

**Political Socialization and its Discontents:  
Youth in Fascist Italy and the Soviet Union**

by

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	iv
Introduction .....	1
1    Ideals.....	21
Fascist Italy.....	22
The Soviet Union.....	30
2    Institutions .....	38
Fascist University Groups .....	39
The Communist Youth League .....	47
3    Revolutionary Tensions.....	54
Fascist Italy and the “Problem of Youth” .....	55
The Soviet Union and the Meaning of Communism.....	60
Conclusion .....	66
REFERENCES .....	73

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis seeks to examine the dynamics underpinning the regimes of Fascist Italy and the Soviet Union in the interwar period through the prism of their policies and attitudes towards youth. As each regime placed a premium upon the allegiance of youth, efforts directed towards that social group provide an unparalleled means of analyzing not only what they hoped to accomplish, but how they sought to accomplish it. The methods utilized by the primary youth groups of the two regimes act as a microcosm of the wider processes of revolutionary change they sought to initiate. Because of the unique positions occupied by the two groups, both were directly subordinated to the interests of their respective parties, their organization and goals can be used to make broader conclusions about the nature of the revolutionary project and the means by which revolutionary movements hoped to institutionalize and perpetuate their visions of social and political change. In other words, comparison of the two groups can be used as a convenient means of comparison for the two revolutionary states they were tasked with perpetuating, revealing in the process similarities and differences in the social bases, means of legitimizing their rule, and the ideologies of the two regimes.

## **Introduction**

The Interwar period witnessed a burst of political extremism all across Europe. The conclusion of the First World War left many questioning deeply held beliefs and searching for alternatives to what they perceived as the system responsible for the woes of the war. In some countries, like Fascist Italy and the Soviet Union, movements took power which sought nothing less than a transformation of society and the people who lived in it. They hoped that by seizing political power they could utilize their positions to enact sweeping changes in their respective countries, bringing the entirety of their populaces along with them, in pursuit of the creation of a “new man.” The Fascists and Communists may have had differing conceptions of what this “new man” would be like, but they agreed that he was to be free from the decadent influence of the bourgeois values that had brought Europe to the brink of collapse.

Belief in the transformative potential of youth was a commonly held belief throughout Europe at the time. Even those countries, like France and Great Britain, that largely managed to maintain their prewar political and social structures saw a discourse on youth during the interwar period centered around their activism and malleability. In the Soviet Union and Fascist Italy, however, preoccupation with youth took up a much larger share of the regimes' energy and attention. The same preoccupation with youth could be seen in Nazi Germany as well, in which legions of Aryan boys marching the goosestep, organized under the Hitler Youth, became a potent symbol of the regime. They based their appraisals of the revolutionary capability of youth on different criteria, but both regimes were convinced of the ability

of youth to live the values of their respective ideologies and transmit them into the future.

At its core, the discourse on youth in both states centered around the issue of continuity. Having seized power and institutionalized their revolutions, to a greater or lesser extent, a central concern for these revolutionary movements became the consolidation of control and the transmission of their values to the next generation. If the revolution was to succeed, it needed a constant infusion of new blood. Because of this need not only to hold onto power, but to ensure its continuation, the youth had to be politically socialized to accept and cherish the ideals of the movement. Both regimes directed a fair share of their propaganda and appeals toward youth, calling upon their idealism and enthusiasm as a means to bind them tightly to the new ideologies and channel their youthful energies into areas dictated by the leadership.

The process of political socialization of the young was not a one-way street, however. As leaders of the two parties attempted to awaken the political and revolutionary consciousness of their youth, they found that youth could, and did, actively participate in the discourse that surrounded them. Fascists and Communists alike found that once the desire for social justice and revolutionary transformation of society had taken hold in the young, youth did not simply parrot back the parties' conceptions of what that meant propagated by the party, but constructed and articulated their own ideas about fascism and communism. This thesis is an examination of the relationship between ruler and ruled through the prism of youth in Fascist Italy and the Soviet Union. I look not only at some of the tools of political socialization used by the regimes, two youth groups particularly, but the way in which youth reacted to and rebelled against the doctrinal pronouncements and definitions

handed down from on high. Both regimes relied upon an inculcation of revolutionary consciousness for the perpetuation of their legacy, but found their definitions of revolution challenged by those in whom they saw the surest hope for the future of their ideologies: the youth. I hope to answer not only the question of how revolutionary leaders of the interwar period in Fascist Italy and the Soviet Union sought to instill their values and conceptions of revolution in the hearts and minds of the young, but also the ways in which youth rebelled against the normalizing and stultifying imperatives of their respective regimes.

The primary organization relied upon in Fascist Italy for the creation of the next generation of leaders was the *Gruppi Universitari Fascisti*, or GUF, a group for university students. The decision to focus upon the GUF, as opposed to one of the myriad other Fascist youth organizations, was dictated by the unique position it occupied in the National Fascist Party, or PNF. While other youth groups, like the *Opera Nazionale Ballilla*, were under the jurisdiction of the state's Ministry of National Education, at least from 1929, for the entire period covered in this thesis the GUF remained a branch of the Fascist Party, under the direct head of the Party secretary. The privileged position held by the GUF in the Party hierarchy spoke to its privileged position in the plans of Fascist leaders. The goals of the GUF were twofold. By drawing university students into its orbit, the organization deprived them of room for dissent or anti-fascist activities. But the GUF also had a more important purpose, the encouragement and creation of the future rulers of Fascist Italy. Ostensibly, leadership positions within the PNF or the state were based on merit and ability, but, when one considers the qualities necessary for rule, a university-educated member of the voluntary Fascist university group is a more obvious choice than a poorly educated

worker. In spite of the movement's populist orientation and rhetoric, it still found a large portion of its support among the white-collar middle classes, and its policies and institutions both reflected and reinforced that fact.

The chosen organization in the Soviet Union was the Communist Youth League, or Komsomol, although its position was not as privileged as its Fascist counterpart. Unlike in Italy, the Komsomol was virtually the only youth group available. There were no independent student groups or anything of the sort, so the Komsomol was one of the few options available for politically engaged youth. Accordingly, the Komsomol was not so geared to the production of a new ruling class, but to the educational acculturation of the broad masses of the Soviet youth. This acculturation process targeted not only those at the receiving end of Komsomol campaigns, but the *Komsomol'tsy* themselves. During the time of the New Economic Policy, the NEP, members of Komsomol were expected to live according to a new code of "Communist ethics," and, by their example, effect a revolutionary change in societal behavior by example and education. This is not to suggest, however, that the Komsomol was not involved in the construction of a new generation of leaders. In correspondence with the Communist idea of the "dictatorship of the proletariat," the Komsomol, by educating the youth of the proletariat and peasantry, were preparing them to assume their proper role in the building of a socialist society. As one resolution stated, one of the primary tasks of the League was to train "worker and peasant youth to be able to govern their state."<sup>1</sup> In addition, *Komsomol'tsy* were sometimes the only representatives of Soviet power in rural areas of the country.

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<sup>1</sup>Ralph Talcott Fisher Jr., *Pattern for Soviet Youth: A study of the Congresses of the Komsomol, 1918-1954* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 61.

While hardly an ideal situation, the lack of Party personnel in the countryside meant that many rural *Komsomol'tsy* acted as agents of the state from a very young age. This situation shows that, in many ways, the Komsomol was but another means for the Party to control and mold the populace. Lacking the pronounced focus that the GUF had on creating a new generation of elite state officials, a symptom of the class basis and ruling style of the PNF, the Komsomol's energies were primarily spent on making sure that the youth of the Soviet Union held views and ideas corresponding to those of the Communist Party.

The chronology in this paper covers different periods for the two regimes, but the focus and concerns of the two states during their respective times creates interesting grounds for comparison. For Fascist Italy, the years examined go from 1922 to 1935, with a particular focus upon the crucial years of 1929-1935. Broadly speaking, this period covers the time from the March on Rome, when Mussolini and his Black Shirts seized power, to the launching of the Ethiopian War. The March on Rome was undertaken in response to a prolonged political crisis that had afflicted the country since the end of the First World War. The years of 1919 and 1920 are often referred to in the historiography as the *biennio rosso*, or the two red years. These two years witnessed an enormous eruption of leftist political activity, primarily directed by the Italian Socialist Party, the PSI, and the Popular Catholic Party, the PPI. Concentrated in north and central Italy, the two red years saw thousands of strikes and huge wins for the two parties in the parliament: there were 500,000 strikes in 1919,

over one million in 1920, and the parties managed to gather over fifty percent of the votes between them in the parliamentary elections of 1919.<sup>2</sup>

Benito Mussolini's first *Fascio di Combattimento*, a combat league, was founded in Milan in March of the same year. It was a loosely organized group unified primarily by its support of Italy's intervention in the war, glorification of its victory, and the espousal of a virile and martial Italy. For its first year it failed to make much of an impact, but by 1920 the movement had become a rallying point for those seeking to turn back the red tide that had been sweeping both local and national elections. The lack of clarity and definition in the programs of the *Fascio* allowed the movement to be taken up by groups like the Futurists, disgruntled socialists, and war veterans. The groups took different forms based on local circumstances, and were often organized around a *ras*, or local boss, but one of their more consistent features was the use of violence for political ends.<sup>3</sup> The *squadristi*, or squads, that conducted attacks against socialist town councils proved successful in halting the machinery of administration in the country and its symbols and style managed to attract legions of supporters, many of them young.

In its earliest days, the years 1919 and 1920, the Fascist movement was a “volatile and fluid amalgam of frustrated minorities drawn from the most varied political and cultural backgrounds,” united only by a “radical rejection of the political realities of the day” and a dedication to the “war-veteran's cult of the fighting spirit.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Giuseppe Finaldi, *Mussolini and Italian Fascism* (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd., 2008), 37.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup>Marco Revelli, “Italy” in *The Social Basis of European Fascist Movements*, ed. Detlef Muhlberger (New York: Croom Helm, 1987), 11.

Primarily concentrated in the more urban and industrialized north of Italy, particularly the city of Milan, over the next few years the movement saw its regional concentration and social base radically altered. Of the 118 *fasci* established by May 1920, over 80 of them, or around 70 per cent, were centered in the area around Milan; by May 1922, a few months before the seizure of power, the portion of Fascists from all the big cities of the North, including Milan, was no more than nine per cent.<sup>5</sup> It was during this period that the “urban fascism” of 1919 and 1920, with its strong level of support from the petty-bourgeoisie, was wedded to the “agrarian fascism” of the large and medium landholders.

The addition of a wing of fascism centered in the countryside profoundly altered the movement's orientation. Agrarian fascism was responsible for the systematization of violence within the movement, and its aggressive moves against socialists and unions brought thousands into its fold. The systematization of violence encouraged by the large and middle landholders in the countryside, at a time when other parties were largely working through parliamentary and institutional means, facilitated the movement's rapid spread from the urban north to the rest of the country.<sup>6</sup> The local nature of fascism came to the fore as action squads popped up all over the countryside to combat the influence of socialists and other organized workers. The influx of new members from rural areas shifted the movement in a more conservative direction, a shift crystallized by the formal establishment of the party.

By 1921 the National Fascist Party, the PNF, was formally constituted, reflecting its transition from a political movement to a political party vying for power.

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 11 and 14.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 20.

The program adopted by the Party at its founding on 20 December 1921 backpedaled from some of the more radical propositions of the early Fascist movement. Its early sympathies to the workers' syndicalist movement were heavily toned down, a reflection of the vested interests of the party's new social base. Even the act of constituting the movement as a proper party signaled Mussolini's new desire to work, at least partly, through traditional political channels. The formation of the party reflected the conservative element brought into the movement by the agrarian fascists. What had started as a diverse movement unified by its opposition to the prevailing political order was transformed into a party with a "clear steer towards a reactionary, authoritarian and anti-proletarian position."<sup>7</sup> By encouraging violence against organized wage-laborers in the countryside, the agrarian petty-bourgeoisie pushed for a political program that sought to restore order to a country on the verge of collapse through the suppression of the working class movement. In addition to this, by 1921 around 2.8 percent of the PNF membership was composed of members of the industrial bourgeoisie, a group which constituted only 1.7 percent of the population of Italy.<sup>8</sup> The relative over-representation of industrialists in the party was yet another factor pushing the fascists towards an emphasis on order and anti-proletarianism. At this time, the changing demographics of Fascist supporters pushed the movement in a new direction, but they would have even more far-reaching consequences once the movement had taken power.

Fascists had been included in the Liberal electoral bloc of 1921, but, by 1922, their hand had been strengthened considerably. They were now a formidable political

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 18.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 19.

party backed by thousands of armed supporters, not to mention the crucial support offered by landed and wealthy supporters. On October 29 1922, following the hastily organized march of thousands of armed Fascists towards Rome, Mussolini was offered the position of prime minister. This event would later become the mythologized March on Rome, where the forces of Fascism, marching on the capitol, had seized power and placed it in the hands of Mussolini, heralding the start of the Fascist Revolution.<sup>9</sup> In reality, the liberal government of the time, realizing its lack of support and control, had given the position to Mussolini in the hopes that he could restore a semblance of order to Italy.

It wasn't until 1925, in the aftermath of the assassination of the socialist politician Giacomo Matteotti, that Mussolini managed to secure firmly his position as dictator. Near the end of May 1924, Matteotti had spoken before parliament and given a lengthy speech denouncing the Fascists. He attributed their recent electoral victories and parliamentary majority to nothing other than “violence, intimidation, and corruption.”<sup>10</sup> In response to his incendiary speech, Matteotti was murdered by a group of disgruntled Fascists less than a month later. The public outcry surrounding his murder constituted a major crisis for Mussolini and the Fascists. Yet the king, and more importantly, the army, maintained their support for Mussolini, fearing a return to the disorder of the two red years. On 3 January 1925, Mussolini made his famous “Clarification Speech” in response to the crisis, reacting not with conciliation to the opposition, but intolerance. In the aftermath of the speech all political parties apart

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<sup>9</sup> Finaldi, *Mussolini*, 45-6.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

from the PNF were banned, newspapers brought under the watchful eyes of Fascist censors, and the elected local governments, which had been one of the primary organs of socialist power, were abolished. It was in this period that “fascistization” of Italy began in earnest. The process of fascistization entailed the institutionalization of fascist values and methods within the organs of the state and party. School teachers were made to take an oath of loyalty to the regime and portraits of Mussolini were placed in every classroom as the PNF gradually brought every institution of power and control into the Fascist orbit. By 1929, the regime had more or less consolidated its control over broad swathes of Italian society.

This period also saw the establishment of methods of rule that would last until the regime's downfall. A key point in the transformation of the regime's methods occurred in the aftermath of the Fascist electoral victories in April of 1924. Ironically, the greatest electoral victories for the Fascists were in those very areas, like the south, where the PNF was organizationally weakest.<sup>11</sup> The divergence between the regime's electoral support and the PNF's organizational base led to a gradual weakening of the PNF's political power. What this meant in practice was that the PNF was gradually stripped of any policy making responsibility as those decisions increasingly came to be made by state organs. The party was resigned to resolving conflicts within the movement itself, propaganda, drumming up support for government initiatives, and other such tasks. The depoliticization of the PNF allowed it to be turned into a tool almost exclusively dedicated to the regimentation of the masses of Italy. By the late 1920s, the structure of the Italian Fascist system had been more or less set: it was comprised of the combination “a mass party base” dominated by the “white-collar

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<sup>11</sup>Revelli, “Italy,” 23.

middle classes,” a large portion of whom were civil servants, and “an executive structure... preponderantly in the hands of upper-class elements”<sup>12</sup> like landowners and industrialists. The primary base of Fascist support, the middle classes, were not so much expected to rule the state as administer it.

The period between 1929 and 1935 is often seen as the “high point” of Italian fascism. With fascistization of the institutions of power virtually complete, the party turned itself more earnestly to the problem of continuation, consolidation, and the creation of the “new Fascist man.” Party leaders increasingly expressed their concerns about the lack of true commitment to fascism in the populace, and the early 1930s saw a flurry of initiatives try to bind Italians closer to the regime and the Fascist way of life. Party leaders focused particularly upon the youth, and an even more focused effort was made to guarantee the support of university students for the regime. Special effort was made to make university youth feel as if they had an active part in the construction of the new Fascist order and they were encouraged to help articulate a new, more universal Fascist ideology that would provide the basis for a total moral regeneration of Italy and eventually the world. The revolutionary element of fascism was once again emphasized in a way that it hadn't been since the March on Rome. Youth took the opportunity provided by the shift in emphasis to put forward their own ideas of what fascism was. The brand of fascism advocated by youth during the 1930s, and supported for the most part by the party, would prove, however, to be a unique feature of the time.

When Fascist Italy launched the Ethiopian War in 1935, it marked a transition to yet another phase of Fascist ideology. The energy that had been invested in

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 33.

transforming the domestic side of Italian life was from there on turned to foreign affairs. The more radical propositions of the young Fascists that had briefly enjoyed support were suppressed along with their journals as the emphasis shifted to the unity of the nation in pursuit of imperial glory. By primarily focusing my analysis of Fascist Italy upon the crucial time from 1929 to 1935, I hope to draw out those elements of fascism most dedicated to the creation of the “new Fascist man” and the revolutionary transformation of society. While efforts continued until the fall of the regime in 1943, many of the most revolutionary elements of fascism were elided in the latter half of the decade as a consequence of war and imperial aggrandizement. In addition, it was during this period that youth were most assiduously courted by the regime and also the period in which youth managed to elaborate their own version of fascism, a version quite different from that envisioned by the leading PNF members.

My analysis of the Soviet Union covers the time between the October Revolution of 1917 and the launch of the First Five Year Plan in 1928, with a more concentrated focus on the period of the New Economic Policy, the NEP, which began in 1921 and ended with Stalin's rise to power in 1928. The October Revolution was a reaction to the untenable system of dual power that had taken hold in the aftermath of the February Revolution earlier in 1917 that had toppled the Tsar. Following the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II in March 1917, two institutions were established as a means to fill the power vacuum left by the monarch and continue the revolution: the Provisional Government and the soviets, or worker's councils, with pride of place given to the Petrograd Soviet. The two institutions both announced their commitment to the revolution and their intention to work together, with the soviets positioning themselves as a sort of check on the power of the Provisional Government and

claiming they were protecting the rights of the working class. As time went on, however, workers, soldiers, and sailors increasingly withdrew even nominal support from the Provisional Government, in large part due to its continued support for and involvement in the First World War. In early 1917 the Bolsheviks were just one of several socialist parties, and not a particularly popular one at that. They expanded rapidly in size, however, as workers, soldiers, and sailors responded positively to its slogans of “Peace, Land, and Bread” and “All Power to the Soviets.” In July, when a spontaneous demonstration took to the streets of Petrograd to protest the Provisional Government in what became known as the “July Days,” it was around the slogan of “All Power to the Soviets” that they rallied. The suppression of the Bolshevik Party and the arrest of its leaders, after the dispersal of the demonstrators by armed troops, marked the end of the uneasy cooperation between the Provisional Government and the soviets. A new Provisional Government was formed in response, with a new governing coalition dominated by socialists, primarily the more moderate Mensheviks, with the socialist Alexander Kerensky at its head. In what proved a poor decision, the new governing coalition resolved to continue Russia's involvement in the war. When the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Army, General Kornilov, attempted to launch a coup against the Kerensky government in August, Kerensky was widely perceived as being in league with Kornilov to crush the workers’ movement in the city.<sup>13</sup> It was in the context of the Provisional Government's almost complete loss of legitimacy among the populace that the Bolshevik Party succeeded in launching the October Revolution and seizing power in the name of the workers.

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<sup>13</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 59-60

The Bolshevik Party, soon to be the Communist Party, could claim with some legitimacy to represent huge swathes of the urban workers, soldiers, and sailors of Russia<sup>14</sup>, but its refusal to share power, apart from a short-lived coalition with Left Socialist Revolutionaries, soon led to the outbreak of the Russian Civil War. Opposition to the Bolshevik seizure of power was almost immediate, but the Civil War truly began in earnest in 1918 and lasted until roughly 1921. A brutal conflict that killed millions, the Russian Civil War saw the Reds- the Communist Party and its supporters- contending with the Whites- a loose coalition of those opposed to Communist rule- for the future of Russia. During the course of the war, the Communists adopted a series of radical measures including nationalization of the economy, forced grain requisitioning, and the consolidation of both production and distribution in the hands of the Party, that would be retroactively dubbed War Communism. Far from a coherent set of policies or the enactment of a definite plan, the measures of War Communism resulted from the exigencies of the war. Despite the savagery of the conflict, some, especially during the relative conservatism of the NEP era, would look back fondly on the period of War Communism as a time of heroic struggle and rapid movement towards socialism and communism. Yet the policies of War Communism proved unsustainable in the long term. At the 10<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in March of 1921 the New Economic Policy was launched.

The NEP was acknowledged at the time as a “strategic retreat” from the policies of War Communism so that the Communists could consolidate their control and restore an economy that had been reduced to shambles by a series of wars, revolutions and famines. The Communist Party relinquished its vice-like grip over the

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 72.

economy of the country, while maintaining its hold of the “commanding heights,” forced grain requisitioning was replaced with a tax in kind, and private trade was once again encouraged. In addition to economic liberalization, there was a concomitant buckling down on political power. More importantly for the topic of this thesis, the NEP entailed a major shift in the way in which the Communist Party conducted itself and the manner in which it sought to instill revolutionary consciousness and effect revolutionary change. During the Civil War, the struggle for socialism had been depicted as a straightforward matter of defeating the bourgeoisie, rich landowners, and other elements of the old society, but in NEP the matter was not so simple. With political power firmly in the hands of the Communist Party, the emphasis shifted to struggling against the cultural backwardness of the Russian population. The struggle was no longer against the armies of the bourgeoisie, but the far more insidious and subversive bourgeois habits and behaviors that still prevailed in people's everyday lives.

The policies and attitudes of the NEP era reflected not only the shift from a wartime to a peacetime footing, but also the transformation of the social base of the regime due to the precipitous decline of the urban proletariat. While the urban proletariat, among whom the Communist Party enjoyed widespread support, numbered 3.6 million in 1917, by 1921 that number had dropped by over half to 1.7 million.<sup>15</sup> The huge decline in numbers of one of its primary bases of support meant that the Communist Party had to entirely retool its style of rule and goals. The peasantry, alienated from the regime by their experiences of forced conscription and grain requisitioning, had to be won over if the Party was to affect the revolutionary

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 94.

transformation of society it so desired.<sup>16</sup> The shift to educational work during NEP was at least in part a response to the Party's shaky social base at the time. With the urban proletariat comprising an even smaller portion of the population than it had before the war, and the restoration of Russia's industry – a surefire way to swell the ranks of the proletariat- still a few years off, social transformation had to happen through education rather than combat and struggle.

The struggle during NEP was waged in the arena of culture: Communists sought to instill their values and behaviors in the broad masses of the Soviet population in order to radically change their everyday life. A heavy focus was placed upon such goals as battling illiteracy, drinking, and prostitution, and the cultivation of a hygienic lifestyle was presented as the ideal of any true Communist. If the struggle during the Civil War had been conducted with bomb and pistol, it was conducted during NEP with book and pencil. As the end of the decade neared, however, and the economy was almost restored to its prewar level, talk turned to the next step for the Soviet Union. With the implementation of the First Five Year Plan in 1928, the focus on stabilization and cultural education of the NEP era was pushed aside in favor of a heroic struggle to rapidly transform the economic base of the country. Stalin's rise to power initiated a qualitative shift in priorities and meant the end of the debates about the nature of communism that had been such a large part of the NEP era.

For the two regimes, both desperate to maintain their hold on power and the viability of their revolutions, ensuring the successful political socialization of the young seemed an obvious choice. Yet the methods they chose approached youth as a

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

virtually homogenous group: youth were targeted because of the particular conceptions about adolescence and youth held by leaders of the regimes. Despite the enormous variety in backgrounds and experiences of youth they sought to indoctrinate, they were still seen as a charmed subset of the populace based merely on their age alone. Youth were stereotyped as malleable and receptive to socialization, which was certainly true in some cases, but this conviction perhaps reveals more about the attitudes and beliefs of the leadership than it does about the actual qualities of the young. The blank slate that the young were thought to be meant that approaches toward youth were a sort of microcosm of the way the regimes approached the task of revolutionary transformation in general.

Anxieties surrounding youth reflected the gulf that could separate leaders from the led. Due to their obvious importance for the future, failures to win over youth to the cause were a source of intense worry for the leaders of both the parties and the youth organizations. Both of the youth organizations examined in this paper were under the firm control of their respective parties, and the leadership positions were occupied by those older than the constituencies of the groups. Members of the groups may have been young, but the direction and tasks of the groups were set by the adults of the parties. The fact that those who directed the groups were adult party members may seem obvious, but it helps one understand the tensions inherent in the revolutionary projects. The youth organizations were to encourage and engage youth, but their ultimate goal was to ensure youth could be guided by the firm hand of the party in order to guarantee the continuation of the regime.

Seen in this light, the different methods of political socialization adopted by the regimes can be used to examine similarities and differences between the two on a

much broader scale. The fact that the Fascists utilized the GUF as a “breeding house” for the next generation of leaders and the Communists used the Komsomol as an organization primarily geared towards mass education provides vital insight into the broader differences between the two regimes, in terms of ideology, goals, social bases, and methods. Both aspired to create a new form of government and society, radically different from that which had come before, but, as approaches toward youth indicate, those aspirations differed markedly in content.

By the mid to late 1920s, support for the Fascists was drawn predominately from the middle classes, a fact reflected by the importance of the GUF in the socialization process. While there were a variety of youth groups in Italy at the time, it was to the GUF that the regime turned for its next generation of leaders. Rhetoric to the contrary notwithstanding, the GUF was a group tuned to “select and prepare the appropriate candidates which would guarantee the political and ideological survival of the regime without preserving freedom of debate within the party.”<sup>17</sup> Fascists envisioned a new, authoritarian political and social system in which the broad masses of Italy were led and united by the figure of the Duce. Following the depoliticization of the PNF in the mid '20s, when the power to make policy was more or less taken from the party and made a state prerogative, the continuation of Fascism required ideologically indoctrinated, yet still capable, administrators. The GUF was the organization responsible for providing these administrators. Accepting any university student between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-eight, a group dominated by youth of the middle classes, the GUF made sure that these students could be relied upon and

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<sup>17</sup>Luca La Rovere, “Fascist Groups in Italian Universities: An Organization at the Service of the Totalitarian State,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 34 (1999): 473.

were politically loyal. In this way, the GUF was a specially-crafted tool utilized to bring about the particular form of political structure aimed for by the Fascists: a state led by an elite few, those who decide policy, backed up by a party of faithful supporters and capable administrators drawn from the middle classes.

The Komsomol also functions as a useful microcosm of what the Communists sought to achieve in society at large. Unlike the GUF, Komsomol was not to be the vat in which rulers and administrators were brewed, but a mass organization that aimed to transform and educate the youth as a means to transform society. Focusing its efforts among young peasants and workers- any peasant or worker between the ages of fourteen and twenty-three would be accepted into the group without qualification while those from other social groups had to provide at least two recommendations<sup>18</sup>- Soviet leaders aimed to produce loyal Communists through the alteration of their everyday modes of behavior. The era of NEP was one of economic recovery, not transformation, so it was society that had to be transformed instead. The focus on peasants showed the regime's desperate desire to win over a rural population alienated by the experiences of the Civil War, and the courting of workers was an indication of both the Party's ideology and base of support. The cultural education campaigns to transform members of Komsomol and the larger category of youth in the 1920s provide, on a smaller scale, an example of the transformation the Communist Party hoped to make on the whole of Soviet society.

The privileged position occupied by youth in the political socialization processes of the two regimes means that an analysis of their methods, goals, and cultures can provide an unparalleled glimpse into the nature of the revolutionary

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<sup>18</sup>Fisher, *Patterns*, 31.

projects enacted by the two regimes in the interwar period. Because of the fact that youth were seen as a blank slate, processes directed at molding them were often clear manifestations of the deepest desires and anxieties of the regimes. By looking at policies directed toward youth and the organizations created to contain and mold them, I hope to draw out some of what constituted the core of the two regimes' beliefs and systems of rule. The specific youth upon whom attention was focused, teenage and young adult workers and peasants in the Soviet Union and middle class university students in Fascist Italy, and men in both cases, is but one way in which the core prerogatives of the regimes were revealed in their approaches to the young. Youth may have provided a useful construction through which the hopes and anxieties of the revolutionary leaders could be explored, but the image and ideal of youth put forward could often be restrictive and exclusionary. Images of youth were often explicitly gendered. The social cultures of both organizations were masculine, and the ideal Fascist and Communist presented to the young could sometimes directly contradict their own ideals. By examining the actual responses of the young, whether the antireligious radicals of the Komsomol or the dissenting intellectuals of the GUF press, I draw out the ways in which the young asserted their status as active individuals who could not be so easily fitted into the mold which the processes of political socialization and indoctrination tried to make them fill.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Ideals**

The ideals of the two regimes differed drastically. The Italians sought to create a “new man” of a virile and martial sort, with an unwavering, quasi-religious faith in and dedication to the Fascist state. The Communists of the Soviet Union, on the other hand, hoped to raise selfless new members of society fully dedicated to the goals of the collective and willing to sacrifice their own personal wants and desires in service of that collective. They agreed, however, that the particular qualities of youth made them natural candidates for the reception and propagation of the values of the regimes. In addition, both viewed women as backwards in comparison to men. While the Fascists consciously sought to encourage the backwardness of women, in the Soviet Union, rhetoric notwithstanding, the perception and depiction of women as backward spoke more to the tenacious survival of prerevolutionary patterns of thought than any concerted ideological effort. The particular values propagated were unique to each of the regimes, but they shared an emphasis upon loyalty to something beyond the narrow limits of bourgeois individuality, and a pride of place given to youth as bearers of these new values.

## Fascist Italy

There are inherent difficulties in discussing the revolutionary essence and goals of the Fascist movement. As stated by Giovanni Gentile, one of the prime ideologists of the Fascist regime, the “truth is that the meaning of Fascism cannot be measured in terms of the special theses that it adopts... in theory or in practice.”<sup>19</sup> In essence, fascism was always conceived of as a malleable doctrine, subject to change based on the contingencies of the moment. It was defined by its followers not so much by “its practical manifestations as a party organization,” but as a “whole way of conceiving life, a spiritual way.”<sup>20</sup> Seizing upon the feelings of disaffection and energy unleashed by the First World War, the early manifestations of fascism provided much of the revolutionary impulse that sustained it for roughly two decades. Some of the early *squadristi* were prone to calling themselves “anti-political politicians,” a sentiment that perfectly captures the general tenor of Fascist ideology. While clearly and self-consciously a political movement, fascism gathered many of its early supporters through its principled rejection of the prevailing political currents. It sought to bring a moral and spiritual conviction to politics and government, eliminating what its followers saw as the false dichotomy between the individual and the state. The creativity of the individual was to be respected and nurtured, but only by and within the confines set by the state. The greatness of Italy was to be renewed by the

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<sup>19</sup>Giovanni Gentile, “The Origins and Doctrine of Fascism,” in *Italian Fascisms: From Pareto to Gentile*, ed. Adrian Lyttelton (London: Jonathan Cape, 1973), 302.

<sup>20</sup>Benito Mussolini, “The Doctrine of Fascism,” in *ibid*, 39.

cultivation of a new man, a man raised in the Fascist manner and unswervingly loyal to the Fascist state. The model for this new man was to be provided by Mussolini himself, as well as the brave *squadristi* and *arditi* who had given their lives in the First World War and during the Fascist Revolution. Even in these vague formulations one can begin to see some of the tensions inherent in Fascist ideology. In fact, the tension between the ideal of the *squadristi*, young, emotional, and violent, and the ideal of the totalitarian state, complete obedience and control, was one of the central contradictions that plagued the regime's dealings with its more active youth.

The myth of the *squadristi*, and its accompanying cult of youth, was one of the central myths of the Fascist regime. The *squadristi* had been among the earliest supporters of fascism, and their courage and daring became the ideal for a whole new generation and symbols associated with them became symbols of the nation. Yet the myth of the *squadristi*, or *squadrisimo*, is but one aspect of the legacy left by the early *squadristi*. In their attitudes and composition, as well as their importance in the Fascist seizure of power, *squadristi* left an indelible mark upon the character and ideology of fascism. These early *squadristi* took much of their spirit from the civilian Arditi movement and incorporated many of its ideas into fascism. The Arditi “had been created [during the First World War] as a special attack unit that always received high-risk assignments requiring courage, a quick pace, violence and the absence of moral hesitation.”<sup>21</sup> In a movement that glorified the war and its veterans, the Arditi were held in especially high esteem. After the war, the Arditi took to the streets as loosely political groups; their political role was indeed quite limited, but “more than an

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<sup>21</sup>Emilio Gentile, *The Origins of Fascist Ideology, 1918-1925* (New York: Enigma Books, 2005), 76.

ideology,” the civilian Arditi movement “greatly influenced fascism with their warrior myths, lifestyle and methods”<sup>22</sup>. Even the famous Fascist black shirt is derived from the uniform of the Arditi: “with the Arditi the black shirt became the symbol of national enthusiasm and military daring,”<sup>23</sup> two values near and dear to Fascist ideology.

In order to properly evaluate their impact, however, one must also look at the people who composed the original groups. The most striking feature is their relative youthfulness. As one scholar points out, because of its relatively late arrival on the political scene, fascism “could gain a mass base only by directing its appeal to a younger generation which had not yet been attracted by the existing parties.”<sup>24</sup> The violent actions and daring boldness of the early Fascist *squadristi* drew in legions of young supporters. Some of these supporters had been veterans of the Great War and longed to return to its violence and excitement, while others, who had been too young for the war, took the opportunity offered by the violent actions of the early Fascists to prove their courage. Roberta Valli, in a study of early *squadristi* groups in Bologna and Florence, revealed that in both cities the percentage of those in the groups between the ages of 16 and 27 was over 80. The youthfulness of the squads meant that, again in both cities, the percentage who had not participated in the war was close to 50. The fact that so many had not actually participated in the war shows the importance of the

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 84.

<sup>23</sup>Herbert W. Schneider and Shepard B. Clough, *Making Fascists* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929), 191.

<sup>24</sup>Bruno Wanrooij, “The Rise and Fall of Italian Fascism as Generational Revolt,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 22 (1987): 406.

myth of violent rebellion in attracting youth to the *squadristi*.<sup>25</sup> The prevalence of the young among fascism's early supporters led to the institution of another central tenet and Fascist myth and belief, the cult of youth.

The cult of youth remained one of the central tenets of the Fascist regime throughout its entire existence. The youth of its initial supporters may have provided the impetus for the institution of the cult, but, over time, it grew to the point where one foreign observer dubbed it “the outstanding feature, of the Fascist movement.”<sup>26</sup> Youth were to be the means of carrying on the Fascist project and rejuvenating Italian consciousness. Speaking on the nature of fascism, Mussolini stated that the victory of Fascism lies in “the possibility of its continuous renewal” and “regards the new generations as forces destined to achieve the ends appointed by our will.”<sup>27</sup> It was upon the coming generations that Mussolini and his contemporaries placed the responsibility for the continuation of the Fascist project. As fascism was not a set doctrine, but, ostensibly, a fluid system of values, the youth had to take the primary role in altering the shape of fascism in order to take it into the future. Here again we see some of the tensions of the Fascist project that will be explored more fully in chapter three. Mussolini called upon the young to enact a “continuous renewal,” while simultaneously relegating them to the role of achieving “the ends appointed by our will.”

This contradiction had little effect on the praise showered upon youth, however. Speaking before the Young Fascists in Congress in Rome in 1931, Mussolini

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<sup>25</sup>Roberta Suzzi Valli, “The Myth of Squadristo in the Fascist Regime,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 35 (2000): 135-6.

<sup>26</sup>Herman Finer, *Mussolini's Italy* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1935), 418.

<sup>27</sup>Mussolini, “Doctrine of Fascism,” 58.

said to them, “Young Fascists! There are two words that echo in the heart and fill with pride the generations which arise in the new Italy willed by the Black Shirts.”<sup>28</sup> This brief statement reveals much of the Fascist attitude towards the young. One sees again the focus on “generations,” which speaks to the hope for continuation, and the reference to the “new Italy” shows the means by which this is brought about. The freedom of the coming generations from the bourgeois decadence of Italy's liberal past meant they would be totally dedicated to the world “willed by the Black Shirts.” The enthusiasm of these young Fascists was to provide the energy and example for the entirety of Italy. The young, “and therefore ardent, impetuous, foreign to scruples of prudence and calculating prudence [sic],”<sup>29</sup> were the means of the spiritual regeneration of the nation. Their impetuosity and lack of scruples were not frowned upon, but actively encouraged. Positing itself as a revolutionary alternative to Marxism, fascism replaced the centrality of class conflict with the centrality of youthful rejuvenation and generational revolt. The March on Rome became the central myth of the regime and was presented as beginning a process of renewal for Italy and the world in which the youth occupied a central role.<sup>30</sup>

The new Italian was to be youthful in his thoughts and actions, and in particular, possess the “virility” of the young. Virility is a term that appears incessantly in Fascist propaganda and speeches and was best personified by none other than the swaggering Mussolini himself, at least according to the propaganda organs. Fascism harnessed the ideal of classical masculine beauty to the service of the regime:

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<sup>28</sup>Benito Mussolini qtd. in Finer, 414.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Tracy H. Koon, *Believe, Obey Fight: Political Socialization of Youth in Fascist Italy, 1922-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 29.

the aesthetic ideal of masculine beauty was “functional for the Fascist plan to make Italians virile, by means of special attention paid to physical robustness.”<sup>31</sup> Despite his relative lack of youth- he was in his mid-forties in the latter half of the 1920s- Mussolini was trumpeted in every organ of the Fascist press as the living embodiment of the classical ideal and the virile Italian of the new type. According to the propaganda, Mussolini was a master of every sport and could learn new ones with ease due to his quickness of thought and strength. In 1929, Marinetti, the Futurist, wrote that Mussolini's “smashing, squared jaw, prominent disdainful lips spit boldness and aggressiveness on everything which is slow, pedantic, meticulous.”<sup>32</sup> Even his mere appearance was enough to inspire rhapsodies dwelling upon those traits that dovetailed best with the ideology of fascism. Mussolini was held up as an example for the new generations of Italians to follow, a living example of the Italian of the new type that the Fascists were seeking to create: bold, virile, aggressive, and instinctive.

The explicit gendering of the discourse around virility was no accident. Fascists did not seek to liberate women like their Soviet counterparts, but to return them to the domestic sphere. The number of women who had actually left that sphere was irrelevant; Fascists reacted against what they perceived as the decadence of the modern woman. Women were to be physically fit like their male counterparts, but their expected role in the regime was not as able and willing soldiers, but healthy and prodigious mothers. In the preamble to the Rules for one of the organizations for young girls, the group was told to “prepare worthily for life the future mother of the

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<sup>31</sup>Gigliola Gori, “Model of Masculinity: Mussolini, the 'New Italian' of the Fascist Era,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 16 (1999): 39.

<sup>32</sup>Filippo Marinetti qtd. in *ibid*, 46.

family of new generations.”<sup>33</sup> The “new Fascist man” was to be just that, a man. The sole task set before women was the production of Fascists for the next generation. Propaganda images often clothed ideal fascist women- plural because “no [individual] woman had enough personal charisma... to embody it convincingly” as Mussolini did for men- in the facade of modernity, yet they were “still expected to be daughters, wives and mothers, and nothing else.”<sup>34</sup> Their position as mothers and wives was presented as a natural fact, a fulfillment of their “biological mission.” Women were discouraged from pursuing either education or paid work, with propaganda depicting working women as ugly and manlike or working only to afford the latest luxury clothes.<sup>35</sup> The first image was an affront to the model of feminine beauty put forward by the regime and the other a trivialization of women's reasons for working. In short, the ideal woman of fascism drew extensively upon traditional conceptions of femininity and in fact sought to roll back what little headway women had made into the public sphere, returning them to what was seen as their proper vocation, motherhood.

By the 1930s, when the institutions of Italian society had been successfully fascistized, many of the elements of Fascist ideology, and what was expected of a good Fascist, were being neatly encapsulated in the so-called *squadristi* novels that became popular around the time. In her study of these novels, Roberta Valli identifies several recurrent themes and devices throughout the novels that served to communicate their political messages. The protagonists, who came from a variety of

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<sup>33</sup> The Rules in Finer, *Mussolini's Italy*, 444.

<sup>34</sup> Gigliola Gori, *Italian Fascism and the Female Body: Sport, Submissive Women and Strong Mothers* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 59.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

social backgrounds, are all bound by the immorality of their lives at the outset of their respective novels, only taking concrete steps to remedy the situation after their exposure to fascism: their lives become “a 'mission' from the moment [they choose] to aim for a high and noble goal.”<sup>36</sup> For the most part induced to join a squad either by love of the fatherland or fascination with the Fascist uniforms, their conversion to the Fascist and *squadristi* cause is “primarily defined as freedom from all 'hints of the bourgeois nature.’”<sup>37</sup> Free of bourgeois traits, these new members of the squads find their lives imbued with a new sense of purpose, their “devotion to a superior goal... transforms manly traits into virtues.... the model for the regime that did not aim to create new *squadristi*, a small group of men capable of great things, but a new 'everyday' Italian.”<sup>38</sup> The image of the *squadristi* painted in these novels was one eminently suitable for the task of the regime in the 1930s. Calling upon the romantic image of the youthful *squadristi*, a central myth of the regime, the novels utilized the dashing figure to show not the violent and uncontrollable Fascist of the early days, but the obedient, manly, and dutiful Italian that fascism sought to create.

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<sup>36</sup>Valli, “Myth of Squadristo,” 140.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid, 141-2.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid, 143.

## The Soviet Union

At the beginning of the NEP era, the Soviet Union was physically exhausted. After close to a decade of war, civil war, and famine, the Communist Party set aside the policies of War Communism in favor of the more moderate approach of the NEP. The emphasis upon total and rapid transformation of the economy and society was replaced by a more conciliatory emphasis on culture and education. Having successfully seized power and maintained it through the crushing difficulties of the Civil War, the Party turned its attention to the cultural development of the populace. The reintroduction of capitalist elements into Soviet society with the advent of NEP was a source of constant fear and anxiety for the leadership, and education was seen as one of the best ways to arrest the development of “bourgeois tendencies.” Almost immediately after the legalization of private trade, restaurants and gambling establishments reopened for the leisure of wealthy patrons.<sup>39</sup> In what seemed a confirmation of the Bolshevik leaders' worst fears, city youths flocked to the new dancing clubs and cafes en masse, imbibing and imitating the cultural output of their West European and American counterparts. The period of NEP was one of great uncertainty for leaders who feared a backslide into the bourgeois past.

Following the destruction of the Tsarist political and social order, the goal now became one of “constructing a socialist society in a new Russia defined officially as

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<sup>39</sup> Anne E. Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia: Enthusiasts, Bohemians, Delinquents* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 116-7.

soviet in its political organization but not yet socialist as a society.”<sup>40</sup> The population had to be brought up to the cultural level befitting a socialist society. Yet what this culture was to be like, and what it meant to be socialist or communist, were still open questions in the early years of the 1920s and even up until the Stalin years. While the formula lighted upon by the Party saw proper socialist values as sobriety, hard work, thrift, and study during the period of NEP, some, particularly among the youth, maintained their conception of socialism formulated during the era of War Communism. One of the central tensions in the ideology and culture of fascism, at least in terms of youth, came from the clash between values of independence and revolt represented by the *squadristi*, and the values of obedience and control needed and cultivated by the regime. In the Soviet Union, the tension arose from a similar contradiction. While many youth clung tenaciously to the heroic image of communism provided by the Civil War, official Party policy and propaganda during the NEP actively tried to suppress that particular conception. The views of militant youth during NEP will be more closely examined in chapter three, but first, one must look at the official conception of Soviet culture and the new man propagated during NEP.

In general, the stabilizing needs of the NEP meant that the qualities looked for in youth changed from ones like aggression and heroism to qualities like sobriety and studiousness. The old order had been destroyed, and different values were needed to construct the new order. In this regard, the Third Komsomol Congress of 1920 is instructive. While technically a prelude to the advent of NEP, speeches given by Party luminaries at the congress hinted at the change in emphasis to come. In particular, the

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<sup>40</sup>Robert C. Tucker, “Lenin's Bolshevism as a Culture in the Making,” in *Bolshevik Culture: Experiment and Order in the Russian Revolution*, ed. Abbot Gleason, Peter Kenez, and Richard Stites (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 33.

speech Lenin gave titled “Tasks of the Youth Leagues,” is the perfect illustration of the transitional phase between War Communism and the NEP. Delivered in early October, just a few months before the introduction of NEP in March 1921, the speech still contains much of the aggression that defined the Civil War era. Sketching out the nature of a “communist ethics,” Lenin states that “morality is what serves to destroy the old exploiting society and to unite all the working people around the proletariat.”<sup>41</sup> The attitude of the Civil War is noticeable in his focus upon the destruction of the “old exploiting society,” but, in general, the speech is more indicative of the policies to come than it was of the Civil War.

One can clearly see a harbinger of things to come in Lenin's overall focus upon the issue of morality. While anything that was in league with the class struggle was deemed morally correct, the fact that he addressed it at all speaks to the winds of change blowing through the Communist Party. Now that the war had almost been won, the task turned to defining how communists, and particularly young communists, should act and behave. The youth, “that generation... who began to reach political maturity in the midst of a... struggle against the bourgeoisie,” had to “learn communism.”<sup>42</sup> Youth were no longer being told to destroy, but to learn what it meant to be a Communist. Bukharin took a similar approach in a speech from the same congress, saying that “We need conscious Communists who have... a burning revolutionary passion... but who have calm heads... who can stop when necessary,

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<sup>41</sup>Vladimir Lenin, “Tasks of the Youth Leagues (Bourgeois and Communist Morality),” in *Bolshevik Visions: First Phase of the Cultural Revolution in Russia*, ed. William G. Rosenberg (Ann Arbor: Ardis Publishers, 1984), 35.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid, 36.

retreat when necessary.”<sup>43</sup> Moderation, not passion, became the guiding ethos behind the Komsomol.

By 1922, the tenor had been set that would guide communist youth until 1928 and the beginning of the First Five-Year Plan. If 1920 marked the beginning of the shift towards the new attitude, in 1922 it was being stressed with an even more intense determination. The reason was that by 1922 communist leaders had begun to fear the effect that the “bourgeois temptations” reintroduced by NEP might have upon the youth. It was seen as necessary to fortify the youth against the reintroduction of bourgeois elements by inculcating in them a healthy sense of “Communist morality.” Lenin may have discussed it briefly at the Third Congress, but, during the Fifth in 1922, Bukharin gave a speech setting it on a slightly firmer ground. Attacking the “fetishistic norms” of bourgeois morality and their appeals to a higher power, Bukharin saw communist morality in a more utilitarian light: “if we wish to achieve some aim,” the aim in this case being a socialist society, “then in order to accomplish that aim we must undertake certain actions and not undertake others.”<sup>44</sup> Youth were being told what to do and how to act in a way that was new to the era of NEP. After encouraging iconoclastic and rebellious impulses during the time of the Civil War, the Party spent their effort during NEP trying to rein in that spirit. Turning to the problems of alcohol and tobacco, a favorite target of the Party, Bukharin said that they were positive phenomena under the Tsarist system, as they signified a flouting of established social norms. He went on to say, however, that to continue to do so under the Soviet system was an “incorrect uncritical transfer of the methods of destruction of

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<sup>43</sup>Nikolai Bukharin qtd.in Fisher, *Patterns*, 42.

<sup>44</sup>Nikolai Bukharin, “Bringing up the Young Generation,” in Rosenberg, *Bolshevik Visions*, 55.

the bourgeois system to our own organism,” an unacceptable transfer considering that from the viewpoint of physical and social health “attraction to tobacco and alcohol are directly harmful.”<sup>45</sup> Statements like these provide very clear insight into the nature of what Party leaders were trying to accomplish during NEP. While the revolution ostensibly continued, those actions that had previously been considered revolutionary were now considered the opposite. Old methods of resistance were rendered ineffective, and even harmful, in the new climate of the Soviet system. “High standards of personal morality were now demanded” by the Party because the Bolsheviks had “striven to destroy all bourgeois morality... and they had succeeded,”<sup>46</sup> necessitating a new, Communist set of standards.

The other key theme touched upon by Lenin in 1920 that was again brought up and emphasized in 1922 was the theme of education. Writing in *Iunii Kommunist*, the Petrograd Komsomol journal, Nadezhda Krupskaya, the wife of Lenin, stated that a “communist must also *know* quite a lot. First, he must understand what is happening around him, and must gain an understanding of the current system.”<sup>47</sup> Youth were encouraged to study and to learn about the world around them. Seizing upon the example of medical care in Russia, Krupskaya wrote that, in order to have any effect upon the situation, one must first study the current situation in Russia, then compare that to the situation in other countries, and then figure out how to “approach the problem in a Communist manner,” which meant to find a way to bring workers into

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid, 58.

<sup>46</sup>Fisher, *Patterns*, 81.

<sup>47</sup>N. Krupskaya, “What a Communist Ought to be Like,” in Rosenberg, *Bolshevik Visions*, 39.

the process.<sup>48</sup> In addition to the intensive study of the current situation, the dedicated young Communist was also expected to apply that knowledge in a constructive way. Implicit in this recommendation is the role Communists had to play as leaders. Young communists had to teach and apply the knowledge learned in self-study to raise the worker above his current condition. One Communist leader, A.A. Solts, perhaps best described the mentality when he said in a speech at Sverdlov University that “by our [the Communists’] behavior the construction of a new life is beginning, since... we, as the ruling class, can cultivate these habits, in the new younger generation and even in the mass of the older.”<sup>49</sup> His speech may have been directed specifically at members of the Party, but the attitude is just as applicable to the activities of the young at the time. Communists were expected to lead by example, and to do so they had to learn what that example was to be.

Women occupied an interesting place in the Soviet conception of the society to come. Ostensibly dedicated to the liberation of women and the complete equality of the sexes, in practice the Communist Party fell far short of its goals. The rhetoric of equality masked the very real prejudices that even the most dedicated female Communists had to face. In a resolution passed during the Second Komsomol Congress, young women were derided as the “most backward element of the working class and the peasantry.”<sup>50</sup> In a manner ironically similar to that in Italy, women were seen as being naturally and biologically tied to their roles as mothers. Even the propaganda directed at women was almost entirely focused upon the household.

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid, 40.

<sup>49</sup>A. A. Solts, “Communist Ethics” in Rosenberg, *Bolshevik Visions*, 43.

<sup>50</sup> Second Congress qtd. In Fisher, *Patterns*, 67.

During the Civil War, “there were almost no female images of the revolutionary militant,”<sup>51</sup> in part because of the actual lack of women serving as combatants, but also reflecting the persistence of old ways of thinking about gender. Women were rarely given the opportunity to participate in combat positions, instead being relegated to support duties during the war, giving rise to their lack of representation in martial propaganda and reinforcing traditional gender roles. In the educational posters, plays, and campaigns that sought to improve hygiene and standards of living in the homes of the populace, it was always women who were depicted as the authorities in the home; granted, women were often presented as the head of the household and responsible for changing the behaviors of their sons and husbands, but it still contributed to the entrenchment of their association with hearth and home.<sup>52</sup> The Communist Party may have proclaimed its adherence to the idea of gender equality, but in terms of actual practice, in both propaganda and attitude the Communists continued to act upon traditional ideas about difference between the sexes, thereby reaffirming the divide.

In her study on youth during NEP, Anne Gorsuch identified the image of the engineer as the best representation of what youth were encouraged to be like during the period. Where the Fascists turned to the heroic image of the early *squadristi* in the novels of the 1930s to communicate their image of the new man, communists of the 1920s latched upon the figures of the engineer and the student to communicate their vision. At the Twelfth Party Congress of 1923, it was resolved that “systematic work must be done to create in this new generation a serious urge to master science and

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<sup>51</sup> Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary*, 102.

<sup>52</sup> Tricia Starks, *The Body Soviet: Propaganda, Hygiene, and the Revolutionary State* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), 97.

technology.”<sup>53</sup> Youths were encouraged to study and learn so that they might “engineer” a new, rational society, and, in the process, engineer a new, rational self. The engineer became the hero of the 1920s because he effected change on the world around him only after mastering the skills and knowledge necessary to do so. The artistic image of the new man emphasized his rational, and even mechanical, qualities, showing that the desired ideal Communist had changed quite drastically from the period of Civil War.<sup>54</sup> The new Communist was to change the world by study, morality, and discipline.

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<sup>53</sup>Congress Resolution qtd in Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary*, 19.

<sup>54</sup>Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary*, 20.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Institutions**

The particular institutions utilized by each of the regimes in the political socialization of youth actually differed considerably in tasks and organization, reflecting the different ideologies, methods of rule, and social bases of the two states. In Fascist Italy, there were a plethora of youth organizations, like the ONB and GIL, that could potentially carry one from the age of eight to twenty-eight, but the organization relied upon to breed a new ruling class, and thereby ensure the regime's continuation, was the GUF. The depoliticization of the PNF following the fascist electoral victories of 1924 meant that the next generation of ruling class did not need to be the most ideologically astute bunch, they merely had to faithfully carry out the orders handed down from above. In the Soviet Union, all activities and campaigns concerning adolescents and young adults were consolidated in the Komsomol. Well suited to the mass change the Communist Party sought to bring about, the Komsomol directed its aim broadly. Its task was to bring about concrete behavioral change in the youth of the Soviet Union through education and example.

## Fascist University Groups

It was to the GUF that the PNF turned in order to draw the next generation of the ruling class. As the Fascists enjoyed steady support from the middle classes, and based their rule upon elite control of the docile masses, the GUF was the ideal institution in which to find a new crop of Fascist leaders. In the words of historian Luca La Rovere, “university students represented the elite of the middle class from which fascism derived its social base and were, therefore, of key strategic importance in guaranteeing the vitality and survival of the Fascist regime.”<sup>55</sup>

The groups were originally formed by spontaneous initiative in towns throughout Italy in the years 1919 and 1920. Initially student groups were little more than action squads, allied with the local *fasci* and *Avanguardie Studentesche*, secondary-school action squads, although in some cases university students were actually responsible for the founding of their local *fasci*.<sup>56</sup> These early days were spent in a near-constant state of violent political action directed against other university groups. In December 1921 the GUF were recognized as an autonomous organization within the Fascist movement, and in February 1922 they were all consolidated under the grouping of the *Federazione Nazionale Universitaria Fascista*, or FNUF. This consolidation into the FNUF brought the groups decisively under the influence of the PNF although, in practice, the groups maintained a considerable degree of

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<sup>55</sup>La Rovere, “Fascist Groups,” 457.

<sup>56</sup>Koon, *Believe*, 184.

independence. The first and best example of this came in December 1922, not long after the March on Rome, when Gentile, then head of the Ministry of Public Instruction, decided to cancel special examinations for war veterans that had been planned for the following March. The universities exploded in outrage, and, as many of the early GUF activities had been in support of special privileges for ex-combatants, even the secretary of the GUF was unable to convince many of its members to toe the line.<sup>57</sup> The confrontation was indicative of the broader tensions within the Fascist movement between loyalty to the state and the Duce, and the desire for political autonomy and action closer to that of the early *squadristi*. The rebelling *gufini*, as members of the GUF were called, were eventually brought into line, however, and the next few years of their activities were directed primarily against other non- and anti-Fascist groups within the universities.

The real core of the GUF program was not the fight against anti-Fascist university groups, but the creation of a new Fascist ruling class and culture. In a telegram sent to Mussolini by the students following the congress founding the FNUF, they defined their goal as making the universities “a spiritual school for Italians, able to shape new leaders from every class for the future glory of the Nation.”<sup>58</sup> While little was done toward this end over the next few years, the consolidation of political control by the PNF, essentially completed by the mid-1920s, allowed the university groups to shift their attention from violent actions against other groups to the “creation of a national culture to replace the antinational culture of the liberal period.”<sup>59</sup> A key factor in this shift in emphasis for the group was the reorganization it underwent under Party

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 186.

<sup>58</sup> Congress Resolution qtd. In La Rovere, “Fascist Groups,” 461.

<sup>59</sup> Koon, *Believe*, 187-8.

secretary Augusto Turati. A new statute for the PNF, promulgated in 1926, put the GUF under the direct supervision and control of the Party secretary. Reacting against what he saw as the lack of Fascist control evident in the universities, as well as the increasing radicalism of the *gufini*, he took decisive steps to bring them fully under the control of the Party. Up until that point, *gufini* had been able to create action squads as a means of attacking anti-Fascist students, a privilege that had “intensified the *gufinis* wish to carry out frontline political action.”<sup>60</sup> Turati abolished this privilege and, in addition, subordinated local GUF branches to the control of the local Party secretaries. The monopoly of control over student life achieved by the GUF through their violent actions against other groups meant the GUF was no longer needed by the party as an active political force. The assertion of control by Turati turned them into essentially a propaganda wing of the party, responsible for the creation of a new, obedient class of leaders.

Having established PNF control over the GUF, Turati turned next to the role and administration of the group, culminating in a massive reorganization of its structure in 1928. Turati realized that it wasn't enough to simply get rid of university groups that weren't the GUF, and set more ambitious goals for the group, the most important of which was the goal “to stabilize militancy... through the strengthening of the cultural, entertainment and assistance services offered by the GUF.”<sup>61</sup> Over the next few years, the GUF would gradually extend its control over virtually every aspect of student life in the universities. According to one contemporary observer, writing in 1929, the GUF acted as a sort of social center for the university: it “organizes sporting

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<sup>60</sup>La Rovere, “Fascist Groups,” 464.

<sup>61</sup>La Rovere, “Fascist Groups,” 465.

events, and gives the students certain privileges- financial aid in case of need, medical aid, and reductions in railway fares and other public services.”<sup>62</sup> Perhaps it was because he was writing in 1929, before the GUF had managed to fully extend its control, but the observer's comments fail to capture the totality of control the GUF held over non-academic activities. Membership in the group was voluntary, but “students who wanted to engage in sports or get involved in social, political, or cultural activities... had to have GUF membership cards.”<sup>63</sup> The need to bring the widest number of university students possible into the organization speaks to the dual tasks of the group, as well as the Fascist Party. The primary task may have been to create a new ruling class, but, as one party member wrote in the journal for young Fascists: in order to bring the people fully in line with the Fascist Party, it was necessary to stimulate “high participation in public life from the greatest number of people possible, which would be impossible were political education restricted to one group of people only.”<sup>64</sup> By bringing all extracurricular activities under the aegis of the GUF, it was hoped that students, by constant exposure to Fascist institutions and propaganda, could be made into bearers of the Fascist banner. The GUF was still to be the incubator for another generation of rulers, but it was also to educate broader masses of the population at the same time through its cultural and social work.

The scope of the GUF expanded greatly and rapidly in terms of members and activities from the time of Turati's reorganization, growth that continued until the regime's demise. In 1927, the GUF had approximately 9,000 members, by 1928 the number had already almost doubled, and by 1931 the number of members broke

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<sup>62</sup>Schneider and Clough, *Making Fascists*, 107.

<sup>63</sup>Koon, *Believe*, 189

<sup>64</sup>U. Bernascone qtd. in La Rovere, “Fascist Groups,” 468.

50,000.<sup>65</sup> But simply ensuring a Fascist climate for university students would not be enough to create a capable ruling class. Reacting against this perceived inadequacy, PNF secretary Achille Starace took considerable efforts, from 1931 onwards, to harness the creative energies of students to the service of the regime and give them an active role, or at least the illusion of one, in the construction of the regime's ideological and cultural message. Starace, secretary from 1931 until 1939, was particularly enthusiastic about tying youth to the regime. In one speech in 1930 Starace spoke of the “totalitarian principle of the education of youth” and the intention “to remain a regime of the young.”<sup>66</sup> Turati's reorganization was responsible for bringing the GUF firmly under the control of the party and sparking its spectacular growth, but Starace set himself the task of ensuring that the opportunity did not go to waste. While more attention will be given to the “Make Way for Youth” campaign of which this was a part in chapter three, mention must be made of some of the institutions Starace founded to give youth a more direct voice in the regime.

The initiatives begun by Starace greatly expanded the range of cultural activities open to students and were some of the more direct ways the regime sought to “mobilize [students'] energy and enthusiasm into an active political consciousness.”<sup>67</sup> Experimental theater, radio, and cinema groups were just some of the ways Starace sought to turn students' creative energy to political ends. The GUF's theater group, *Teatro Sperimentale*, was founded in Florence in 1934 and the cinema sections, the *Cineguf*, were set up in most major university centers by 1933 and the rest of the

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<sup>65</sup>Koon, *Believe*, 190.

<sup>66</sup>Achille Starace qtd. in Finer, *Mussolini's Italy*, 416.

<sup>67</sup>Edward R. Tannenbaum, *The Fascist Experience: Italian Society and Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1972), 129.

universities by 1934. The groups were not simply under the jurisdiction of the GUF, however, they were also actively utilized to mold the students' political beliefs. Admission to the GUF theater group entailed a detailed political background check, many of the productions “were blatant glorifications of the party and the regime,” and the cinema sections, conveniently enough, “also served as local censorship boards” to make sure the films produced toed the political line.<sup>68</sup> The most popular of the cultural initiatives begun by the GUF at this time proved to be the *Littoriali* competitions. Held every April beginning in 1934, the competitions provided a relatively free forum for students to debate and discuss political issues of the day. According to one historian, “even the most critical observers... agreed that [the *Littoriali*] were the most successful means of mobilizing traditionally self-centered and unorganizable Italian students.”<sup>69</sup> Bearing out his statement, one critical observer in 1935 wrote of the “glowing eyes” of a young man who had just won one of the competitions, one glance into which will convince one “the regime has made a faithful follower for many years.”<sup>70</sup> In fact, when the first Party Leadership School was founded in 1935, special consideration was given to applicants who had won a *Littoriali* prize; these schools, which combined “theoretical studies on fascism with administrative experience in some PNF agency” were to provide “especially intense indoctrination” for the next generation.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>Koon, *Believe*, 191.

<sup>69</sup>Tannenbaum, *Fascist Experience*, 129.

<sup>70</sup>Finer, *Mussolini's Italy*, 396.

<sup>71</sup> Koon, *Believe*, 192.

Women were given little thought in the activities and organization of the GUF. Partly a consequence of the small number of women in the universities, this also reflected the position of women in the Fascist conception of society. As women, they were expected to be mothers and homebodies, not educated and in public roles right alongside men. While they were allowed in the group, they were kept quite separate from the men. That isn't to say they received their own accommodations and provisions, however. Female participation in the activities of the GUF was severely circumscribed, coeducational activities a rarity, and there were few options for women who were interested in things other than family or child care and social welfare.<sup>72</sup> Some women managed to participate in the cultural activities offered by the GUF, like writing in one of the GUF journals for example, but even then it was only on account of "the goodwill of their male peers."<sup>73</sup> The GUF was intended to produce a new ruling class through the indoctrination of the youth of the universities, but what was really meant was male youth. Despite the group lacking the hyper-masculinized and militaristic fervor of some of the other youth groups, women still had little role in an organization geared to the production of a ruling class. The subordinate position of women in the GUF mirrored their subordinate position in society at large.

The GUF had to go through a long period of evolution before it reached its totalitarian apex with the tenure of Starace. Originally little more than groups of anxious and combative students, by 1935 it was perhaps the primary organization relied upon for the formation of the next Fascist ruling class and had succeeded in bringing virtually every extracurricular sporting, political, and cultural activity into its

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>73</sup> Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 110.

jurisdiction. Firmly tied and dictated to by the PNF secretary, it was the ideal institution to target and mold the elite who would one day take up the reins, channeling their energies into activities that only served to further tie them to the regime. Yet the relatively free hand given to university students in their journals and activities allowed many to voice their dissatisfaction with the current state of the Fascist revolution.

## The Communist Youth League

The founding congress of the Komsomol was held from 29 October to 4 November 1918. Composed of representatives from various peasant and worker youth groups, of the one-hundred and ninety-four delegates present at the founding congress, roughly half (88) were members of the Communist Party and another thirty-eight were Communist sympathizers.<sup>74</sup> Despite the rather sizable portion of delegates unaffiliated with the Communists, it was clear from the beginning that the Party was the dominant force in the group. All six of the individuals who presided over the sessions of the congress were Party members, and they were elected as a group to the Presidium, and at the end of the congress, to the Central Committee of the newly founded league.<sup>75</sup>

Two of the most important decisions taken at the congress, the question of the relationship of the group to the Party and the name of said group, were each indicative in their own ways of some of the longer-term trends of the group. The resolution that the new organization was to be independent of the Party was passed unanimously,<sup>76</sup> but the importance of that decision lies not so much in the resolution itself as in the Party's response. Following the Eighth Party Congress in April 1919 confirming and approving the creation of the Komsomol, within a week a plenary session of the Central Committee of the youth group was called that made a "request" for the group

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<sup>74</sup>Fisher, *Patterns*, 10.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup>Abdurakhman Avtorkhanov, "A Brief History of the Komsomol," in *Soviet Youth: Twelve Komsomol Histories*, ed. Nikolai K. Novak-Deker (Munich: Institute for the Study of the USSR, 1959), 9.

to be brought more closely under Party control, a request duly granted by the Party.<sup>77</sup> In August 1919 a joint resolution was passed by the Central Committees of the Komsomol and the Party stating in no uncertain terms that the CC of the former was directly subordinate to the latter. Almost from the very beginning, the subordination of the League to the Party was made abundantly clear, and set the standards for relations between the two organizations. The founding of the group showed the importance of the young in Communist plans to change society, but its subordinate status revealed a lack of faith in their capabilities. At a later congress, in 1922, when a proposal was put forward by some of the delegates to raise the minimum age of the group from fourteen to sixteen it was decisively rejected by the adult Party members of the leadership. While those young delegates had hoped to purge the “children” of the group in order to strengthen its influence and dedication, the Party accused them of trying to strengthen their political power and reminded them that they could “help best by taking in young people from the age of fourteen and educating them.”<sup>78</sup> Needless to say, this education would come in a form decided in advance by the Party. The politically engaged youth of Komsomol may have wished to assert the autonomy and strength of their organization, but to the Party it was but a means to act on the young.

The question of what to call the group may seem like it would have been a foregone conclusion, but it was a hotly debated topic at the congress and its ultimate resolution gives a valuable indication of how the role of the group was perceived. Some delegates, even some of the self-proclaimed Communist delegates, objected to the use of “Communist” in the name of the group. They argued that having

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<sup>77</sup>Fisher, *Patterns*, 12.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

“Communist” in the name would alienate those not already won over to the cause, limiting the group’s effectiveness among “politically undecided” youth.<sup>79</sup> Despite the objections, the name “Communist League of Youth” was nonetheless settled upon, with the abbreviation Komsomol derived from the first syllables of the League's name in Russian. Lazar Shatskin, a presiding officer at the meetings, stated that the League would still admit “the broad masses of still uncommitted worker and peasant youth,” but insisted that “outside of Communism there is no worker movement,” so Communist must remain in the name.<sup>80</sup> The decision showed that, despite the nominal independence of the group, it was still very much tied to the Communist Party and movement. By stressing that uncommitted youths would still be accepted, however, Shatskin also hinted at the group's educative function. One didn't have to be a Communist to join, but the hope was that membership and participation in the League's activities would change that.

The position of women within the League was rather ambiguous. Women were codified within the statutes of the group as the “most backward element of the working class and peasantry.”<sup>81</sup> Because of their supposed backwardness, all Komsomol bodies were instructed to bring women into the work and activities of the group, yet no special section was established for them and the supervisory commissions for activities among young women were composed of members of both sexes.<sup>82</sup> Many young women joined the group hoping to experience the gender

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

equality promised by the revolution, but experienced only discrimination and prejudice instead.

The social and political culture of the Komsomol was hyper-masculine. By 1926, after concerted efforts to bring more young women into the organization, they still only composed around twenty percent of the membership.<sup>83</sup> Those who were in the group had to face the harassment of their male peers, many of whom had embraced the rowdy and masculine culture of the Civil War era. Despite efforts by the Party to bring more women into the group, the chauvinistic attitude of its members and their conception of women as backward and ill-suited for public affairs meant that the growth of women's participation in the organization was slow. The culture of the group stayed a masculine one and politically engaged young women were often forced to choose between their femininity and political commitment if they wished to be accepted by their male counterparts.

As detailed in chapter one, the task set before Komsomol youth during NEP was the inculcation of a Communist morality and lifestyle. One of the primary means employed by the Party in pursuit of this goal was cultural campaigns. In his analysis of the cultural campaigns undertaken during this period, historian Matthias Neumann makes a broad distinction between what he terms “outward” and “inward” directed campaigns: the “outward-directed” campaigns tasked youth with the “Sovietization” of the not yet “conscious masses” of youth while the “inward-directed” campaigns sought the “fashioning of the *Komsomol*’*tsy* themselves.”<sup>84</sup> He goes on to point out

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<sup>83</sup> Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary*, 97.

<sup>84</sup> Matthias Neumann, “Revolutionizing Mind and Soul? Soviet Youth and Cultural Campaigns during the New Economic Policy (1921-1928),” *Social History* 33 (2008): 245.

that even outward-directed campaigns had an inward effect upon the *Komsomol'tsy*, but the distinction is still useful for analytical purposes.

A prime example of an inward-directed campaign was the battle against alcohol and alcoholism. During NEP, drinking was classified as a “bourgeois” activity and the qualities of the non-drinker, “restraint, rationality, and self-control,”<sup>85</sup> were heralded as the markers of a true Communist. It was a campaign waged through a wide variety of mediums and activities that sought, through the alteration of youths' habits and behaviors, to combat the degenerative effects of the “bourgeois influences” of the NEP and help in the creation of the new Soviet man. Drinking was perceived as one of the more pernicious of these influences, and was seen as one of the root causes of other juvenile crimes like hooliganism. Newspaper and journal articles were one of the more common methods of communicating a campaign. Student newspapers would often contain stories of *Komsomol'tsy* who had taken the money usually spent on alcohol and had donated it towards a social campaign, and an article in another newspaper spoke of anybody who is drunk as “an evil agitator against our very core.”<sup>86</sup> Another tactic was direct agitation campaigns like street demonstrations with posters bearing messages as simple and direct as “Komsomol is the enemy of drunkenness, *Komsomol'tsy* must not drink!”<sup>87</sup> The campaign was largely unsuccessful, for reasons to be elaborated in chapter three, but its methods and goals are indicative of the role occupied by the Komsomol at the time. The construction of a “new society” depended upon the creation of “new habits,” “new features,” and new

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<sup>85</sup>Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia*, 67.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid, 68.

<sup>87</sup>Neumann, “Revolutionizing Mind,” 248.

“virtues,” in opposition to “petty-bourgeois laxity and disorder.”<sup>88</sup> During NEP, youth no longer had to fight against an external and real bourgeois threat, but the remnants of bourgeois attitudes within. This was to be accomplished through a change in how one's life was lived, a constant target of virtually all Komsomol campaigns of the period.

*Komsomol'tsy* were not only expected to change themselves, however, they were also relied upon to help transform the society around them. The outward-directed campaigns of the Komsomol sought to utilize the activism of youth to bring the mass of Soviet society firmly into the socialist fold by attacking those remnants of tradition left over from the Tsarist past. The attack on religion initiated by the Komsomol is one of the more obvious of these campaigns. In an article originally published by the Komsomol publishing house, *Molodaia Gvardiia*, Em. Yaroslavsky, who would eventually go on to head the League of Militant Atheists, wrote that the Party “must conduct a war with religion by means of propaganda, agitation,” etc., so that the religious conception of life could be replaced with a “scientific, materialistic worldview” more in keeping with Communist ideology.<sup>89</sup> Given the outward direction of the campaign, it was conducted less in the press and more in active demonstrations. One *Komsomolets*, Nikolai Bocharov, described the antireligious festivals that he and his fellow league members put on around religious holidays. They would hold “antireligious lectures in the theater” followed by dances, try to “take down the ikons in their homes,” and march around the church chanting “Down with monks! Down

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<sup>88</sup>Nikolai Bukharin qtd. In *ibid*, 247.

<sup>89</sup>Em. Yaroslavsky, “Is the Communist Movement Anti-Religious? (An Answer to Kheglund),” in Rosenberg, *Visions*, 199.

with priests!”<sup>90</sup> Attempting to explain the intensity of the “antireligious feelings in those days,” he described how the revolution had “disclosed many flaws in the ancestral order of things” and how the “peasants' traditional ignorance” was seen as connected to their religious faith.<sup>91</sup> While the rowdiness of early antireligious campaigns would be reined in by the Party over the coming years- the *Komsomolets* had been writing of his experience in the early years of NEP- the general attitude of Bocharov seems to align perfectly with the goals of the Party. Not only was he fighting against the “traditional ignorance” of the Soviet peasantry, attempting to educate and bring them up to a cultural level befitting a socialist society, but, in the process, reaffirmed his own commitment to the Communist cause. His attitude reveals an internalization of values and an active desire to transmit those values to the society around him.

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<sup>90</sup>Nikolai Bocharov, “Off the Beaten Track,” in *Soviet Youth*, ed. Novak-Deker, 50.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid, 50.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Revolutionary Tensions**

Broadly speaking, both regimes were faced with resistance from those in whom they aimed to inculcate their values. In Fascist Italy, this revolt came not in the form of protest or destruction, but journal articles from young intellectuals. Reflecting the social composition of fascism's supporters, the early 1930s witnessed young Fascist intellectuals advocating a new vision of fascism sometimes at odds with that of the old guard. Their visions of a Fascist modernity emphasized the revolutionary origins of the movement and attempted to alter the ideology to suit what they saw as the most pressing issues of the time. In the Soviet Union, it was among the rank-and-file members of the Komsomol that resistance to its goals of behavioral and cultural transformation manifested. The leadership of the Komsomol wished to alter what they perceived as the negative behavioral flaws of the youth of the country, but youth had different ideas of what constituted negative or counterrevolutionary tendencies.

## Fascist Italy and the “Problem of Youth”

Around the late 1920s the *problema dei giovani*, or the “problem of youth,” began to take up more and more space in the Fascist press. One contemporary writer, writing in 1935, dated the beginning of this anxiety about youth to 1929. Noting that it was in that year that the regime signed the Concordat with the Catholic Church, firmly ensuring its own “power and stability,” the “problem of [the regime's] perpetuation flared up” in response.<sup>92</sup> It was in response to this anxiety and the desire to ensure youths' continued support of the regime that the slogan of *largo ai giovani*, or “Make Way for Youth,” was introduced, “a policy of concessions to the idealistic fervor of the young.”<sup>93</sup> Starace's efforts to provide cultural and creative outlets for *gufini* were but one part of a much larger policy of indulgence. In addition to the relative freedom of speech granted to students, they were “actively encouraged to think along new lines and to extend their activities beyond national borders.”<sup>94</sup> The Fascist hierarchs, realizing that the “masses in the universities are not yet what the Duce wants,”<sup>95</sup> sought to direct their dissatisfaction into safe channels that could be easily moderated and controlled by the PNF. Concomitant with this policy of concessions, they asked youth to participate in the elucidation of a new footing for Fascist ideology. By asking youth to help in the evolution of Fascist ideology so that it could be passed to a new

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<sup>92</sup>Finer, *Mussolini's Italy*, 415.

<sup>93</sup>Koon, *Believe*, 197.

<sup>94</sup>Michael A. Ledeen, “Italian Fascism and Youth,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 4 (1969): 143.

<sup>95</sup>Carlo Scorza qtd. in *ibid*, 141.

generation, and by making sure that this process of evolution was done within the organs of the Party, the regime provided a sort of safety valve for student criticism.

Students eagerly seized the opportunity for debate opened to them by the *largo ai giovani* policy and utilized it to put forward ideological visions of fascism that had little relation to the fascism of the older generations. Several new youth journals and reviews began publishing in the early 1930s, each positing their own particular take on the Fascist project. Ruth Ben-Ghiat, in an analysis of several of these journals and the ideas contained within, states that, despite the wide range of opinions present in the variety of journals, most, if not all, shared two basic ideas of fascism: the first was that “fascism constituted the political manifestation of modernity,” and second was the belief in “corporatism as a key component of fascist models of modernity.”<sup>96</sup> A telling example of the first belief is provided by *La Sapienza*, a journal for young intellectuals brought out by Gastone Silvano Spinetti in January 1933. The journal was dedicated to exploring the idea of *universalfascismo*, a movement calling for a “return to the principles of 1919” in order to revive the “revolutionary spirit” of a regime that had “grown old and flabby in power.”<sup>97</sup> Youth were to be the leaders of this “moral regeneration,” and, having returned fascism to its principled roots, the ideology was destined to spread the world over and herald a new epoch of mankind, “a new civilization of the spirit.”<sup>98</sup> For many of Spinetti's generation, corporatism was seen as vital to this enterprise: it “promised a new relationship between the individual and the state and the triumph of a new code of values.”<sup>99</sup> The freedom given to young

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<sup>96</sup>Ben-Ghiat, *Modernities*, 99-100.

<sup>97</sup>Ledeen, “Fascism and Youth,” 144.

<sup>98</sup>Koon, *Believe*, 198-9.

<sup>99</sup>Ben-Ghiat, *Modernities*, 101.

intellectuals to air their grievances and help regenerate Fascist ideology was eagerly seized upon and used to explore the potential of fascism.

Even some women managed to participate in the discussion opened by the campaign, although it would be easy to overstate its impact. While many of the new journals for young Fascist intellectuals, including Spinetti's *La Sapienza*, continued to exclude women from their list of writers, one in particular, *Orpheus*, became the mouthpiece for the elucidation of a peculiar Fascist feminism. Founded in the city of Milan in 1932, during its two years of publication the journal advocated a decidedly modernist orientation and hoped to sketch out a unique Fascist modernity. Its editors advocated parity between the genders and allowed women to speak for themselves in the pages of the journal, a rarity in the masculine culture of the Fascist press. Young female intellectuals used the forum to “reconcile feminism and fascism by emphasizing the modernity of both.”<sup>100</sup> The reconciliation was less than perfect, but the attempt is interesting on its own merits. One university student named Clara Valente argued that the proper fascist family was the “first nucleus of the Fascist state” and was favorably compared to the “irregular” and “divorced” American family.<sup>101</sup> Other women championed careers for women, criticizing the Fascist policy of excluding women from jobs outside the home, but were sure to stipulate that a career could be combined with marriage and motherhood: it didn't have to replace it. The peculiar difficulties in reconciling fascism and feminism experienced by young women writers speaks to the gendered nature of both Fascist ideology and its youth movement. Most of the journals of the time refused to allow women writers to

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>101</sup> Clara Valente qtd. In *ibid.*

contribute, and even those young men who wished “women to be real companions,” thought that they should not “imitate our [men's] lives and our mentalities.”<sup>102</sup> Even those young women who managed to have their voices heard were forced by the culture to affirm the centrality of the family and motherhood, albeit with a feminist twist that simultaneously asserted young women's possible contributions.

The cultural outlets and free forums provided by the “Make Way for Youth” campaign may have helped alleviate some of the discontent of young Fascists, but their say in the actual running of the regime was still extremely circumscribed. They were given the task of sketching a new ideology and basis for the Fascist regime, but the regime's method of rule remained completely unchanged despite their admonitions. Indicative in this regard is the fact that most of the key posts in the PNF, even in the 1930s, were still held by Fascists of the first hour. As “veterans of the War or the Revolution,” these PNF hierarchs were seen as containing “the passion of the Fascist movement,” and, because they had they been present through the “purges” and “liquidations” of the early to mid-1920s, many of those who occupied the top positions tended to be between “twenty-five and forty-five.”<sup>103</sup> The relative youthfulness of the old guard when they had received their posts, and their possession of “the passion of the Fascist movement,” meant that prospects of a changing of the guard happening at any point in the 1930s were slim.

In addition to the problem of the ossification of the regime's structure, some of the old guard reacted negatively to what they perceived as the antifascist strain present in the ideas and movements of the young intellectuals. Many feared that encouraging a

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup>Finer , *Mussolini's Italy*, 417.

creative role for the young would “push fascism beyond its plotted course and toward some dangerous social and political adventures.”<sup>104</sup> One can see elements of this strain of thought in the Starace speech quoted earlier. The speech is an exhortation to youth to continue the “Revolution of October 1922, a Revolution still in its ascending movement, because many of its aims are yet to be attained.”<sup>105</sup> The choice of the “Revolution of October 1922” over the “spirit of 1919” advocated by the young Fascists is a revelatory one in determining the actual imperatives and desires of the regime. The “spirit of 1919” was one of youthful rebellion, violence, and spontaneous initiative, while the “Revolution” of October 1922, the March on Rome, was responsible for the seizure of power by the still-ruling regime. He mentions the *squadristi* of the early days and the fact that they “were composed of young men,” but he highlights how they “died intrepidly under the sign of the Littorio” as their primary virtue.<sup>106</sup> It is obvious from these statements that the regime sought obedience, not initiative, from the youth of Italy. Their task was to carry out the unattained “aims” stipulated by the Fascists of 1922, to carry on the legacy of the older generation rather than articulate and follow through on a plan of their own. The “continuous revolution” often invoked by the leadership and propaganda was nothing more than the continuation of a revolution deemed stale by many youth of the 1930s.

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<sup>104</sup>Koon, *Believe*, 219.

<sup>105</sup>Starace qtd. in Finer, *Mussolini's Italy*, 416.

<sup>106</sup>*Ibid*, 416.

## The Soviet Union and the Meaning of Communism

The ideal conception of Communist youth propagated by the Communist Party during NEP emphasized their sobriety, rationality, unflinching dedication to work, and their abstention from harmful pursuits like drinking and smoking. Some young Communists willingly embraced and internalized this conception and lived their lives according to its standards. Bocharov, the *Komsomolets* discussed in the previous chapter, described one Komsomol organizer who “had a truly puritanical way of life”: he didn't smoke, drink, or even dance.<sup>107</sup> Another *Komsomol'tsy* writing in 1922 spoke of the “spirit” of the Komsomol youth, who, “in public life and in their way of living... tried to realize the principles of Communism even then.”<sup>108</sup> Yet for some politically active youth, the “Communist values” propagated during NEP had little in common with their own values. For many of these dissenting youth, it was around the heroic image of the Civil War and the values of War Communism that they built their idea of what a Communist should be like. The “shared experience of the Civil War” of many members of the Komsomol “helped to produce... a feeling of shared belonging” and allowed the Komsomol to “become an agency in which the Civil War mentality was consolidated.”<sup>109</sup> This mentality, in many areas, directly contradicted the mentality that the Party sought to cultivate. The disjuncture between the two reveals the tensions

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<sup>107</sup>Bocharov, “Beaten Path,” 53.

<sup>108</sup>Nikolai Lunev, “Blind Faith in a Bright Future,” in *Soviet Youth*, ed. Novak-Deker, 31.

<sup>109</sup>Matthias Neumann, “Youth, It's Your Turn!': Generations and the Fate of the Russian Revolution (1917-1932),” *Journal of Social History* 46 (2012): 283.

brought about by NEP, and the ways in which youth carved out their own place and values within the Soviet system. The behaviors and values needed by the regime in pursuit of the stabilization and consolidation of the revolution pushed militant youth to articulate their own conception of what it meant to be “revolutionary.”

While in chapter two I looked at the detrimental effects the masculine culture of the Komsomol could have upon young women's activity and participation in the organization, some young women responded positively to the persistence of a Civil War mentality. They, much like their male comrades, adopted military dress, like leather apparel and combat boots, and were disdainful of those females in the group who engaged in the sewing circles or drama groups, the typical haunt of the feminine element within the organization.<sup>110</sup> Again like their male counterparts, these women often defined themselves in opposition to the “backward” females of the group: makeup and trendy clothing were rejected out of hand, and many went out of their way to adopt a slovenly look, the contrast between their physical appearance and that of their more fashion-inclined female comrades a mark of not only outward, but inward, difference.<sup>111</sup> The fact that even women would sometimes adopt the military garb and attitude of their male peers speaks to the pervasiveness of the Civil War culture within the Komsomol. Those women who participated in its manifestations, while managing to assert their own independence and commitment to the Communist ideal, merely contributed to its ubiquity and further marginalized their female peers.

One of the key discursive battlegrounds of these mentalities was around the concept of *meshchanstvo*. *Meshchanstvo* was a pre-revolutionary term referring to

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<sup>110</sup> Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary*, 112.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

“petty-bourgeois vulgarity,” resurrected during NEP and applied to anything that seemed non-Communist, be it “behavior, dress, language, [or] manners.”<sup>112</sup> The term was originally brought back in order to attack those behaviors and attitudes, like drinking, swearing, and slovenliness, considered dangerous and subversive during NEP, but it wasn't long before militant youth appropriated the term and applied it to their own purposes.

Resistance by some *Komsomol'tsy* to the anti-alcohol campaigns initiated by the leadership provided a sterling opportunity for them to challenge and subvert the official discourse. The anti-alcohol campaigns were virtually doomed from the start. Near the beginning of the campaigns, in 1923-4, a survey conducted in the Vyborg region of Leningrad revealed that of some 6,000 youth, over 50 percent indulged in both drinking and smoking, and over a quarter had begun drinking by the age of 14.<sup>113</sup> A similar survey in 1927, after years of vigorous campaigning, revealed that the problem had actually gotten worse: over 60 percent “regularly drank spirits,” and, of those, 65 percent had begun before the age of 14.<sup>114</sup> The main point, however, is not that the anti-alcohol campaign failed, but that youth rejected and subverted the discourse that presented drinking to them as *meshchanin*. Again turning to Bocharov, he tells of how the “Komsomol rank and file were fairly lenient towards such 'un-Komsomol-like behavior'” as drinking and would vote for a reprimand with “marked irony” as the leaders struggled to “maintain the proper tone.”<sup>115</sup> Some went even

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>113</sup>Peter Gooderham, “The Komsomol and Worker Youth: The Inculcation of 'Communist Values' in Leningrad during NEP,” *Soviet Studies* 34 (1982): 516, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/151905>.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid, 516.

<sup>115</sup>Bocharov , “Beaten Track,” 51.

further and adopted heavy drinking as an integral part of their lifestyle, hearkening back to the “tough” image of the soldier fighting in the Civil War. It isn't hard to understand why they perceived abstention from alcohol as being more petty-bourgeois than partaking. For one thing, drinking was deeply ingrained in working-class culture: Gorsuch describes how even the “most dedicated young communist felt pressure to drink with others on the factory floor if he wanted to be accepted and not derided as an 'intellectual'.”<sup>116</sup> In addition, the literature on the subject “was hardly different in tone from that of the prerevolutionary temperance movement.”<sup>117</sup> For a generation whose definition and idea of Communism had been forged in the fires of the Civil War, attempts to stamp out drinking reeked of the conservatism of the “petty-bourgeois vulgarity” they had fought so hard to eliminate. Drinking was only one of the matters on which militant youth articulated their opposition to the prevailing image of the new Soviet man, but the flagrant manner in which they did so is indicative of their response to a variety of NEP values.

The curbing of the excesses of the early years of the antireligious campaigns provides another example of the ways in which the regime's need for stability and consolidation could conflict with youth's revolutionary energy and desires. As described above, the early anti-religious campaigns were noted for their carnivalesque atmosphere. The first antireligious carnival, the Komsomol Christmas of 1923, was a riotous affair. In Moscow, on Orthodox Christmas day, processions marched from noon until dark with floats behind “bearing clowns who mocked God, a figure of God embracing a nude woman,” and other such blasphemous images before ending the

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<sup>116</sup>Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia*, 69.

<sup>117</sup>Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 118.

night in front of “effigies of all the gods.”<sup>118</sup> The event drew a crowd of over twenty thousand and similar events were held in towns and villages all over the country. The riotous tone of the event had been provided by the spontaneity and enthusiastic support of the *Komsomol'tsy*, but, despite the fact that it had “attracted some youths away from the church holidays,”<sup>119</sup> the Party soon took steps to rein it in: the Komsomol Easter of the same year focused on “evening club meetings with... discussions of religion” and “free plays and performances” to draw youth away from their holiday celebrations instead of a blasphemous parade.<sup>120</sup> In the rural areas in particular, the Komsomol's disrespectful counter-celebrations served to alienate and anger the peasantry. The regime, desperate to build and maintain its support among the peasantry, prohibited the “hooliganistic attacks on churches” that had been occurring in some areas and asked the rural *Komsomol'tsy* to tone down the intensity of its attacks on religion.<sup>121</sup> The policy was a logical one for the regime to adopt, but the curbing of the young's spontaneity and initiative served to dampen their commitment to the antireligious campaigns. From a peak of 2,100, the number of functioning “atheist circles” in the country had declined to a mere 500 by the time of the Seventh Congress of 1926. The Komsomol Christmas had been an assertion by the young of “their newfound ideological superiority over their elders.”<sup>122</sup> The antireligious carnival of 1923 was in many ways, although not nearly as obviously as in the debates over *meshchanstvo*, an example of youths' continued attachment to the militancy of the

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<sup>118</sup>Ibid, 109.

<sup>119</sup>Fisher, *Patterns*, 130.

<sup>120</sup>Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia*, 71.

<sup>121</sup>Fisher, *Patterns*, 130.

<sup>122</sup>Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia*, 70.

Civil War in its iconoclasm, spontaneous initiative, and lack of respect for established norms. The *Komsomol'tsy* who organized the event ably demonstrated their desire and ability to actively participate in the political life of the country and put forward their own ideas of what it meant to be revolutionary.

## **Conclusion**

The regimes of Fascist Italy and the Soviet Union faced similar problems in the interwar period. Having successfully consolidated more or less all political and institutional control in their hands and eliminated any potential rival movements, by 1921 in the Soviet Union and 1929 in Italy, the two regimes next had to deal with the problem of creating the “new man” that was the supposed end goal of each of their revolutions. In both cases, at least during the times examined, the solution was not found in the transformation of the economic base of the country, but in the inculcation of their values in the broad population. The consolidation of political power allowed the regimes to shift their efforts to the consolidation of social support. This shift had the dual effect of not only bolstering the legitimacy of the regimes, at least in theory, but also ensuring their continuity through the inculcation of their values in the next generations destined to carry the revolutions far into the future. The importance of succession is revealed by the pride of place given to youth in the propaganda and appeals of the regimes. The young were seen as a blank slate onto which, given the right education and upbringing, could be projected the ideology and values of the revolutionary movements. Youth groups, the GUF and Komsomol especially, were a crucial part of the apparatus of political socialization established in the two states and the success of the groups in instilling loyalty in the young was seen as vital to the perpetuation of the regimes.

The methods utilized in the inculcation of values in youth also provide a lens through which to view the unique systems of rule established in the two states. In

Fascist Italy, the GUF was a group perfectly suited to propagate and reinforce both the basis of its social support and its own political system. Notwithstanding the cultural outlets and spaces of moderate dissent provided by GUF activities and journals in the 1930s, the GUF geared itself to the production of ideologically loyal and politically faithful supporters. Given the depoliticization of the PNF and a style of rule that needed unquestioning administrators more than bold visionaries, the rote inculcation of Fascist values in the students of the university proved the perfect means to guarantee a next generation of rulers for the state, and support for the party, among the regime's most consistent base of support. In the Soviet Union, the Komsomol's mass education efforts were one of the most visible attempts by the regime to transform the behaviors of the populace through a concerted cultural effort. With its social support base among the urban workers, and a need to win over the support of the peasantry, the efforts of the Komsomol served to consolidate the regime's legitimacy and further the process of social transformation. Its mass organizational base, which steadily increased throughout the 1920s, reflected that the League did not seek to create passive administrators and rulers as in Italy, but instead aimed to win over the populace to the regime and its specific vision of society and politics.

For all the faith they placed in the young, however, government and party officials of both countries found that the young were far from the blank slates they thought them to be. As evidenced by the discourse surrounding the concept of *meshchanstvo* in the Soviet Union and the apprehension caused by the young intellectuals of the early 1930s in Fascist Italy, leaders of the two states discovered that youth would not uncritically accept the doctrines passed down from on high. Ironically, it was often from those youth in whom the revolutionary ideal had taken

hold that Party leaders found their authority challenged. Content to present their ideologies as a tidy package to be consumed whole by the youth of their countries, they were shocked when even dedicated revolutionary youth refused to accept the package as it was. Resistance from politically active youth in both countries took similar forms and reveals the underlying tensions of a revolutionary project. The progenitors of both the revolutionary movements sought to create a “new man” with new values, but, when push came to shove, the pragmatic necessities of rule meant that any true effort at liberation from the injustices of the past took a back seat to the perpetuation and further consolidation of the regime's power. One need only look at the “Make Way for Youth” campaign in Fascist Italy to see an example of this in practice. Even though intellectual youth were actively encouraged to engage in the construction of a new basis for Fascist rule and ideology, few, if any, of their suggestions and ideas ever changed anything. They were made to feel as if they had an active role in the construction of the Fascist regime, but, in reality, they were merely constructing a new facade and the only ones who ever believed they were the real thing were the youth themselves, and even they saw through the facade eventually. The true priorities of the Fascist regime were revealed with the outbreak of war in 1935: those journals that had recently published the voices of young Fascists calling for a return to the revolutionary spirit and roots of the Fascist movement were one by one shut down as the need for national unity outstripped the need to give youth a steam valve to release anti-establishment pressure. Having envisioned a fascism too far removed from the view of fascism held by those in positions of power, the spontaneity and free expression of the youth was curbed so as not to challenge the legitimacy of the regime.

One can find a myriad of similar examples in the Soviet Union, though none perhaps so explicit. There, even without the encouragement of the Party, youth put forward a vision of communism quite different than that hoped for by the leaders during NEP. Many politically active youth saw the NEP as a shameful retreat from the heroic struggle of the Civil War and sought to live their lives in a manner keeping with the values of the time. Leaders, however, objected to their conception due to the conflicts it engendered within society at large. Raucous displays of antireligious feeling may have been fine during the Civil War, but during NEP, when Communist Party officials were trying hard to win peasant support for the regime, it was unacceptable. The spontaneous and voluntary holiday counter-celebrations beloved by radical Komsomol youth were seen as deeply offensive by many of the highly religious peasantry, so the Party took the side not of the dedicated Communist youth, but the wavering peasantry. Atheism was conceived by the youth who enthusiastically took part in the antireligious festivals as a central tenet of Communism, and while many Party leaders may have personally agreed with them, the need for stability, centralized control, and the support of broad swathes of the population meant that youthful spontaneity had to be curbed in favor of the regime's power.

In their efforts to socialize youth, the two regimes revealed not only their conceptions about youth, but in large part, their conceptions of the task of the revolutionary regime. In the case of the Fascists, university students were their primary targets, a reflection of both the regime's basis of social support as well as its ideology. The Fascists drew a large bulk of their support from the white-collar middle classes, and the regime's efforts to mold university students was a means to both perpetuate and bolster that support in the generations to come. Fascist ideology was

centered around the figure Mussolini. Whatever served the Duce served the cause of fascism as well, so the Fascist regime did not need rulers capable of making high-level policy decisions because that responsibility was reserved for Mussolini. Following the consolidation of power by Mussolini and the Fascists, the Fascist cause did not require the activism of the early *squadristi*, but the professional administrative expertise of the loyal middle classes. The authoritarian strain of fascism had been present since its inception, but it became the primary strain after the seizure of power. When the PNF called for intellectual youth to formulate a new conception of the ideology of fascism, the youth responded with a resounding call for a return to the revolutionary roots of the movement. In return they received nothing but lip service. Their loyalty was required, not their ideas. The temporal proximity of the reorganization of the GUF and the Fascist's consolidation of power was no coincidence: the institutionalization of the revolution required future cadres to run those institutions. In short, the GUF, in its methods, goals, and typical membership profile, acts as a microcosm of institutionalized fascism as a whole. Its primary method of political socialization was a rather passive one: it held a virtual monopoly over social and cultural events and activities in the universities, ensuring the continued exposure of university youth to the institutions and ideology of fascism. The passiveness of this approach speaks to the needs of a regime that needed passive support more than active, a need also reflected in the goals of the GUF: to create the next generation of the ruling class. This ruling class needed to be politically loyal, not politically original, and technically competent. And, finally, the membership profile of the group, almost entirely white collar middle class, was the exact social class from whence the regime derived a majority of its support and administration.

For the Communists, the youth targeted by the Komsomol were not as clearly reflective of the regime's social support, nor were the goals and methods of the organization so focused upon the production of a new ruling class. These differences can be chalked up to the different ways the regimes' conceived of the task of youth, a conception shaped by their respective ideologies. In other words, considering the close link forged in the highest echelons of each party between the task of the revolutionary regime and the task of the youth groups, the differences in their methods, goals, and membership profiles is a clear indication of the differences in ideology between the two regimes. Whereas the Fascists sought to perpetuate indefinitely the political structure they had established and the class of those who occupied it, the Communists believed that their political structure had yet to develop to its fullest expression. The methods employed by Komsomol were centered around education because Communist ideology demanded an educated and cultured populace worthy of a socialist society. Its goals were to transform the behaviors and beliefs of an entire generation of Soviet citizens, ensuring that the construction of socialism could be continued indefinitely. The membership profile of the organization is likewise indicative of this. While the Communist Party derived much of its support from the urban working class, and its ranks were dominated by members of that same group, the Komsomol was encouraged to draw young peasants into its ranks. The revolutionary project envisioned by the Communists did not just need urban workers capable of staffing the bureaucracy, but participation by broad masses of the populace in the construction of socialism. In summary, the narrow emphasis upon white collar youth and the static perpetuation of the current political system evinced by the GUF's methods is indicative of Fascist ideology more broadly, an ideology that, especially

following the consolidation of power, demanded unwavering faith in the Duce as its central tenet. For the Komsomol, its focus on the peasantry, in addition to the proletariat, revealed a desire to widen the regime's base of social support, a goal approached through education. Communist ideology required not only loyal subjects, but cultured ones. While the actual ideal of culturedness presented to the youth of Komsomol may have found its basis more in the needs of the regime than in Communist ideology, the fact that culturedness was a goal at all is indicative of the particular goals of that ideology. It is the shared focus of the two regimes on youth that makes their youth organizations such fruitful objects for comparison. In their efforts to inculcate their values in youth, both regimes turned to a more conservative conception of the tasks and meaning of their revolutionary movements, showing in the process the changes wrought by institutionalization. That being said, the huge differences between their methods and goals is a reflection of their very different ideologies.

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