

Totalitarianism and Fascism

Totalitarianism and Fascism

A Century of Ideocratic Regimes

Peter Franken

Cover Note: The Architecture of Ideocracy

The cover features the *Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana* (often referred to as the *Colosseo Quadrato*), constructed for the planned 1942 World's Fair in Rome's EUR district. Visually and symbolically, this iconic landmark encapsulates the central thesis of this volume: the critical tension between modernity and modernism.

Architectural Modernity: The structure exemplifies technological and material advancement through its streamlined, monumental execution in reinforced concrete and travertine marble. It represents a mastery of modern engineering and rationalist forms.

Ideological Alignment: Concurrently, the building reinterprets the classical Roman Colosseum to serve an overarching totalitarian imperative. By binding modern architectural techniques to Mussolini's mythic imperial doctrine, the structure demonstrates how the regime co-opted aesthetic modernism to enforce total social alignment and project state authority.

Cover photo: Mario Dilorenzo

ISBN 9789465544366

© Peter Franken

Contents

Preface	7
1 Ideocracies in the 20th Century	9
2 Communist Russia	20
Prelude	20
The New Dawn	27
The Socialist State	63
3 National Socialist Germany	103
The Path to Power	103
Breakthrough of National Socialism	118
The New Germany	132
Racial Purity and Public Health	160
The Country at War	176
4 Fascist Italy	187
The Emergence of a Fascist Movement	187
The Fascist State	195
L'impero fascista	235
5 Totalitarianism and Fascism	265
Nomos and Totalitarianism	265
Generic Fascism	272
Appendices	277
I Corporatism and Fascism	277
II Composers in the Third Reich	283

Endnotes	296
Bibliography	309

Preface

On 29 October 1922, Benito Mussolini travelled by train to Rome, carrying an invitation from King Victor Emmanuel III to form a new government. This event was later mythologised into the 'March on Rome', and from 1927 onward, a new calendar was retroactively introduced with this date as its starting point. Consequently, the period from 29 October 1922 up to and including 28 October 1923 became the year I EF, or year 1 of the *Era Fascista*. The year was indicated in Roman numerals, with the letters EF appended to distinguish it from the conventional calendar (CE or AD). Had fascism in Italy survived, a new century in the fascist era would have commenced on 29 October 2022. As is customary with such milestones, one then commemorates the completion of the preceding century—marking what would have been *L'anno C* (Year 100 EF).

That fascism could have sustained itself for a century is less improbable than it might seem. After all, in Russia, it took more than 73 years before communism finally collapsed. The Soviets, however, had won the war; for them, the basic organisation of society remained unchanged after 1945.

With Italian fascism, the term 'totalitarian' entered political discourse. The phenomenon itself was not new; it had simply waited thousands of years for a definition that would take root. Totalitarianism must therefore be evaluated independently of Mussolini's movement. For that reason, this book first examines and analyses two case studies of other totalitarian regimes: communist Russia and National Socialist Germany. Only then does the focus shift to Italy, where the fascists held power from 1922 to 1943, with a 'coda' until 1945 in the form of the Salò Republic. Subsequently, *Italia Fascista* is measured against the yardstick of totalitarian regimes and compared with those in Russia and Germany.

Why devote such attention to totalitarianism and fascism in 2026? Several reasons can be advanced. To begin with, fascism remains a misunderstood ideology. It is easily conflated with National Socialism, highlighting primarily those elements that lingered in the collective consciousness after the Second World War. The leap from fascism to Nazism, and onward to a dictatorial police state, racism, war, and the Holocaust, is swiftly made. A rigorous analysis of the original ideologies rarely occurs.

It is often asserted that writing about the history of the first half of the 20th century requires a central focus on the Second World War. Yet in this context, stepping away from that focus is necessary. Fascism in Italy and National Socialism in Germany are therefore examined primarily up to around 1940, with the subsequent war period addressed only briefly. Consequently, the emphasis shifts to the socio-communal, economic, and cultural aspects of these ideologies. This focus is essential to comprehending them thoroughly and, above all, to understanding how they achieved such widespread support in their respective countries.

Today, 'fascism' is used primarily as a pejorative label. On a micro-level, it often denotes nothing more than an authoritarian or un-empathetic stance—it has become a generic insult. 'Nazi' is used similarly, though typically when a racist component is present. However, with the emergence of contemporary movements termed neo-fascist or neo-Nazi, separating the wheat from the chaff becomes imperative. Populism is distinct from fascism; hooligans are not necessarily neo-Nazis, even if they adopt such rhetoric for provocation. Maintaining vigilance in the present era requires sound knowledge of these original ideologies. Only then can emerging movements be assessed accurately. This book attempts to contribute to that understanding.

To avoid being swept along by prevailing narratives, one must become conscious of the uncritical self-evidence with which certain political developments are accepted. A critical examination of one's own assumptions—and a recognition that every individual is influenced by their social environment—is more vital than ever, a century after these mass movements first emerged on the world stage.

Peter Franken

Rotterdam, September 2026

1. Ideocracies in the 20th Century

Concepts such as totalitarian, dictatorial, authoritarian, and autocratic are frequently invoked as the antithesis of democratic. This easily leads to conceptual confusion, particularly when another term is introduced: ideocracy as the counter-pole to democracy. A straightforward typology helps clarify these distinctions.

In a democracy, the population exercises substantial influence over state governance through local and national elections, referendums, and a parliament with genuine legislative powers. A state that labels itself democratic, however, does not necessarily function as one in reality. A historical example is the former German Democratic Republic (GDR). Although it possessed a parliament with elected members, the electoral lists were subject to such severe restrictions that independent representation relative to the ruling Politburo was impossible. In such cases, popular representation serves merely as a 'rubber stamp', making the state a democracy in name only.

Where the population lacks meaningful influence over the exercise of power, the form of government falls into one of the non-democratic categories. The oldest and most familiar of these is dictatorial authority. In times of emergency during the Roman Republic, the standard power-sharing system between the Senate and the consuls was temporarily suspended, and a dictator was appointed for a term of six months. This figure wielded absolute authority in all spheres, anticipating the absolute power of the later emperors. The designation 'dictator' fell into disuse as the Roman Republic transitioned into an empire, only re-emerging much later as a title for a head of government. In its place arose the broader concept of the 'autocrat'. In an autocracy, unlimited power is exercised by a single individual, often for an indefinite period. A contemporary illustration is North Korea, where Kim Jong Un holds absolute control.

An autocracy can also emerge when a parliament formally relinquishes its authority. A clear example is the *Ermächtigungsgesetz* (Enabling Act) passed by the German Reichstag on 23 March 1933, through which Adolf Hitler arrogated vast executive powers as Reich Chancellor.

Initially valid for a maximum of four years, this law was systematically extended by the subsequent 'rubber stamp' parliament in 1937 and 1939, before being perpetuated indefinitely by Führer decree in 1943. Dictatorship and autocracy denote specific systems of government—they describe structural frameworks. 'Authoritarian' and 'totalitarian', by contrast, describe the manner in which power is exercised. An

authoritarian regime¹ features an autocratic structure and authoritarian conduct. Decisions enacted by the leader (*Führer*, dictator) or the ruling elite (Politburo) are imposed upon the population, with opposition or dissent strictly prohibited. The primary focus lies on securing outward conformity; eradicating internal dissent is not the immediate priority.

A totalitarian regime, however, demands complete internalisation: citizens must not merely submit to what is imposed, but must actively embrace it. Internal dissent is not tolerated, and a 'thought police' emerges to enforce ideological uniformity. Establishing a totalitarian regime requires considerably more time than an authoritarian one. Much like the introduction of a new religion, it depends on a succession of generational shifts. Consider, for example, children born in Germany around 1925, who were indoctrinated with National Socialist ideology from the age of eight through to adulthood. By 1945, the majority of this cohort comprised 'believing' Nazis. The subsequent generation was destined to form the hard core of the regime. This dynamic provides the foundation for understanding the concept of an 'ideocracy'.

Ideocracy

When an autocracy internalises an all-encompassing guiding principle—one that tolerates no opposition and remains entirely beyond debate—it becomes an ideocracy. This foundational principle is termed the *nomos*. The entire structure exhibits a distinct structural affinity with religion. An autocracy anchored in a fundamentalist religious *nomos* is better known as a theocracy. The temple state of Jerusalem, established by Jewish exiles returning from Babylonia, represents a classical example. Belief in Yahweh as the sole true God and strict adherence to Mosaic law constituted the *nomos* of this theocracy. Non-compliant behaviour, such as failing to observe the Sabbath, could carry the death penalty. A theocracy is thus a specific variant of an ideocracy. The broadening of a *nomos* to non-religious spheres directly corresponds to the declining social influence of traditional religion. The secular motto 'liberty, equality, fraternity' from the French Revolution provides an early example of a non-religious *nomos*. Anyone deemed insufficiently egalitarian—including the Duke of Orléans, who renamed himself Philippe Égalité for self-preservation—risked execution during the Terror.

The 20th century was defined by the existence of two short-lived ideocracies and a third that sustained itself for over seventy years: fascist Italy (1922–1945), National Socialist Germany (1933–1945), and

communist Russia (1917–1991). A fully developed ideocracy is inherently totalitarian, though it invariably originates as an authoritarian regime. In Italy and Germany, the totalitarian stage was never fully realised—in Italy due to a lack of structural consistency and persuasive power, and in Germany due to a lack of time. Russia, by contrast, progressed far along the path toward totalitarianism, though its *nomos* ultimately eroded due to an inability to maintain complete isolation from the outside world.

The central question remains: what inspired large populations in these countries to internalise the *nomos* for extended periods? How did movements operating as quasi-religions achieve such profound success? The explanation lies in the fundamental psychological conditioning of human nature: *homo sapiens reflexus religiosus* is perpetually in search of a Sacred Canopy.

Sacred Canopy

Rituals, and the presence of a sacerdotal elite that monopolises their execution, distinguish humans from all other living creatures. The origin of this defining feature remains a fundamental question. In biblical terms, it corresponds to the expulsion from Eden following the consumption of fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. Evolutionarily, it marks the transition from *Homo sapiens* to *Homo sapiens sapiens*—or, in technological metaphor, the emergence of *Homo sapiens 2.0*. The capacity to reflect upon one's own existence, made possible by a newly evolved neural complexity, represents a cognitive leap hardwired into the species. From this threshold onward, the self-conscious human is confronted by an existential void: living without an intrinsic purpose, with mortality as the sole certainty. *Homo sapiens 2.0* initially experiences existence as ephemeral and transient.

This existential futility became bearable as *Homo sapiens 2.0* developed an awareness of belonging to a larger whole. Though an individual life is brief, it unfolds within a vast cosmos bounded only by the limits of human perception. In the search for existential grounding, concepts such as 'the firmament' emerged—a structured celestial sphere offering a defined boundary within which humanity assigned meaning to its presence. Populating this cosmos with supernatural phenomena, from which a pantheon of gods gradually evolved, reflects a cognitive development that likewise became anchored in the neural architecture of *Homo sapiens 2.0*. Hence, one may speak of *Homo sapiens religiosus*. Excavations in Mesopotamia have yielded vast insights into how religious narratives shaped human consciousness thousands of years ago.

Clay tablets record creation myths explaining the origin and purpose of humanity alongside the gods. One Babylonian narrative recounts how the god Marduk, supervised by Ea, commanded the goddess Aruru (or Mami) to fashion humanity from clay mixed with the blood of sacrificed deities. The sole purpose assigned to humans was to serve and revere the gods. The divine realm required an audience to justify its own existence, effectively projecting the human existential void onto the cosmos. Yet, it provided humanity with an answer to its primary question: existence meant divine service. This foundational narrative proved remarkably enduring.

In the 1960s, sociologist Peter Berger developed a framework building upon the evolutionary-anthropological development of *Homo sapiens religiosus* (or *Homo sapiens reflexus*). For this comforting enclosure of the earthly world by a supernatural order, Berger coined the term *Sacred Canopy*. Shamans initially established themselves as intermediaries guaranteeing the connection between the earthly and spiritual realms. From these origins emerged a priestly class that leveraged its privileged access to the sacred to exercise social dominance. Over centuries, a shared worldview crystallised within communities. People understood the structure of the cosmos, proper moral conduct, and which deities required propitiation.

However, cultural evolution eventually causes traditional worldviews to fracture when they no longer align with a society's intellectual maturity. Just as a child eventually rejects the narrative of Santa Claus due to its inherent contradictions, the inhabitants of the Roman Empire found that the Romanised Greek pantheon no longer functioned as a viable Sacred Canopy. A supreme deity who transformed into animals—from swans to ants—to pursue mortal women ceased to command intellectual respect; the ancient gods had devolved into mythological caricatures. Seeking new structures to conceal existential dread, the population turned toward mystery cults that appealed to transcendental fascination rather than anthropomorphic drama. This religious shift—a classical *Nouvelle Vague*—originated predominantly from the East and Southeast, as Mithras, Isis, Zoroaster, and Sol Invictus displaced Jupiter, Hera, and Apollo.

Within this spiritual transformation, the early Christian movement established itself through cultural mimesis. Whether Christianity absorbed these oriental mystery cults or was itself absorbed into prevailing traditions like the Mithras cult—with the Marian devotion later incorporating elements of Isis—remains a subject of scholarly debate. Ultimately, Christianity gained decisive momentum, largely due to an institutional structure closely modelled on the Roman state apparatus.

This enabled a seamless integration with imperial authority. Secular rule acquired a sacral dimension, while the emperor gained indirect control over the spiritual destiny of his subjects through the mechanism of ecclesiastical authority. With this restored Sacred Canopy, Western society sustained itself for over a millennium. Erosion set in once more during the late Middle Ages, accelerating until, by the close of the nineteenth century, modern humanity stood spiritually isolated. This vacuum explains why modern mass movements like communism and National Socialism found such fertile ground: they offered alienated individuals the illusion of belonging to a grand transcendent narrative, promising a new world and a transformed human nature.

Modernity and Modernism

The use of these terms assumes an understanding of the concept 'modern', which presents considerable analytical difficulty. Strictly speaking, 'modern' exists only in opposition to its antecedent; it denotes 'non-classical' or 'non-contemporary'. Inevitably, the modern of yesterday becomes the classical of today—defining 'modern' is indeed akin to 'nailing jello to a tree'. The derived concept 'modernity' offers greater analytical utility because its origin connects to a specific historical epoch, one that coincides with the initial erosion of the Sacred Canopy in the West.

That erosion proceeded subtly until the onset of the Enlightenment, the eighteenth-century intellectual movement dedicated to the elevation of reason. The Enlightenment spurred scientific inquiry, combated superstition, challenged judicial and ecclesiastical tyranny, and championed fundamental rights. It initiated a profound societal transformation through individualisation, secularisation, and early globalisation, giving rise to concepts of human rights and political philosophies such as liberalism, socialism, and anarchism. The Constitution of the United States stands as a primary structural product of this era.

The definitive rupture occurred at the end of the eighteenth century with the French Revolution—not merely an upheaval in a single state, but a political earthquake within the dominant European power. France led Europe demographically, politically, and culturally. The overthrow of its established order and the transition from monarchy to republic sent shockwaves across the continent. Following the execution of Louis XVI, revolutionary France was viewed by European monarchies as an existential threat capable of imposing its will by force.

Although the revolutionary fervour subsided under Napoleon's imperial rule, the break with the past remained irreversible. The French

Revolution marks the breakthrough of modernity at the turn of the nineteenth century. This socio-political modernisation received immense momentum from the subsequent Industrial Revolution, which reshaped human existence far more profoundly than prior political upheavals. Material conditions transformed dramatically: while overall affluence increased, urban living environments severely deteriorated. Millions migrated from rural areas to industrial cities, generating an urban proletariat.

Secularisation progressed unevenly, advancing rapidly among the urban working class and intellectual elites while rural areas remained under clerical influence much longer. In industrial centres, traditional social cohesion dissolved, leaving individuals reliant solely on immediate family and factory peers. For many, life appeared reduced to a mechanised routine ending in death. This condition generated an intense demand for new forms of meaning and secular transcendent experiences—a desire to restore the Sacred Canopy not through traditional religion, but through secular ideologies offering a collective purpose. Had France followed a gradual parliamentary path like Great Britain or experienced enlightened reforms like the Habsburg Monarchy under Joseph II, the socio-political transition might have occurred less violently. Yet, the Industrial Revolution would ultimately have produced the same structural outcome; the steam engine was far more decisive in shaping the world of 1900 than the events of 1789.

The rapid modernisation of the late nineteenth century produced a version of modernity fraught with internal contradictions. The unbridled optimism of a fully engineerable society—promising perpetual scientific progress, rational organisation, and the triumph of *Homo rationalis*—proved fragile. For the intellectual elite, modernity increasingly represented cultural decay rather than linear progress. This spiritual backlash manifested in new artistic movements and in a deep scepticism toward parliamentary politics, which seemed incapable of managing modern industrial society.

In response to these discontents of modernisation, *modernism* emerged. In *Modernism and Fascism*, Roger Griffin analysed this phenomenon extensively, deliberately treating it as an overarching cultural force rather than a rigid concept.² Griffin identifies a primary characteristic of modernism in its tendency toward syncretism: combining contradictory values and historical references to forge a new order from the ruins of a decadent present. Paradoxically, this often involved incorporating mythical or archaic elements to construct a revolutionary future. Despite its nostalgic borrowings, modernism remains

fundamentally future-oriented and revolutionary. In all its manifestations, modernism seeks to erect a new 'canopy' that satisfies the human need for myth, transcendence, and a total rebirth.

The philosopher of Fascism in Italy, Emilio Gentile, arrives at a comparable description of modernism:

'An ideology, a culture, a movement that, starting out from the perception of modern reality as an age of irreversible changes, wants to address and resolve the human, cultural and political problems produced by industrial civilisation and modernisation by elaborating solutions consistent with its own vision of modernity.'

The American philosopher Peter Fritzsche limits himself to a succinct description:

'Modernism is a force that breaks with the past, manufactures its own historical traditions and imagines alternative futures.'

In this structural sense, both Fascism and National Socialism were fundamentally modernist movements.

Derived from 'modernism' is the qualification 'modernist'. As a label 'modernist' is frequently misapplied in popular discourse, particularly regarding architecture, where modern design is often conflated with ideological modernism.

Establishment of an Ideocracy

An ideocracy is inherently totalitarian, but it invariably originates as an authoritarian regime. It follows an evolutionary trajectory, requiring several generations before its *nomos* becomes fully rooted. Because establishing an ideocracy requires the eradication of competing ideologies, a substantial restructuring of the politico-communal landscape is necessary at the outset. This intervention can take the form of a violent upheaval, as in Russia in 1917, or a creeping structural transformation. The latter occurred in Germany, where the National Socialist movement developed over more than a decade into a parastate. Following a legal transfer of power, it utilised the full authority of the state to transform rapidly into an advanced ideocracy. Fascism in Italy represents a distinct case, as the movement began exhibiting ideocratic traits only after the formal declaration of a fascist state.

Essential to the success of an ideocratic ideology is a receptive socio-political environment. A mass movement offering the promise of a total rebirth—in a society perceiving itself as balancing on the edge of an abyss—has a high probability of success. This was evident in the breakthrough of National Socialism following the 1929 economic collapse. In Russia, a comparable domestic breeding ground for socialism was

largely absent; without a violent revolution, the ideology would scarcely have gained traction.

An ideocratic ideology functions as a secular monotheistic religion. A monotheistic faith asserts its own doctrine as an absolute *nomos*. Other belief systems are tolerated only so long as the dominant faith lacks the power to suppress them. Christianity, for instance, systematically sought to eliminate its Jewish precursor, which nevertheless maintained its existence as a resilient minority tradition across two millennia. The same absolute intolerance of pluralism defines an ideocratic ideology. Like a traditional religion, it relies on canonical texts containing absolute truth, a messianic founder or leader, and structured rituals. Adherents of a secular ideocracy are therefore accurately described as 'believers'—a designation chosen deliberately over more neutral terms.

The formulation of the doctrine is followed by the emergence of a core movement of believers. As long as the societal crisis remains limited, the growth of this movement remains constrained, existing as an ideological anomaly within the prevailing order. Only when a severe calamity sharpens the unconscious desire for a intact Sacred Canopy does the movement gain rapid momentum. Believers join in large numbers as the ideology is embraced and internalised.

This stage marks the critical tipping point. If the movement captures the state apparatus, broader conversion follows rapidly, driven by opportunism and career advancement. To render this bandwagon effect irreversible, the fledgling ideocracy must deliver immediate, visible successes. Results must be demonstrated rapidly, even if this requires a temporary pragmatic adjustment of the *nomos* or economically questionable measures.³ This process of co-optation is vital. While an ideocracy can be maintained purely through repression within a small territory—such as the temple state of Jerusalem following the Babylonian Exile—doing so in large states like Russia, Germany, or Italy is unfeasible. Sustained repression is viable only after the majority of the population has embraced or accepted the new order, whether out of conviction or self-interest; a state cannot place half its population in concentration camps. Co-opting adherents of non-ideological movements generally poses few obstacles, as a passive attitude of 'at least action is being taken' often suffices.

Co-opting adherents of competing ideocratic traditions, however, is considerably more difficult. The explicit atheism of both communism and National Socialism made them natural adversaries of Christianity. In Germany, the traditionally loyal Evangelical Church compromised its doctrine to the extent that it largely lost its distinct theological identity.

The Catholic Church proved far more resistant, making the co-optation of believing Catholics significantly harder. In principle, however, these populations remained convertible. The same held true for the vanquished communists—in itself not so surprising. Certainly in theory, National Socialism profiled itself as a socialist ideology. Furthermore, like communism, it was a future-oriented mass movement, its gaze fixed on a new beginning with a new man, even if that future in Germany began in the here and now; National Socialism was not a millenarian movement.⁴

There was only one population group in Germany structurally excluded from integration into the *Volksgemeinschaft*: the Jews. Their defined racial exclusion provided the rationale for their complete removal from the newly envisioned society.

To consolidate power and embed the *nomos*, the regime deploys its coercive machinery. Freedom of movement is restricted, career paths are conditioned on conformity, and dissenters are subjected to re-education. The concentration camp functions as an explicit instrument of intimidation, hanging like a sword of Damocles over the population. Anonymous denunciations further enhance the efficiency of the secret police apparatus by reducing the need for labour-intensive surveillance. In Germany, the combination of widespread co-optation and targeted repression proved so effective that, shortly before the outbreak of war, the concentration camps were severely underpopulated.

Where co-optation fails and large-scale repression becomes the primary mechanism of control, state violence easily escalates into mass murder, as demonstrated by the Soviet state. In Italy, this process was far less extreme. Fascist ideology failed to establish deep roots, despite enjoying a decade's head start over National Socialism—a limitation due in part to the enduring competition of the Catholic Church, an institutional anomaly within a self-proclaimed totalitarian state.

Co-optation and Propaganda

Measuring the precise degree of co-optation within an ideocracy remains difficult. Individuals who reconcile themselves to living under a new normative order—even one claiming monopoly on truth—will actively seek alignment with the regime. Others simply accept the new reality out of pragmatic career considerations. Both groups are effectively co-opted. Repression ensures that the remainder of the population maintains outward compliance to preserve their daily quality of life. Over time, this dynamic can transition into a stable state characterised by widespread co-optation and mild repression, wherein the

regime's presence is accepted as an unquestioned norm. This transition requires the passage of generations. Compulsory education in modern states provides a useful parallel: citizens accept state enforcement without perceiving it as tyranny, recognising its utility for children and society. A totalitarian society can achieve a similar acceptance, provided it endures long enough for memories of the previous order to fade.

Consensus established in the absence of political choice cannot be equated with democratic consensus, yet as an analytical concept, co-optation remains essential for evaluating how deeply a regime's *nomos* has been internalised.

Propaganda serves both co-optation and repression. To expand the core of believers, the regime's message must be transmitted clearly and without competing noise. All reporting must be centralised and censored to prevent divergent messages from official representatives. External information is suppressed, rendering the population reliant on state channels. However, disseminating blatant falsehoods proves counterproductive; effective propaganda requires a kernel of truth.

More critical than information control is the aesthetic presentation of the ideology. The difficulty of establishing an abstract ideology without visual imagery is illustrated by early Judaism, which struggled against idolatry due to its strict prohibition on depicting or naming the deity. Consequently, the ideocratic temple state of Jerusalem depended heavily on coercive enforcement. Christianity bypassed this limitation by centralising the image of the crucified Christ and subsequently incorporating familiar pagan iconography disguised as martyrs and saints. Church interiors were transformed into visual narratives accessible to an illiterate population.

In the Byzantine part of the empire, the Christian emperors distanced themselves from the relative simplicity of their Roman predecessors and allowed themselves to be inspired by the pomp and circumstance customary in Persia with which the emperor was surrounded. A vast court, complicated rituals—all to increase the distance from ordinary mortals. Due to the symbiosis of church and state, those rituals penetrated more and more into the ecclesiastical sphere as well. Politics and religion became a spectacle. And in this, aesthetics plays an important role. Just as in an advertisement for a consumer product a strong emphasis is placed on attractive positioning, far more than on the content, propaganda likewise works better if it is 'beautifully' sold. The spectacle must, if at all possible, please the senses and preferably bring about a positive 'gut feeling'. Advertising 'viewed with the gut' is the most effective of all. Beautifully staged ritual processions, executed to

perfection, are the textbook example of aesthetic propaganda. The aesthetics of Christian propaganda not only encouraged the rooting of the *nomos*, but likewise the development of religious art outside the church, which in its turn formed the basis for secular art.

In the Western world, the socio-communal focus has shifted over time from religion to politics. That brought a soberness; politics is largely conducted out of sight of the public, and only during an election period is there any sense of occasion. With the rise of new mass movements, that changed. People fell back upon the proven methods of influencing the masses that were practised by powerful monarchs and by the church, which had acquired them a global following. Going to school with the old masters, the craftsmen of the past—that is what it came down to. In modern mass movements, we therefore see the sacralisation of politics; it becomes a spectacle with great emphasis on aesthetic qualities.⁵ Once attention for the movement and its leader has taken hold, belief in the content of the message follows of its own accord.

Ubiquitous images of the leader and of symbols of the movement play a major role. Film offers moving images—highly effective if well choreographed, preferably with a well-chosen voice-over. In Russia, this came to development later because initially the emphasis lay on the physical elimination of real and imagined enemies. But Stalin's consolidation of power marked the beginning of an unprecedented cult around his person. With Mussolini and Hitler, that was the case from the very outset. As symbols, the Hammer & Sickle, the Fascio Littorio, and the Swastika became omnipresent. A special case was that fascist Italy could appropriate a glorious past by presenting itself as a continuation of the Roman Empire and Mussolini as the successor of Augustus. That led to the cult of the *Romanità*—the Romanisation of Italy in a fascist sense.

Structure of this Book

As noted in the preface, totalitarianism and fascism are central to this study. The concept of the totalitarian state was first applied to fascist Italy under Mussolini, though the phenomenon itself long predated the term. To analyse fascism clearly, it is necessary to separate these two concepts. Totalitarianism is therefore examined first through two primary case studies: communist Russia and National Socialist Germany. Subsequently, *Italia Fascista* is evaluated against the criteria of an ideocracy with a defined *nomos*, allowing for a systematic comparison with the other two regimes that sought totalitarian control.

2. Communist Russia

Prelude

Karl Marx

The Communist Manifesto was published on 21 February 1848 by Karl Marx with the collaboration of Friedrich Engels. Communism in this context is the final stage of socialism. Marx argued that an international collapse of capitalist society was required to make a new form of society possible: a classless society without money and with a fair distribution of labor and resources. In his view, this collapse would be accelerated by the excesses resulting from the Industrial Revolution. The impoverishment (*Verelendung*) of the proletariat would culminate in a worldwide revolution that was to open the door to a communist Utopia. Marx was particularly inspired by the conditions in England, the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution. Due to the migration from the countryside to the large cities to work in newly established factories, a working-class proletariat had emerged—in Marx's approach, a new social class. This new underclass had to contend with poor living conditions: living under the smoke of the factories, inadequate housing, low wages, long working hours, and so forth. It would be only a matter of time before the capitalist society that rested upon these wage slaves would perish from its own success. After all, it was inevitable that the exploited proletariat would rise up against the ruling class. Whereas the French Revolution was primarily supported by the bourgeoisie, who claimed their place in society by stripping the nobility and the church of their privileges and properties, in the revolution Marx had in mind, the middle class—somewhat contemptuously referred to as the bourgeoisie—was the enemy the proletariat would have to reckon with.

It is important to note that Marx sketched a future vision and did not actually call for an armed uprising. It is quite possible that he had in mind the image of a building that would collapse under its own weight, after which the original owner would be excluded from the reconstruction. That new building would be erected in accordance with the image of the final stage of socialism, a communist paradise in which there would be an abundance of resources from which everyone could draw according to their needs, irrespective of their contribution.

A fair distribution of labor, to be carried out in a healthy environment without long working hours, with sufficient free time to achieve self-

actualisation, a society without money—such was the Utopia outlined that awaited the new human.

Despite the fact that things were not well with the working-class proletariat in England and other industrialised nations, the existing economic order held out bravely. Capitalism was more resilient than Marx had foreseen, and a smoothing over of principles occurred that made the rise of a more or less respectable (*salonfähig*) social-democratic party possible. In no country, however, did social democracy gain governing power; it remained stuck in the political margin. Nevertheless, attention grew among the propertied class for the problems of the proletariat. Through social legislation, this underclass was bought off, as it were. What Marx had not foreseen was that a worker apparently prefers a bourgeois existence as a means to get ahead in life. A politically instigated, violent revolution was therefore required to give communism a chance, and that happened of all places in 1917 in Russia—an agrarian state virtually without a working-class proletariat and, as such, far removed from Marx's starting points. His vision had clearly proven too limited; what it ultimately came down to was the collapse of the 'building', after which the former underclass could take the reconstruction in hand. And that collapse of social interaction could have multiple causes, as long as they had sufficient impact. A prolonged war is pre-eminently the example of such a cause, comparable to the earthquake that gives the unstable building its final push.

The promised horizon of communism is clearly that of a millenarian movement: the prophecy of the collapse of the existing world, the reckoning with the ruling order, the promise of a new beginning in which all pain and misery will be gone for good and man will lead a paradisiacal existence. Marx is the prophet who heralds the upheaval and predicts the expected secular state of redemption. We see this in Christianity too with a prophet who heralds the arrival of the Kingdom of God, still in 'this' time, whereby humanity will be judged (the reckoning) and the believers will inherit the earth (the idea of the *parousia*). Jesus, however, proved a false prophet; nothing happened, even after a few centuries of waiting. To process the disappointment, the sect he had founded quickly gave a different interpretation to his prediction. Jesus had admittedly died, but the Kingdom of God would commence at his imminent return to earth.

The Apocalypse of John, the final book of the New Testament, revolves around that new explanation, with the addition that Jesus will rule over the earth for a thousand years, after which, in a final battle with the devil and his accomplices, the matter will be definitively decided in

favor of the righteous, and those who survived it all will live happily ever after. Humanity would, after all, be considerably decimated before things reached that stage, since the return of Jesus would be accompanied by massacres of Old Testament cruelty and scale.

Once Christianity had acquired power in the Roman Empire and had factually become the foundation upon which the state rested, there was no longer a need for this kind of wild prediction, and the prophecy of Jesus diluted into the promise that those who believed in him would enter heaven after their death, while hell awaited the unbelievers. The hope for a better future during one's own lifetime, or at least during the lifetime of coming generations on earth, made way for the soothing thought that earthly suffering would be amply compensated after death, if only one believed. In this manner, the church kept its flock in a state of permanent resignation, almost sedation, and thus effectively took over the controlling function of the state apparatus. That was the occasion for Marx to dismiss (Christian) religion as the opium of the people.

The revolutionaries in Russia who were waiting for the future at the end of the 19th century were chiefly drawn from the intelligentsia and were thus highly well-read. Knowledge of the Apocalypse of John was therefore commonplace and was later to exert a major influence on the manner in which, following the virtually bloodless coup that would go down in history as the October Revolution, the actual reckoning with the enemy class, the bourgeoisie, would unfold. As if people wanted to follow John almost literally, as will be shown below.

Revolutionaries in Russia

At the close of the nineteenth century, the Industrial Revolution had largely bypassed Russia. The vast majority of the population lived in the countryside, sustained by agriculture. Through grain exports, the state secured the foreign currency required to finance its technological modernisation. Additional funding came from extensive foreign borrowing, particularly from France and Britain, and to a lesser extent from Germany—itself still in the midst of its rapid *Gründerzeit* expansion. Virtually all high-tech goods had to be imported; high-quality domestic manufacturing was virtually non-existent. Lenin, leader of the Bolsheviks—the most radical wing of the revolutionary movement—later observed after the October Revolution that Russia lagged a century behind the major Western powers. Catching up, he insisted, was a matter of survival: the country had to bridge that hundred-year gap in just twenty years if it was to avoid defeat in any future conflict.¹

Consequently, Russia possessed no sizeable industrial proletariat to speak of. Resistance against the established order—the tsarist regime and its mainstay, the middle class—had to emanate from the intellectual elite. True to their bespectacled stereotype, these radicals gathered in reading circles: evening salons dedicated to discussing the country's future, invariably framed by the doctrines of their prophet, Karl Marx. Political activity was largely confined to circulating articles and pamphlets. The main exception was the sporadic assassination of regime officials, the work of the Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs).

Beside the SRs stood the Mensheviks—broadly comparable to Western Social Democrats—and the Bolsheviks, radical socialists intent on forcing the arrival of the communist Utopia through an apocalyptic revolution the moment opportunity struck. While the SRs sought their primary base among the peasantry, advocating land reform as their chief objective, the Bolsheviks dogmatically insisted on the primacy of the proletariat—a class that remained distinctly underrepresented in Russia. Indeed, the few genuine factory workers who drifted into Bolshevik circles looked somewhat out of place alongside all those intellectuals who could recite the classics by heart and quote Marx in their sleep.

Hardly any self-styled revolutionary managed to escape the notice of the Okhrana, the tsarist secret police. Virtually every member of the future Bolshevik government after 1917 had spent time behind bars or in internal exile—whether in Siberia or along the bleak shores of the White Sea. The leading figures, however, had fled abroad in time, living as expatriates in foreign cities: Lenin resided in Switzerland, while Trotsky and Bukharin frequented the cafes of New York.

With the benefit of hindsight, one might easily view those years of exile as the grand prelude to monumental historical events. For the individuals involved, of course, the reality felt vastly different. They had no way of knowing whether a revolutionary situation would ever materialise. Deep doubts crept in: were they merely waiting for Godot? Marx, after all, was hardly the first prophet whose timeline had failed. Was socialism destined to share the fate of countless earlier millenarian movements whose prophecies had dissolved into nothing? When all was said and done, not a single one of them had ever been proven right. Compounding this existential gloom was the harsh reality of exile in remote, unforgiving outposts. Near the White Sea, Yankel Solomon shared a cramped, dark cottage with the sullen and introverted Ioseb Dzhughashvili, in a region where the sun vanished for months on end. Later, under their revolutionary pseudonyms Yakov Sverdlov and Joseph Stalin, both would play commanding roles in the new state. Sverdlov was

a committed revolutionary, yet even he was frequently plagued by doubt. In exile, he read and wrote voraciously, seeking out fellow radicals whenever possible. He posited that the ultimate realisation of Utopia required closing the chasm between human conscious and unconscious functioning—a reconciliation between reason and emotion, or, in modern terms, the full integration of software into hardware. That such a transition was essentially an evolutionary process did not fit his worldview: man would over time become truly human out of habit, not a developed animal.²

The revolutionary movements did not initially view each other as adversaries. They were fellow travellers, at most opponents, not enemies, and strove toward the same primary goal: the end of the tsarist regime and the organisation of a new society. Everything outside the revolutionary circle was designated as the 'swamp'. And just like a real swamp, it possessed the characteristic of swallowing anyone who failed to stay clear of it. This approach led to a closed front, and in any case, there was far more that connected the revolutionaries than divided them. The swamp was populated in this metaphor by the Philistines—the standard designation for the bourgeoisie and the nobility. To this group belonged also the officer corps and the higher army leadership. The petty-bourgeoisie that lay like a suffocating blanket over the cities, however, aroused the greatest aversion and later became anathema to the new Soviet State. The countryside bothered them less; uneducated peasants lived there, and they were merely waiting for their liberation. During the ultimately suppressed revolution of 1905-1907, Soviets had been formed, first of all in Saint Petersburg. A Soviet was a council of workers and, later, also soldiers. The later term Soviet Republic therefore means Council Republic. These simply continued to exist when, by way of concession by the regime, the Duma was created as a representative body. This parliament, however, proved in practice to have very little influence. The informal power of the Soviets that were formed throughout the entire country did, however, play a role at the local level, if only by binding the population in resistance against the authoritarian regime. Of the revolutionary movements, the Bolsheviks led the way in organising small connections at the grassroots level. With this, they managed to recruit a relatively large number of women for their movement, with appealing points such as independence from the husband, freedom to go and work outside the home, the abolition of arranged marriages, and the right to divorce. Support from this quarter would later prove of almost decisive importance.

The Great War

In the summer of 1914, Russia joined the Great War on the side of the Entente, taking up arms against Austria-Hungary and Germany, the Central Powers. In itself, this choice was remarkable, as Russia had little to fear from either nation. In the background, however, a factor was that Russia had in the few decades prior gradually forfeited its financial independence by borrowing excessively in England and, particularly, in France. The government in Paris imposed increasingly stringent conditions on the Russian government before any loan could be floated on the financial market, particularly after the crisis of 1899 resulting from the overheating of the Russian economy. In this state of pseudo-colonial dependence on France, aligning with the Entente was effectively unavoidable. Yet there was also a positive side to choosing the Entente: the opportunity to wrest new territory from the Ottoman Empire—likewise one of the Central Powers—and thus finally gain control over the long-desired passage from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean, an ambition the British had always resisted. But now that Russia was no longer viewed as a potential threat to British interests in India and forced Germany into a war on two fronts, London granted Russia a free hand around the Bosphorus. The war went poorly for Russia. The territorial objective was not achieved, and the Russian army became bogged down in a war of attrition with its adversaries. The result was mounting war weariness among the population, fuelled by deteriorating living conditions and a profound lack of confidence in the military leadership. Following the humiliating defeat in the war against Japan, the armed forces had failed once again—or so it was felt. Desertion occurred on a massive scale; conscripted peasants abandoned the hopeless conflict and returned to their land.

On 22 February 1917, two and a half years after the outbreak of the war, a strike erupted in Petrograd—the name given to Saint Petersburg upon the declaration of war—which soon escalated into rioting. Tsar Nicholas dispatched a contingent of soldiers from the front to the city to quell the unrest, but to no avail. As the situation escalated, the regime collapsed like a house of cards. The Tsar abdicated and was arrested alongside his family. The Duma, which until then had possessed only formal political authority, was assigned the responsibility of forming a new government. A committee was created under the name of the Provisional Government, pending democratic elections. Yet the outcome for which many had hoped failed to materialise: Russia's withdrawal from the war. Given the hidden dependence on France, this was hardly surprising, though for the general public that consideration played no

role. It appeared as though distant allies were deemed more important than the starving population at home. For a bourgeois government, however, the threat of capital flight was a paramount concern. Had French creditors recalled their outstanding loans on a massive scale, the country faced bankruptcy. For the subsequent Bolshevik regime, such considerations would no longer carry weight, but in mid-1917 matters had not yet reached that stage.

In Germany, the leadership sensed an opportunity to escalate the situation in Russia by offering a helping hand to the radical splinter group of the Bolsheviks. Lenin was permitted to travel in a train across German territory to Finland, arriving in Petrograd on 3 April. He profited from the amnesty the Provisional Government had declared for all political exiles at home and abroad. That they admitted a Trojan horse in the person of Lenin can be attributed solely to naivety, born of the euphoria following the successful revolution.³ He ignored the outstretched hand of the Provisional Government to join a broad coalition and immediately heightened tensions by demanding that all power be transferred to the Soviets, under his leadership. With this, he bewildered not only the bourgeois parties but also the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks, to whom a prominent revolutionary like Trotsky still belonged at the time. Lenin's demand was rejected, prompting the Bolsheviks to continue their activities underground. Day-to-day operations fell to Sverdlov who, like Stalin, had hurriedly returned to Petersburg from his place of exile on the White Sea.

Following the February Revolution, the Petrograd Soviet swiftly developed into a counter-government. Although the official government issued a vast number of laws and decrees that would have rendered the country the most progressive in all of Europe, it failed to execute them for lack of support and legitimacy (being unelected). The Soviet, by contrast, consisted exclusively of elected members who could quickly lose their seats in regularly held elections. Within six months, the Bolsheviks thus managed to secure a majority in this Soviet and establish a temporary power base. To the public, the Bolsheviks profiled themselves as the only party unwilling to mark time. Where other parties promised a transition period of ten to fifty years for the expropriation of estates, for instance, the Bolsheviks wished to realise that upheaval immediately. For urban dwellers, this carried little practical significance, but it endowed the Bolsheviks with additional momentum. Six months after his return, Lenin deemed the time ripe for a coup d'état, and on 25 October 1917 the moment arrived. Prime Minister Kerensky was at the front, and the ministers assembled in the Winter Palace yielded easily to the inevitable. The real revolution had begun.

The New Dawn

The Bolshevik Revolution

What is known in Christianity as the Last Judgment was to the Bolsheviks the New Day, and this day now genuinely appeared to be dawning. The problem, of course, was that the seizure of power in Petrograd and the resignation of the Provisional Government did not yet mean that the Bolsheviks held actual power throughout the entire country. While the garrison stationed in Petrograd had remained aloof and the sailors were in any case supportive of any revolution, in Moscow armed resistance was encountered. Yet after a week of fighting, here too the issue was decided in favour of the Bolsheviks. They declared that the All-Russian Congress of Soviets now constituted the government—a body of elected representatives from across the country in which the Bolsheviks had secured a majority. The other parties opposed this and demanded the establishment of an official democratic coalition government. In protest, they subsequently boycotted the Soviet Congress. The remaining members, as a matter of course, voted for the formation of a government consisting solely of Bolsheviks, bearing the name Council of People's Commissars (*Sovnarkom*), with Lenin as chairman.

Against Lenin's wishes, certain Bolsheviks urged the broadening of the support base, which in December 1917 resulted in a coalition with the left wing of the SRs. The new government moved swiftly to honour its primary promises: land reform, the stabilisation of the food supply, and the termination of participation in the war. Furthermore, it was essential to gain real control over the vast country, a task that fell largely to the existing and newly established Soviets. The problem for the new government was its highly isolated position in multiple respects. On the one hand, domestic support was paper-thin, and its opponents would soon resort to armed resistance. On the other hand, Lenin and Trotsky (who had crossed over from the Menshevik camp shortly before the October Revolution) were all too aware of the backward nature of their country. One might well skip the penultimate stage in the development of humanity as formulated by the prophet Marx and leap directly from an agrarian society to a socialist one, yet its further construction would unconditionally require assistance from more developed nations. It was therefore imperative that communist revolutions occur as soon as possible in several highly industrialised capitalist countries, launching an 'International' of mutually supportive, like-minded nations. In short, Russia was running far ahead of the music. The dragging war had indirectly prompted a revolution in Russia, but in Germany no such

outcome was in sight. Prolonging the war in the expectation that it would spark revolutionary action there was a mere chimera. Domestic interests now had to take precedence; without peace with Germany, the situation risked sliding further into chaos.

An agrarian country reliant primarily on animal draft power cannot function without peasants and horses. Massive numbers of both, however, had been requisitioned by the army, severely depressing agricultural output. Restoring the food supply would be impossible in a state of ongoing warfare. Trotsky was assigned the task of opening peace negotiations with Germany, the chief power among the Central Powers, which occupied vast swathes of Russia. On the one hand, he was eager to conclude a swift agreement; on the other, he continued against better judgment to hope for a revolution in Germany, causing him to stall..

The outcome was a peace treaty heavily stacked against Russia. The so-called Peace of Brest-Litovsk, named after the location of the negotiations, provided for the loss of vast territories of the former empire. Germany was henceforth protected by a chain of satellite states in the East. These states—the Baltic region, Finland, Poland, and the Russian heartland of Ukraine—became economically dependent on Germany and, alongside Russia, were obligated to deliver raw materials to Germany. Under this treaty, Russia lost a quarter of its population, a third of its arable land, a quarter of its industry, and the vast majority of its coal mines. Latvia and Lithuania were to be de facto annexed by Germany. Poland, Ukraine, Estonia, and Finland became formally independent nations. In addition, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia also gained independence.

That matters ultimately reached this point, against the wishes of many prominent Bolshevik figures, was the doing of Lenin, who insisted on an immediate end to the war regardless of the terms and without according any weight to the views of the other Entente members. The German communists felt abandoned, but Lenin argued that the success of the revolution in Russia was at stake, and that a failure in Russia would be of no benefit to revolutions in other countries.

The treaty between the Central Powers and Russia was signed on 3 March 1918. On 27 August, a bilateral treaty between Russia and Germany followed, in which Russia committed to paying six billion marks in compensation for outstanding debts that the Bolsheviks had cancelled and for the nationalisation of German property. As part of the Versailles negotiations in 1919, these treaties were largely declared void. Poland, Finland, and the Baltic States retained their independence, but Ukraine and the Caucasian states were reincorporated into Russia. The reparations payment of six billion marks was likewise annulled.

Civil War and Foreign Intervention

Lenin's fear that the revolution was in danger of failing was far from groundless. The Bolshevik power base was anything but secure, and across the vast expanse of Russia lay numerous regions over which the new government exercised scarcely any control. Opponents of the Bolsheviks began organising into resistance groups and small armies. To distinguish them from the Reds—the colour long associated with communism—their adversaries were collectively referred to as the Whites. Tsarist military units not deployed at the front formed small armies led by anti-Bolshevik commanders. The fundamental problem for the Whites, however, was their profound internal division. On one side were groups seeking to restore the monarchy; on the other, supporters of the ousted bourgeois government; and alongside them the Cossacks, who under the Tsar had enjoyed far-reaching autonomy in exchange for acting as a mobile unit to crush threats to the tsarist regime—or simply out of boredom, in which cases the Jewish population usually bore the brunt.

The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk—seen by many as a disgraceful sell-out by Lenin—led to mass desertion from the regular Russian army, which formally fell under the authority of the new government but was commanded by tsarist officers. Consequently, the ranks of the White armies swelled, while the government could no longer rely on a dependable instrument of power. Lenin therefore tasked his confidant Trotsky with forging a dedicated military force. Although the Bolsheviks already possessed a small militia, under these circumstances the Red Guard was utterly inadequate. In a remarkably short period, Trotsky managed to raise the so-called Red Army from the ground to take the fight to the Whites. To guarantee the political reliability of this army, so-called political commissars were placed alongside the officers, effectively subordinating the military leadership to them. Properly considered, these commissars were the government's representatives in the field—a distinctly hands-on approach to leadership that was presumably decisive in determining the outcome of the struggle. In accordance with the peace treaty, Germany remained entirely aloof from the conflict in Russia. As a result, the heartland of Bolshevik power—Petrograd, Moscow, and the surrounding territory—was not threatened, allowing them to concentrate their efforts on the fight in the outer regions. That term, incidentally, is something of an euphemism, given that these territories comprised roughly three-quarters of the entire Russian Empire.

Following the German defeat in November 1918, support for the Whites arrived from Russia's former allies, Britain and France, and to a lesser

extent from the United States. Gradually, the conflict devolved into a virtually inextricable tangle of warring factions, as the Whites failed to present anything resembling a united front, while peasant uprisings and anarchist rebellions further complicated the fray. This lack of unity was the primary reason the Bolshevik Red Army emerged victorious. A second reason was that the Reds held the central core, leaving the Whites scattered across a vast surrounding periphery and making it difficult for them to join forces. All in all, the war would drag on for five years, from October 1917 to October 1922.

The struggle was waged by all parties with a ruthless intensity, as though the Apocalypse had arrived. On both sides, the most horrific atrocities were committed, both in qualitative and quantitative terms. Entire villages and captured army units were slaughtered, frequently triggering equivalent reprisals. The conduct of the Red Army against the Don Cossacks, who had declared independence, was particularly brutal. The Cossacks, more than any other group, were identified with the tsarist regime; to the Bolsheviks, they were the personification of the class enemy who might block their path. Dealing with the Cossacks became a special project for Sverdlov—the major figure behind the October Revolution—who pursued a single goal: the decimation of the population in the region concerned. Later, this genocidal action was compared to the civil war in the Vendée, when the French Revolution stood on precarious ground and its leaders sought to nip every form of resistance in the bud.

Yet this approach was not an isolated case. Bukharin had previously compiled a list of class enemies against whom ruthless violence ought to be deployed, albeit phrased somewhat more euphemistically. The revolution, after all, could only succeed if socialism were given free rein in Russia. Groups that could be assumed to remain opposed to the all-encompassing transformation of society deemed necessary by the Bolsheviks had to be removed from society—both physically and through intimidation. Terror, in either case, is the only effective method, since the liquidation of large groups forces the remaining like-minded individuals into internal emigration.

The extent to which this constituted deliberate policy on the part of the Bolsheviks becomes chillingly clear when reading what Sverdlov articulated on 20 May 1918 during a session of the party's Central Executive Committee. He indicated that revolutionary authority in the cities was by then strong enough to withstand an attack from the bourgeoisie. In the countryside, this was not the case. He therefore proposed that an image of the enemy had to be manufactured in the villages by pitting poor peasants against the wealthier ones, the kulaks. The resulting civil

war at village level would play directly into the government's hands, as a unified peasant front would cease to exist.

Bukharin designated nine groups eligible for 'concentrated violence'. These comprised the parasitic element of society (effectively anyone not contributing to production in some form), the bureaucracy that had sustained the *ancien régime*, bourgeois entrepreneurs and other capitalists, specialised bourgeois, religious, and military personnel, the intelligentsia (effectively anyone in a profession requiring higher education), officers, well-to-do peasants, the petty bourgeoisie, and finally the lower clergy. The hierarchy reflected the importance attached to the sequence in which the various groups were to be tackled. What it amounted to, however, was that an entirely fresh start had to be made with completely new personnel. A similar clean sweep would later form the objective of the Cultural Revolution in China and in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge. In every case, it was a march over millions of corpses. The political outcome of the civil war was the stabilisation of the Bolshevik regime, which managed to establish its authority over the vast majority of the former empire. Only the independence of Poland, Finland, and the Baltic States had to be accepted; otherwise, all temporarily independent territories returned to the empire, which was of vital importance, particularly in the case of Ukraine. The matter was sealed with the founding of the Soviet Union, of which eventually 10 other national states alongside Russia would form part.⁴ Formally, these were autonomous regions, but in practice the country would be governed as a unitary state.

Estimates of the number of victims claimed by this five-year war range from 10 to 15 million, including the entire tsarist family. It would leave permanent scars.

Lenin speaks on 8 March 1918 during the Seventh Party Congress:

'Comrades! The question of changing the name of the party has been before us ever since April 1917 and has brought forth a great deal of discussion leading to almost complete unanimity. The Central Committee now proposes to change the name to Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik). The word "Bolshevik" is necessary because it has acquired a certain political significance both in Russia and abroad. The term "Social-Democratic Party" is scientifically inaccurate and our press has already called attention to that fact.

When the workers formed their own government they came to see that in the process of revolutionary development the old conception of democracy, bourgeois democracy, has been left behind. We have arrived

at a democracy which existed nowhere in Western Europe. The nearest thing to it was the Paris Commune, which, according to Engels, was not a state in the proper sense of that term. In so far as the toiling masses themselves undertake to govern a state and to organise military force for the support of that state, to that extent the special government machinery and the state compulsion apparatus disappears. We cannot therefore stand for a democracy in its old form.

On the other hand, in undertaking socialist reforms, we should clearly formulate the object toward which these reforms are aiming. That object is to create a communistic society and not merely to expropriate factories, shops, land, and other means of production or to introduce strict accounting and control over production and distribution. We must go beyond that and realise the principle: from each one according to his ability and to each one according to his needs. That is why the name – Communist Party – is the only scientifically correct name.

The most important reason for changing the name of the party is the fact that the old official socialist parties in the leading European countries have not yet broken away from the spirit of chauvinism and patriotism which has led to the complete crash of European socialism. Now almost all official socialist parties stand in the way of the workers' revolutionary socialist movement. Our party, which at the present time has without doubt and in an extraordinary measure the good will of the toiling masses of all countries, should come out with a clear and straightforward statement that it has broken with the old official socialism. The change of name of the party will serve as the best means of attaining that end.

The most difficult question is the theoretical part of our programme. Two points of view are in evidence. One, of which I am the protagonist, maintains that there is no reason to discard the old theoretical part of our programme. All that is necessary is to add a description of imperialism as the highest stage in the development of capitalism, and then a description of the era of the socialist revolution, which is now in progress. The second point of view, that of Comrade Bucharin and Comrade V. Smirnov, maintains that it is necessary to remove part of the old programme which deals with the evolution of industrialism and capitalism and substitute the later stages of capitalism, viz., imperialism, emphasising at the same time the impending transition to the social revolution. I do not think that the two standpoints are so radically divergent, but I shall insist on my own point of view.

Our next task must be to describe the Soviet type of state. I believe that the official socialists of Western Europe have perverted completely the Marxist conception of the state. The experience of the Soviet Revolution