description of political theory than a guide to achieve power. He wrote almost wholly on the means, whether lawful or not, by which rulers and states could expand their power. Machiavelli abstracted politics from other considerations and wrote

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[75]George H. Sabine, A History of Political Theory ("Machiavelli"; New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1937), p. 338.

[76]Manchester Guardian, July 21, 1924, p. 8.

of them as if they were an end in themselves.[77] Realizing this, the British press did not argue that Fascist doctrine was based on Machiavelli's concepts. Instead it sought elsewhere the underlying philosophy of the Fascist state.

Mussolini's attacks on individual freedoms and his glorification of the Italian state led some British papers to conclude that Fascism was based on Hegelian philosophy. To the New Statesman the Fascists planned to establish "a Hegelian State in which the State is everything and the individual or group next to nothing, an Italy in which 'patriotism' is the supreme virtue and 'internationalism' the sin against the Holy Ghost."[78] The Spectator's view was similar:

> As Signor Mussolini does not make any acknowledgment to the inspiration of Hegel we may venture to make it on his behalf. "The Italian nation," we learn, "is an organism having ends of life and means of action superior in power to those of the single individuals occupying and forming it." Accordingly all individuals must subordinate their personal liberty "to the national strength."[79]

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[77]Sabine, p. 339.

[78]"Comments," New Statesman, XXIX (April, 1927), p. 68.

[79]"News of the Week," Spectator, CXXXVIII (April 30, 1927), p. 750.

The philosophy of Hegel had flourished in Italy for years before Fascism. The Fascists had, in fact, only availed themselves of the arguments of Italian nationalists who used Hegelian ideas against the political values of liberty and equality. This Hegelian tradition served two purposes. It brought to Fascism the classical argument against liberal individualism and it offered a ready-made idealization of the national state.[80] It was this glorification of the state and subordination of the individual to it that led the British press to classify the Fascist state as Hegelian. By classifying Mussolini's regime as such, the British press separated Fascism from its real spiritual significance.

Italian Fascism drew heavily upon the irrational ideas of the nineteenth-century Continental philosophers. Its roots lay in the nonrational concepts of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Bergson. While their ideas took a multitude of forms, they all agreed in denying a persistent faith in reason. Their convictions were in some nonrational experience: in mystical intuition, in the drive of will, or in the instinctive urge of vital forces.

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[80]Sabine, pp. 752-53.

Neither Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, nor Bergson made any very explicit application of irrationalism to politics. Instead Georges Sorel, in his Reflections on Violence, attempted to make political use of Bergson and Nietzsche's ideas. Through Sorel, the idealizing of direct action and a belief in the creative power of the myth became part of the ideology of revolutionary syndicalism in which Mussolini served his apprenticeship as a political agitator.[81]

Strict party control of every aspect of life and the violent means used by the Fascist Party caused the British press to draw parallels between Italian Fascism and Russian Communism. Without exception the comparisons were derogatory to both governmental systems. It would add little to the study of the British press's reaction to Fascism to cite repetitious quotations from the press illustrating the comparison. In spite of some of the titles used by the editors, British publications printed no lengthy articles comparing Communism and Fascism. There was no attempt to collate the various programs and methods of the two systems. Comparisons tended to be superficial and usually amounted to no more than a

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[81]Ibid., pp. 755-58.

sentence or two. Even in this comparison the press tended to emphasize those aspects of Fascism and Communism which it found particularly deplorable. For example, the Manchester Guardian opposed the small minority that ruled Russia and Italy.[82] The Times attacked governmental control of the means of production in the two countries.[83] Nearly every publication at one time or another compared the brutality of the two systems, and their similar use of a secret police.[84]

With less frequency, the British press compared Mussolini to other European governments and dictators. In 1931, an editorial in The Times suggested that Mussolini was less tolerant of dissent than his fellow dictators:

> And it is interesting to observe that even in Poland and Turkey, where a dictatorship has been established, the advantages of having some Parliamentary opposition are recognized. But Signor Mussolini is even less tolerant of public opposition, than either Marshal Pilsudski, or Ghazi Mustapha Kemal Pasha.[85]

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[82] Manchester Guardian, March 30, 1926, p. 10.

[83] The Times, November 18, 1926, p. 15.

[84] "The Barbarity of Fascism," New Statesman, XXIII (April 12, 1924), p. 4; New Leader, March 28, 1924, p. 4; Daily Herald, August 22, 1931, p. 3; "Events of the Week," Nation, July 25, 1925, p. 508.

[85] The Times, April 23, 1931, p. 15.

The above quotations illustrated some of the attempts made by the British press to conceptualize Italian Fascism as a political formation. The total control at which Mussolini aimed led some elements of the British press to search for an underlying philosophical doctrine or program. The most active period for these efforts was from 1926 to 1927, when the initial Corporate state legislation was enacted. This legislation and the suppression of Italian civil liberties led the British press to conclude inaccurately that Mussolini's plans were inspired by Hegel or Machiavelli. Actually Mussolini came to office in 1922 virtually without program. He built Fascist Italy on the basis of his experience. This he did by making a patchwork of bits and pieces collected from friend and foe.[86] Mussolini's goal--the creation of a one-party state--evoked comparisons between Fascism and Communism. While these comparisons tended to be superficial, the British press deserved credit for seeing many obvious parallels in the methods of both systems.

In general, however, these attempts by the British press at an understanding of Fascism were the exception

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[86]Nolte, p. 17.

rather than the rule. Instead it tended to label Fascism as a dictatorship, and Mussolini as a dictator. Although this was especially so of extreme Left-wing publications, it can be found in papers of all political complexions. It would add little to this study to adduce numerous quotations. But a statement from the Spectator typified the use of the term "dictatorship" as well as the response of the British press to the expansion of Fascist controls.

> Fascism in Italy is following the course of dictatorships. Three years ago there was a tendency to map the ways by which Italians might some day return to constitutional forms and practices, but now each new danger causes the dictatorship to become more dictatorial.[87]

The fact that Fascism was usually identified with dictatorship merely showed how much political thinking was still rooted in the old established patterns, and how little the readers of British papers were likely to be prepared for what was to come with the advent of Hitler to power in 1933.

Whether Fascism was closely akin to Nazism is a difficult question to answer. Hannah Arendt maintained that "Mussolini who was so fond of the term 'totalitarian

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[87] "Italy and Europe," Spectator, CXXXVII (November 13, 1926), p. 884.

state,' did not attempt to establish a full-fledged totalitarian regime and contented himself with dictatorship and one-party rule."[88] One of the principle reasons advanced by Arendt as proof of the nontotalitarian nature of the Fascist state was its surprisingly mild treatment of political offenders.[89] Yet Ernst Nolte held that the effective use of terror does not require the physical destruction of an adversary or that it be directed at apolitical population groups (such as Kulaks or Jews). Further, Fascism came to power with the aid of such a powerful terror that later action became superfluous. Besides it "attacked the opposition's political-intellectual leading class even after the Fascist victory no less ruthlessly than was the case in Germany."[90] In their study of totalitarian dictatorships, Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski did not consider Nazism as being separate from Fascism.[91]

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[88]Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism (New York: World Publishing Company, 1958), p. 308.

[89]Ibid. [90]Nolte, p. 220.

[91]Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1961), pp. 8-10.

This is a complicated issue which could not be settled in the framework of this study. It is a debate which can now be based on forty years' experience of different types and blends of totalitarianism, whereas this study tries to detect the recognition by contemporaries of Fascism in the making. But on one fundamental point the various authorities of totalitarian schemes agreed--that terror and propaganda are two of the most important generic traits of all political totalitarianism.[92]

A substantial section of the British press reported and evinced an understanding that terror in Fascist Italy was used to compel uniformity of political behavior. But it is not an unfair judgment of the British press to say that it lacked even the most fundamental understanding of the use of mass communication in its propaganda role. Though it will be pointed out in greater detail in the next chapter, it is enough to say here that the British press commented widely on the suppression of the Italian press. Nevertheless, it failed to report the full use that Mussolini made of the press, radio, and films

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[92]Arendt, p. 344; Nolte, p. 220; Friedrich and Brzezinski, p. 107.

to transmit Fascist propaganda. Because it lacked an appreciation of the importance of propaganda, the British press failed to record the connection between terror and propaganda in totalitarianism. It is this linkage which distinguishes them from all comparable phenomena in non-totalitarian systems of government. The peculiar atmosphere of totalitarian dictatorship was created by the relation of propaganda and terror. Since terror reinforces the monopoly of mass communication, totalitarian propaganda can be understood only within this context. And conversely, terror assumes its all-pervading quality because it is spread through continuous repetition of the official propaganda lines.[93] In fact, one reason for the absence of opposition to Mussolini's regime after 1925 and the proportional dwindling of violent Fascist reprisals was the skillful use of propaganda.[94]

That British readers were without an accurate conception of Fascism left them ill-prepared for Nazism. While authorities on totalitarian systems disagreed on the relation of Fascism to Nazism, a clearer understanding of the former would have enabled Britons to better

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[93]Friedrich and Brzezinski, p. 107.

[94]Smith, p. 431.

appreciate the nature of Hitler's movement. In her study of the reaction of the British to the Nazi movement from 1929 to 1933, Brigitte Granzow stated that Hitler was often compared to Mussolini.[95] In the early 1930's the term "Fascism" was used synonymously with "dictatorship." Such dictatorship came to be regarded in Great Britain with a certain tolerance--even by those who disliked Fascism--as an unpleasant, but fairly normal, method of achieving order and economic stability.[96]

Like the German businessmen who helped Hitler into power, the British press naively believed that he was only a dictator, who could be expected in time to become moderate as had his counterpart in Italy.

The British press's failure to recognize the totalitarian nature of Fascism was not merely because the system itself was unprecedented, but also because there existed in Great Britain a kind of common-sense empiricism, and a philosophical and political narrowness of imagination about the passions that can move men in politics.

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[95] Brigitte Granzow, A Mirror of Nazism (London: Victor Gollancz, 1964), p. 143.

[96] Ibid., p. 53.

CIVIL LIBERTIES AND CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS IN FASCIST ITALY

The suppression of civil liberties in Italy caused widespread comment in the British press. Mussolini's acts and decrees against Italian liberties were given comprehensive coverage, and often editorial discussion as well. In fact, any editorial on Italy, no matter what its focus, nearly always mentioned the lack of freedoms in that country. The only exceptions to this statement were those editorials devoted solely to Italian foreign policy. The reason for this concern shown by the press at the loss of liberties in Italy was rooted in the traditions of the British people. Their experiences and heritage taught them to associate British government with integrity, as demonstrated by officials, by ministers, judges, and civil servants. They knew that discussion was free, and that they had the right of association, and public meeting. Experience taught the British people that their way of life provided them with much individual liberty, which they felt was responsible for

making Britain a great and powerful nation. They believed that free institutions best guaranteed social and economic progress. Hence Britons connected their social and economic advancement with personal liberty.[1]

Civil and religious liberty came to Great Britain as a lesson drawn from bitter experience. Toleration was erected into principle, and civil liberties were gradually established. The liberty for which past generations took up arms was a limited liberty--freedom from royal absolutism, parliamentary freedom, and freedom for a reformed Church. For the rest, liberty had "broadened down from precedent to precedent." While laws and institutions in time protected the basic liberties, these liberties and the blessings they insured, became an attitude of mind among the British people.[2] Thus the British press expressed a sense of outrage and shock when the Fascist government suppressed the liberties of the Italian people.

It has been seen that the British press generally did not condemn Mussolini's repressive actions before and just after he took office. Even the reception of the

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[1] Ivor Jennings, Cabinet Government (2nd. ed.; Cambridge: University Press, 1951), p. 16.

[2] Frederick G. Marcham, A Constitutional History of Modern England, 1485 to the Present (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), p. 461.

Daily Herald--subsequently a strong critic of Fascism--was mild.[3] British conservative newspapers had not criticized Mussolini or his squads when they attacked Italian Left-wing forces and destroyed their printing presses before the March on Rome. The dismay expressed in the British press at the kidnapping and murder of Matteotti was strong proof that much of the British press had expected Mussolini to act legally once in power. Only the Glasgow Forward and the New Leader were from the beginning consistent in their attacks on Mussolini's unconstitutional means. A short time after the coup d'etat, these two publications were joined by the Daily Herald. The remainder of the press, largely of moderate or conservative viewpoint, was stunned by Matteotti's murder or by the authoritarian decrees suppressing the Italian press that followed in its wake. Except for the Morning Post, the British press reacted strongly to the suppression of the Italian press. The Morning Post, which represented the extreme conservative point of view, never wavered in its endorsement of Mussolini or Fascism, believing that the suppression of liberties was necessary to save Italy from Communism.[4]

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[3] Daily Herald, October 31, 1922, p. 4.

[4] Morning Post, April 24, 1926, p. 12.

On January 3, 1925, Mussolini publicly acknowledged his responsibility for the local chieftans and their squads. Any criticism of him in the Chamber or the newspapers was now declared intolerable. Within a few days of Mussolini's declaration, Senator Amendola's Il Mondo was forcibly silenced. The socialist paper Avanti and the radical Secolo also paid the price of intransigence and fell into Fascist hands. Next followed the liberal Corriere della Sera, which had long been under government pressure.[5] It was no longer possible to deceive oneself into believing that Mussolini was intent on becoming respectable. It was evident that he was more interested in power than democratic principles.

The decree repressing the non-Fascist press and its execution stirred the British papers to express great disapproval of Mussolini's undemocratic action. The Nation considered the press decree to be of an "unconstitutional nature."[6] The Times considered the controls "unknown to a free people," and worried that it would be difficult to assess the opinions of the Italian people

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[5]Smith, pp. 386-7.

[6]"Events of the Week," Nation, XXXV (September 20, 1927), p. 741.

without a free press.[7] The Observer suggested that a "gagged press" was a bad omen for the future.[8] G. P. Gooch in the Contemporary Review held that "we sorrowfully witness the extinction of the last embers of political liberty" in Italy.[9] Punch, the satirical Right-wing review, in a cartoon depicted Mussolini trying without success to restrain a flood of lava. In the caption, the volcano, which was labelled the press, stated: "This will hurt you more than it hurts me."[10] So outraged was the British press at the suppression of freedom of opinion in Italy that its correspondents boycotted the reception Mussolini gave for foreign papers at the Locarno Conference.[11]

In spite of their frequent and ample discussion of the repression of the Italian press, the British publications showed a lack of comprehension of the high

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[7] The Times, November 18, 1926, p. 15.

[8] Observer, November 15, 1926, p. 8.

[9] G. P. Gooch, "Professor Salvemini and the Fascists," Contemporary Review, CXXIX (February, 1926), p. 183.

[10] Punch, January 14, 1925, p. 43.

[11] The Times, October 17, 1925, p. 12.

propaganda value of a state-controlled press. Totalitarian dictatorships must manufacture approval, not merely outlaw disapproval. Of all of the means of propaganda, Mussolini relied most heavily upon the Italian newspapers. In reality the journalists were simply political agents of the regime.[12] Only the Manchester Guardian understood this:

> . . . the present arrangement whereby the press is not censored but in its essential parts directly manufactured by Government agents, who keep the rigidest account of every variation of make-up, of every hint of independent judgment in technical articles, of every unexpected attribution or denial of space to argument of the day, has reduced (the Fascist would say elevated) the journalist to being a mere bureaucrat.[13]

Whereas the British press realized that the Italian government controlled the press, it did not note that Italian newspapers were the principal arm of Fascist propaganda. Day in and day out, following directives from the ministry of propaganda, they guided their readers on a multitude of issues. The radio was used only occasionally by Mussolini, although his subordinates were frequently on the air. After 1929 the cinema came to

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[12] Weiss, p. 96.

[13] Manchester Guardian, July 11, 1927, p. 13.

be used increasingly; its impact was rather slight, however. Most Italians, including Mussolini, speedily became disenchanted with the dull Fascist films and exhibited a distinct preference for the nonpolitical films of Hollywood. As a result, the Italian press remained the chief instrument of Fascist propaganda.[14]

In totalitarian dictatorships, virtually all propaganda is directed ultimately to the maintenance in power of the party controlling it. It is generally agreed that state monopoly of mass communication is one of the most striking characteristics of totalitarian dictatorship. It is also one of the features which clearly differentiates it from earlier forms of despotic rule.[15]

The utilization of the Italian press to accomplish this end was inadequately reported by British publications. In retrospect, this appears at first inexplicable since the Fascist regime did not attempt to conceal its propagandizing of the Italian people. Indeed, it would have been difficult to do so while foreign

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[14]Smith, pp. 425-26.

[15]Friedrich and Brzezinski, pp. 107, 109.

correspondents and tourists remained in the country. On the one hand, however, the unprecedented use of a modern press and other media to deprive citizens of a chance for independent thought and judgment handicapped the British press in perceiving the importance of propaganda to totalitarian dictatorships. There was also a general reluctance to understand the need for government propaganda in peacetime Italy. As such, the British press did not realize that totalitarian regimes, even in times of peace, could not forego the advantages of absolute ideological faith.[16] Furthermore, the freedom that the British press enjoyed from government interference hampered its understanding of Fascist propaganda methods. Freedom of the press had been established in Great Britain since the 1770's during John Wilkes' attacks on the government.[17] Even during the First World War, the British press, though subject to strict censorship of overseas news, approached the issues of wartime in much the same way as those of peacetime.[18] In the

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[16]Weiss, p. 98.

[17]David L. Keir, The Constitutional History of Modern Britain, 1485-1951 (5th ed. rev.; London: Adam and Charles Black, 1953), p. 343.

[18]Marwick, p. 51.

last analysis, on the other hand, the British press proved unperceptive to the use of propaganda--one of the most important characteristics of totalitarian regimes.

In addition to Fascist press controls, the British press also discussed the suppression of strikes and the trade union movement. After October, 1922, pressure was placed on individuals in search of a job to abandon the Socialist and Catholic unions and to join the Fascist syndicates. Though it had been nearly impossible for Italian workers to strike since the March on Rome, labor unrest was formally abolished by Italian law in October, 1925. At that time, the Confederation of Industry and the Confederation of Fascist Trade Unions signed the Vidoni pact. By this, Mussolini obtained industrial peace through the abolition of strikes and penalizing labor unrest.[19]

Naturally, British publications representative of the Left were more vocal than others in denouncing the suppression of Italian workers' right to organize and strike. Seen through the eyes of the Daily Herald,

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[19]Smith, p. 394.

New Leader and Glasgow Forward, Mussolini's attempt to harmonize class relations was just a way of helping management at the expense of the working class. The remarks of the New Leader were typical of the Left-wing press:

> His [Mussolini's] Fascist Unions will now enjoy a monopoly which will be embodied in the Constitution. Strikes will become illegal (they are already impossible), and compulsory arbitration, between a Fascist employers' organization and a sham Fascist Trade Union, will fix the level of wages in Italy.[20]

After a similar judgment of Mussolini's policies, the Daily Herald added "they [Italian workers] will be the defenseless prey of their employers."[21]

Conservative publications tended to underplay the injustices done to Italian workers by the loss of their right to strike and to organize unions. Instead, they declared that owners as well as workers were dominated by the government. The Times advanced the explanation that "the corporate reform is only a means of keeping in hand both masters and men."[22] The Observer even suggested that Mussolini's controls could possibly help the workers:

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[20] New Leader, November 6, 1925, p. 8.

[21] Daily Herald, October 7, 1925, p. 3.

[22] The Times, September 17, 1931, p. 13.

> Industrialists and workers are now vassals of the Fascist state. Furthermore, the law [compulsory arbitration] is so adjusted as to enable the Government to swing the balance in favor of the workers and to the detriment of employers at any given moment if any sign of serious opposition hovers on the horizon.[23]

The Spectator thought Fascism would be impartial:

> Although the State recognizes and praises capitalism, it leans to neither side in the unending dispute between Capital and Labour. It is the judge between the two. The workers will be protected by the State, but it is equally clear that they will also, if necessary, be coerced.[24]

An editorial in the Morning Post went so far as to maintain that:

> Fascism, whether in theory or practice, is not, as our Socialists say it is, anti-labour. On the contrary, its benefits and its protection are abundantly shared by labour as by any other section of the community.[25]

The editors of the New Statesman scoffed at the conservative papers' idea that Fascism was beneficial to labor by holding that "some wag has suggested that this last scheme [Fascist trade unions] shows Mussolini's sympathy with labor."[26]

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[23] Observer, December 20, 1925, p. 8.

[24] "News of the Week," Spectator (April 30, 1927), p. 750.

[25] Morning Post, April 24, 1926, p. 12.

[26] "Comments," New Statesman, XXV (October 10, 1925), p. 713.

Actually, compulsory arbitration in labor disputes roused no enthusiasm in Italian capitalist circles. Indeed, the scheme was looked at with misgivings. It was true that industrialists, landowners, and bankers had reason to appreciate how Socialist and syndicalist institutions were destroyed, and how strikes and lockouts were effectively forbidden. But the more solidly Fascism established itself in power, the more its grip tightened on the country's industrial and credit system.[27]

At the core of Mussolini's doctrine were production and efficiency, and not necessarily the enrichment of the Italian upper classes. A discussion of the Fascist economic program and British press reactions to it will be presented in the next chapter. It is enough to say here, however, that the suppression of strikes in Italy was not done by Mussolini deliberately to aid the employers. Therefore, the assessment of the Daily Herald, Glasgow Forward, and New Leader gave less than the full picture. It is true that wages and labor conditions did not improve under Fascism, but Mussolini was no mere instrument of industrial and business interests.[28]

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[27]Weber, pp. 74-75. [28]Smith, pp. 404-5.

Assessments in the ultraconservative Morning Post were no less false. Italian workers did not benefit from Fascist rule. As early as 1926 the hard-earned eight-hour day was practically surrendered, and the following year a general wage reduction was decreed. Much of this trouble was the result of world-wide economic problems and beyond the control of the Fascist government. Part of the problem, though, was caused by the impossible schemes of industrialization. There were, of course, business interests that benefited from these schemes, but this was not Mussolini's aim.[29] In fact, the deductions of The Times and the Observer were closer to the truth. For example, The Times editorialized that "Fascist reforms are only a means of keeping in hand both masters and men and thus perpetuating the domination of the Fascist party."[30]

Not long after the Fascist government had declared strikes illegal and prohibited labor from forming its own organization, Great Britain experienced something like a general strike. Following the strike of 1926,

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[29] Ibid., p. 405.

[30] The Times, September 17, 1931, p. 13.

Conservatives in Parliament were eager to enforce their victory over trade unionism. In May, 1927, the Baldwin government carried a bill that made illegal any sympathetic strike or any strike "designed or calculated to coerce the government." Another provision which had nothing to do with the "general strike" forbade civil servants from joining a union affiliated with the Trade Union Congress. The bill also reduced the income of the Labour Party by no longer requiring union members to pay the political levy automatically. Each member then had to "contract in" by signing a form expressing his willingness to contribute. So reduced was the income of the Labour Party that it could no longer pay its share for the maintenance of the Daily Herald. In 1927 ownership passed to the T.U.C. alone.[31]

Some members of the British press made the connection between events in Italy and those in Great Britain. The New Statesman's remarks typified those of the Left-wing press when it argued that the Italian Labor Charter "embodies a scheme for dealing with Trade Unions that must make Mr. Baldwin's Die-hards sick with envy."[32]

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[31] Taylor, pp. 250-51.

[32] "How They Do It In Italy," New Statesman, XXIX (April 30, 1927), p. 68.

The Economist reflected a conservative position when it compared the Labour Charter to the 1927 Trades Disputes Act. The former had an all-embracing design, whereas the Economist stated that the new British act made "mild changes in the trade union law [1906]."[33] The Labour movement disagreed with this conclusion, as was shown by the fact that the repeal of the 1927 Trades Disputes Act followed close on Labour's victory in 1945.[34]

The response of the British press to the loss of other civil liberties in Italy was similar to that which was manifested by the prohibition of strikes. British Labour organs tended, though not exclusively, to view the suppression of all political liberties as being directed against the Italian working class. Both the Daily Herald and the Glasgow Forward often interpreted Fascist repression as being directed solely at Socialism or the worker. On one occasion the New Leader listed a number of undemocratic measures in Italy. Yet it considered "the destruction of the Italian Trade Unions an

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[33] "Italy's Labour Charter," Economist, CIV (May 14, 1927), Part 2, p. 1008.

[34] Taylor, p. 250.

event which concerns the whole world."[35] That Fascism directed its repression and terrorism almost exclusively against those classes of the Italian community which sympathized with Socialism and Communism is borne out by historical studies. Because Fascist measures were used against Socialism, Communism, and their sympathizers, they were barely reported in the British conservative press.[36] When British publications representative of the Right-wing commented on the lack of civil liberties in Italy, they often qualified their criticism. The Times and the Observer printed articles on the numerous benefits Italians gained from Mussolini's construction and welfare schemes. Both credited Mussolini's authoritarian practices for curbing the Mafia's control in Sicily.[37] An editorial in The Times typified their defense of Fascist methods:

> The Fascist Government of Italy has many enemies--Anarchists who are the foes of all Governments and rulers; Communists, who committed several crimes of the same type during the troubles that convulsed Italy after the

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[35] New Leader, November 6, 1925, p. 8.

[36] Nolte, p. 221.

[37] The Times, May 4, 1924, p. 13; Observer, January 22, 1928, p. 10.

> war; the Mafia which lived by blackmail and crime, and is now at last being crushed by the Fascist grip.[38]

With respect to the tension in Italy after the kidnapping and presumed death of Matteotti, the Observer praised Mussolini's maintenance of public order:

> One element of consolation there has been during this trying week, and that is the admirable way in which public order has been maintained. This speaks well for the political education and self-control that Fascism has been able to impose upon the nation. There have been no riots or demonstrations.[39]

The Morning Post reflected strong conservatism when it considered the severe restrictions placed on the expression of political opinion in Italy: "These severities may be frankly regretted; but the question is--Are they too heavy a price to pay for what has been accomplished? Not many who remember whither Italy was drifting before Fascism came would confidently answer Yes."[40] Mildly conservative journals such as the Spectator and the Economist never gave extensive coverage to the fate of the working class or those who showed sympathy for

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[38] The Times, April 13, 1928, p. 15.

[39] Observer, June 22, 1924, p. 8.

[40] Morning Post, April 29, 1926, p. 12.

Leftist causes in Italy. Instead the Spectator confined its remarks to the Fascist government's demands for oaths of allegiance from university professors, and the Economist noted the Fascist campaign against Freemasonry.[41] A quote from The Times can best sum up the attitudes of many conservative publications toward Fascist suppression of Italian liberties:

> Only the most bigoted opponents would attempt to deny the immense services rendered to Italy by Fascism. A judicious relaxation of its more unnecessarily repressive measures would regain for Fascism much of its waning popularity.[42]

The reason for this complaisant attitude of so many British papers to Mussolini was the fact that they basically approved of his policies. Mussolini made strikes illegal, ended civil strife, and even political dissension of all kinds. Communists, trade unionists, Social Democrats, and pacifists were attacked. For a typical British Conservative it was possible to condemn the methods by which these policies were pursued, but impossible to condemn the policies themselves.[43] Even

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[41] "News of the Week," Spectator, CXLVIII (January 2, 1932), p. 3; "Notes of the Week," Economist, CI (October 10, 1925), Part 2, p. 570.

[42] The Times, January 2, 1931, p. 11.

[43] Seaman, p. 252.

those British people who opposed the suspension of parliamentary procedures and the suppression of civil liberties, came to regard Fascism with a certain tolerance. They considered it a necessary, if unpleasant, method of achieving order and economic stability in the chaotic state of postwar Italy.[44]

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Despite severe restrictions placed on trade unions, opposition parties, and the press, the Catholic Church survived as a somewhat independent institution in Fascist Italy. At heart Mussolini was, however, just as much of an anticlerical after the March on Rome as he had been before. Furthermore, his fierce antipathy to Catholicism, the religion of the overwhelming majority of Italians, was shared by many of the Fascist leaders. Claiming not just the citizen but the whole man, Fascism insisted that it alone was the "true" religion. It thus loomed as the natural adversary of the Roman Church. Yet Mussolini was prudent enough to realize how indispensable was ecclesiastical support. To strengthen his dictatorship,

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[44]Granzow, p. 53.

Mussolini placed expediency before all else and sought the goodwill of the Church. In any case, he realized that he could not crush the Church, whereas its enormous moral influence, if exerted on his behalf, could make his position nearly unassailable.[45]

Since the time of the Risorgimento, the papacy had never forgiven the spoliation of its territory by the House of Savoy, and still refused to recognize the Italian kingdom. Mussolini was fortunate in that Pius XI looked kindly on the idea of a rapprochement with the Italian government. Together with his penchant for authoritarianism, Pius XI's social conservatism made him unsympathetic with the progressivism of the Catholic Popular Party and the activities of the Catholic trade unions. He regarded Communism as atheistic and believed that the Church should accept Fascist aid in waging war against it.[46] The mutual advantages were self-evident: the papacy objected to the great mass of anticlerical legislation enacted under previous governments, and it insisted on the restoration of at least a portion of the

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[45]Richard A. Webster, The Cross and the Faces (Stanford: University Press, 1960), pp. 84-90.

[46]Smith, p. 440.

temporal power destroyed in the period of Italian unification. On both demands Mussolini was willing to give satisfaction in return for an undertaking by the Church to repudiate the Popular Party and the Catholic trade unions and to support, or at least tolerate, the Fascist government.[47]

The first Fascist program in 1919 had called for the confiscation of Church property, but by 1922 the party seemed to have come to some tacit arrangements with Church dignitaries.[48] These arrangements and Mussolini's volte face were unreported in the British press. In fact, coverage of the relationship between the Church and the Fascist government remained infrequent until the reconciliation in 1929. The Times, Observer, and Manchester Guardian provided most of the reports and editorials on Church and State affairs before and after the reconciliation. Publications of smaller circulation usually confined their remarks to only a few lines which were contained in articles dealing with matters other than just relations between the Vatican and the Quirinal.

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[47] Ibid., pp. 440-41.

[48] Webster, p. 85.

In Great Britain religious faith had long lost its strength. Christian dogma weakened and church attendance declined. The only religious controversy centered on parliamentary debates on revision of the Anglican Prayer Book in 1927 and 1928. It was the aim of the hierarchy of the Church of England to introduce a Prayer Book which gave greater latitude for Anglo-Catholic practices and doctrines. This was favored by the majority of the ordained; it was less welcome to the lay members. Though the attempts at revision were defeated, the revised Prayer Book was subsequently published and used at the discretion of church officials. No parliamentary reprisals followed and the anomaly remains today.[49]

This decline of interest in religious and church affairs among the British people may explain the British press's paucity of reportage on Italian Church-State relations. In addition, news of Italian foreign policy and domestic programs overshadowed accounts of the relationship between Church and State. Also there was little to report on the negotiations for a settlement as these were mostly conducted in secret between Mussolini and

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[49]Taylor, pp. 168, 259.

Pius XI. What little coverage there was, though, tended to be accurate in its estimate of Mussolini's aims.

British publications rightfully discerned that Fascist overtures of conciliation to the Vatican were politically motivated. The Manchester Guardian noted in 1926 that "Mussolini's attempt at rapprochement is evidently of merely political character."[50] The Times discussed how the Fascist government wanted to control every aspect of a citizen's life and thus desired to bring the Church into its orbit.[51] A special correspondent for The Times argued that Mussolini's moves toward conciliation were "nothing but political opportunism."[52]

The British press was less perceptive of the Church's inclination toward Fascism. In the period before the 1929 settlement, both Left- and Right-wing elements of the press depicted the Vatican as irreconcilably opposed to Mussolini, or at least uncooperative with Fascism. J. M. Macdiarmid wrote in the Glasgow Forward:

> Fascism received its first and most deadly shock at the hands of the Pope, who like so

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[50] Manchester Guardian, January 20, 1926, p. 9.

[51] The Times, February 2, 1926, p. 13.

[52] The Times, August 18, 1927, p. 12.

> many of the successors of St. Peter, is a man "who loves righteousness and hateth iniquity. . . . . In an endeavor to rescue the support of the Catholic Partito Populare at the then approaching election, Mussolini doubled the official State stipend of the bishops and clergy and re-admitted the priests into the schools to impart religious teaching . . . . His Holiness, while thanking Mussolini's Government for these concessions to the Vatican demands, issued on the 24th of March [1924] an encyclical in which he called on Mussolini to cease the iniquities of Fascismo and govern Italy within the limits of the statute law.[53]

The New Statesman believed that "there are clericals who may find it more and more difficult to reconcile their particular interests with those of the Fascist State."[54]

The Observer stated that "the Vatican through its organ the Osservatore Romano continues to conduct an unflinching polemic against the principles of violence in politics--a polemic which has gained additional authority by some pointed words from the Pope himself."[55] The Rome correspondent of The Times, in discussing a speech of Pius XI before a group of university students, maintained that:

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[53] Glasgow Forward, July 26, 1924, p. 8.

[54] "Comments," New Statesman, XXVI (April 10, 1926), p. 793.

[55] Observer, August 16, 1925, p. 6.

> There is no doubt, however, that it is the government that is most severely handled in the speech . . . . There has never been much hope of open collaboration between the Catholics and the Government, but after this speech the support of those Catholics who were looking to the Vatican for guidance will now certainly be withheld from the Government.[56]

A later editorial in The Times with regard to Mussolini's outlawing of Masonic orders in Italy contended that in spite of this it "is unlikely that the Pope will depart from his attitude of vigilant, but detached observation."[57]

In reality Mussolini received Church support during the early twenties when he needed help in establishing his regime. During the twenty years of Fascism there was one upper-class group of Catholics, for the most part Right-wing members of the Catholic Popular Party that had in 1923-24 defected to Fascism, who consistently upheld the alliance between the regime and the Church.[58] As a result, Church encouragement was withdrawn from the Catholic Popular Party in 1923. Sturzo, the head of the party, was urged by the Vatican to resign his position.

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[56] The Times, September 11, 1924, p. 11.

[57] The Times, January 16, 1925, p. 13.

[58] Webster, p. 119.

When the Catholic Popular Party joined with the Socialists in the Aventine secession in order to protest the government's part in the death of Matteotti, the Osservatore Romano condemned this impious association. More importantly, the Church refused to say, in spite of all its experience with tyrants, that Fascism was incompatible with Christianity. For all its ruthless bludgeoning and its glorification of the state and war, Fascism could be relied on to oppose atheistic Communism. While the Pope boldly protested Mussolini's more strident heresies, no government in modern Italian history had received so much ecclesiastical approbation.[59] It was the shadow of these protestations on which the British press reflected and not the substance of the support given to the Fascist regime.

Negotiations between Italy and the Holy See went on for nearly three years before a complete settlement emerged. Finally, on February 11, 1929, a treaty and a concordat signed at the Lateran Palace resolved the Roman question and regulated relations between Church and State. The treaty vested in the Papacy full territorial sovereignty and independence of Vatican City. It also

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[59]Smith, p. 441.

reaffirmed the first article of the constitution of 1848, which declared Catholicism to be the "only State religion." In addition, the Vatican received monetary compensation in order to satisfy its financial claims growing out of the loss of temporal power in 1870. To the ecclesiastical hierarchy the concordat was especially important. It granted broad privileges to the Church in such vital areas as education, marriage, episcopal appointments, and the status of religious orders. These undid more than half a century of anticlerical legislation.[60]

The British press for the most part noted that the settlement was favorable to both the regime and the Vatican. There were only a few papers that voiced concern that the Church would become a mere auxiliary of the Corporate State. Sisley Huddleston wrote in the New Statesman that "papal independence accepted from the hands of M. Mussolini may easily, by simple paradox, become dependence on Italy."[61] Similarly, the Economist held that "the Vatican will lose politically as much as Italy stands to gain."[62]

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[60]Webster, pp. 109-10.

[61]Sisley Huddleston, "The Roman Question," New Statesman, XXXII (February 16, 1929), p. 594.

[62]"Notes of the Week," Economist, CVIII (February 2, 1929), Part 1, p. 208.

But most of the British press held a contrary opinion. The Spectator editorialized: "We do not share any fears that Pius XI has 'swallowed Fascism' or put the Vatican under obligation for which Signor Mussolini will exact subservience."[63] This was also the opinion of E. L. Woodward, the historian, who wrote in the Contemporary Review that "there is no more danger than before that the church will become the political servant of the Italian government."[64] The opinion of Dudley Heathcote in the Fortnightly Review was that

> the position of the Church has been tremendously strengthened by it [the settlement] since the Pact has not only freed the Holy Father from a futile quarrel, but given him such status as will enable his Church to exercise its influence entirely untrammeled.[65]

Whether the State or the Church received the better bargain, even from a historical perspective, is a question not easily answered. The settlement helped Mussolini greatly. It won him support from non-Fascist

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[63] "News of the Week," Spectator, CXLII (February 16, 1929), p. 219.

[64] E. L. Woodward, "The Roman Question," Contemporary Review, CXXXV (April, 1929), p. 419.

[65] Dudley Heathcote, "Mussolini and the Roman Question," Fortnightly Review, CXXV (April, 1929), p. 499.

circles, and added to his prestige and popularity.[66] But in conditions of ever tighter totalitarian control, the Church was one of the few institutions in Italy to survive with some degree of independence. In spite of that, the Church was rarely if ever a rallying point of anti-Fascist opposition. By that fact its prestige suffered. This is especially so as the Church supported the Fascist regime in its Ethiopian venture and endorsed its intervention in the Spanish civil war in return for a privileged position in Italy.[67] All this was, of course, unknown to the British press in 1929.

Nevertheless, in view of past Church-State cooperation, the press assessment should have emphasized the mutual benefits, and deduced the pro-Fascist sentiments in the Vatican. Only the Manchester Guardian provided an accurate description:

> Whether the Vatican's gain is so absolute seems a little uncertain. There is evidently much Italian nationalist sentiment in the Vactican itself. In other words, the Vatican has considerable Fascist sympathies. Pope Pius XI is credited with much admiration for Mussolini.

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[66] Smith, p. 441.

[67] Webster, pp. 111, 123.

> That the Italian clergy as a whole are pro-Fascist is easy to understand, seeing that Fascism is a nationalist, authoritarian, anti-liberal and anti-Socialist force.[68]

With the exception of extreme Left-wing publications, the British press praised Mussolini for his diplomatic skill in obtaining a reconciliation. Even the usually critical Manchester Guardian concluded that "one thing seems to be sure--namely, that Mussolini has achieved a great diplomatic success, perhaps the greatest of his career."[69] Other publications shared these sentiments, though some elements of the press stressed more the common absolutism of Catholicism and Fascism in facilitating a reconciliation. For example, an unsigned article in the Spectator made the point that for Mussolini a settlement was easier than for previous Italian governments: "The rule of the Duce is absolute. So is the Roman Church. Their mental habits leap together."[70]

Prior to the 1929 settlement one of the impediments to reconciliation of Church and State had been education and control of youth groups.[71] Instructors in

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[68]Manchester Guardian, February 12, 1929, p. 10.

[69]Ibid.

[70]"The Roman Question," Spectator, CXLII (February 9, 1929), p. 182.

[71]Webster, pp. 110, 156.

lower schools were required to follow the Fascist political line. Textbooks not approved by the state were banned; manuals specially prepared by Fascist educational experts were given preference at every level of instruction.[72]

Specific articles on Italian education were rare in the British press. Remarks on education were usually found in articles that considered a number of aspects of life in Fascist Italy. Yet the major part of the British press showed a knowledge of the government's plans to inculcate Fascist values and loyalty to Mussolini in the youth of Italy. An editorial in The Times described how "he [Mussolini] is determined to saturate the whole of it [the Italian youth], boy and girl, in Fascist principles."[73] The Daily Herald simply noted that "the education of youth in Italian schools is now entirely in the hands of Fascist teachers."[74] To the Manchester Guardian the net result of these efforts "has been to evolve a body of teachers and a generation of taught devoted solely to the glorification of Fascist Italy."[75]

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[72]Weiss, p. 97.

[73]The Times, February 12, 1931, p. 13.

[74]Daily Herald, January 12, 1927, p. 5.

[75]Manchester Guardian, April 26, 1930, p. 12.

Equally important to the Fascist government and to the Church were the Catholic youth activities. In 1927, before the Lateran accords were signed, Mussolini's suppression of the Catholic boy scouts nearly ended the negotiations. The need for a settlement prompted both sides to continue despite the unresolved conflict over the training of the youth. Hardly had a settlement been reached in 1929, when a serious quarrel erupted over the labor and youth activities of Catholic Action. Mussolini feared the use of Catholic organizations to launch a revived Catholic Popular Party. The climax came in May, 1931, when Mussolini dissolved the youth and student organizations of Catholic Action. The Pope responded with a series of protests culminating in the outspoken encyclical Non Abbiamo Bisogno, in which the independence of the Church was asserted. In September both sides came together and the Catholic Action was allowed a genuine sphere of its own under certain stipulated limitations.[76]

Those elements of the British press that reported the quarrel correctly ascribed it to a conflict over the control of the Italian youth. To the Observer "the crux

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[76]Webster, pp. 109, 112.

of the whole matter" was that "the Fascist Party claims the right to educate and control the youth, even to the exclusion of Church and family."[77] The Times' comments were similar: "The real struggle is for the control of the youth of Italy."[78] The Economist agreed with this opinion. It held that "the truth, we imagine, is that Signor Mussolini decided, at the risk of offending Catholic opinion, to make it clear once more that he and he alone, is the patriarchal head of the nation."[79]

Editorials from conservative papers were sympathetic toward Mussolini during the dispute. The Observer argued that "unfortunately, but inevitably, the present condition of tension is due to the activities of the Azione Cattolica."[80] For its part, The Times suggested: "the feelings on the Fascist side have been quite naturally exacerbated by the manner in which the Vatican chose to issue its Encyclical."[81] The Vatican had elected to

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[77] Observer, July 19, 1931, p. 10.

[78] The Times, August 3, 1931, p. 9.

[79] "Notes of the Week," Economist, CXII (June 6, 1931), Part 1, p. 1211.

[80] Observer, July 19, 1931, p. 10.

[81] The Times, June 11, 1931, p. 13.

have the Encyclical published abroad and thereby enlist world opinion on its side. This was something to which the Fascist government had long objected.[82]

Though comments from the Left-wing press were scanty, the New Statesman found it difficult to be sympathetic with the Vatican, because it had not "behaved better to the Christian Democrats--the Popular Party led by Don Sturzo."[83] The Manchester Guardian offered no editorial on this dispute, and its news reports simply stated the points of conflict. The Daily Herald only mentioned the settlement.[84] The Glasgow Forward and the Daily Worker made no record of this dispute or its solution.

The British press characterized Italian Church-State relations from 1922 to 1933 as a series of conflicts between Fascism and Catholicism. The press tended to focus on the controversy rather than on the many instances of cooperation. Church support for Fascism in its years in power went unreported in the British press. Much of this support was simply a tolerant or uncritical attitude

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[82] Webster, p. 76.

[83] "Comments," New Statesman, I (June 6, 1931), p. 530.

[84] Daily Herald, September 3, 1931, p. 3.

toward Fascism, and was unlikely to attract comment in the foreign press. What did cause comment were the occasions when the Vatican openly challenged the Fascist regime. For example, the Pope's protests against Fascist attacks on Catholic Action received attention in many British publications.

The British press did, however, adequately describe Mussolini's courting of the Church, and his reason for it. It was apparent to the British press that Mussolini wished to use the Church's endorsement as a prop for his regime. Where some members of the British press were mistaken was their belief that the Vatican was inimically disposed to Fascism.

In return for a settlement of the Roman question and a privileged position for the Vatican and the Church in Italy, Pius XI withdrew support from the Catholic Popular Party and labor unions. The Pope's authoritarian cast of mind helped him to deal personally with Mussolini. Together they decided that "the Catholics of Italy were to have no independent voice in determining their own religious political situation."[85] Furthermore, the Church

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[85]Webster, pp. 79-80.

gave its blessings to many of Mussolini's ventures, and "exhorted the faithful to be loyal to their great leader."[86]

Accordingly, the Church's toleration of and even support for the Fascist regime was largely unreported in the British press. Once again the outlook of the press may have been influenced by developments in British history. The long struggle between Church and State in the British Isles made any cooperation between the two institutions appear inconceivable. Without examining the advantages the Church gained from cooperation with the Fascist regime, the press interpreted Church-State relations, at least partly, in light of the British past.

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[86]Smith, p. 443.

THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POLICY OF THE FASCIST STATE

During the period between the wars, Great Britain was faced with severe problems of economic readjustment, many of which were the result of wartime disruption. One of the chief problems was unemployment. No British government of the interwar years found a way of reducing the figure of the registered unemployed much below the one-million mark. The unemployment policies of both Labour and Conservative governments were unimaginative. Unemployment benefits were increased by the first Labour government in 1924, but more radical efforts to tackle the problem, such as public works programs, were not introduced until 1929, by the second Labour government. Even at that time, there were only a few schemes produced, which found work for only some 60,000 men. But the great economic Depression of 1929 swept aside Labour's trivial efforts.[1]

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[1]Taylor, p. 284.

When in late 1924 the Conservatives returned to power with Churchill as the Chancellor of the Exchequer, they followed a policy of deflation and returned to the gold standard at the prewar rate. This policy caused considerable strain on the economy. It hampered British exports which tended to be overpriced in world markets at a time of severe competition. Hence unemployment remained high in British export trades.[2]

In attempting to return to pre-1914 conditions, British governments ignored the structural changes brought about in Great Britain, and in world trade, by the events of the previous decade. They also exposed Great Britain more nakedly to the effects of the 1929 crash. A clue to the problem was that few economists had changed their doctrines since the days of Adam Smith. They could not imagine any improvement in the old laissez-faire order. John Maynard Keynes' idea that unemployment could be alleviated by government intervention and public works was ignored by the Conservative and Labour party heads. During the war regulated capitalism operated, but it was dismantled afterwards. In 1926, the Central

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[2]Medlicott, p. 221.

Electricity Board and the British Broadcasting Corporation provided the first peacetime models of regulated capitalism. These claimed to offer the advantages of socialism without the evils of bureaucracy or worker's control.[3] Even the exigencies of the Depression produced no timely, radical departure from the principles which had made Great Britain economically supreme in the previous century.[4] The government took only feeble action to assist the recovery of agriculture, the steel industry, and shipbuilding. Apart from measures such as these and subsidies for housebuilding and slum clearance, British efforts to regulate capitalism in the general interest were meager.[5]

Against the background furnished by these conventional ideas and practices that were characteristic of British governments in the twenties and thirties, it is interesting to view the reaction of the British press to the regulated economy of Fascist Italy. In Italy everything that happened was organized as a battle, whether it was to build houses, drain swamps, or improve

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[3]Taylor, pp. 278-9.

[4]Ibid., pp. 181-2, 213. [5]Seaman, p. 233.

railway service. Italians were called to fight the "battle" of the lira and of wheat. "Campaigns" were undertaken to reclaim land, construct highways and stadiums. Whereas Baldwin in 1929 called for "safety first," Mussolini in 1924 proclaimed: "The entire nation must become a wharf, a factory."[6]

Italy responded to Mussolini's oratory. Several hundred thousand acres were reclaimed and hundreds of peasants were settled in a more ambitious and successful scheme than any previous ruler of Italy had attempted. The battaglia del grano was so successful that wheat imports were cut by 75 percent in the ten years after 1925. Highways called autostrades were built to connect the principal towns in northern Italy. Impetus was also given to the manufacture of automobiles and airplanes.[7] Indeed, the former lethargic tempo of Italian life appeared to change with the advent of Fascism. "Strikes ended as if by magic, trains suddenly ran on time, bureaucracy's leisurely pace was transformed under the eyes of the dynamic leader into hard work and enthusiasm."[8]

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[6]Nolte, p. 214.

[7]Smith, pp. 406-8.

[8]Nolte, p. 214.

In retrospect, many of Mussolini's projects looked less than completely successful. Despite the fact that the production of grain was increased, it was an economic failure. Marginal land hitherto used for pasture or olive and fruit trees was converted to wheat fields. This upset the economy, and yet Italian wheat remained higher priced than American. Many of the reclamation projects were abandoned unfinished, when war erupted with Ethiopia in 1935. Moreover, working and living conditions of the Italian people did not greatly improve under Fascism.[9] Yet Mussolini's projects appeared impressive, particularly to the British conservative press.

Conservative elements of the British press enthusiastically recorded the new accelerated rhythm of Italian life. The Spectator printed a number of these laudatory articles of which many were written by travellers to Italy from 1922 to 1925. A typical example was an unsigned article, "The New Italy and the Holiday Maker," in which the writer extolled the new efficiency of the railways and telegraph.[10] Another article in the Spectator

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[9]William G. Welk, Fascist Economic Policy (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938), p. 248.

[10]"The New Italy and the Holiday Maker," Spectator, CXXXI (October 13, 1923), p. 494.

described what it called the "marvellous Fascist spirit."[11] Other conservative publications made similar statements concerning Italian life after the advent of Fascism. Beckles Willson wrote in the Nineteenth Century that "the intense vital resurgence since the war of the Italian people is a manifestation of Fascism."[12] The Times expressed views alike in substance, though it concentrated more on presenting Fascism as less exhilarating and more positive in achievement:

> The best proof is that Fascism has actually done nothing very startling. It has abolished the game of Parliamentary chess; it has simplified the taxation system and reduced the deficit to measurable proportions; it has vastly improved the public services, particularly the railways; it has reduced a superfluously large bureaucracy without any very bad results in the way of hardships or unemployment. All this represents hard and useful work.[13]

Although the New Statesman had adopted a critical viewpoint toward Fascism in early 1923, it printed an article by "V. B." that listed some of the worthwhile aspects of the new Italian government. The same article, however,

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[11] "The Spirit of Fascism," Spectator, CXXXII (January 5, 1924), p. 5.

[12] Beckles Willson, "Italy's Vital Resurgence," Nineteenth Century, XCVIII (December, 1925), p. 858.

[13] The Times, October 31, 1923, p. 13.

went on to criticize the Fascist militia and the Electoral Reform Bill.

> There are fewer trains, but they are much better run; there are no longer thousands of men doing unnecessary police work; there are no strikes and but few disturbances; one hopes and believes that the old gang of politicians has been swept out of power forever. In Rome itself there is even some show of traffic regulation, and throughout the country the posts and telegraphs are more reliable.[14]

What did the British extreme Left-wing think of the "new" Italy and its hastened pace of life? It is not easy to say. The socialist organs tended to disregard the so-called "spirit of Fascism." The burden of their argument was that punctual trains and a dependable telegraph service did not justify or redeem Fascist terror and violence. While conservative publications carried articles on the rapid pulse of life in Fascist Italy, the Glasgow Forward wrote of "Fascisti Terror in Italy," and the Daily Herald described how Mussolini's dictatorship was "a menace to Democracy."[15]

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[14] "Mussolini's Italy," New Statesman, XXI (June 30, 1923), p. 355.

[15] Glasgow Forward, September 8, 1923, p. 1; Daily Herald, December 20, 1922, p. 1.

As pointed out elsewhere in this study, Mussolini's government, in spite of its Right-wing orientation, was moderate and circumspect in manner during the first year and a half in power. No special tribunals or emergency laws were introduced, and opposition newspapers continued to appear. A great deal of the Fascist terror and violence was directed solely at Italian Left-wing movements and their sympathizers.[16] Naturally, the British Left-wing press reacted unfavorably to Mussolini's actions. The conservative press ignored the seamy side of Fascism and instead focused on railway schedules, on tourist facilities, and on "trim, handsome, black-shirted lads [who]:

> . . . were everywhere: enforcing order in the docks, in the market-place, in streets; stopping extortion at the railway stations, punishing violence with a ruthless severity; and coming to the help of all distressed citizens.[17]

Much of the early praise for Fascism's role in regenerating the spirit of Italian life was tempered or downgraded with the increased knowledge of the less commendable aspects of the Fascist regime. On some occasions,

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[16]Nolte, pp. 214-15.

[17]Morning Post, April 29, 1926, p. 12.

though, the conservative press continued to praise the Fascist spirit. When a particularly severe earthquake struck Italy in 1930, the Spectator stated:

> We are bound to acknowledge that in a catastrophe Fascist Italy has shown herself more vigorous and efficient than old Italy.[18]

In 1929, The Times lauded Mussolini and the Fascist movement for "the moral and material progress achieved since the war."[19]

Whereas Great Britain did not significantly move toward a planned economy until after the Second World War, Mussolini began to introduce strict economic regulation into Italy in the mid-twenties with the Corporate state program. A word must be said here about the doctrines of the Corporate state. The origins of Fascist syndicalism go back to the years immediately preceding the First World War. In 1906, Arturo Labriola broke with the Italian Socialist movement. His movement was influenced by the writings of Georges Sorel, who published his principal work, Reflections on Violence, in 1908. In this book, Sorel espoused the formation of powerful workers'

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[18] "News of the Week," Spectator, CXLV (August 2, 1930), pp. 149-50.

[19] The Times, October 26, 1929, p. 13.

trade associations called syndicates, which through violent revolutionary action would weaken the resistance of capitalists and employers. Gradually, the capitalists and employers would be forced to surrender all means of production to the syndicates. A union of workmen's syndicates in control of the productive apparatus of the nation would then take the place of the present liberal democratic state.[20]

Although this early socialist syndicalist movement never reached sizable proportions, it contributed to the evolution of Fascist syndicalism. Sorel's doctrines were responsible for molding much of Mussolini's early social thought. Soon after the First World War the idea of a Corporate state in Italy appeared in a few of Mussolini's speeches. From Sorelian syndicalism, Mussolini obtained his idea that authority and representation in the Fascist state should rest on economic function.[21] The enunciation of the Corporate doctrine in Mussolini's eyes also provided the status which he believed Fascism lacked without a political philosophy of

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[20]Welk, p. 44; Nolte, pp. 69, 153.

[21]Alan Cassels, Fascist Italy (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1968), p. 56.

its own.[22] Needless to say, he perverted the intentions of the early syndicates.

While Fascists echoed the Sorelian emphasis on economic association, they expanded the sindicato from a labor union into a corporation of both employer and employee. In the corporations, wages and working conditions were supposed to be determined by collective agreements between the representatives of the workers and their employers. Any unresolved disagreements were to be settled by courts within the Corporate structure itself. From an economic point of view, these measures were restrictive. The object was, however, to discipline production. The absence of strikes and the efficiency of production were at the core of the Corporate doctrine. By organizing workers and employers into corporations, and forbidding strikes and lockouts, Mussolini achieved central organization and control. Private enterprise was not directly threatened, though the role of management and ownership was at least potentially diminished. As far as Mussolini was concerned, laissez-faire was out-of-date.[23]

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[22] Welk, p. 153; Weber, p. 77. [23] Weber, pp. 74-5.

The Corporate institutions had in reality little authority and no autonomy. The government itself determined economic policy. There was a total concentration of authority at the top in the economic as well as in the political domain. Command was not delegated, least of all to the workers' syndicates. Yet the Corporate institutions compiled huge quantities of statistics on production and related matters that enabled the government to effect a number of administrative economies. But this fell far short of the preeminence that Mussolini claimed for them in his plans for national regeneration.[24]

Mussolini's plans were brought into force chiefly by two principal laws. The Rocco Law of April 3, 1926, paved the way for the legal recognition of Fascist syndicates, which were associations consisting of workers or employers exclusively. The representatives of the syndicates were to be brought together by means of the corporations and thus came under the aegis of the government. The Labor Charter promulgated by the Fascist Grand Council in April, 1927, formally recognized the corporations as

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[24]Welk, pp. 55-60.

organs of the state, vested with authority to enforce binding regulations upon workers and employers. But the corporations, despite the imposing superstructure, still only existed on paper. This situation lasted until 1934, when 22 separate corporations were created. However, this last decree changed little. The complete domination of the Corporate structure remained in the hands of the Fascist Party.[25]

The announcement of Mussolini's plans in 1926 and 1927 received extensive coverage and comment in the British press. Since the Fascist-controlled press gave detailed and lengthy reports of the Corporate state legislation, accounts carried by British publications were thorough and accurate. A few members of the press reprinted the complete texts of the legislation and a number of others carried extensive quotations from them.

Despite the widespread coverage of the Corporate legislation, the British press failed to search for the roots of the Corporate system in modern Italian history or in Mussolini's earlier experiences. From time to time, it used the word "syndicalism" or "syndicate."

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[25]Weber, pp. 75-6; Welk, pp. 63-8.

This was especially true of the Observer.[26] But there was no penetrating analysis of the terms or their origins. Instead the press focused on clauses of the Rocco Law and the Labor Charter, of which the latter received the most attention. The British press reflected its pragmatic approach when it concentrated on how Corporate legislation would effect life in Italy, rather than on its philosophical origins.

The British press gave considerable attention to the interests of the Italian workingman under the Corporate system. The conservative press tended to regard the Fascist plan as beneficial to the Italian working class. Again the Morning Post was the most emphatic in voicing its beliefs in Fascism. It felt that workers themselves disliked strikes, and argued that "the laws were enacted to the intense satisfaction of the workmen," because they ended industrial strife.[27] The Times made no initial response concerning this question.[28] In 1930, The Times expressed a conviction that the workers benefited from

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[26] Observer, March 25, 1923, p. 8; April 26, 1925, p. 8.

[27] Morning Post, April 29, 1926, p. 12.

[28] The Times, April 25, 1927, p. 13.

the Corporate program. At that time it stated that if the Fascist regime were overthrown by a Socialist uprising:

> . . . The one probable survivor among the political creations would be the trades union system of syndicates, federations, confederations, and corporations under which employers and employees are now grouped. This system would certainly be continued in some form or other under a Socialist regime, because the workers have benefited from it to a far greater extent than have the employers.[29]

Though the actual Left-wing coverage given the publication of the Labor Charter was scanty, it took strong exception to the conservative position. The socialist organs did not reprint the text of the Labor Charter or sections of it, as did other British publications. One possible reason for the lack of extensive coverage might have been the 1926 "general strike" and the controversy within Great Britain over reform of the Trades Disputes Act in 1927. Articles did appear, however, in the Daily Herald and the Glasgow Forward a few months after the promulgation of the Labor Charter in April, 1927. From these articles it was easily discerned that British socialist organs considered the Corporate

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[29] The Times, October 29, 1930, p. 15.

legislation as being directed against the working class, which in their view had already suffered at the hands of their employers.[30]

The Manchester Guardian, the Spectator, the New Statesman, and the Nation adopted a more moderate position than the extreme Left-wing press. These publications held that, while he had little control over the Fascist syndicates, the Italian workman would receive at least some protection from the Fascist regime. Mussolini was cast in the role of a benevolent despot by the Nation and the Spectator.[31] The Manchester Guardian editorialized that the workers were "protected against the worst excesses of exploitation."[32] After it discussed the lack of collective bargaining and the imposed wages in Fascist Italy, the New Statesman maintained:

> On the other hand, it would be unfair to pretend that there are no benevolent features in the Charter. Mussolini is not simply a wicked uncle; he is the stern father, but with some

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[30] Daily Herald, June 22, 1927, p. 4; Glasgow Forward, July 17, 1927, p. 12.

[31] "Events of the Week," Nation, CXXIV (May 4, 1927), p. 491; "News of the Week," Spectator, CXXXVIII (April 30, 1927), p. 750.

[32] Manchester Guardian, April 23, 1927, p. 12.

> paternal feelings--provided, of course, the children are good boys.[33]

The Times, Manchester Guardian, and New Statesman all listed some of the privileges guaranteed by the Labor Charter, such as an annual holiday with pay, special payments for piecework, and a weekly day of rest.[34] It is strange that in all its enthusiasm for Fascism the Morning Post neglected to cite those basic benefits.[35]

Some special attention was also paid to how industrialists and employers were treated by the Corporate scheme, and to whether the Fascist program made any allowance for entrepreneurial initiative. The British conservative and moderate press expressed the almost universal opinion that Mussolini intended to allow free enterprise to continue within certain limits. The remarks of the Observer typified this opinion:

> The State is paramount--deified, it is true, but a door is left open for individual initiative in industry, for example; an industrialist

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[33] "How They Do It In Italy," New Statesman, XXIX (April 30, 1927), p.68.

[34] The Times, April 23, 1927, pp. 9-10; Manchester Guardian, April 23, 1927, p. 12; "How They Do It In Italy," New Statesman, XXIX (April 30, 1927), p. 68.

[35] Morning Post, April 24, 1926, p. 13; April 29, 1926, p. 12.

> will be left in peace so long as they are not too grasping and their businesses flourish.[36]

A similar observation was made by the Manchester Guardian:

> Industry is still to be in the hands of private enterprise, but the State is to intervene where the production attained is not satisfactory.[37]

The Spectator editorialized that "theoretically industry will remain under private enterprise, but the State will intervene at numerous points."[38] The New Statesman's explanation was near this position, but it went on to express a Left-wing conclusion. It suggested that "for the moment he [Mussolini] and capitalism are on comfortable terms."[39]

The socialist organs made no comment with respect to the loss of private initiative by Italian industrialists. They believed that the Corporate legislation was helpful to business interests. The Glasgow Forward

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[36]Observer, May 1, 1927, p. 12.

[37]Manchester Guardian, April 23, 1927, p. 12.

[38]"News of the Week," Spectator, CXXXVIII (April 30, 1927), p. 156.

[39]"How They Do It In Italy," New Statesman, XXIX (April 30, 1927), p. 68.

carried an article which went so far as to maintain that the industrialists and big bankers were Mussolini's bosses.[40] A few months after the promulgation of the Labor Charter the Daily Herald gave headlines to a case in which two employers were acquitted of locking out their workers. The Daily Herald argued that this case was just one more instance of collaboration between the employers and the Fascist government.[41]

Such conservative publications as The Times, the Spectator, and the Observer noted that the Italian employers were not pleased with the Corporate arrangement, but no real resistance came from them.[42] On the other hand, employees' syndicates had to be promoted by official recognition, which was accorded only to Fascist organizations. Only Fascist syndicates were permitted to conclude binding agreements. Accordingly, the employees had to accept Fascist Party functionaries as their representatives. Still the industrialists were apprehensive,

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[40] Glasgow Forward, July 17, 1926, p. 12.

[41] Daily Herald, July 22, 1927, p. 4.

[42] The Times, April 25, 1927, p. 13; "News of the Week," Spectator, CXXXVIII (April 30, 1927), p. 750; Observer, May 1, 1927, p. 12.

because it was the party, and ultimately Mussolini, to whose power of arbitration they were subjected.[43] Therefore, those publications which suggested that Italian industrialists were uneasy with the Corporate scheme were closer to the truth.

The moderate, the conservative, and to a lesser degree the socialist press were inaccurate or incomplete in their description of the relationship between Mussolini and the industrialists. British socialist organs tended to argue that Mussolini was merely the tool of Italian capitalists. This was not completely a proper estimate of the collaboration between Mussolini and the entrepreneurial class in the twenties. The lack of a precise appreciation by conservative and moderate papers of the relationship was no less false, since big business enjoyed some special consideration from the Fascist regime.

Throughout its first five years, the Fascist government did much to stimulate the recovery and growth of Italian industry. To increase its efficiency and reduce its costs, the Fascists turned over to private enterprise some former government monopolies, such as the telephone

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[43]Nolte, p. 261.

system. To encourage industrial expansion and win the friendship of big business, the Fascist regime repealed some Socialist legislation, notably that providing for inheritance and other direct taxes.[44] Moreover, Mussolini decided in favor of the industrialist against the plans of Edmondo Rossoni, secretary general of the confederation of Fascist syndicates. Rossoni's plans called for integrated syndicates which would have combined employers and employees together. In the 1927 Corporate state legislation, the industrialists were allowed to have their own syndicates and representatives. The Italian workers were, however, forced to accept Fascist representation. While Mussolini acceded to the demands of the industrialists and often collaborated actively with them, he was not simply the instrument of big business. Nor did Mussolini contrive to exploit the Italian people in order to enrich the capitalist class. But Mussolini's plans called for collaboration with the industrialists in order to gain complete control of Italy.[45]

This collaboration went unrecorded in the British conservative and moderate press. The socialist organs

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[44] Ibid., pp. 160-61. [45] Nolte, p. 261.

recognized active collaboration between the government and the Italian industrialists, but the effectiveness of their arguments was diminished by overstatement and an intemperate tone.

As to whether the Corporate state would play an integral part in the future life of Italy, the British press wisely deferred judgment. Both the syndicates and the confederations of the Corporate state played a comparatively minor role in the actual conduct of economic affairs. The system was not an agency for the economic self-government of the Italian people. In the late twenties and early thirties, coverage of the Corporate apparatus was scanty in the British press. And this mirrored a true picture of the minor importance that Mussolini attached to the Corporate structure.

In addition to the attention shown to the doctrines of the Corporate state as such, the British press manifested deep interest in the policies of Fascism in such fields as finance, industry, agriculture, and welfare. With the exception of the Economist and The Times Financial Review, detailed consideration of the policies themselves was not given. For the most part, the British press did not offer a penetrating analysis of Fascist

development programs. Rather, the press discussed the consequences of these plans on Italy and the Italian people, and whether they had benefited from Fascist rule. Often articles carried by British publications representing views at either end of the political scale read like polemics. Right-wing publications often praised the projects and gave slight attention to their disruptive aspects on the Italian economy. The Left-wing press focused entirely on the negative side of the development programs, seemingly disregarding the fact that much of the industrial world was facing similar economic problems. Here again, the intemperance of the socialist organs did much to weaken their case.

One of the most distinguishable characteristics of Fascist economic policy during the twenties was its attempt to readjust and stabilize the Italian currency. The initial stimulation of industry by the Fascist government from 1922 to 1926 resulted in not only rapid forward industrial strides and production growth, but in spiraling inflation. In order to protect the currency and to prevent further inflationary excesses, severe measures were taken by the government. To increase the country's prestige, benefit savers, and help

Italy as a large importer of raw materials, a policy of deflation and stabilization of the lira was followed by the government in 1927. These measures in time resulted in serious industrial and commercial stagnation.[46]

Italian financial news did not receive widespread attention in British publications. Those elements of the British press that printed discussions concerning the Italian financial position were in agreement that there was a genuine improvement by 1925. Disagreement among the British press occurred over the reasons for this improvement. The Times editorialized that "vigorous efforts of the Fascist government have done much to re-establish the financial position of Italy."[47] In January, 1926, it declared that Italy enjoyed the best financial position in Europe because of Fascist economic planning.[48] The reports of the Economist, unlike those of The Times, did not depict such an optimistic financial position.[49] The fact that Fascism was not solely responsible for

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[46]Welk, pp. 160-65.

[47]The Times, April 9, 1925, p. 9.

[48]The Times, January 8, 1926, p. 8.

[49]"Italy," Economist, C (June 13, 1925), Part 2, p. 188; CV (December 24, 1927), Part 2, p. 1146.

Italy's stronger financial position was suggested by the New Leader, and the Economist. The Economist offered an accurate assessment of the reasons for the improvement of financial conditions in Italy in 1926:

> The strong financial position and industrial growth which Italy has experienced in recent years is due to deep-seated causes which are quite independent of political regimes. The Fascists have not created the wave, nor did the Government which they overthrew create the preceding depression.[50]

The British press was in agreement that Mussolini's deflationary policy and return to the gold standard were responsible for the recession in the Italian economy from the end of 1927 to the Depression.[51] The conservative press, however, praised Mussolini's efforts directed toward deflation and return to the gold standard. In the opinion of the Observer,

> the Italian Press, now exclusively employed in extolling the Government, is justly proud that Italy should at last stand in line with the thirteen powers enjoying a gold basis for their currency.[52]

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[50] "Italy," Economist, CII (February 13, 1926), Part 1, p. 296.

[51] "Comments," New Statesman, XXIX (August, 1927), p. 526; "Notes of the Week," Economist, CV (December 10, 1927), Part 2, p. 1026; Observer, December 29, 1929, p. 19; The Times Financial Review, February 7, 1928, p. 7.

[52] Observer, January 1, 1928, p. 8.

The Times similarly added that "deflation has been severe in Italy, and certain painful effects of revalorization have frequently been emphasized with too little regard for the wise and steady purpose of the Government's financial policy."[53]

Whereas The Times and the Observer applauded deflation and the return to the gold standard, the Left-wing press focused attention on the disruptive implications of Mussolini's policy. The following quotation from the Daily Herald typified the remarks of Left-wing publications:

> The Duce's financial policy--embarked on by that headstrong, if wily, politician against the advice of all his experts--has landed him in difficulties which are not to be met by any of the weapons which have so far served to maintain him in power. Violence, rhetoric and the subtler arts of political chicanery are all useless for the solving of an economic crisis such as confronts him. Day by day the situation grows worse. Bankruptcies multiply, unemployment increases, trade grows more stagnant. Workers and peasants alike find even their miserably low standard of living becoming lower. Employers are in desperate straits. The banks cannot help, for their own position is insecure.[54]

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[53] The Times, October 22, 1927, p. 13.

[54] Daily Herald, September 9, 1927, p. 4.

To the Manchester Guardian, Mussolini's actions were a result of the rivalry between France and Italy:

> And what was the object? To have a higher unit of value in Mussolinian Italy than in Parliamentary France. It is plain as a pikestaff that Signor Mussolini aspired to this paltry ambition, and that he forced the country to suffer a severe dislocation in order to attain it.[55]

It seemed only natural that the conservative press would support Italy's return to the gold standard. Great Britain's return to the gold standard had been carried out by a Conservative government in 1925. It was taken for granted that the triumphant restoration of parity with the United States dollar would re-establish the former domination and prestige of "the City." British economic advisers also felt it would increase the value of foreign investments in Great Britain, and reduce the burden of the American debt by requiring fewer pounds to be paid to the United States. Unfortunately for British exports, return to the gold standard at prewar rates increased the cost to foreigners of British goods. This policy helped to price British coal as well as other goods out of the foreign market. To retain their profits,

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[55]Manchester Guardian, December 31, 1929, p. 10.

the coal mine owners reduced the miners' wages. The miners went on strike and by so doing paved the way for the 1926 "general strike" which ended so disastrously for the workers.[56]

It was no wonder then that the British Left-wing press reflected some of its resentment of Great Britain's return to the gold standard when it commented on Fascist Italy's recession. The socialist organs probably viewed the plight of the Italian workers as being similar to that suffered by workers in Great Britain, who were adversely affected by the Conservative government's decision. This divergence between British Left- and Right-wing publications was witnessed in other Fascist endeavors.

Great Britain and Italy also shared similar food production problems. Neither country produced enough food to be totally self-sufficient. In Great Britain, large-scale active assistance was not given to agricultural production until the Depression. Then it took the form of subsidies and marketing boards.[57] In Fascist

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[56]Taylor, pp. 222-24; Seaman, pp. 190-92; Medlicott, p. 222.

[57]Seaman, p. 233; Taylor, pp. 279, 341.

Italy, government intervention into food production was begun before the Depression and on a much greater scale than in Great Britain. In order to alter Italy's dependence on foreign imports and to provide jobs for Italians, Mussolini in 1926 initiated the "battle for grain," which was successful in that grain production was vastly increased. But the heavy emphasis on grain production disrupted and hampered the production of other foods in Italy. To assist grain production and to provide land for peasants, the Fascist government in December, 1928, instituted an enormous land reclamation scheme. Although land reclamation in Italy was begun long before the coming of Fascism, it was Mussolini who gave it new impetus and made it a cornerstone of his agricultural policy.[58]

The first reaction to the land reclamation by the British press was mixed. The Times Financial Review praised the project as "ambitious, but sound" and added:

> The revenue accruing to the Treasury from the taxes levied on what were formerly unproductive, unoccupied lands amply compensates for the initial expenditure while the social

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[58]Smith, pp. 407-8.

> benefits conferred on the whole community are incalculable.[59]

Though the Economist judged the plan for reclamation as worthwhile for Italy, it differed from The Times Financial Review's explanation of the monetary returns to be derived from the project.

> Nor can there be for some time to come any extensive return on capital so invested. On the contrary, the profits, from a business point of view, are practically nil.[60]

The socialist organs offered no direct comment on Mussolini's scheme. The Daily Herald did, however, recount how "tens of thousands of leaseholders have been compelled to suspend work because they have no money to buy seeds and fertilisers."[61] However, in 1926, Yeats-Brown's article, "Welfare Work in Fascist Italy," in the Spectator typified the solidly conservative description of Fascist development schemes.

> Eighty thousand square metres of farm lands have been taken over at Arquata and sown with grain forming the nucleus of a flourishing farm colony.[62]

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[59] The Times Financial Review, February 5, 1929, p. 18.

[60] "Italy," Economist, CVI (December 20, 1928), Part 2, p. 1026.

[61] Daily Herald, October 3, 1927, p. 1.

[62] F. Yeats-Brown, "Welfare Work in Fascist Italy," Spectator, CXXXVII (October 16, 1926), p. 618.

From the limited coverage of the Italian agricultural program before the Depression, it can be ascertained that generally conservative papers approved of Mussolini's schemes. Doubts were expressed by the Economist, but the reservations did not deter it from supporting Italy's development projects. The same cannot be said of socialist organs. Here again, reportage was scanty, but the descriptions by the Daily Herald, New Leader, and Glasgow Forward of conditions in Italy portrayed a land in which abject poverty was the condition of all but a few. But the socialist press largely ignored Mussolini's attempts to increase agricultural production in Italy.

Before considering the Depression, which tended to increase British press coverage of Italian development projects, it is necessary to turn to the methods used to deal with unemployment in Italy. Although Great Britain faced chronic unemployment during the twenties, the British press took little detailed notice of Fascist plans for relieving unemployment.

The Observer in 1923 furnished one of the few specific accounts in the British press of the twenties with regard to work projects as a means of reducing

unemployment. It maintained that

> the marked decrease of unemployment during the past six months is largely due to the extensive public works which have been taken in hand by the Fascist Government.[63]

The Times made a similar observation in connection with the construction of hydroelectric plants providing work for Italians.[64] On another occasion, the Economist recorded that "the figures of unemployment are low enough to be the envy of British observers," but it failed to elaborate on the reason for low unemployment in Italy.[65]

The usual tack followed by British conservative publications during the 1920's was to extol the construction and development efforts without drawing a great deal of attention to the fact that the projects helped to reduce unemployment. For example, Beckles Willson's article, "Italy's Vital Resurgence," in the Nineteenth Century, commended the Fascist government for its development of a hydroelectric power system in northern Italy, rather than discuss how worthwhile it was as a

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[63] Observer, October 14, 1923, p. 8.

[64] The Times, August 9, 1926, p. 9.

[65] "Italy," Economist, CII (February 13, 1926), Part 1, p. 295.

means to alleviate unemployment.[66] Conservative papers also listed a number of Mussolini's achievements. A typical example of cataloging Fascist accomplishments was provided by an editorial in The Times in 1929:

> The work accomplished by the Duce during the past seven years has compelled the reluctant admiration even of those who have displayed the greatest antipathy toward his methods. To the casual observer, the evidence of the moral and material progress achieved since the War is almost overwhelming. New roads, new railways, new public land, new streets and suburbs forming whole townships, meet the eye of the traveller on every side. Nor are these signs of material achievement confined merely to the great industrial centres of the North and Rome itself.[67]

As noted in an earlier passage, the extreme Left-wing press failed to take any notice of Fascist construction projects during the 1920's. It was left to the conservative journals, such as the Spectator and the Nineteenth Century, to supply articles on the improvements instituted by the Fascist government. But even in these publications reports were infrequent. The Depression changed this; attention given to Italian domestic schemes increased in the British press.

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[66] Beckles Willson, "Italy's Vital Resurgence," Nineteenth Century, XCVIII (December, 1925), p. 858.

[67] The Times, October 26, 1929, p. 13.

The Depression supplied a more compelling reason for the British press to study Fascist plans to cope with the disaster. For example, in 1928 the Azienda Autonoma Statale della Strada (the State Highway Corporation) was created to remedy the deplorable condition of many of Italy's roads.[68] It was not until 1931 that The Times commented favorably, not only on the roads themselves but on the fact that a national agency had been set up "to work as the national interests demand."[69] Many of the Fascist projects were not begun until the late 1920's and their initial results remained unknown for a few years, which also accounted for the reason why the press failed to discuss them in detail until after the Depression had begun. The Fascist land reclamation plan was not really initiated until 1929. And this program had a very positive effect on the "Battle for Wheat," which had been started in 1926.[70]

When the Depression came, Italy's economic system was just emerging from the crisis caused by the revaluation of the lira. Weakened by this experience, the

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[68]Smith, p. 201.

[69]The Times, July 31, 1931, p. 11.

[70]Welk, p. 191.

Italian economy could offer little resistance. As in other countries, prices fell, markets dwindled, production lagged, and unemployment rose. Conditions rapidly went from bad to worse. The Italian government was soon compelled to lend active assistance. This intervention was affected not through the Corporate state machinery but through a series of government instructions and decrees. To relieve unemployment, the Italian government's program of public works was expanded. Land reclamation, hydroelectric power developments, the electrification of railroads, the construction of highways, and public buildings were greatly intensified.[71]

In Great Britain the ideas of Keynes, Sir Oswald Mosley, and Lloyd George, which called for active governmental intervention in the crisis and a planned economy, did not "stir the enthusiasm for new ways which F. D. Roosevelt was to arouse later in the United States."[72] With respect to the problem of unemployment, the British were reluctant to initiate large public works programs. Politicians of the Left and the Right were united in a common faith that mass unemployment was largely uncontrollable. The Right thought nothing could be done about

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[71]Welk, pp. 165-70. [72]Taylor, p. 286.

unemployment because it cost money. Further, they thought that government help to find work for the unemployed by large public works schemes merely transferred unemployment from one area to another. Besides it was felt that these schemes did not benefit the nation as a whole. Substantial relief grants were also ruled out, because Great Britain was, in the words of one historian, "governed by the kind of person who thought of the chronically unemployed as in danger of enjoying a 'privileged' status by drawing unemployment benefit."[73] Many Left-wing thinkers faced a dilemma. Some wished to shelter the poor from the economic storm. Others hoped that conditions would worsen until they became so desperate as to make radical change in the capitalist system possible. The belief that nothing short of Socialism would make things better created a controversy among the Left. How could Socialism be achieved? By cooperating with the National government? Or by continuing to attack it? The Left never solved the problem.[74]

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[73] Seaman, p. 243.

[74] A. J. P. Taylor, "Confusion on the Left," The Baldwin Age, ed. John Raymond (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1961), pp. 74-5.

During the Depression, the British press increased its attention to the measures that Fascist Italy used to deal with unemployment problems and compared them to British efforts. While an editorial, "An Example From Italy," in The Times, implied a certain conservative dislike for projects that only created jobs, it praised the Fascist work schemes for not merely creating jobs but for creating jobs which benefited the entire country.

> Few can have read the article on Bonifica [land reclamation], which was published on this page on Friday [November 17, 1932, p. 12] without a glow of satisfaction that in one country at least a great constructive effort is being made to provide work for the unemployed in a way from which the entire nation seems likely to benefit.[75]

The Rome correspondent for the Observer displayed a predisposition for rigid control which reflected the exigencies of the Depression period and the desire to do something about them.

> With shrewdness Mussolini saw the incompatability between "Liberty" and "la bonifica" [land reclamation]. He knew that only a Fascist Regime could hope to impose the necessary taxation, and enforce a rigid discipline, on landowners to enable him to carry out schemes of improvement on a scale worthy of ancient Rome, and in a comparatively short period of time.[76]

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[75] The Times, November 21, 1932, p. 13.

[76] Observer, July 27, 1930, p. 10.

The need for active government planning and intervention was portrayed by a cartoon in Punch. Mussolini was depicted as a Caesar-like figure before a table heaped with charts and diagrams. At his side stood John Bull with a look of amazement and admiration. In the caption Mussolini stated: "I have arranged for a new Rome to arise within five years." To this John Bull replied: "And to think that London's taken nearly twice that time to decide about keeping one bridge where it was." Below this an explanatory caption appeared:

> Like the Soviet Government, Signor Mussolini has a Five Year Plan. It includes not only rebuilding Rome, but connecting it with the sea by a canal, and the construction of a vast harbour, to be named Port Mussolini in the neighbourhood of the city.[77]

Unfavorable comparisons between Great Britain and Italy were not confined to the conservative press. The New Statesman also expressed a desire for the introduction into Great Britain of schemes like those carried out in Fascist Italy.

> Fascism is not a model that we want to see adopted in this country. But it has some achievements to its credit and the latest of these might be noted with advantage by

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[77] Punch, June 8, 1932, CLXXXII, p. 619.

> the more rabbit-hearted of our politicians. The feat of reclaiming the Pontine marshes has just been accomplished, and Signor Mussolini has inaugurated a new town in the midst of what was once a malarial swamp. Presently there will be two more towns, and over 40,000 people will be settled on the land. There are no Pontine marshes in Britain. But there are comparable enterprises to be undertaken. There is, in fact, land to be drained, and land to be afforested; and, if we may risk repetition on the unpleasant subject, there are slums to be cleared and new houses to be erected in their place. Is the thinking out and carrying out of such schemes possible under an Italian despotism and impossible under a British democracy?[78]

Subsidized housebuilding under the Wheatley Act was brought to an end in 1933. Arthur Greenwood, the Minister of Health, in the second Labour government had instituted a slum clearance program, which also had been suspended by the National government until 1934. It was the lack of these programs to which the New Statesman objected.[79]

It was only natural that the extreme Left-wing press would react vigorously to the praise of Fascism. During the Depression, Left-wing Socialists anticipated

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[78]"Comments," New Statesman, IV (December 24, 1932), p. 821.

[79]Taylor, p. 279.

a Fascist dictatorship in Great Britain. At this time, it was part of the Left-wing dogma that declining capitalism would seek survival in Fascism. Mosley, who launched the British Union of Fascists on October 1, 1932, seemed to arrive just in time to confirm the fears of the Left.[80]

In 1930, Sir Oswald Mosley, a rich and relatively recent recruit to the Labour Party, submitted proposals that dealt with the unemployment problem to the Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald. After the proposals were rejected, Mosley pressed his case before the Parliamentary Labour Party and at the party conference. In both cases, he lost to MacDonald. Losing patience, he quit the Labour Party, and founded the New Party in February, 1931. A year later, after a visit to Italy and Mussolini, Mosley formed the Union of British Fascists. The ranks of the movement swelled in the following months and this alarmed Left-wing forces.[81]

That Left-wing publications were keenly aware of the favorable response of other sections of the press to Mussolini was shown by an article in the Glasgow Forward

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[80] Ibid., p. 319.

[81] Cross, pp. 36, 68, 77.

in 1932:

> Mussolini is having a great press these days, and the papers are full of photographs of Benito making great orations about how the whole of Europe will be Fascist in ten years' time.[82]

In reply to the "great press" that Mussolini enjoyed, Socialist publications printed articles that described life in Italy in the blackest of terms. The Glasgow Forward was the foremost advocate of these tactics: "All Italians are tightening their belts, the unemployed are dying of hunger, tradesmen are becoming bankrupt."[83] The Daily Worker and the Manchester Guardian both reported that hungry refugees were fleeing into France.[84] The Daily Worker printed what these refugees allegedly said:

> We are looking for work. We waited two years for permission to leave. It was better to die quickly in the glaciers than to starve slowly at home.[85]

That there was hunger in Italy was acknowledged by The Times, though it praised the efforts of Fascist youth organizations to combat the urgent need for food.

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[82]Glasgow Forward, November 5, 1932, p. 9.

[83]Glasgow Forward, July 11, 1931, p. 3.

[84]Manchester Guardian, December 6, 1930, p. 6.

[85]Daily Worker, November 21, 1930, p. 3.

> The enthusiastic youths of the Fascist associations look upon themselves as being mobilized in a fight against hunger. They speak and act as if they felt sure of victory. Theirs is a good fight.[86]

Basically, the editorial explained in equally laudable terms the organization of the relief centers, the duties of their personnel, and the numbers of those who had received aid.

When some of the worst effects of the Depression had begun to be felt in Italy and Great Britain, the Observer printed a number of articles which described summer holidays in Fascist Italy. It stated on July 26, 1931:

> For not only the well-to-do escape from the city's heat and dust. People of the sort, who, in England, think themselves lucky to be able to take their families away for a fortnight, send them off for six weeks to mountain or seashore.
> . . . . . .
> For the very poor, or at any rate, for their children, are the Fascist "Summer Colonies." They cover practically every section of the country and guarantee to send to sea or mountain every child between the ages of six and eleven for at least fifteen days--the majority go for a month.[87]

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[86] The Times, December 15, 1932, p. 15.

[87] Observer, July 26, 1931, p. 8.

By this article and similar ones, the Observer definitely placed itself in the ultraconservative camp with respect to Mussolini's domestic programs. Whereas it was accurate in saying that social welfare activities existed in Fascist Italy, the Observer presented an unbalanced description of life under Mussolini. It never carried articles of the widespread suffering and dislocation in Italy during the Depression. Moreover, the Observer and publications like it ignored the statistics of the International Labor Office in 1930 which suggested that real wages in Italy were lower than anywhere else in western Europe, including Spain.[88]

In addition to its articles on hunger in Italy and Mussolini's callous disregard of it, the British Left-wing press criticized Fascist taxation and government-imposed wage cuts. A random selection of headlines typified the manner of criticism. Some of the articles were titled: "Gigantic Wage-Cut Imposed by Mussolini," "Fascist Regime Hard Hit," or "Plight of Italian Workers."[89] Yet while 12 percent reductions were made in wages and

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[88]Smith, p. 405.

[89]Daily Worker, November 21, 1930, p. 3; February 17, 1930, p. 2; Glasgow Forward, August 22, 1931, p. 10.

the salaries of civil servants, the regime in fact endeavored to bring about corresponding reduction of other fixed charges in rents and retail prices by energetic price controls in order to alleviate the burden.[90] The Daily Worker's report neglected to mention these price regulations.

Like Great Britain, the Fascist regime was "hard hit" by the Depression. Italy too abandoned its house-building programs and attempted to limit public expenses to administrative tasks. In the opinion of the Daily Herald, this indicated near bankruptcy.[91] But conservative accounts differed from the dire reports of economic conditions in the Leftist press. The Economist held that Italy "by facing early the necessity of a reduction in her industrial costs and in her public expenditures, she may have placed herself in a position to weather the Depression with greater success than many other countries."[92] On another occasion, the Economist declared that "the country [Italy] is working hard in the face of the world

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[90] Welk, p. 235.

[91] Daily Herald, September 29, 1930, p. 11.

[92] "Notes of the Week," Economist, CXIII (September 12, 1931), Part 1, p. 467.

economic depression."[93] Although The Times Financial Review noted that "Italy was necessarily affected in much the same manner as other countries by the world-wide economic depression," it maintained that Italy "remained steady and self-confident . . . which surpassed all expectations." The Times went on to explain that this was due to the "financial policy persistently pursued by the Government in recent years, comprising deflation of credit and currency."[94] Perhaps The Times and the Economist endorsed Mussolini's economic policies because he did what the Conservative Party had done. The Conservative government had followed a deflationary policy and returned to the gold standard in 1925. Likewise, the National government, which was dominated by Conservatives, tried to reduce public expenditures, and enforced a 5 percent cut in police pay along with other cuts.[95]

On the other hand, the British Left-wing press assaulted Fascism more frequently and more bitterly during

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[93] "Notes of the Week," Economist, CXII (June 6, 1931), Part 1, p. 1211.

[94] The Times Financial Review, February 9, 1932, p. 17.

[95] Taylor, p. 331.

the Depression years than in the 1920's. The Glasgow Forward in 1931 printed a vehement attack on the uses of tax funds:

> Where does it [the money] go? It goes for Balbo's aeroplanes, for gifts to manufacturers and landlords, for the auto-road from Rome to Ostia, illuminated by 2,300 lamps, for the galleys on Lake Nemi, for the Mussolini monolith, for filling the Pope's money-bags, for subsidising foreign newspapers, for the electoral contests of the German Nazi, for the Arnaldo firm, for D'Annunzio's caprices, for the mistresses of Fascist chiefs, for illuminations, parades, meetings, and for all the knavery and chicanery which distinguish the Fascist regime above all other civilised Governments.[96]

In addition to being nearly unprecedented in its bitterness against Fascism, the Glasgow Forward made two previously unmentioned points. Its charges that Italian tax money was used to subsidize foreign newspapers may have been aimed at some French papers and perhaps even the Daily Mail. These publications printed material highly favorable to Fascism, and the Daily Mail openly supported Mosley and the British Union of Fascists from January to July, 1934.[97] Even more important than this was that a British publication stated openly the fact

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[96] Glasgow Forward, July 11, 1931, p. 3.

[97] Cross, pp. 96, 117.

that Mussolini aided Hitler's movement before it came to power.[98] No other British publication referred to this support.

Seen through the eyes of British Left-wing publications, Fascist terrorism and the sufferings of the Italian people were destined to culminate in active resistance to Mussolini's government. In February, 1930, the Daily Worker, which first began publishing the month before in Great Britain, made the following prediction:

> It [the Fascist Government] is abandoning all pretence at "social progress," and concentrating on naked dictatorship alone. This must lead to a great intensification of the class struggle and to increasing resistance on the part of the worker.[99]

This was a prediction and a hope which did not come true until 1943. There was dissatisfaction among some in Italy during the Depression years, but this dissatisfaction was not strong enough actively to oppose Mussolini. The occasional strikes and disorders in Italy encouraged Leftist publications to believe that "the Fascist regime has passed the greater part of its span of life."[100]

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[98] Smith, p. 454.

[99] Daily Worker, February 17, 1930, p. 2.

[100] Glasgow Forward, July 26, 1930, p. 5.

But up to 1936, support for Mussolini grew rather than diminished.[101]

There are substantial grounds for assuming that in viewing Fascist Italy during the Depression the British press mirrored its own hopes and fears. As pointed out above, it was the British Conservative Party which returned Great Britain to the gold standard in 1925. Thus, the Economist and The Times endorsed Mussolini's fiscal conservatism, when he reduced expenditures and returned Italy to the gold standard in 1927. In its support of Mussolini's public works programs, that benefited all Italians, the conservative press reflected the mood of many British conservative middle-class citizens who opposed the government dole and schemes that provided jobs from which the entire nation did not profit.[102] The Conservatives, who dominated the National government after 1931, assisted Great Britain's recovery from the Depression by allocating funds for such projects as the London Transport, completion of the ocean liner, the Queen Mary, and telephone developments. What the government was not

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[101] Smith, pp. 431-32.

[102] Seaman, p. 243.

prepared to consider were programs for the creation of jobs alone.[103]

The reaction of the Left-wing press to Fascist development schemes and unemployment programs was simply to avoid comment on them. With the exception of one small report in the Daily Worker that criticized public works projects in Italy as inadequate, the extreme Left-wing press did not directly comment on Mussolini's efforts to reduce unemployment.[104] Even the Manchester Guardian did not discuss in depth Fascist measures to alleviate unemployment. For instance, it considered the development of a seaport at Rome as just another one of Mussolini's bids for prestige rather than as an attempt to reduce the number of unemployed.[105]

The amount of articles critical of conditions in Fascist Italy at the time of the Depression increased in the extreme Left-wing press. This further reflected the extreme Left-wing's fear of a Fascist government in Great Britain. Its editorials on Fascist Italy were

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[103] Iain Macleod, Neville Chamberlain (London: Frederick Muller, 1961), p. 173.

[104] Daily Worker, August 13, 1930, p. 1.

[105] Manchester Guardian, August 7, 1931, p. 8.

written to convince British readers that Fascism did not belong in Great Britain. One article in the Glasgow Forward ended its graphic description of unemployment, hunger, and disease in Italy by stating: "So think twice before you dye your shirt black and shout for Mussolini and Fascism in Britain."[106]

Both the Left- and Right-wing press tended, however, to overstate their case. Many articles of the conservative press depicted Italy in an entirely favorable light. On the other hand, extreme Left-wing publications painted too black a picture of life in Fascist Italy. Despite the catastrophic economic consequences of the Depression, Mussolini continued to be popular with the majority of Italians. Fascism came to power with the aid of such a powerful terror that later terrorist action became less necessary than in the first years of Mussolini's government. After 1925, anti-Fascist outbursts diminished, and Fascist violence and cruelty dwindled proportionately.[107] Yet for all its exaggeration, the Left-wing press grasped one essential point

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[106] Glasgow Forward, November 5, 1932, p. 9.

[107] Nolte, p. 222; Smith, p. 431.

which the conservative press did not print. Disregarding such benefits as were implied in social welfare activities, Italian labor under Fascism--as measured by wage and employment conditions--not only failed to improve but was made worse. This was certainly true in agriculture and probably in industry. How much of this was due to the action of the regime itself, and how much to the repercussions of the world-wide economic crisis, it is difficult to tell.[108] It was significant that the Left-wing press reported a more accurate assessment of labor conditions than did the conservative press. Here again, it appeared that the conservative press's approval of Mussolini influenced its reportage of the actual state of affairs in Italy.

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[108] Welk, pp. 241-2.

MUSSOLINI'S FOREIGN POLICY:

THE PATTERN ESTABLISHED

Since the heroic days of the Risorgimento, Anglo-Italian friendship had been a popular axiom of European politics. Several elements had contributed to the formation of this traditional friendship. Many of the governing classes in Great Britain had acquired a deep knowledge and admiration of Italian history, art, and literature. Quotations from the Latin classics frequently appeared in parliamentary speeches, or embellished the dispatches of ambassadors. Robert Browning, Byron, Shelley, Thackeray, and Keats expressed in their writings romantic sentiments of Italy. Garibaldi had been a popular hero in Great Britain in the 1870's. Italian pictures, furniture, and works of art were the choicest treasures of many a British collection or drawing room. Anglo-Italian marriages were common among the aristocracies. Outside such large cities as Rome, Florence, and Venice, British colonies and Anglican churches were established.[1]

[1]Maxwell H. H. Macartney and Paul Cremona, Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy: 1914-1937 (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), pp. 169-70.

To these, plus other ties of sentiment and of culture, were added most important bonds of material and political national interests. The new Kingdom of Italy, practically devoid of coal, iron, and other indispensable raw materials, had for many years lacked industrial development. Hence there was little industrial competition between Italy and Great Britain. In fact, the two economies for years tended to complement each other. Italy was a large importer of British coal, and to Great Britain she sent olive oil, oranges, lemons, and other produce.[2]

For the most part, Italy's diplomatic policy was conducted against a background of realism furnished by its geographic location and lack of natural resources. Career diplomat Raffaele Guariglia in 1932 characterized his country's traditional policy in modest and realistic terms:

> Italy was historically constrained, for intrinsic and obvious reasons, to take its stand first on one side and then on another; to pursue the execution of its aims by cutting from the garments of its different adversaries the material necessary for its own cloak; and to take refuge on rainy days

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[2] Ibid., p. 170.

(so long as this cloak was not ready) under the ample and capacious mantle of England.[3]

This policy had been pursued with fairly satisfactory consistency and success for the first half-century after the unification of Italy. The Italian entry into the First World War was carried out in the classic manner. After thoughtfully considering offers from the Entente and the Central Powers, Italy intervened on the side of France and Great Britain. The proposed reward that Italy was to have received rested on the future of the Austrian and Turkish empires. At the time of the Treaty of London in 1915, it appeared to Italy that the Austrian empire would remain and that of Turkey would collapse. Actually by 1921 or thereabouts the Austrian empire fell apart, whereas Turkey emerged stronger than before the war. These changed circumstances made obsolete many of the original Italian claims. In addition to these circumstances, the entry of the United States into the war brought the Wilsonian doctrine of self-determination to the peace table.[4]

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[3] H. Stuart Hughes, "The Early Diplomacy of Italian Fascism: 1922-1932," The Diplomats: 1919-1939, ed. Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert (New York: Atheneum, 1967), I, p. 210.

[4] Ibid., p. 211.

At the Paris Peace Conference, the American President seemed more inclined to enforce the principles of self-determination against Italian territorial demands than those of any other country. Moreover, the inflexible stand of Italy on the promises contained in the secret treaties with France and Great Britain also contributed to the lack of territorial compensation. So far as Italy's future was concerned, the basic significance of the Peace Conference was that the nationalist and conservative sector of Italian public opinion felt convinced that Italy had been cheated of the rewards of victory. For the next two decades this unhappy memory influenced Italian foreign policy.[5]

Before seizing power, Mussolini had been a bitter critic of the peace settlements. His discontent with the Versailles Treaty led him to anti-British outbursts. Furthermore, he advocated that all non-Mediterranean Powers, especially the British, should be banished from the Mediterranean.[6]

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[5] Ibid., p. 212.

[6] Macartney and Cremona, p. 172.

The British press did not accord Mussolini's anti-British sentiments a great deal of attention before the March on Rome. In fact, scant notice was taken of the Fascist movement until the summer and early autumn of 1922, when it appeared that Mussolini posed a definite threat to the Italian government. The weekly journals and the socialist organs failed to record Mussolini's anti-British vituperations. This was left to The Times, Manchester Guardian, and Observer. While these publications manifested some concern, they were doubtful that Mussolini expressed the genuine sentiments of the Italian people. This common verdict was expressed by The Times:

> As to foreign policy Signor Mussolini expressed violent hostility to our own country and declares the Mediterranean must be controlled exclusively by the peoples who live on its shores. It is hard to believe that these chaotic views reflect the real mind of Italy, but the test may come soon.[7]

Despite all Mussolini's bellicose statements before the March on Rome, he had scarcely been in office two weeks when he appeared to exhibit a moderate policy.[8] Although coverage of Mussolini's foreign policy views

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[7] The Times, October 10, 1922, p. 13.

[8] Hughes, pp. 214-15.

continued to be slight, the British press commented on their moderation. The Observer's Rome correspondent's judgment characterized also the views of The Times and Manchester Guardian:

> I have good reason to believe that during the fortnight he [Mussolini] has held his high office, and has come up against the realities and difficulties of inter-allied policy, past utterances have been submerged, and a new vision is shaping in the vivid light of experience.[9]

Therefore, the impression gained from British newspapers was that Mussolini was being tamed by the realities of international politics. This initial impression was strengthened by the events before the Corfu crisis late in the summer of 1923. The fact that the Fascist government in February, 1923 ratified the Washington Naval Treaty and the Treaty of Rapallo which settled the Fiume question, played a minor role in the Lausanne Conference, and pursued a moderate course in the Ruhr crisis, did much to confirm the impression of Mussolini's restraint in international affairs.

Before discussing the response of the British press to Italian policy in each of these circumstances,

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[9] Observer, November 12, 1922, p. 8.

a word must be said here about the general paucity of news about Italian foreign policy. Throughout the period from 1922 to 1933, Italian news had to compete with events in France, Germany, the United States, and the British Empire. Italy's comparatively minor political and military status placed it in an unfavorable competitive position. In the period from the March on Rome to the Italian occupation of Corfu, the British press tended to focus on an evaluation of the Fascist coup, on Mussolini's personality, and on Italian domestic affairs. Perhaps the mood of the British people accounted for some of the lack of interest in Italian policy. The scanty reportage of Italian foreign policy by the British press was a reflection of the isolationism of the times, which really meant in Great Britain just a great uninterest in foreign affairs. "By 1922, the country was disillusioned, bored with international crises and in an escapist mood."[10] In addition to these considerations was the fact that Italy played a minor role in the Lausanne Conference. In the end, Italy only obtained formal cession of Rhodes and the Dodecanese, which she held in any case.[11]

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[10]Medlicott, p. 78. [11]Hughes, p. 214.

For all practical purposes, British publications ignored Italian efforts at the conference. The overall picture of Mussolini's policy continued to be one of moderation. In one of the few articles concerning Italy at Lausanne, J. C. Powell maintained in the New Statesman:

> On the whole, the indications are of a nature to reassure those who, on the strength of the past record of Fascismo, feared that the advent to power of its creator would mean the pursuit by Italy of the sort of militarist imperialism with which the propertied classes in Italy had become identified.[12]

The view of Italian policy as moderate was sustained during the Ruhr crisis. When French and Belgian troops occupied the Ruhr in January, 1923, in order to compel Germany to fulfill the reparation clauses of the Treaty of Versailles, Mussolini was not as aloof as Great Britain was, but sent a small number of engineers to safeguard the deliveries of coal to which Italy was entitled.[13]

The British were opposed to the occupation, though they accepted it. Initial Italian efforts to form a new reparation scheme and thus postpone the

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[12]J. C. Powell, "Italy at Lausanne," New Statesman, XX (December 9, 1922), p. 291.

[13]Macartney and Cremona, p. 145.

French occupation were praised by the British press. An explanation of the plan in the Manchester Guardian was entitled: "Italy's Moderating Influence."[14] While The Times opposed Italian support of the French, its criticism was confined to pointing out frequently that "support of the French Ruhr policy is not natural either to Mussolini or to the Italian people."[15] Even the sending of more Italian engineers to the Ruhr raised no bitter remarks in the Daily Herald, but only doubts as to Mussolini's "dubious denials" of "setting up an entirely separate organisation from the French."[16] In September, 1923, the Nation concluded that Mussolini's Ruhr policy had been "reasonable."[17] The fact that Mussolini had not dispatched troops to the Ruhr undoubtedly favorably influenced the British press. Whereas the press opposed the Italian support of France, it remained sympathetic to the Italian position. This opinion was best summed up by an editorial in The Times:

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[14] Manchester Guardian, January 11, 1923, p. 7.

[15] The Times, November 30, 1923, p. 11.

[16] Daily Herald, May 3, 1914, p. 3.

[17] "Events of the Week," Nation, XXXIII (September 1, 1923), p. 675.

> Italy is most anxious to help the German financial situation, but her need of money and deliveries makes it impossible for her to oppose the French occupation of the Ruhr.[18]

A third event did much to confirm the press's view of Mussolini's ultimate pacific intentions. On February 16, 1923, the Fascist government settled the question of Fiume with Yugoslavia by ratifying the Treaty of Rapallo. In November, 1920, the Italian Foreign Minister, Count Carlo Sforza, had negotiated a treaty with Yugoslavia which the Italian government had never ratified. Under its terms, Italy received Istria and the Dalmation city of Zara, while Fiume was to become a free city. In seeking a solution, Mussolini was faced with a dilemma: should he accept Count Sforza's treaty or reopen the whole Adriatic question? Mussolini accepted the treaty, although it was only a temporary settlement.[19]

The British conservative press praised Mussolini for his peaceful solution to the Adriatic question. The remarks of The Times typified this view.

> Signor Mussolini in bygone days was loud in his advocacy of the extreme Italian claims on the Adriatic, but soon after the chief of the

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[18] The Times, January 11, 1923, p. 9.

[19] Macartney and Cremona, p. 92.

> Fascisti assumed power he had the wisdom and the courage to declare for ratification of the Treaty of Rapallo and for a policy of reconciliation and friendship with Yugoslavia.[20]

The Observer expressed an opinion which became a dominant theme in the conservative press--Mussolini was able to control the radical elements of his movement.

> In carrying out Italy's obligation to the letter, "Il Duce" has shown that he holds his party in the hollow of his hand. It was obvious that the Treaty of Rapallo would prove to be the touchstone of his authority; and now that even the most intransigent Fascists have voted in favour of a treaty which they had judged to be "iniquitous" relief is expressed, and approbation felt by every section of public opinion.[21]

The extreme Left-wing press took no notice of the ratification. Moderate Left-wing publications expressed favorable comment on the solution, though they heaped fewer praises on Mussolini than did the conservative press. The observations of the Nation characterized the sentiments of the moderate Left-wing press:

> Whatever its motives and origin, it [the Rapallo Treaty] is a valuable achievement if it finally settles the Fiume dispute and substitutes friendly for acrimonious

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[20] The Times, February 20, 1923, p. 13.

[21] Observer, February 18, 1923, p. 8.

> relations between the two shores of the Adriatic.[22]

The doubts expressed in this passage as to the finality of the solution proved to be accurate. As the Corfu crisis decreased in intensity, Mussolini seized Fiume. But this will be discussed later.

All the moderation manifested by Mussolini during his first ten months in power was suddenly swept aside in late August, 1923. The incident occurred when Italy's General Tellini, head of the commission engaged in delimiting the Greco-Albanian boundary, was killed by unknown assailants. Mussolini charged that the murder had been inspired by the Greek government. After issuing an ultimatum to the Greeks, Mussolini ordered Italian warships to bombard and occupy the island of Corfu. The Greeks immediately took the question to the League of Nations. Fortunately for Mussolini, the British and French shifted the case to the more friendly arena of the Conference of Ambassadors. Here Italy received an indemnity from Greece but little else. This was received with jubilation in Italy; it was forgotten that indemnity

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[22] "Events of the Week," Nation, XXXIII (February 17, 1923), p. 619.

had been only one of the demands. In return, Mussolini evacuated Corfu and the crisis ended.[23]

Several Left-wing publications considered the Italian ultimatum reminiscent of Austria's demands to Serbia in the last weeks before World War One. In "the note to Greece containing demands," the Daily Herald stated, "their [the demands] extremeness can only be likened to those made of Serbia by Austria in 1914."[24] The conservative press for its part maintained a detached position and did not view Mussolini's action as likely to touch off a general European war. The remarks of the Economist were representative of the belief among conservative publications that Mussolini had acted only in the heat of passion:

> When the first burst of natural passion is past, we trust that Signor Mussolini will see the wisdom, both from the world point of view and from his own, of acting in consultation with his Allies.[25]

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[23]Hughes, p. 220; Macartney and Cremona, pp. 173-74.

[24]Daily Herald, August 30, 1923, p. 1.

[25]"Europe's New Storm-Cloud," Economist, IIIC (September 1, 1923), Part 2, p. 319.

This passage also reflected a lack of censure on the part of the Economist, which typified the reactions of conservative publications to the Italian occupation of Corfu. In both of its editorials on the subject, The Times abstained from criticizing Mussolini's action. Instead, The Times hoped that Mussolini would "promptly evacuate Corfu."[26]

Just as the Corfu incident appeared to be peacefully settled, Mussolini provoked another crisis by the seizure of Fiume in mid-September, 1923. As stated above, Mussolini originally had accepted the Treaty of Rapallo with Fiume as a free city in February, 1923. In July, he suggested to the Yugoslavs the incorporation of Fiume into Italy. By September, Mussolini was wearied by the negotiations and simply took over the city.[27]

What amazed the British press was Italy's complete disregard for the existing treaty with Yugoslavia. In the opinion of the Observer, the Italian actions had rendered the treaty "for all practical purposes 'a scrap of paper.'"[28] This amazement was best expressed by the

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[26]The Times, September 11, 1923, p. 11.

[27]Hughes, p. 221.

[28]Observer, September 16, 1923, p. 8.

Manchester Guardian:

> We have searched the records for some mitigating circumstances, and done it with eagerness of people whom old and deep-seated regard for Italy renders anxious to find all her public actions upright, chivalrous, and wise. To our mortification we find nothing to lessen the shock of such a repudiation of a national promise.[29]

As with the Corfu incident before it, the Fiume crisis ended quickly. The Yugoslavs accepted the de facto situation. The French, fully involved in the Ruhr, did not provide the expected support. Thus, Yugoslavia formally recognized Italy's sovereignty over the city and port of Fiume in January, 1924.[30] With this settlement, the international fame of the city diminished, and along with it the interest of the British press.

The aggressive role Mussolini played toward Greece and Yugoslavia did much to crystallize the attitudes of the extreme Left-wing. During the seizure of Fiume, the Daily Herald characterized the Italian annexation as "evil."[31] This impression remained with the extreme Left-wing press. In April, 1924, when most British

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[29] Manchester Guardian, September 14, 1923, p. 8.

[30] Hughes, p. 221; Macartney and Cremona, pp. 94-5.

[31] Daily Herald, September 18, 1923, p. 1.

publications had temporarily stopped discussion of Italian foreign policy, the Glasgow Forward described Mussolini's policy as depending on "the threat of the Manganello [an Italian blackjack]."[32] For the most part, however, the extreme Left-wing press only touched on Italian foreign affairs during the 1920's. Instead the extreme Left-wing position in general appeared to be in accordance with that of Charles Roden Buxton's statement in the New Leader: "Space does not permit more than a passing reference to foreign policy."[33]

The occupation of Corfu only left a temporary imprint on the moderate Left-wing press. At that time, the Nation editorialized that the Italian attack on Greek territory "should serve to remind us that he [Mussolini] holds his power as the representative of an aggressive nationalism that may yet disturb the peace of Europe."[34] As quotations from the later 1920's showed, however, the Nation and other moderate Left-wing publications seldom took seriously Mussolini's warlike outbursts.

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[32] Glasgow Forward, April 12, 1924, p. 8.

[33] New Leader, March 28, 1924, p. 4.

[34] "Events of the Week," Nation, XXXIII (September 1, 1923), p. 675.

The conservative press soon forgot and forgave Mussolini's transgressions. In its opinion, Italy's new leader had learned his lesson from the Corfu incident. On the first anniversary of the March on Rome, The Times editorialized:

> The danger of wild talk about the "New Roman Empire," "Mediterranean Expansion," and so on, and so on, intensified as it is by the restrictions on emigration, cannot be denied. But there are signs--notably the change from fulmination to conciliation in twenty-four hours on the Fiume questions--that the Corfu complications have given their [the Fascists'] exuberance a severe fright. Naturally Italy will always play her own hand, but she is beginning to realize that peace pays her best.
> . . . . . .
> And in spite of a few terrifying diplomatic recoils he [Mussolini] has steadily advanced towards the aims of stamping Fascism with his own motto of moderation--"Discipline; order; work." Fascism has had a great deal of courage, very considerable wisdom, and immense luck. On the whole, it has deserved the sincere birthday greetings of the world.[35]

To the Spectator, Mussolini's acceptance of a compromise solution in the Corfu crisis proved his moderation as well as his strength.

> The plain truth is that Signor Mussolini has shown the moderation of second thoughts. We venture to congratulate him on this. It is a mistake to suppose that it is a sign of

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[35]The Times, October 31, 1923, p. 13.

> weakness when a man who has been breathing fire blows forth a temperate blast. It is rather a sign of moral strength.[36]

The storm that had blown up over Corfu soon subsided. In the following decade, Anglo-Italian diplomatic relations were conducted in harmony. At no other period were the policies of the two countries marked by such cordiality and close cooperation. The cession by Great Britain of Trans-Jubaland in July, 1924 settled a possible point of conflict between the two countries. When the Conservatives returned to office in the autumn of 1924, the appointment of Austen Chamberlain to the Foreign Ministry brought to Mussolini a collaborator who was personally congenial. In 1925, Italy and Great Britain opposed MacDonald's security pact known as the Geneva Protocal. Later in the same year both countries signed the Treaty of Locarno as co-guarantors of the Franco-German border. The return of Labour to government in 1929 had no visible effect upon the collaboration between Great Britain and Italy. Throughout the period, Mussolini's warm feeling for Sir Ronald Graham,

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[36] "News of the Week," Spectator, CXXXI (September 22, 1923), p. 376.

British Ambassador to Italy from 1921 to 1933, was so notorious as to be embarrassing.[37]

The British press failed to call attention to the close diplomatic rapport between Downing Street and the Palazzo Chigi. Rather, the press commented on Mussolini's bombastic speeches. With respect to Anglo-Italian affairs, the British press gave slight coverage. The lack of a major issue between Italy and Great Britain resulted in a dearth of reportage. Also events in China, India, France, and Germany often held the attention of the press more than relations with a comparatively lesser power and former Allied nation. The Trans-Jubaland settlement was a case in point.

The Jubaland question aroused considerably more interest in Italy than in Great Britain. This issue was originally launched by the Treaty of London in 1915. It made pledges to Italy of frontier rectifications in favor of the Italian colonies of Eritrea, Somaliland, and Libya and the neighboring British and French colonies. A boundary had been agreed upon by Lord Milner and Senator Scialoja in 1920. But the actual cession of territory from

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[37]Macartney and Cremona, pp. 174-5.

northeastern Kenya to Italian Somaliland did not occur until May, 1924.[38]

The negotiations leading to the settlement and the agreement itself went virtually unnoticed in most of the British press. The Times printed no editorial on the ratification of the Milner-Scialoja accord. The Manchester Guardian briefly commented:

> There is no reason why the arrangement now made should not have been confirmed in 1920 and a grievance that has since bulked large in Italian eyes avoided.[39]

Italy's role at the time of the signing of the Locarno agreements also failed to elicit detailed coverage in the British press. An international conference was held at Locarno, Switzerland at the beginning of October, 1925, which produced a series of treaties. The most important of these was an agreement confirming the inviolability of the Franco-German and Belgian-German frontiers and the demilitarized zone of the Rhineland. This treaty was signed by France, Germany, and Belgium on December first. It was guaranteed by Great Britain

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[38]Hughes, p. 221; Macartney and Cremona, p. 280.

[39]Manchester Guardian, May 24, 1924, p. 10.

and Italy.[40] For Europe the treaties signaled the end of the cold war between victorious France and vanquished Germany. The shadow of war seemed to be removed. Great Britain, which seemed more secure than she had been in centuries, experienced a psychological uplifting of spirit after the conclusion of the Locarno Conference.[41]

Despite the widespread coverage of the accords by the British press, it made no editorial comment on Italy's part in the pacts. Instead attention was fixed on the lessening of tension between France and Germany and the return of Germany to the comity of European nations. Two leading articles on the Locarno settlements in The Times failed to mention Italy.[42] Other publications followed this pattern. In fact, foreign correspondents boycotted the reception Mussolini gave at Locarno because, as stated above, they were outraged at the repression of the non-Fascist press in Italy.[43]

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[40] F. S. Northedge, The Troubled Giant (London: G. Bell and Sons Ltd., 1966), p. 265.

[41] Ibid., p. 267; Taylor, p. 227.

[42] The Times, January 1, 1926, p. 13; January 11, 1926, p. 15.

[43] The Times, October 17, 1925, p. 12.

Later, however, a few editorials appeared which related Italy to the Locarno agreements. As expected, the Morning Post believed that Mussolini "possessed the true philosophy of peace."

> This, we believe, is the true meaning of the Duce's policy. He is a man not of war, but of peace, and desires to direct the bursting energies of his nation along pacific lines. Here, then, the interests of England and of Italy coincide.[44]

From an unexpected quarter, Italy also received praise for her role in the Locarno pacts. The Manchester Guardian wrote in November, 1928:

> Italy as well as Great Britain and France is a partner to the Locarno Pact. Italy is a Great Power and she cannot be ignored. However, illiberal her domestic policy may be, her foreign policy has, in certain important respects, been conspicuous for its skill, resoluteness and honesty. The Italian attitude towards disarmament on land and sea has been impeccable.[45]

Though the Manchester Guardian maintained a highly critical view of Mussolini's suppressive domestic measures, it often commended his foreign policy views. What the Manchester Guardian found so praiseworthy in Mussolini's statements was his constant call for disarmament. The

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[44]Morning Post, October 4, 1926, p. 10.

[45]Manchester Guardian, November 26, 1928, p. 8.

above quotation was one of the first endorsements for Mussolini's plans for arms reductions by the Manchester Guardian. In the early 1930's, this became a cornerstone of its editorial policy.

Shortly after the conclusion of the Locarno Conference, Mussolini, in 1926, began a policy of expansion. He chose the new and chaotic state of Albania for his area of penetration. Whereas Italy had secured a kind of contingent mandate over Albania from the Conference of Ambassadors in 1921, the next few years found her too preoccupied with internal difficulties to take up this virtual invitation to meddle. In November, 1926, though, Italy and Albania signed a Pact of Friendship and Security wherein Italy guaranteed the territorial status quo of Albania. Naturally this treaty implied a threat to Yugoslavia and indirectly to France as the protector of Yugoslavia. Thus, France and Yugoslavia concluded an alliance in November, 1927. A few days later, Italy retorted with a second Treaty of Tirana which took the form of a defensive alliance.[46]

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[46]Hughes, pp. 222-23; Macartney and Cremona, pp. 100-110.

The British Left-wing press viewed with anxiety Italy's diplomatic penetration into Albania. In the eyes of the moderate Left-wing papers, Mussolini's actions were provocative and aggressive. An unsigned article, "Italy and Albania," in the New Statesman concluded:

> The Tirana Treaty, all the world must now understand the Italians to interpret it, is a direct provocation both to Jugoslavia and to the Balkan States at large.[47]

In the opinion of the Nation, the Treaty of Tirana "constitutes Albania a sort of praetorian gate, through which Italian armies may march into the Balkans."[48]

On the other hand, the conservative press did not consider Mussolini's treaty-making activities as foreshadowing an expansionist policy. The remarks of the Economist were characteristic of this impression:

> But we do not foresee any possibility that the special position which Italy has recently acquired for herself in Albania might be extended farther afield.[49]

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[47] "Italy and Albania," New Statesman, XXVIII (March 26, 1927), p. 726.

[48] "Events of the Week," Nation, XLII (December 3, 1927), p. 340.

[49] "Notes of the Week," Economist, CV (December 24, 1927), Part 2, p. 1132.

On June 23, 1928, The Times published a lengthy article, "Adriatic Balance of Power," by a military correspondent in which the author attempted to prove that the "pride and independence" of the Albanian people would "militate strongly against" the stationing of large units of troops on Albanian soil in time of peace. In wartime the correspondent maintained that the disembarkation of Italian troops on the Albanian shores would be made extremely hazardous because of the possibility of a rapid deployment of Yugoslav forces from the north and from the east. The article concluded by stating:

> With these factors in mind, any criticism that the Italo-Albanian alliance is an aggressive one rather falls to the ground, and it would seem that there is little in reality to arouse the fears of Yugoslavia.[50]

The assessment of The Times' military correspondent proved to be less than accurate, when on April 7, 1939 Italian landings took place on the Albanian coast. Shortly thereafter Mussolini annexed his former ally.[51]

A complete picture of British press reactions to Mussolini's foreign policy cannot be obtained solely

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[50] The Times, June 23, 1928, p. 9.

[51] Northedge, pp. 581-82.

from his dealings with Albania and Yugoslavia. In order to form a clear understanding of these reactions during the late twenties it must be kept in mind that Mussolini possessed no plan or considered policy. The so-called eastward expansion of Italy lacked thrust and careful planning. In the words of one historian, Mussolini's eastern policy was "only bits and pieces--penetration of Albania, friendship with Bulgaria, a pact with the Yemen, the encouragement of Italian commercial and linguistic interests in the Levant."[52] The same absence of policy characterized Mussolini's mania for signing pacts of amity with foreign nations. At least eight of them were signed between 1926 and 1930. Seen in retrospect, this policy of improvisation had a haphazard and uncoordinated quality about it.[53]

It, therefore, becomes necessary to note press comments on a variety of miscellaneous subjects and speeches. Some of these received inadequate coverage in the British press, while others obtained widespread comment. The remarks of the extreme Left-wing publications on Fascist foreign policy appeared infrequently

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[52]Hughes, p. 224.

[53]Ibid., pp. 224-25.

and at random. The Times, Manchester Guardian, and Observer, though they reprinted the text of various treaties, often neglected editorial comment. Taken all together, British press coverage of Italian foreign affairs was inconstant, uneven, and desultory. Nevertheless, the British press provided more than enough material for its readers to form a definite impression of Mussolini as either a pacific or a warlike leader. This was made possible by the British press's response to Mussolini's speeches during the last four years of the 1920's.

In general the conservative press tended to excuse Mussolini's inflammatory speeches as only a harmless manifestation of the exuberance of the Fascist spirit. The response of the Morning Post to one of Mussolini's outbursts typified this reaction:

> Signor Mussolini's speech on foreign affairs delivered in the Senate should dispel misunderstandings concerning Fascist Imperialism. To those not blinded by enmity for the Blackshirt regime and for Italy, this is shown once more to be merely the exuberance of the spirit of patriotism and a determination that Italy shall be increasingly worthy of a high place among the Great Powers.[54]

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[54]Morning Post, May 31, 1926, p. 8.

The Times repeatedly declared that Mussolini was capable of restraining this Fascist exuberance. The following quotation was characteristic of this argument.

> The all-round activity of Fascist diplomacy and still more the resounding rhetoric with which its triumphs are proclaimed in the Fascist Press may seem disturbing to old-fashioned diplomacy. They are not without their risks and they would certainly be dangerous in weak or unwise hands. But they need not create uneasiness while the Duce is there to regulate and control them. The merit of Signor Mussolini lies in the admirable judgment with which he knows how to stimulate at once and to regulate the aspirations of Fascismo in the field of foreign politics. That is the great service he has done Italy in her international relations.[55]

On occasion, however, the conservative press showed uneasiness at Mussolini's speeches. One such occasion was Mussolini's derisive remarks toward the Kellogg Pact in December, 1928. Though the conservative press censured Mussolini's remarks, it usually discounted them as not to be taken seriously and hoped that they did not reflect the Italian government's true views. For example, the Economist stated:

> Signor Mussolini's observations on foreign policy were calculated to annoy all readers, Italians included, who have the cause of

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[55] The Times, August 8, 1928, p. 13.

> peace at heart. His first point was to ridicule the Kellogg Pact.
> . . . . . .
> When we read a speech like this two questions suggest themselves: first, is Signor Mussolini speaking in sober earnest, or is he playing up to his audience? . . . On the first point we are inclined to be optimistic. Signor Mussolini's bark has so often been worse than his bite that we are inclined to think that he may never intend to bite at all.[56]

The British moderate Left-wing press also displayed a tendency to doubt Mussolini's sabre-rattling oratory or his talk of a new Roman Empire. To excuse these utterances, moderate Left-wing papers proved to be more ingenious than conservative publications. In the opinion of the Nation, it was all a part of the Fascist drama: "We do not take seriously the Fascist rhetoric about the creation of a new Roman Empire--Fascism and melodrama are inseparable."[57] Major E. W. Polson Newman attributed Mussolini's wild talk to the temperament of the Italian people:

> It must be remembered, however, that the Italians are a people full of imagination and enthusiasm and that for this reason

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[56]"Fascism at Home and Abroad," Economist, CVII (December 15, 1928), Part 2, p. 1096.

[57]"Events of the Week," Nation, XXXVIII (January 9, 1926), p. 512.

> Signor Mussolini employs eloquence and show as the means best calculated to appeal to the character of the Italian masses. His utterances should not, therefore, be literally interpreted as representing the facts of Italian intention.[58]

Similarly, Professor Gaetano Salvemini suggested in Contemporary Review that Mussolini used martial speeches to create enthusiasm among the Italian masses. But Salvemini argued that the Italian people would resist any Fascist war policy. What gave Salvemini's article an aura of authenticity was the fact that he was well known in British academic circles as being above reproach as well as having fled Fascist Italy in 1925.[59] Professor Salvemini wrote in December, 1928:

> Mussolini's fire-eating talk is not backed by any concrete war-plans. It is meant to keep the enthusiasm of his followers at the required pitch. Any attempt to arm the Italian masses for a foreign war would plunge the country into civil war. The first day of a war would be the last day of Fascism.[60]

Even extreme Left-wing papers slipped into the pattern of overlooking Mussolini's statements. In

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[58]"Italian Expansion," Contemporary Review, CXXXI (January, 1927), p. 46.

[59]Smith, pp. 429, 433.

[60]Gaetano Salvemini, "Problems of Over Population," Contemporary Review, CXXXIV (December, 1928), p. 708.

September, 1929 the Glasgow Forward editorialized:

> When a nation is always being told about enemies across the frontier, it is less apt to be pre-occupied with affairs at home. That is why Mussolini talks as if Italy were in a perpetual state of seige. That is the reason for all the talk of being ready for the next war.[61]

The reader of British publications by the end of the 1920's must have gained the impression that Mussolini was after all not a very dangerous man. That Mussolini's bellicose eruptions were strictly for home consumption was the underlying theme of British comment. Occasionally, the Left-wing press printed a warning to its readers that Mussolini's speeches endangered the general peace. But this warning usually followed a passage in which the reader was told that in reality Mussolini's utterances were only empty rhetoric. The imprint left on the reader's mind was that Mussolini was not to be taken seriously. Rarely was Mussolini considered likely to provoke war. An unsigned article, "The Fat Boy of Italy," in the New Statesman typified this point of view:

> For our part, we believe that this speech of Signor Mussolini is one of his periodical explosions of gas, designed to tickle the ears of faithful Fascists and to gratify his own

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[61] Glasgow Forward, September 27, 1929, p. 7.

> peculiar sense of humour. It is not to be taken seriously as a threat against anybody in particular.
>
> That is not to say, however, that there is nothing serious and no threat at all in it. There is a danger to the general peace in the constant wild talk of the Italian Dictator.[62]

Any forewarning that may have been derived from articles such as these was often diluted by the comic aspect in which Mussolini was depicted. How much the British press contributed to the image of Mussolini as either a pacific statesman or a harmless windbag was shown by the surprise of British public opinion at the Ethiopian crisis in 1935.[63] It can be argued that the British press was a contributing factor to the unawareness of Mussolini's intentions. British readers obtained the impression from their papers that in the last analysis Mussolini was committed to a peaceful policy. The British press repeatedly made excuses for Mussolini's warlike statements. Since contemporary readers received the notion that Mussolini was only a

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[62] "The Fat Boy of Italy," New Statesman, XXIX (June 4, 1927), p. 240.

[63] Macartney and Cremona, p. 175; Graves and Hodges, p. 323.

haranguer of large crowds, it seems only natural that they showed surprise at the prospect of war.

The close of the twenties marked the high point of Mussolini's diplomatic prestige. In February, 1929 Mussolini scored one of his most substantial successes with the signature of the Vatican accords. The amicable settlement of the bothersome Roman question seemed to support the thesis of Mussolini as a moderate and constructive statesman. Moreover, Italy's relations with nearly all nations were in a state of tranquility. Anglo-Italian relations were cordial; the French gave few signs of alarm; and even Yugoslavia enjoyed a precarious detente with Italy. In September, Mussolini de-emphasized his role in international affairs by turning over the Foreign Ministry to Dino Grandi, who had been one of the tough young men of the early Fascist movement. In 1925, Grandi became Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry. In that capacity he adopted in time the patient, modest, and realistic methods of the career diplomats.[64] It appeared that international conciliation had become the accepted goal of Italian policy.

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[64] Hughes, pp. 226, 230-31; Macartney and Cremona, pp. 175, 257-59.

In Great Britain the majority of people had emerged from the First World War convinced that war had come, at least in part, as a result of the massive arms race, and thus were committed to the reduction of war machines. Added to this feeling was the fact that the Labour Party possessed a deep-seated mistrust of great armaments. Since the Labour Party during the interwar period became a national competitor to the traditional parties, it compelled the Right to profess sympathy for disarmament, if it was to gain votes. There was also an economic argument against massive armaments. The long economic depression of the 1920's was attributed by many orthodox economists to the burden of government spending, which included military budgets. This diagnosis was incorrect, but it agreed with the average person's assumption that British economic difficulties could only be ended by bringing government expenditure into line with its income.[65]

Great Britain never contemplated total naval disarmament, not even in 1930. The dependence of the British Isles on overseas trade and the necessity for

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[65]Northedge, pp. 327-28.

communication with the Empire ruled out complete naval disarmament. But the British government desired an agreement limiting naval construction, especially with the United States and Japan, so that the burden of building and maintaining great ships could be reduced. The successful achievement of this aim, and the restraining of the rivalry and naval ambitions of France and Italy also would help satisfy the public demand for disarmament. The Washington Naval Treaty signed in February, 1922 realized these aims to some extent. In 1930, the British government sought an extension of the Washington ratios from battle fleets to auxiliary vessels.[66]

The Five-Power Naval Treaty was signed on April 22, 1930. In it all parties agreed to Parts I, II, IV, and V of the treaty which included a five-year "holiday" in the construction of capital ships, the regulation of the conditions of submarine warfare, and the limitation of the tonnage and gun caliber of submarines. France and Italy declined to sign Part III of the treaty which dealt with auxiliary vessels. In return for the suspension of a heavy naval program on which she had embarked,

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[66] Ibid., pp. 328-35.

France demanded: either a Mediterranean pact similar to that of Locarno, or an overall French superiority of at least 200,000 tons over Italy. Italy was uninterested in the proposed pact, and refused to accept any thing less than full parity with France. Consequently, the conference failed to arrive at a general Franco-Italian understanding. After its adjournment, France and Italy continued negotiations, with Great Britain and the United States as mediators. It appeared that in February, 1931 an agreement had been reached, but all efforts finally ended in total failure by January, 1932.[67]

The London Naval Conference received widespread coverage in the British press, although editorial remarks on the Franco-Italian imbroglio were nonexistent. At the conclusion of the conference, the British press did little more than re-state the Italian and French proposals. Even The Times carried no editorials or articles on the subject. Instead the press used editorial space to evaluate British policy. Subsequent to the conference, Mussolini's actions caused the British press

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[67]Hughes, p. 231; Northedge, p. 344.

to dwell on them rather than editorialize on the Franco-Italian naval deadlock. In the months following the conference, Mussolini made a series of inflammatory speeches and announced an ambitious naval building program.[68]

In May, 1930, Mussolini made a speaking tour across northern Italy. At Leghorn, Florence, and Milan his provocative speeches disturbed European tranquility. Substance was given to Mussolini's remarks by the announcement in June of an increased military budget. Four months later, on October 27, during a celebration of the March on Rome, Mussolini again gave way to a militant outburst.[69]

The conservative and moderate press showed some alarm at Mussolini's talk of "encirclement," of Italy's neighbors attempting to isolate her, and of the Mediterranean as Italy's mare nostrum. In practice, however, the response was not different from what it had been in the previous decade. The New Statesman continued its former editorial policy--it printed a passage mocking

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[68]Macartney and Cremona, p. 265.

[69]Hughes, pp. 231-32.

Mussolini's remarks and then followed it by a vague warning:

> Europe is now becoming used to the extravagance of the Duce's utterances. It is realised that his words are not to be taken at their face value, but are to be regarded more in the light of cocktails for the native Fascist child than as solid food for grown-ups and foreigners.
>
> On the other hand, when patriotic extravagances are accompanied by steadily increasing expenditures on armaments and by the military training of the whole nation, they must be viewed from a different angle.[70]

During the summer of 1930, the Manchester Guardian held a similar position:

> Clearly no responsible person wants war, Signor Mussolini perhaps least of all. It has, indeed, become almost a platitude that the Duce's bark is worse than his bite. There is nevertheless an obvious danger in such phrases as "Italy desires not only prosperity but prestige and a place in the world." These are echoes from the uneasy prewar world and ought to warn the orator of danger. Signor Mussolini may find one day that some "incident" has inflamed beyond restraint those national passions he has so encouraged.[71]

Despite the recurrence of the words "war" and "prestige" in so many of his speeches, his apothegm that might

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[70] "Comments," New Statesman, XXXVI (November 1, 1930), p. 102.

[71] Manchester Guardian, May 15, 1930, p. 12.

makes right, and his invocation of the precepts of Machiavelli, Mussolini was regarded as a "responsible person" by the Manchester Guardian.

The Times agreed with the moderate Left-wing press. It provided excuses for Mussolini's statements:

> His own vehement nature; the reputation he has built up for galvanizing his audiences; the fact that enemies of his regime assail him on every side; the sense of power which comes from being in sole control of a powerful machine which he has built up by his own remarkable ability--all this justifies the greatest reserve in foreign opinion and warns the outside world not to take his words entirely at their face value.

Then the editorial went on to comment on Mussolini's truculent attitude:

> Nevertheless his attitude is the antithesis of that spirit of international collaboration and of settlement by negotiation which has made appreciable progress, in many of the most important countries in the world; and always is in evidence at Geneva, which Signor Mussolini never visits.[72]

Furthermore, The Times did not follow a consistent policy during the summer of 1930. On occasion, it printed articles supporting Mussolini's reasoning. One such article appeared on June 19, 1930:

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[72]The Times, October 29, 1930, p. 15.

> There have been repeated allusions to mare nostrum. Italy has been reminded again and again that her future is on the sea. It must be admitted that Signor Mussolini has a good case. With the birth of modern industrial conditions in a country but poorly provided with many of the most essential raw materials; with the rapid growth of his population; with the important outlet for immigration in the United States very seriously restricted; and finally with the Duce's own desire to keep as many Italians on Italian soil, the vital necessity to Italy of untrammelled sea communications is becoming yearly more indisputable.[73]

On the whole, conservative and moderate Left-wing papers were not alarmed by Mussolini's truculence. There was no suggestion that Italy would seek and provoke war. Any concern that was registered came from the fear that a Sarajevo-type incident would trap Italy in a conflict. Once Mussolini returned to uttering peaceful statements, it was concluded that his former bellicose speeches were intended only for internal consumption. The opinion of the Spectator illustrated this approach, when Mussolini made a broadcast on New Year's Day, 1931.

> His [Mussolini's] pacific sentiments were most welcome. It is impossible, of course, to reconcile them with his recent laudations of navies and armies upon which he said that money was "never wasted," but we must suppose that one

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[73] The Times, June 19, 1930, p. 15.

> version of his thoughts is for home consumption and the other for consumption abroad. Fortunately it is reasonable to believe that the foreign version is the true one, for obviously Signor Mussolini could have roared like the German Emperor in the face of all the world, if he had wanted to do so. He preferred to say that he had fought as a common soldier himself and knew how terrible war was. "Italy," he exclaimed, "will never take the initiative in starting a war."[74]

The conservative and moderate Left-wing press could hardly believe that Mussolini meant to put into action what seemed merely a wearisomely reiterated rhetoric. The reasoning of the conservative and moderate Left-wing papers was rooted in the liberal beliefs of nineteenth-century Great Britain. That men could actually want war was incomprehensible within this framework of liberal ideas, which held in profound respect the virtue of compromise and the process of democratic government. The irrational nature of Mussolini's speeches was considered unbelievable to minds cast in the framework of the rational behavior of men. But this proved to be faulty reasoning when applied to the dictators of the twentieth century. Instead the British press showed a total inability to adjust itself to

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[74] "News of the Week," Spectator, CXLVI (January 10, 1931), p. 34.

the political ethos of the new systems with their marching totalitarian hordes and the agonized megalomania of dictatorial oratory.

During the same period extreme Left-wing publications, except for the Daily Worker, tended to concentrate on Italian domestic affairs. For its part, the Daily Herald headlined Mussolini's speech on the eighth anniversary of the March on Rome as a "Battle-Cry," and found "scarcely convincing" his support of military preparations as only for self-defense. But it did not print lengthy criticism of Mussolini or his statements.[75] On the other hand, the Daily Worker, which continually depicted Mussolini as a threat to peace, judged the speech as a prelude to war.

> This speech, following on the breakdown of the Franco-Italian negotiations, is as plain a hint as could be desired that Fascist Italy contemplates war with France. An armaments race is already in progress between the two countries. This will now be intensified, and the movement towards imperialist war speeded up.[76]

From the time of its first publication to the end of the period covered by this study, the Daily

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[75] Daily Herald, October 28, 1930, p. 9.

[76] Daily Worker, October 29, 1930, p. 3.

Worker was the chief Left-wing publication to view Mussolini as a warmonger. The Glasgow Forward normally noted Mussolini's armament expenditures only in connection with the alleged misery they caused the working class. It carried few articles on Mussolini's foreign policy. After 1928, the New Leader was concerned, almost to the exclusion of all else, with British domestic problems. Although it carried some reports on Germany in the early 1930's, the New Leader printed nothing of note on Fascist Italy.

The London Naval Treaty was concluded during a period when it and the Washington Four-Power Treaty for consultation were considered adequate to provide the stability which made disarmament possible. The Disarmament Conference was launched, however, amid European tension as a result of the struggle of Germany to cast off the shackles of Versailles in the face of French resistance. In the Far East, Japan had embarked on a war of aggression against China in 1931. Therefore, when the Disarmament Conference convened on February 2, 1932, the political setting was unfavorable in every aspect. The conference also met almost at the nadir of the world economic Depression. While the Depression encouraged

reduction of armament expenditures, it also shook men's belief in the future. But it was in Germany that the political situation caused the most anxiety. The notable gains of the National Socialist Party in the Reichstag election of September, 1930, had compelled the German representative on the Preparatory Commission to adopt a hostile attitude to the draft convention.[77]

As the Preparatory Commission drew to a close in December, 1930 Italy placed herself in the "revisionist front" along with Germany and Russia. Italy found in Germany an ally in her struggle for parity with France. When the Disarmament Conference assembled, the initial Italian proposal suggested a formula whereby all arms forbidden to the conquered countries by the peace treaties should be considered aggressive weapons. This position was close to the German demand for complete equality. This revisionist collaboration was to make France more determined than ever to press for security guarantees before disarmament and to resist any treaty revision. The British government maintained in public that France was not in danger from Germany. But Great

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[77]Northedge, pp. 346-47, 368-69.

Britain could not bring herself to order France to accept German demands for equality.[78]

The Franco-German deadlock and British efforts to resolve it provided the focal point of British press coverage of the conference. In addition to the Disarmament Conference, Hitler's rise in Germany, the war in Manchuria, the Ottawa Conference, and the reparations conference at Lausanne all competed for the press's attention. Hence British press coverage of Italian foreign policy tended to be sporadic. Italian policy aroused the interest of British publications on three separate occasions during 1932: Italy's disarmament proposals, Grandi's dismissal, and Mussolini's speeches made on the anniversary of the March on Rome. On February 10, Signor Grandi put forward Italy's disarmament proposals. These proposals were extreme in their hopes, for they called for among other things the abolishment of capital ships, aircraft carriers, tanks, artillery, and bombing aircraft as well as revision of the laws of war the better to protect civilians.[79]

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[79] Ibid., pp. 369-70.

[80] The Times, February 11, 1932, p. 12; Manchester Guardian, February 11, 1932, p. 9.

It was acknowledged in the British press that the Italian proposals went further than those offered by other nations. The New Statesman, and the Spectator made this observation, but failed to editorialize on it.[80] These publications summarized the week's proceedings at the Conference and space alone prohibited them from commenting in detail on the Italian proposals. And, as stated above, the tendency was to dwell on the French-German embroilment. The Times labelled the program as "straightforward" and reviewed it favorably, though with a certain amount of scepticism:

> It is a trenchant proposition which, though it may be beyond what is practicable yet, contains nothing that an assembly met for disarmament can dismiss as fantastic. It will certainly appeal as a whole to British imagination and sympathy.[81]

In the opinion of the Economist, Italy's proposals gave it "the moral initiative at Geneva."[82] This was the view of the Manchester Guardian which gave the Italian

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[80] "Comments," New Statesman, III (February 13, 1932), p. 186; "News of the Week," Spectator, CXLVIII (February 20, 1932), p. 237.

[81] The Times, February 11, 1932, p. 13.

[82] "The Disarmament Conference," Economist, CXIV (February 13, 1932), Part 1, p. 340.

program a highly favorable reception. It entitled this article "Italy's Lead for Disarmament." The report began:

> Englishmen may well be pardoned for feeling envy and regret because the speech made by Signor Grandi, the Italian Foreign Minister, at the Disarmament Conference this morning was not made by a representative of the British Commonwealth. The Italian proposals are radical and realistic.[83]

While extreme Left-wing publications did not take any direct notice of the Italian disarmament program, they never wavered in their impression of Mussolini as a threat to European peace. Against this view were pitted the conservative and moderate Left-wing press, which were united in the conviction of Mussolini's peaceful intentions. Further evidence that the British press generally believed that Mussolini was a man of peace was recognized by its reaction to the dismissal of Grandi from the Foreign Ministry.

After the presentation of disarmament proposals in February, comment on Italy remained practically non-existent until the dismissal of Grandi from his post in July refocused the attention of the British press on Italy.

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[83] Manchester Guardian, February 11, 1932, p. 9.

The removal of Grandi motivated the press to review Italian international policy. There was agreement, especially among conservative publications, that Italian policy was pacific in design. The Observer declared:

> For the last eight years Italian foreign policy has been carried out on logical lines leading towards international peace and good will. The world is learning to judge Mussolini by his acts rather than by his market-square speeches.[84]

Similarly the Economist argued:

> Only a few years ago the foreign policy of Fascism was a source of anxiety and uneasiness; but to-day the policy of Mussolini expounded with very great ability and charm by his youthful Foreign Minister, has immensely strenthened the prestige of Italy and made her a steadying influence in this bedlam-like world of 1932.[85]

Even the New Statesman observed that "lately there has been no rumbling of the old Fascist thunder."[86]

The conservative and moderate Left-wing press concluded that Grandi's discharge did not mean a change for the worse in Italian policy. Grandi's removal was

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[84] Observer, July 24, 1932, p. 8.

[85] "Cabinet Changes in Italy," Economist, CXV (July 23, 1932), Part 1, p. 166.

[86] "Comments," New Statesman, IV (July 23, 1932), p. 87.

viewed as the desire on the part of Mussolini to have a firmer hold on policy. The remarks of the New Statesman typified this response: "Mussolini's move though it does not portend anything particularly sinister, may be taken as a hint of a more assertive attitude."[87] Not only did the Economist note that Italian policy would remain peaceful but maintained:

> The change may, therefore, indicate Mussolini's intention to pursue the policies on which his mind is set with renewed vigour. If this happens, Great Britain will have every reason for satisfaction, for the policies which Italy is pursuing are very closely in accordance with the interests of this country.[88]

The Times suggested:

> Nevertheless it is by no means likely that the resignation of Signor Grandi will mean any appreciable change in Italian foreign policy. Almost certainly it will not, even though firmer language may sometimes be heard from the Palazzo Chigi.[89]

On the other hand, the extreme Left-wing press, led by the Daily Worker, continued to anticipate war

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[87] "Comments," New Statesman, IV (July 23, 1932), p. 87.

[88] "Cabinet Changes in Italy," Economist, CXV (July 23, 1932), Part 1, p. 166.

[89] The Times, July 21, 1932, p. 12.

because of Mussolini's actions. An article in the Daily Worker which discussed Grandi's removal was entitled, "Mussolini Wants Another War." In its opinion, the cabinet changes were an attempt to weaken Grandi's influence.

> Grandi, his [Mussolini's] second in command, has been sent to England as the new Ambassador, with the obvious intention of weakening his influence in the Fascist Grand Council.

Then without further explanation the Daily Worker added, "The reason for these manoeuvres is mainly the serious economic plight of Italian industry."[90] Actually Grandi had little influence with the Fascist Grand Council after March, 1930. Grandi's dismissal was undertaken by Mussolini so that he might again control Italian policy, which after 1930 was to stand closer to Germany in its demands for equality.[91]

The above line of thinking illustrated one major criticism of the Daily Worker's coverage of Italian policy, and for that matter the coverage of the Glasgow Forward and the Daily Herald; their arguments were poorly constructed. As seen above, the Daily Worker first explained

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[90]Daily Worker, August 4, 1932, p. 2.

[91]Hughes, pp. 232-35.

Grandi's discharge in terms of a power struggle. Then it jumped to the conclusion that it was motivated by the "economic plight of Italian industry." But the Daily Worker offered no explanation of what the dismissal of the Foreign Minister had to do with Italian industry. A far more effective device than its own arguments was the reprinting of Mussolini's warlike outbursts. For example, the Daily Worker quoted Mussolini as stating, "Fascism does not believe in the possibility or utility of perpetual peace. Only war brings out the full force of human energy."[92]

While the extreme Left-wing press regarded Mussolini as a menace to peace, the Manchester Guardian developed the opposite impression. A word must be said here about the change in editorial policy of the Manchester Guardian toward Mussolini. As noted in an earlier passage, Italy's policy by 1932 concentrated on achieving a reduction of armaments and thereby echoed Germany's demands for international equality. The Manchester Guardian commented favorably on the Italian proposal for the abolishment of several weapons in February.

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[92]Daily Worker, August 4, 1932, p. 2.

Beginning in mid-summer, it began printing a number of editorials in support of Mussolini's plans for armament reductions. An editorial on August 1, 1931, was characteristic:

> The Duce is a late and in some ways an unexpected convert to the cause of disarmament, but he is for that very reason an especially welcome one. After all, it is only the professed militarists who stand in the way of drastic reduction of armaments. If Mussolini means what he says his article is worth a dozen demonstrations by lifelong pacifists.[93]

The Manchester Guardian's favorable reception of Mussolini's disarmament plans becomes clearer when the policy of the British government is considered. The British government in July, 1932 had been alarmed by President Hoover's disarmament proposal at Geneva. This plan called for substantial reduction in naval strength as well as land forces. Stanley Baldwin, who was Lord President of the Council, stated in the House of Commons that the American plan, if adopted, would make the British army incapable of fulfilling its imperial responsibilities and that the navy could not be further reduced. The Hoover plan had the effect of placing Great Britain on the side of the French, who opposed disarmament. The

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[93] Manchester Guardian, August 1, 1931, p. 10.

result was that the Foreign Secretary, John Simon, submitted a resolution to the Disarmament Conference. While it welcomed the "interconnectedness" of the Hoover plan, the resolution rejected the proposals, and listed a dozen less drastic propositions. The resolution carried at Geneva at the summer adjournment was based on Simon's outline. It showed that the only definite commitment undertaken by those who voted for the resolution was the renunciation of chemical and biological warfare. This had already been declared illegal by the Geneva convention of 1925.[94]

The British government's hedging policy at Geneva provoked the Manchester Guardian to support Italian calls for disarmament. In August, General Balbo, the Italian Minister of Air, attacked British and French domination of the League of Nations. The Manchester Guardian used Balbo's speech as a means to criticize the British government and the Simon proposal, which it called "a masterpiece of guarded generalities."

> General Balbo's outburst has international importance. It voices the disillusionment of many millions in many other countries at the suspicious methods and meagre outcome of the

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[94]Northedge, pp. 372-73.

> Geneva Conference. These protests never come from enemies of disarmament; the enemies of disarmament are much too busily engaged preparing formulae which save their faces.[95]

Two weeks later, the Manchester Guardian referred to the British and French representatives at Geneva as "self-styled peace-lovers."[96] In its opinion, Italy genuinely sought disarmament because of the cost of arms; "Italy is compelled by her financial stringency and her traditional policy to welcome real disarmament, however late it comes."[97] This avid support of disarmament was not a new policy for the Manchester Guardian; it had favored disarmament before 1914.[98] But in 1932, no other British publication endorsed Mussolini's proposals so strongly.

The conservative press's reactions, when it considered the Hoover plan, were typified by The Times, which spoke of "the special requirements of the British Empire."[99]

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[95] Manchester Guardian, August 3, 1932, p. 8.

[96] Manchester Guardian, August 18, 1932, p. 8.

[97] Manchester Guardian, September 15, 1932, p. 8.

[98] Postgate and Vallance, p. 249.

[99] The Times, July 8, 1932, p. 14.

The Right-wing press mirrored the feeling of British conservatives who held a special place in their heart for the Royal Navy. Reductions in naval armament or anything which might endanger the safety of the British Empire were not considered with favor in conservative circles. Thus, while conservative papers were in agreement with the Manchester Guardian on the pacific intention of Mussolini, they were less responsive to his demands for drastic arms reductions.

The Mussolini speech at Turin given on the eve of the tenth anniversary of the March on Rome reinforced the British press's tendency to view Mussolini as a proponent of a pacific foreign policy. In this speech, Mussolini affirmed his loyalty to the League and continued his proposals for armament reduction.[100] In the opinion of the Manchester Guardian, Italy continued to be regarded as desirous of disarmament: "Italy has done enough to prove that she desires large-scale disarmament."[101] The Spectator in its review of the Turin speech and of ten years of Fascist power delivered what was

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[100] The Times, October 24, 1932, p. 14.

[101] Manchester Guardian, October 25, 1932, p. 8.

probably the common verdict of the conservative and moderate Left-wing press--that Mussolini was tamed.

> The answer at the moment is that Fascism is no longer a potential menace to the peace of the world. Signor Mussolini's speech at Turin on Sunday was highly significant. He stamped finally and decisively on the rumor that his country contemplated withdrawal from the League of Nations. He declared no less decisively for that equality of status which Germany has been demanding in the matter of armaments . . . . This is not the language of a disturber of European peace. There has been a good deal of sword-rattling during the past ten years, and there are still great potential causes of friction with France and with Jugo-Slavia. But it may well be argued that these tactics have given the Italians what the Scots call a good conceit of themselves without leading that feeling into dangerous channels. Mussolini is a tremendous realist, who thoroughly appreciates the character of his countrymen; and he has established such a reputation as a nationalist leader that he can now well afford to be a man of peace. The March on Rome may well prove to be the first and the last aggressive march of Fascism.[102]

The Turin speech failed to arouse comment in the extreme Left-wing press, but subsequent reports showed that Mussolini was still regarded there as a threat to peace. An article that typified this belief appeared a few days later in the Daily Herald. It noted how

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[102] "Ten Years of Fascism," Spectator, CXLIX (October 29, 1932), p. 569.

"boys of eight learn to use rifles" in Italy.[103] So that in spite of Mussolini's speech in support of the League and disarmament, the opinion of extreme Left-wing publications remained unchanged.

By the end of 1932, conservative and moderate Left-wing papers had concluded that Mussolini in reality desired peace. When Mussolini uttered warlike statements, these publications were in agreement that they were intended only for Italian ears. There were occasions when the British press showed a sense of uneasiness at Mussolini's bellicose speeches. The summer following the London Naval Conference in 1930, was the time of greatest concern. But the British press returned to the judgments developed in the previous decade to explain Mussolini's belligerent speeches. During the 1920's, the British press formed the opinion that Mussolini made martial speeches to motivate his countrymen, to take their minds off conditions in Italy, and to raise the prestige of Italy in their eyes. Once Mussolini ceased his outbursts and initiated a severe arms reduction program at the Disarmament Conference in

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[103] Daily Herald, October 28, 1932, p. 1.

February, 1932 conservative and moderate Left-wing papers forgot his former truculence. The Manchester Guardian supported the Italian proposals and used them to criticize the British government's reluctance to take the lead in a drastic disarmament plan at Geneva.

The extreme Left-wing press was no less deficient than conservative and moderate Left-wing elements in presenting an accurate picture of Mussolini. After 1928, the New Leader printed no major articles on Italian policy. The comments of the Glasgow Forward were almost solely directed to conditions within Italy. Coverage of Italian foreign policy in the Daily Herald was infrequent and superficial. It gave front page space and large headlines to comparatively unimportant incidents. For example, the Daily Herald printed such headlines on the front page as "Five Years Prison for Toscanini?" and "Duce Locks Up Lieutenant for Jilting Fiancee."[104] Whereas the Daily Worker printed articles that described Mussolini as warlike, it also carried articles that depicted every capitalist nation as eager to declare war:

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[104]Daily Herald, June 5, 1931, p. 1; September 5, 1932, p. 1.

> Each capitalism, whether British, French, Italian, German, or indeed, American, is choked with its own production, and at the same time is intensifying its own crisis by increasing the attacks on the workers. Each capitalism sees more and more that the only way out is by war.[105]

The effectiveness of the Daily Herald and Daily Worker was diminished not only by overstatement and intemperate tone but by the content of their reportage. It was known in Great Britain during the interwar period that Left-wing Socialists believed war was inevitable among capitalist states. Since Left-wing Socialists also regarded Fascism as merely the final development of capitalism, much of the value of their seeing Fascist Italy as a particular threat was diminished.[106]

That a large section of the British press concluded that Mussolini's speeches and actions were actually the harmless rhetoric of an expert haranguer of crowds has been the subject of this chapter. How much the British press may have influenced public opinion and the opinion of the official mind to view Hitler as another Mussolini is more difficult to ascertain.

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[105] Daily Worker, June 11, 1932, p. 4.

[106] Taylor, p. 368.

Though Britons realized that Germany was potentially a more dangerous military threat than Italy, a tempting pattern had been established by Fascist Italy. Mussolini had let it be known that Fascism was a vital force in the world, but despite all his talk he had done nothing seriously to challenge the peace. So that after ten years of Fascism, the press concluded that its creator was more interested in peace than in war. Certain views of Mussolini in the press, particularly the conservative and moderate Left-wing publications, could be transferred to Hitler without presenting much difficulty in the mind of the reader. The firebrand oratory intended for domestic consumption could conceivably be held for both dictators. The Times's repeated declaration that Mussolini was capable of restraining his more zealous followers may have convinced its readers that Hitler's leadership was likewise crucial to the maintenance of peace. More important was the conviction that Mussolini had begun his rule by an attack on Corfu, and followed it by fire and thunder speeches that gradually diminished in intensity and frequency. In the end, Mussolini had offered sweeping disarmament proposals to Europe. One authority on

British twentieth-century history wrote:

> Educated people in Britain, both in and out of politics, were slow to understand Hitler and Mussolini. They were ready to admire both of them, much as enlightened people in France and England had admired Prussia in the 1860's. They seem to have thought, as Papen and Hugenberg thought in Germany, that Hitler could be tamed; and that Mussolini already was tame.[107]

The British press contributed to the conviction that Mussolini was tamed, and thereby may have contributed to the notion that Hitler also would be tamed in time.

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[107] Seaman, pp. 251-52.

A RETROSPECT ON THE FIRST DECADE OF ITALIAN FASCISM

In the course of this survey, it has been repeatedly stressed that the British press, when reporting news of Fascist Italy, often mirrored its own prejudices and political ideas. Each publication tended to present its own political outlook when editorializing on developments in Fascist Italy. Though most British publications had a more or less identifiable political allegiance, among the principal papers only the Daily Herald and Daily Worker were strictly tied to a political party. While part of a publication's outlook was determined by its proprietor and, to a lesser extent, by its editor, events within Great Britain also exerted a strong influence on the press.

British press reactions to the first ten years of Italian Fascism were generally divided into three broad classifications: conservative, moderate Left-wing, and extreme Left-wing. The publications within each of these categories suffered in varying degrees

from the same handicaps. Though Fascist Italy elicited more interest from the British press than parliamentary Italy, events elsewhere were frequently even stronger competitors for the press's attention. Hence the close and continuous coverage which may have produced a better understanding of Fascism was absent. Further, the British press was handicapped by an inveterate British inability to grasp imaginatively what could happen on the continent of Europe. Finally, many publications' initial views of the Fascist movement were crystallized in an unsettled and politically uneasy period of British history. Some elements of the British press never changed their initial impression. But more importantly, subsequent developments in Fascism were interpreted in light of these initial impressions.

In many respects, developments in Italy paralleled those in Great Britain. For both countries the cost of war proved greater than any had expected at the beginning. Italy had been psychologically damaged by the defeat of Caporetto, emotionally over-excited by the sudden triumph of Vittorio Veneto, and then depressed again when the peace did not bring the utopia which irresponsible leaders had promised. In addition, Italy's failure to

satisfy her territorial expectations at the end of the war played no small part in breeding that mood of national exasperation which produced Fascism.[1] Allied economic aid ceased almost immediately after the armistice, leaving Italy in debt. Wheat subsidies for farmers, steel subsidies to the heavily over-capitalized war industries, bread subsidies for consumers, all helped to increase **inflation** and a budgetary deficit, and yet were insufficient to relieve distress. In the meantime, inflation had undermined middle-class security.

Another threatening trend was the growing disparity between social classes. Government contractors had greatly benefited because of the war, whereas many landless laborers returned from the front to primitive conditions, depressed wages, and unemployment. In fact, demobilization created widespread unemployment just when the old remedy of emigration was becoming impossible. Politics were strongly affected by the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia; and as a result, only then did Marxism become a significant force in Italy. Socialism flourished among dissatisfied workers, especially in the big

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[1]Smith, p. 321.

industrial centers of Milan, Turin, and Genoa, where the war had concentrated many in factories. Agarian and industrial strikes in 1920 swept across the country during the course of which workers seized the large metallurgical factories in the North. For eight weeks the red flag flew over these buildings in what was falsely regarded by conservative sections of the population as part of a systematic attack on private property, and the first step in a political revolution. Here was something quite new in Italian history, and many of the upper and middle classes took fright at it.[2]

In Great Britain, circumstances were not dissimilar from those in postwar Italy. The material and financial cost of the war was immense. Great Britain's livelihood was closely bound up with the workings of international economy and the war brought about the disruption of international trade and investment. To pay for its vast expenditures, the government relied on loans raised on unnecessarily expensive terms. Thus the financial policy was highly inflationary and when the war ended purchasing power was greatly reduced. After the

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[2] Ibid., pp. 327, 332.

short replacement boom which ended in early 1920, unemployment became widespread.[3]

Even more unsettling were the industrial disorders and strikes. Less than three months after the armistice, there occurred a violent strike in Glasgow in which the red flag was raised and troops were used to crush it.[4] The threat of Red revolution was increased when later in 1920 Labour acted in solid resistance against the possibility of British intervention on the side of Poland against Russia. The "Hands off Soviet Russia" movement and the arrival of the Labour Party to office in January, 1924 seemed a prelude to revolution in thousands of secluded middle- and upper-class homes.[5]

It was in that turbulent era that the British conservative press established the myth of Mussolini as savior of Italy from Bolshevism. The impression that Mussolini's timely appearance rescued Italy from the scourge of Bolshevism was not lost on those who were apprehensive of Bolshevism in Great Britain. After Mussolini's victory in Italy, Fascist groups were formed

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[3]Taylor, pp. 123-25. [4]Seaman, p. 110.

[5]Cross, pp. 57-8; Taylor, pp. 143-44.

in Great Britain. In composition they were almost entirely upper and middle class. Nearly all of these organizations became rallying points for that section of society that had never adjusted itself to the death of Queen Victoria.[6]

While the moderate conservative press reinterpreted Mussolini's role in suppressing Italian Socialism, extreme Right-wing elements held, until at least the mid-1930's, that Mussolini had saved Italy from Communism.[7] In time, the legend was shared by Hitler in Germany, and accounted for a measure of his support among conservative circles in Great Britain.[8] But the myth was short-lived in moderate Right- and Left-wing publications. Both of these segments of the British press presented a historically accurate judgment when they argued that the Bolshevik menace was defunct before the March on Rome. The Times and Observer contended, however, that Mussolini's seizure of power was necessary to end parliamentary paralysis and to restore stable government to Italy. This view was still held in 1932. In an article "Ten Years of Fascism," The Times editorialized:

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[6]Cross, pp. 57-61. [7]Taylor, p. 374.

[8]Seaman, p. 252-53.

> It has often been maintained that even as early as 1921 the worst of the post-War economic crisis in Italy was already over. But if statistics show economic conditions had improved the Parliamentary crisis persisted. Liberals, Socialists, and Popularists (Clericals) in turn vainly tried to find some comprehensive solution of the national needs. The summons of the King to Signor Mussolini after the March on Rome gave Italy not merely another Government, but "The Government" which has remained in power ever since.[9]

The readers of the extreme Left-wing press, on the other hand, were constantly reminded that Mussolini's coup was a severe check to the progressive forces of Socialism. Extreme Left-wing papers never doubted who benefited from Mussolini's "saving" Italy. He saved it for the capitalists who exploited the Italian working class. The extreme Left-wing organs held this view throughout the period in question, always expressing themselves in typical Marxist phraseology. Left-wing criticism of Mussolini mirrored the fear of Socialists that Fascism would be established in Great Britain. During the Depression, when Socialists became convinced that Fascism was near at hand, the extreme Left-wing increased its attacks on Mussolini.

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[9] The Times, October 18, 1932, p. 15.

This intense antipathy for Fascism in socialist and communist organs accounted for the want of analysis of Mussolini's regime in their pages. Within a few weeks after the March on Rome, the Glasgow Forward and Daily Herald were in agreement that the new government was a dictatorship directed against the toiling Italian masses. There were no further attempts to conceptualize Fascism as a political formation. The evolution of Fascism from a government of Right-wing orientation to an all-embracing regime went undescribed in extreme Left-wing publications. From the first to the last, readers of these publications were informed that Fascism was directed solely against the Italian working man. In the first months after the attainment of power, Fascist terror affected almost exclusively those classes of the population sympathetic to Socialism and Communism. Hence it was barely reported in the conservative foreign press. But extreme Left-wing publications dwelled on little else.

The readers of conservative and moderate Left-wing publications were presented a clearer understanding of the development of Fascism than those who read the socialist and communist press. In response to each

measure of the Fascist government, the conservative and moderate Left-wing press evaluated it and attempted to fit it into their overall conceptualization of Fascism.

In 1925 began a series of legislative measures which gave Fascism a strangle-hold on Italy. The Italian press became a mere mouthpiece of government propaganda. Industrialists and workers were organized into syndicates. The Chamber was elected in such a way that only good Fascists could possibly become Deputies. Local government suffered the same fate. The all-encompassing nature of these laws led the moderate elements of the British press to grope for terms to describe the political formation which was being erected in Italy. The Times, of all conservative and moderate Left-wing publications, was the most unceasing in its efforts to define and categorize the Fascist regime. It also admitted being perplexed by the difficulty of fitting "Fascism into any of the customary categories which political science has inherited from Plato and Aristotle."[10] Beginning in 1932, The Times occasionally used the term "totalitarian" to describe the Fascist government. This was usually

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[10] The Times, September 16, 1929, p. 13.

used after listing the various means Fascism employed to remain in power, although no definite definition was presented. Therefore, readers were unlikely to have had their knowledge increased by its use.

From time to time, a few British papers during the mid-twenties suggested that the philosophical origins of Fascism were rooted in the ideas of Machiavelli or Hegel. But these reports lacked substance and actually separated Italian Fascism from its real spiritual significance, which was expressed in the non-rational concepts of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Bergson. Their ideas, through the political writings of Georges Sorel, influenced Mussolini as a young man.[11] For the most part, however, the British press referred to Fascism as a dictatorship and Mussolini as a dictator. These terms were found in papers of all political complexion. Contemporary readers were led to believe that Mussolini was simply a dictator. Also, British readers were largely uninformed of the connection between terror and propaganda in Fascist Italy--two chief generic traits of totalitarianism. Such a dictatorship came to be regarded

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[11]Sabine, pp. 755-57.

as a method of insuring order and economic stability, and met with a certain degree of tolerance in Great Britain, even by those who disliked its anti-democratic characteristics. In consequence, both the press and people of Great Britain were ill-prepared to appreciate the totalitarian aspects of Hitler's movement in Germany. Moreover, they expected the Nazi regime to conform in time to the comparatively mild Italian model.[12]

With respect to civil liberties, the British conservative and moderate Left-wing press considered the Fascist ideas as anti-liberal, anti-individual, and anti-democratic. For its part, the conservative press showed greater reluctance than Left-wing publications to criticize Fascist excesses during Mussolini's first few months in power when violence was confined to Socialists, Communists, and trade unionists. But the murder of Matteotti, a respected member of the Italian Chamber, had a galvanic effect on the British press. It was alien to the concept of parliamentary justice for a man to be murdered for his criticism of the government. Readers of conservative publications, however, received the impression that not only

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[12]Granzow, p. 53.

was Mussolini innocent of any part in the crime, but that his continuation in office was essential to the preservation of order in Italy. Though moderate Left-wing publications did not hold Mussolini directly responsible for the murder, they editorialized that Mussolini must either step down or purge the Fascist Party of its criminal element.

Awakened by the Matteotti case, the moderate conservative and Left-wing press reacted unfavorably to the Fascist legislation which suppressed freedom of the press in 1925. Freedom of the press was one of the most highly-prized civil liberties to the British people, and thus to the British press. Therefore, the murder of Matteotti and the suppression of the Italian press did much to crystallize Liberal opinion against Mussolini. From 1925 forward, the Manchester Guardian became a foremost critic of Fascist internal policies. The extreme Right-wing typified by the Morning Post, continued its endorsement of Mussolini's measures as necessary to halt Communism.

In spite of its censure of Mussolini's control of the Italian press, a substantial section of the British press failed to understand the importance of

propaganda to the Fascist regime. British readers were never informed of the integral role that the Italian press played in the indoctrination of the masses in Fascist dogma. Only the Manchester Guardian seemed to appreciate the fact that the Fascist regime used the Italian press for propaganda purposes.

Fascist legislation outlawing strikes and disorders received more attention in the Left-wing press than in conservative publications. Here again the extreme Left-wing press argued that Mussolini's attempt to harmonize class relations was simply another means to exploit the working class. Moderate conservative publications accurately concluded that Mussolini's controls were aimed as much at employers as the workers. With less validity, the Morning Post argued that the workers benefited from government controls.

In spite of a sense of bewilderment and outrage at the loss of liberties in Italy, the British conservative press continued to support Mussolini. Much of its criticism of Fascism in the mid-twenties turned to admiration for the material progress made in Italy. During the Depression, conservative publications praised Fascist land reclamation schemes, road building, and the use of

public works projects to provide work for the unemployed. Articles appeared in the conservative press that depicted the happy leisure hours of workers or their children on holidays at sea or mountain camps, which were paid for by the state. Some of this admiration reflected the sense of frustration with economic conditions in Great Britain. It appeared to conservative and on occasion moderate Left-wing publications that Italy was able to withstand the Depression because of Mussolini's active intervention.

The adulation of Italian Fascism in the conservative press and the formation of Mosley's British Union of Fascists in October, 1932, confirmed the belief of Left-wing Socialists who anticipated a Fascist dictatorship in Great Britain.[13] In an effort to guard against such an event, the socialist and communist organs increased the volume and bitterness of their attacks on Mussolini. A reader of these publications was largely unaware of Fascist development schemes or public works projects. Such programs were ignored by the extreme Left-wing press. Instead the reader's impression of

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[13]Taylor, p. 319.

of Italy was likely to be one of a land of terror by night and toil by day. While famine stalked the land, hungry workers either fled across the frontiers to France or prepared for the eventual class war. Seen through the eyes of the extreme Left-wing press, every industrial strike was a step toward the overthrow of Mussolini and his capitalist bosses. Likewise British readers were warned of the dangers that Mosley's organization posed for the workers in Great Britain. These fears and the black picture of life in Italy were symptomatic of the conditions in Great Britain as viewed by the Left-wing. But in spite of their exaggeration and intemperate tone, the extreme Left-wing press understood the plight of the Italian working class. That Italian workmen had done worse under Fascism as measured by wage and employment conditions was a correct assumption.[14]

Balanced between the extreme descriptions of Fascist Italy by the conservative and socialist publications was the British moderate Left-wing press. Although such publications as the New Statesman and Manchester Guardian commented favorably on Fascist welfare

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[14]Welk, pp. 241-2.

programs and building projects, they remained critical of the loss of freedoms so much a part of the British heritage. Thus the reader received the impression that despite its modernization efforts, Fascist Italy was a place unlikely to appeal to British people.

Some limited attention was paid to the relations between the Fascist regime and the Catholic Church. The British press described both Mussolini's courting of the Church and his need for its support. It accurately judged that the Church's endorsement strengthened the Fascist regime. And a substantial section of the British press praised Mussolini for the settlement of the Roman question. It is not, however, an unfair judgment of the British press to say that it failed to see the special relationship that the Church enjoyed with the Fascist government. The press focused attention, almost exclusively, on the anti-government outbursts of the Church. Yet the privileges gained from Fascism went unnoticed.

After ten years of Fascism, the steady reader of conservative publications received the image of Mussolini as a sensible, even paternal dictator who by wisdom and unceasing effort had restored Italy to the rank

of a Great Power. This restoration was accomplished by the moral and material transformation of Italy and its people. Mussolini was credited in the conservative press with infusing a new capacity for steady creative work into his country. Perhaps the phrase in the conservative press which best epitomized this change of spirit was that in Fascist Italy "the trains ran on schedule." In the realm of material improvement, the drainage of the Pontine Marshes and la bonifica were celebrated projects in the British conservative press.

While little was known or understood of the Fascist movement and its governmental structure, the reader of conservative organs did know that Fascism had rendered a service by stopping the spread of Bolshevism and restoring Italy to order. It was regrettable that Mussolini had seen fit to suspend those civil liberties so dear to the hearts of British people. But then the reader was told that Italians had never been accustomed to parliamentary government, and perhaps in the last analysis they were unfit for it. Their fiery and imaginative temperament required a strong leader such as Mussolini. In any case, Mussolini remained immensely popular with the Italian masses. All in all, the reader

of the conservative press was informed that Mussolini's achievements ensured him a place among the great constructive statesmen of history.

After ten years of reading the moderate Left-wing press's views, the reader envisioned Mussolini as a theatrical mountebank or megalomaniac who harangued crowds about Roman virtues. The readers of the New Statesman and Nation were treated to humorous accounts of the extravagant posturings of Mussolini, which often pictured him to be little more than a comic figure. Myths and legends of Fascism were regularly debunked in the eyes of British readers, but without appreciation for the hold these had on Italians.[15] Look beneath the surface, British readers were told. It was plain to readers of the moderate Left-wing press that Fascism had not saved Italy from Bolshevism. When Mussolini came to power, the Bolshevik crisis already had been overcome. The economic expansion that took place under the Fascist government was in reality the result of the groundwork of previous Italian governments, and international circumstances beyond Mussolini's control. That

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[15]Nolte, p. 211.

Italians continued to tolerate such a system of government seemed incomprehensible to the moderate Left-wing press. The Fascist government lacked the British virtues of tolerance, political moderation, and a loathing for manifest injustice. Anything so bizarre, flamboyant, and basically ridiculous as the antics of Fascism seemed unlikely to last. In time, did not revolutions become respectable? In fact, had not Mussolini shown himself more moderate by 1932?

During the same ten-year period, the constant reader of the extreme Left-wing press received an impression of Fascist Italy approximating what life must have been in Tsarist Russia. The reader's attention was nearly always focused on the living and working conditions of the Italian masses, which were described in the blackest of terms. The theme of the socialist and communist organs seldom varied. From the initial weeks of Fascist government to the end of 1932, Mussolini was never depicted as anything but a tyrant. Except for the undaunted efforts of the working class, Fascism was perceived as an unchallengeable dictatorship of the Italian industrialists and financiers.

Turning finally to the matter of Italian foreign policy, a British reader found that only the extreme Left-wing press consistently viewed Mussolini as a potential threat to European peace. There were, however, times when Mussolini's outbursts were viewed as a means to distract the attention of the Italian people from the depressing conditions at home. But for the most part, readers of socialist and communist publications by 1932 had been reminded, if infrequently, that the League of Nation's spirit stopped at the Italian border, that Mussolini spent lavishly on armaments, and that Italian youth was being trained for the next war. The Daily Worker was the most persistent of any of the extreme Left-wing publications in its characterization of Mussolini as warlike. Its readers received coverage of Italian war maneuvers, armament programs, and selected excerpts from Mussolini's bellicose speeches. The Daily Worker predicted, however, that war was inevitable among all capitalist states. Hence, much of the value of seeing Fascist Italy as a particular threat was diminished. Though the readers of the Daily Herald were presented coverage similar to that of the Daily Worker, they were told less frequently of the Fascist menace. For its part,

the Glasgow Forward lingered only fleetingly on Italian foreign policy. Its readers were informed of the massive armament costs borne by the working class but little else. Even less space was given to Italy in the New Leader after 1928 than in any of the other extreme Left-wing publications. From that date forward, events in Great Britain absorbed its whole attention. The knowledge in Great Britain that Left-wing Socialists believed war inevitable under capitalism diminished the value of their alarms. Publications of the Right tended to ignore the warnings of the extreme Left-wing.

Those who read moderate Left-wing publications found that Mussolini's sabre-rattling utterances were meant only for Italian consumption, and were not intended as a threat. Mussolini's bark was described as worse than his bite. Even the occupation of Corfu was forgotten. The Italian dictator's attacks on the Kellogg Pact and his warlike outbursts during the summer of 1930 caused momentary uneasiness to the moderate Left-wing press. But here again the reader was reminded that Mussolini only wished to awaken the national consciousness of Italians. No reasonable person wanted war, least of all Mussolini. His statements were just

periodic eruptions and not to be taken seriously. Seen through the pages of the New Statesman, Mussolini appeared a poor and humorous imitator of the German Kaiser. The readers of the Manchester Guardian were likely to be convinced that Mussolini was more forthright in his desire for disarmament than the British government in 1932. It appeared that Great Britain's disarmament proposals were not as drastic or complete as those put forward by Italy. In the opinion of the Manchester Guardian, Mussolini was a man dedicated to European disarmament and peace.

Opinion of Mussolini's foreign policy in the conservative press was not fundamentally different from that in moderate Left-wing publications. Both sections offered various explanations for Mussolini's firebrand oratory, such as a method of kindling patriotism and pride in the Italian people. But readers of The Times, Morning Post and Spectator were reassured that so long as Mussolini remained at the helm of state there was no cause for alarm. Mussolini had the ability at once to stimulate his audiences and yet control his radical followers. The Duce had learned a lesson from his attack on the Greek island of Corfu. He had seen that his purposes

could be more favorably pursued within the framework of European peace and through the League of Nations. Subsequent actions were confined to ranting speeches and even these became so infrequent as to be considered exceptional. So convinced of Mussolini's peacefulness were conservative and moderate Left-wing publications that the dismissal of Grandi in July, 1932 caused them no concern. In their opinion, the discharge of the Italian Foreign Minister, whose reputation for peace was well known, meant no change in Italian policy. There was no need to be fearful. Mussolini posed no threat to peace; he had been tamed by the responsibilities of office and international politics.

But those who saw Mussolini only as peaceful had to overlook or minimize his genuine warlike manifestations. This was the Mussolini who reviewed his troops from a white Arab horse with the eyes of a Caesar, or addressed his Blackshirts from a tank turret, engulfed by the roar of a thousand voices shouting, "Duce, Duce, Duce," or spoke of putting the Imperium above all else. Those British publications which wrote of all this as only empty rhetoric had to disregard the opinions of Socialists, Communists, and political émigrés. And

finally they had to ignore the Mussolini who could not be satisfied with being the leader of a counter-revolution and the hardworking prime minister of a backward nation, and who declared that Europe and the world would be Fascist in ten years.[16]

How much the conception of Mussolini as a pacific and tamed statesman predisposed public opinion to hope that Hitler, like Mussolini, would in time become moderate, is difficult to say. That Mussolini was considered by an influential section of the British press as internationally well behaved is safe to conclude. The pattern set in conservative and moderate Left-wing papers, that Mussolini was a man of moderation, could easily have influenced the public's conception of Hitler. As stated above, Granzow in A Mirror of Nazism pointed out that Hitler was in fact often compared to Mussolini.[17] The hope that the German Fuhrer would follow in Mussolini's footsteps was expressed by The Times on Hitler's assumption of power.

> Herr Hitler has in fact, like Signor Mussolini ten years ago, made a great reputation for himself in opposition. He has now to

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[16] Ibid., p. 223. [17] Granzow, p. 143.

> show that, like his great Italian prototype, he is capable of constructive leadership in office.[18]

In addition, a substantial section of the British press held Mussolini to be a restraining influence on the extremists in his movement. For in the eyes of the outside world, the totalitarian leader tried always to appear as the man of moderation. His real role, which was to accelerate the pace of the movement, was carefully hidden.[19] This was true of Mussolini, who gave the thrust necessary to the erection of the Fascist state.[20] Yet in the opinion of conservative and moderate Left-wing papers, Mussolini curbed his zealous followers. And the same thing was true of Hitler whose role in the Nazi Party was misunderstood by the British press.[21] The fact that the British press failed to appreciate accurately Hitler's part as leader of the Nazi movement led Granzow to remark that "this is indeed a strange phenomenon."[22] Part of this phenomenon can be explained when one considers the pattern set by

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[18] The Times, February 17, 1933, p. 13.

[19] Arendt, p. 375.

[20] Nolte, pp. 217-18.

[21] Granzow, p. 177.

[22] Ibid.

the British press in its view of Mussolini as a moderate and responsible statesman. With respect to the frequent comparisons between the two leaders, it appeared that the British press similarly judged Hitler to be a man of moderation. Another part of this phenomenon can be accounted for when it is realized that the British press possessed a politically narrow outlook and an inability to grasp the full significance of a man whose ideas were so alien to the British heritage.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

A number of British press publications provided the principle source of information for this paper. These publications offered instructive views on how the British press reacted toward Mussolini and Italian Fascism from 1922 to 1933. The Observer, Manchester Guardian, Daily Herald, Daily Worker, Glasgow Forward, Morning Post, and the Labour Leader (which became the New Leader in 1922) are on file in the British Newspaper Museum in London. Microfilm copies are available on request. The New Statesman, Economist, Nation and the Athenaeum, Spectator, Fortnightly Review, Punch, Nineteenth Century and After, and Contemporary Review can be found in the Michigan State University Library. The Times is available on microfilm at the Michigan State Library in Lansing and the Main Library in Detroit.

Three recent surveys proved particularly helpful to the understanding of contemporary Great Britain. These were A. J. P. Taylor's English History, 1914-1945 (New York, 1965), L. C. B. Seaman's Post-Victorian

Britain, 1902-1951 (London, 1966), and W. N. Medlicott's Contemporary England, 1914-1964 (London, 1967). Taylor's book was most useful throughout as a reference. The works of Seaman and Medlicott offered excellent insights into the moods and outlooks of the British people during the period considered here. Many impressions and attitudes of the British people between the wars were gained from The Long Week-End (New York, 1963), by Robert Graves and Alan Hodge. Colin Cross in his book, The Fascists in Britain (New York, 1963), traced the reasons for and development of Fascism in British society. In connection with foreign affairs, F. S. Northedge's The Troubled Giant (London, 1966), provided a recent study of British policy. There were two studies of the British press that provided a guide and much important information. In England Goes to Press (New York, 1937), the authors, Raymond Postgate and Aylmer Vallance, sketched the opinions of English papers on a variety of foreign affairs topics from the end of the Napoleonic wars to the late thirties. Brigitte Granzow's A Mirror of Nazism (London, 1964), was a useful source for attitudes prevailing in the British press during the late twenties and early

thirties. It also noted some important connections which the British press made between Hitler and Mussolini.

Essential background on Italy before and during the Fascist period can be found in Denis Mack Smith's Italy: A Modern History (Ann Arbor, 1959). This work covered most phases of Fascist activity and was continually useful as a reference. For a detailed analysis of Mussolini's economic planning, the most prominent work was William G. Welk's Fascist Economic Policy (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1938). This widely quoted work proved to be extremely helpful in comprehending the Corporate economic structure and Fascist development schemes. The relations between Church and State were best surveyed by Richard A. Webster in The Cross and the Fasces (Stanford, 1960). While a balanced account, the work described the conservative forces within the Church hierarchy which made collaboration possible with the Fascist regime.

Two secondary studies that served as an introduction to the subject of Italian foreign policy and as references on numerous occasions were Maxwell H. H. Macartney and Paul Cremona's Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy, 1914-1937 (London, 1938), and H. Stuart Hughes'

article, "The Early Diplomacy of Italian Fascism: 1922-1932" (The Diplomats, 1919-1939, ed. Gordon A. Craig, and Felix Gilbert, New York, 1967). The former was a judicious and balanced general history of Fascist foreign policy which offered one brief chapter on relations between Italy and Great Britain. A more detailed study has yet to be written. The latter focused on the controversy between Mussolini and the tradition-minded diplomats of the Foreign Ministry, offering especially insightful passages on the development of Mussolini's policy.

Several studies offered insights into the Fascist dogma and political structure. Most useful was Three Faces of Fascism (New York, 1966) by Ernst Nolte. This work dwelled on the development of Fascist doctrine and the influence of Mussolini on it. Eugen Weber's Varieties of Fascism (New York, 1964) was particularly enlightening on Corporate state doctrine. An informative and basic introduction to Fascism was presented by John Weiss' The Fascist Tradition (New York, 1967). The development of totalitarianism was set forth by Hannah Arendt in The Origins of Totalitarianism (Cleveland, 1958). The philosophical origins of Italian

Fascism were gained from George H. Sabine's A History of Political Theory (New York, 1937). Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski's Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy (New York, 1961) explored the nature of the totalitarian state itself.

Reference to the many other secondary sources cited once or twice in this paper is unnecessary since their usefulness in dealing with the subject is made sufficiently clear in the text of the study.