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Three Forms of Fascism

Working Paper No. 1

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Prepared for Professor John Hall

Abstract: This inquiry seeks to establish that fascism can appear in three forms. A classical fascist, a brutal and dominating figure, is autodidactic, having impressive and engaging oratory skills that effectively put forth their ideals to the working-class majority. Neo-fascists, or neo-Nazis, idolize Hitler and the society of Nazi Germany, being extremely radical and militant, they exist in small groups dispersed around the world. A post-modern fascist uses money and various forms of media to spread their ideologies to vulnerable members of society. Post-modern fascists project themselves as hard-working and tough, but they buy loyalty and pay others to do their bidding. Each form of fascism strives to regain a lost past, attempting to build new empires based upon fear, nationalism, racism, and false information. (Words: 123)

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This inquiry seeks to establish that fascism can appear in three forms. In order to establish that fascism can be characterized into three distinct forms, this inquiry will outline the formation of fascism as an institution and the figures throughout history up until current times that have shaped the institution into its various forms. This inquiry will typify the three forms of fascism by providing descriptions of policies, characteristics, beliefs, and societal plans of fascist leaders using their writings, speeches, and actions. Furthermore, films and videos will be used to describe leaders of the three forms of fascism on a more personal and emotional level. Film provides an explanation of fascism through a first-person point of view that otherwise could only be experienced by living under a fascist institution itself.

Barry Clark (2016, 71) explains that the rise of classical fascism was a response to capitalism and the social disruption it caused during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Fascists believe that markets and capitalism breed exploitation, alienation, and class conflict, therefore government planning of the economy is used in order to replace markets. In fascism, planning of the economy is accomplished through negotiations between leading private industrialists and government bureaucrats, making private property an integral factor. Clark (2016, 71) states that fascists view democratic states as feeble and unable to forge powerful, unified nations, but

this can be ameliorated by totalitarianism. With a totalitarian government, a fascist can eliminate private organizations and opposition parties that might defy the authority of the state. Furthermore, a fascist regime attempts to mobilize all of its citizens to work towards a common goal of economic growth and national power under the direction of the state, motivating the citizens through emotional appeals of loyalty, duty, and patriotism. Self-interest and individualism are suppressed by demands of devotion to the state and ideological purity, domestic problems are blamed upon “enemies of the people” and such groups or individuals are targeted by violent suppression. Clark (2016, 72) notes that fascists oppose egalitarian social policies and often uphold the genetic superiority of a particular ethnic or racial group, in some cases forcing the extermination of members of “inferior” groups. Furthermore, it is also important to note the proclivity of imperialism, genocide, and war demonstrated by fascist societies due to the fact that they reject markets. Fascists attempt to attain entry to foreign resources through control and domination rather than trade, and their search for new territory often ends in war.

Classical Fascism: Mussolini-Fascism and Pan's Labyrinth

Benito Mussolini was the oldest of three siblings, his father was a part-time socialist journalist and blacksmith, his mother was a schoolteacher, and money was scarce. As a child, the young Benito proved restless, aggressive, disobedient, unruly, and was a bully at school. This led to his enrollment in boarding schools, followed by multiple expulsions due to his assaulting of fellow classmates. He worked job to job and began to gain the reputation of a young man with exceptional rhetorical talents and an odd magnetism. He was arrested and imprisoned on many occasions and, while incarcerated, voraciously studied theorists and philosophers, absorbing what appealed to him and discarding the rest. He became a public speaker and political journalist, producing propaganda advocating violence as means to enforce demands. Once an opponent of Italian intervention in WWI, Mussolini came to believe that social revolution typically follows war and therefore it was necessary for Italy to enter into the fight. Upon his return from the first world war, Mussolini had a sense of destiny and he advocated for the emergence of a dictator who could solve the political and economic crisis that gripped Italy, hinting that he was such a man.

Clark (2016, 72) affirms that fascism first appeared after World War I under the ascendancy of Benito Mussolini in Italy. Mussolini's term

fascismo, or fascism in English, comes from *fasces*, a weapon which was carried at the front of a Roman army as it marched into war. Clark (2016, 72) notes that a fasces, a purely symbolic weapon, consists of a tightly-bound bundle of rods attached to an axe blade, symbolizing a society in which a single citizen is virtually powerless compared to the strength of united citizens pursuing collective goals. Mussolini's speech on April 21st, 1922 proclaimed that the people of Italy must venerate the ancient Roman civilization and race; he notes, "the immortal spirit of Rome is reborn in fascism."

Mussolini's style of oratory was impressive, his mannerisms were theatrical, and his metaphors were striking and relevant. Although his facts were often wrong, opinions contradictory, and rhetoric routinely misdirected and malicious, he could catch the imaginations of crowds and effectively put forth his ideas while appealing to the working-class majority. Mussolini's fascist movement established a large base around the ideas of nationalism and anti-Bolshevism. His black shirt wearing supporters created fascist militias and squads, they terrorized local populations, rounded up socialists, burnt down party and union offices, prevented left-wing administrations from grasping power, and attacked local government institutions, eventually solidifying his reign with the March on Rome. In a February 23rd, 1941

speech, Mussolini reminds his followers that they have been at war with the capitalistic, Masonic, and Democratic world since their 1922 revolution; he claims that plutocracy, liberalism, and democracy have waged and declared a war against them with the spreading of libelous reports, press campaigns, and financial sabotage. Mussolini criticizes the English for elevating “lying into a government art” and a “narcotic for the people,” and he states that America “is a political and financial oligarchy dominated by the Jews.” Furthermore, Mussolini assured his followers that “fascism establishes the real equality of individuals” and, economically, his regime would “ensure higher social justice for the whole of the Italian people.”

Guillermo del Toro’s 2006 film, “Pan’s Labyrinth,” illustrates a classical fascist captain in 1944 Spain under Francisco Franco’s dictatorship. The story follows a young girl, Ofelia, and her ill and pregnant mother as they move into an old mill in the country with her new stepfather, the fascist Captain Vidal. Del Toro (2006, 00:01:08) explains that a civil war has just ended, men are still fighting the new fascist leadership, but the fascists have established military posts to exterminate the “Resistance.” Del Toro (2006, 00:16:50) shows the fascist soldiers capture an older man and his son who say that they were hunting rabbits in the forest, the soldiers go through one of their bags and find “Red propaganda” the Captain proceeds to beat the

son to death and shoot the father, later to search the other bag and find a dead rabbit, proving that the men were only hunting. To force the resistance from hiding in the surrounding woods, the Captain and his henchmen block access and supplies from entering the woods, they will starve the Resistance by storing all available food and medicine in the mill under lock and key. Later, del Toro (2006, 00:39:25) exhibits the fascist Captain giving rationing cards to the local aristocracy and fascist supporters over a dinner party; he talks of the “New Clean Spain” and the “vermin” who believe in equality. Later in the film, when the Resistance stages an attack on the mill, the fascists capture a hostage and the Captain begins to slowly and brutally torture the hostage with his collection of torture apparatus. The local doctor tries to put the hostage out of his misery and is immediately killed by the Captains for taking mercy upon the enemy. In the final moments of the film, del Toro (2006, 01:46:00) shows the young Ofelia trying to escape the grasp of the Captain with her new brother, as the mother has passed away giving birth. It is clear that the Captain’s only goal of starting the family was to produce a male heir and therefore he shoots the innocent Ofelia for disobeying him. Del Toro gives a superb illustration of classical fascism and conveys the brutal, cruel, and, in some cases, evil actions and traits of a fascist leader.

Typically, a classical fascist proves to be a charismatic leader coming from a lower to middle class family. They have impressive and engaging oratory skills that catch and appeal to the imaginations of the working-class majority while effectively putting forth their ideas. The classical fascist is autodidactic, who diligently studied theorists and philosophers, absorbing what appealed to them and discarding the rest. They seek to regain a lost past by rebuilding a new empire based on their ideologies. With the introduction of mass culture, it was easy for classical fascists to broadcast their propaganda through radio and film. Being openly racist, they instilled fear into the hearts of citizens by suggesting that the surrounding world was against them, feeding them false information, and sabotaging them financially. Minorities, intellectuals, and other individuals and groups that did not agree with their policies were slandered, harassed, or killed. Furthermore, classical fascism relies on the dominance of the fascist state and anti-individualism to achieve its success. The preaching of nationalism, masked by patriotism, and their unwavering brutality towards dissident could justify and ensure the power of classical fascist leaders.

Neo-fascism: Neo-Nazis and Romper Stomper

Clark (2016, 72) claims that groups representing the far right of the political spectrum that blame their nation's issues on minorities, immigration, and Jews have caused a mild resurgence of fascism in the Western world. These groups, often called neo-Nazis, include the Ku Klux Klan in the United States, Golden Dawn in Greece, and the National Front in France. Neo-Nazism is a radical form of fascism that is most prominently characterized by beliefs in white nationalism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, white racial superiority, and Holocaust denial. The Southern Poverty Law Center explains that these far right groups are enamored with Nazi Germany and Adolf Hitler, they share hatred for the LGBTQ+ community, minorities, and sometimes, even Christians, but their foremost hatred and cardinal enemy is "the Jew." The Southern Poverty Law Center reveals that some neo-Nazi groups pay particular attention to the "revolutionary creation of the fascist political state," others simply emphasize hatred. Neo-Nazis often promote a survivalist, "tough-guy," and combative lifestyle among their followers. Since the First Amendment can be employed to protect their propaganda and these materials are illegal under anti-racist laws in Europe, American neo-Nazi groups spread information by publishing host internet sites and material directed at European audiences. Furthermore, European neo-Nazi

groups place their internet sites on American servers to avoid prosecution in their own countries. Although the roots of Nazism can be traced to Europe, the Southern Poverty Law Group emphasizes that the strong ties between European and American neo-Nazis continue to grow.

The 1992 film “Romper Stomper” directed by Geoffrey Wright gives an intimate and realistic view of neo-fascism. In the opening scene, Wright (1992, 00:01:52) shows three Asian teenagers skateboarding in Melbourne, when they go into a tunnel they are stopped by a group of eight skinheads. The eight skinheads are wearing combat boots, military style jackets covered in patches, their heads are shaven, and some are covered in tattoos of Nazi symbolism. The skinheads harass the three teenagers and brutally beat up two of the boys while telling them that this “is not your country.” The lead character, Hando’s, room is decorated with Nazi war memorabilia, propaganda, and a large red swastika flag that reads “Deutschland Erwache.” The small group of skinheads are tightly-knit and always together, Wright (1992, 00:22:17) demonstrates that the skinheads use the heil Hitler salute as a salutation. When Hando’s new girlfriend asks him why he is a skinhead, he explains that the country is not the way it used to be, rich people are bringing in “boatloads of human trash” for cheap labor, and that he is proud of his white history and blood, then he reads her a passage from Hitler’s

Mein Kampf. Wright (1992, 00:28:06) exhibits the skinhead's aggressive reactions to hearing that there were minorities at their local watering hole, after which they immediately go to the bar and viciously attack two young men. As the skinheads are attacking the boys, more and more Asian men come to come to fight, leading to a significant loss on the side of the neo-Nazis. Enraged over the loss and other events that follow, Hando goes mad with anger and resentment. In the final moments of the film, he attempts to kill a member of his remaining group but is the killed by a Nazi war dagger that he had recently helped his friend purchase.

Neo-Nazism, or neo-fascism, is a radical form of fascism that is most prominently characterized by the beliefs of white nationalism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, white racial superiority, and Holocaust denial. Neo-Nazis idolize Hitler and wish to live in a society modeled after Nazi Germany, they represent the farthest right of the political spectrum, and blame their nation's issues on minorities, immigration, and Jews. Since neo-fascism is so radical, brutal, and militant, it is difficult to capture large followings and therefore this type of fascism exists in small groups scattered around the world. These small, radical groups share information and propaganda through websites, relying on American servers in order to avoid prosecution under European anti-racism laws. Geoffrey Write's film

“Romper Stomper” demonstrates the brutality, dedication, and loyalty a group of skinheads have towards Nazi ideology. Neo-fascists want society to return to the way it used to be and see violence as the mode of achieving it.

Post-Modern Fascism: Timothy Bagman and Snotsmart News

Timothy Bagman was born in Norfolk, Virginia in 1953 to an Irish Catholic family, his mother was a homemaker and his father worked as a telephone lineman and a middle manager for AT&T. Growing up, Bagman's working-class family was pro-union Democrat and pro-Kennedy. After receiving his bachelor's degree, he joined the navy and later received a master's degree in national security studies and a master of business administration. While in the navy, Bagman was deployed to the Persian Gulf to assist in operations during the Iran hostage crisis. The failure of the mission caused a drastic change in his political views, going from mainly apolitical to a strong supporter of Reagan. After leaving the navy, Bagman worked as an investment banker at Goldman Sachs, later launching a boutique investment bank specializing in media, together with a number of his colleagues from Goldman Sachs. In the early 1990s and 2000s Bagman ventured into media and entertainment, he worked as an executive producer in the television and film industry. In 2007, he wrote a treatment for a new

documentary called *Destroying the Great Satan: The Rise of Islamic Fascism in America*; the outline stated that, “although driven by ‘best intentions,’ institutions such as the media, the Jewish community, and government agencies were appeasing jihadists aiming to create an Islamic republic.” Bagman also worked as vice president of the board of Cambridge Analytica, which was allegedly responsible for using unlawful tactics that targeted American voters in the 2016 election; Cambridge Analytica is largely owned by the Mercer family, a family that also co-owns Snotsmart News.

Snotsmart News is a right-wing news, commentary, and opinion website, of which Bagman was a founding member of the board. When Bagman became executive chair of the company, it took a more nationalistic and alt-right approach towards its agenda and declared the website as a platform for the alt-right. What immediately stands out when browsing articles on the Snotsmart News website is the number of articles about corruption in the government, voter fraud, persecution of conservatives by the left, negative stories about immigrants, and of course Donald Trump. In light of the resignation of Attorney General Jeff Sessions, an article published on November 9th, 2018 presents a list of eight “America First” candidates to replace him. The descriptions of candidates reveal that

“America First” attributes are: harsh policies on immigration, allied with and defendant of Trump, the filing of lawsuits pertaining to leftwing states, government officials, and sanctuary cities, fixing voter fraud, pro-life, pro-Second Amendment, and a non-secular set of beliefs. Another article from the 12th of November 2018 explains that a poll shows sixty-one percent of Democrats describe Republicans as “bigoted,” “sexist,” and “racist,” whereas only thirty-one percent of Republicans describe Democrats in the same way. A July 13th, 2018 article titled “Feds: 1-In-5 Illegal Aliens Crossing with Toddlers are Criminals, A Danger” discusses a report released by the White House that found that of 102 border-crossing toddlers, twenty-one of the adults were deemed “unfit” to be reunited with the children they arrived with. The July 13th article goes on to criticize “the GOP establishment,” “the establishment media,” and Democrats for making false claims about President Trump’s “zero tolerance” policy and stating that the Department of Homeland Security did not keep records pertaining to the detainment of child border crossers during the Obama administration.

A post-modern fascist uses money and various forms of media to spread their ideologies and fear to vulnerable members of a society. Alternative right propaganda is used to make viewers feel personally attacked by and afraid of non-white races, non-Christian religions,

Democrats, and individuals with non-traditional lifestyles and beliefs. Snotsmart News serves as an outlet for the alt-right to push biased, sexist, racist, homophobic, anti-Semitic, and xenophobic stories that incite fear, violence, and white nationalism. The website uses vocabulary that vilifies Democratic officials, progressive activists, illegal immigrants, and the GOP establishment, framing their attitudes as un-American. Snotsmart News publishes articles proposing that Democratic politicians and officials are corrupt, feeding misinformation to the public and allowing non-citizens to vote. The website affirms and supports nearly everything that President Donald Trump says and proposes, although on many occasions it is not correct. Today, in the era of post-modern fascism, money appears to be the way in which the fascist spreads his or her extreme-right ideology. The post-modern fascist buys loyalty; they may project themselves as hardworking and tough, but they pay others to do their bidding.

Conclusion:

This inquiry has sought to establish that fascism can be characterized as appearing in three forms: classical fascism, neo-fascism, and post-modern fascism. Each type follows the same framework but there are certain aspects that set them apart. A classical fascist is self-taught, has impressive and

engaging oratory skills, they wish to regain a lost past, and they harass or kill groups or individuals with dissenting opinions. They preach nationalism, while relying on anti-individualism and the dominance of the fascist state to maintain power. In comparison, neo-fascists exist in small groups, due to their radical and militant ideals, but they maintain the sense of brutality, racism, and xenophobia towards immigrants and progressives paralleling classical fascism. On the other hand, post-modern fascists use money and the media to convey their views, they do not have the hardworking, tough-guy mentality of classical and neo-fascists, they pay others to do the work for them, although they portray themselves as such. Although there are three types of fascism, each type spreads fear, racism, and sexism to their followers, they invoke a feeling of “us versus them,” they preach nationalism, disguised as patriotism, and each type is as dangerous as the next. After leaving the White House staff, Timothy Bagman has worked on campaigns in Europe and Brazil with success. Today, fascist groups are appearing at a greater frequency all over the world, America, Italy, Belgium, Sweden, Holland, and France have all experienced an uptick in alt-right movements.

(2,922 words)

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