

Trajectories of Fascism: Extreme-Right Movements in India and Elsewhere
(The Fifth Walter Sisulu Memorial Lecture, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, 18 March 2013)

Jairus Banaji

The term ‘Theories of fascism’ was trademark for the kind of discussion that went on in strictly Marxist circles, in Germany and elsewhere, in the sixties and early seventies. It was a major part of the revival of Left theory that characterised the radicalism of the sixties. In some ways the highpoint of this current of discussion came with the publication by Wolfgang Abendroth, in 1967, of a collection of Marxist texts that included essays by Otto Bauer, Arthur Rosenberg and August Thalheimer. These writings span the period from 1930 to 1938. Bauer, who was Austrian, identified the nationalism of the intelligentsia as a major cementing force in the ideology of fascism.¹ Rosenberg too assigned central importance to ideology and to the intelligentsia, seeing the latter as a key social base of the fascist movement, but unlike Bauer he saw the mass element in fascism as its distinctive feature. Thus, unlike almost all other left-wing writers of the period, he underlines the mobilising force of anti-semitism, the power of this and other ideologies, especially nationalism, to feed into the construction of a fascist mass base.² The terrible fact that we have to face up to and learn from is that the great majority of the German people accepted the Nazi regime at least passively. I’ll come back to this in a moment. The other important element in Rosenberg’s analysis, which was by far the best to be developed by the Left in the 1930s, was the connivance or active complicity of the existing state authorities in condoning fascist violence, turning a blind eye to illegal activities such as conspiracies and political murders and repeated assaults on the Left. The police establishment and the judiciary played the main roles here in implicitly buttressing the fascist movements. In Italy the *squadristi* or fascist squads which first emerged in the rural areas of northern Italy and Toscana to suppress sharecroppers and other workers could operate with total impunity *because* the government authorities stood by and simply allowed them to do so. In Germany the courts played an especially important role in being soft on right-wing violence. As Franz Neumann notes in his great book *Behemoth*, ‘At the centre of the counterrevolution [he means against the Weimar Republic] stood the judiciary’. A third and final element that emerges from Rosenberg’s analysis is what he calls the fascists’ “peculiar tactic” of using stormtroopers. In fact, a plethora of paramilitary organisations emerged across the political spectrum and more even than the stormtroopers it was the paramilitarisation of wider nationalist circles in Germany and their use of targeted political assassinations that truly reflected the extra-parliamentary Right’s resolute opposition to the new democracy.³ Given that some 350 government politicians were assassinated by the nationalist terror groups, this backlash had the features of an armed

¹ See Otto Bauer, ‘Fascism’, in Tom Bottomore and Patrick Goode, eds., *Austro-Marxism* (Oxford, 1978) pp. 167–86.

² See Arthur Rosenberg, ‘Fascism as a Mass Movement’, *Historical Materialism*, 20.1 (2012) pp. 144–89.

³ R. G. L. Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism: The Free Corps Movement in Postwar Germany 1918–1923* (Cambridge, Mass., 1952).

insurrection against Weimar democracy but played out in slow motion and unevenly. I say ‘wider nationalist circles’ because on one estimate over 1 million German males belonged to the various paramilitary formations in the summer of 1919.⁴ That is a staggering number. The culture of militarism that led into the war carried over into the Weimar Republic in the shape of this organised element, the so-called Volunteer Associations of which the most famous was the Freikorps. What I’m going to do in the main part of this lecture is return to some of these themes after suggesting a theoretical framework for dealing with them. We know that the violence of the Right often takes the form of pogroms but what are pogroms? Or to put this another way, how are pogroms intelligible in any theory that rejects positivism? In the final part of the lecture I’ll look at the way fascism works in the context of Indian democracy, and then draw out the distinctiveness of India’s fascist movement by comparing it with the German case.

Now the ‘theories of fascism’ strand of the literature on fascism had more or less run dry by the mid seventies, and the field was rapidly swamped by a burgeoning academic literature that became both more specialised and humongously massive in the scale on which books and articles began to appear. One offshoot of this explosion of the more purely academic work on fascism was that new themes were developed. Of these probably the most important was the literature on the Nazi genocide, supplemented by a whole lot of new research on the persecution of marginalised social groups such as women, youth and sexual minorities, and on the murderous policies of ‘eugenic cleansing’.⁵ This had such an impact on the field that it forced the more thinking elements of the Left to reconsider classic Marxist accounts of fascism, as Enzo Traverso did in his brilliant little book which was subtitled *Marxism After Auschwitz*. Did conventional Marxist explanations that prioritised the class base of fascism or the economic forces at work behind its emergence have any real sense of the kind of rupture that the concentration camps came to signify?

Let me start with one aspect of this broader issue. In his book *Une culpabilité ordinaire?* Edouard Husson writes, ‘As for the so-called “ordinary Germans”, it’s plausible to argue that while not all of them participated in the massacres, all of them *have* to be held politically responsible for supporting the *Führer* who made the genocide possible – all, that is, except those who were politically opposed to Nazism’.⁶ Husson is saying that the mass of ordinary Germans were responsible for the crimes of Nazism insofar as they bore political liability for installing the regime. The distinctions implied here are those that Karl Jaspers laid out in his famous lecture *Die Schuldfrage*.⁷ Indeed, Jaspers argued that the notion of ‘collective guilt’ was only ever valid in the specific sense of political liability, but he also made it clear that he thought that ‘those who went right on with their activities as if nothing had happened’ were indeed morally guilty as

⁴ Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism*, p. 39.

⁵ E.g., Jane Caplan, ‘The Historiography of National Socialism’, in Michael Bentley, ed., *Routledge Companion to Historiography* (London, 1997).

⁶ Edouard Husson, *Une culpabilité ordinaire? Hitler, les Allemands et la Shoah* (Paris, 1997) p. 138.

⁷ Translated as Karl Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*, tr. E. B. Ashton (Westport, Conn., 1948).

well. He wrote, ‘I, who cannot act otherwise than as an individual, am morally responsible for all my deeds, including the execution of political and military orders. It is never simply true that “orders are orders”’.⁸ So how do we deal with this potentially huge mass of morally impervious individuals who, as Jaspers says, ‘went right on with their activities as if nothing had happened’? They were not hard-core Nazis but they were crucial to the success of Nazism all the same.

To take this further, Sheehan writes that what the Nazis required of the bulk of the population was ‘compliance, not conviction’.⁹ In Germany in the thirties there was the overtly Nazi element, the direct perpetrators (both the Nazi leadership and Party organisations as well as ‘large sections of the German non-Nazi élites in the army, industry and bureaucracy’),¹⁰ and on the other side the bulk of the civilian population (ethnic Germans and Poles) who went along with the regime. The precise German term for the latter is *Mitläufer*. They were, it is said in the literature, morally indifferent to the fate of the regime’s victims. But this characterisation, which comes from Ian Kershaw, doesn’t seem even vaguely satisfying. Two holocaust historians Kulka and Rodrigue settle for the term ‘passive complicity’ as a stronger description of the role of the *Mitläufer*. Again, what does it mean to be passively complicit in the criminality of a regime, whether it’s a fascist government or any other? What explanation or even sort of explanation is there for what Browning calls a ‘widespread receptivity to mass murder’ when speaking of Germans under Nazism?¹¹ No form of positivism is going to be able to match the kind of explanation we need. And that in part is why the horror of the holocaust confronts us as a sort of brute facticity, the sense of sheer intellectual defeat that Tim Mason expressed when he wrote ‘I have always remained emotionally, and thus intellectually, paralysed in front of what the Nazis actually did and what their victims suffered. The enormity of these actions and these sufferings both demanded description and analysis, and at the same time totally defied them. I could neither face the facts of genocide, nor walk away from them and study a less demanding subject’.¹²

So let’s start with passive complicity. The only theoretical text I’m aware of that helps to make sense of this notion, to make it intelligible, is the massive enterprise Sartre undertook in the two volumes of his *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. The *Critique* was written at the end of the fifties, against the background of a savage war of repression in Algeria. Algeria figures in the *Critique* as Sartre’s prime example of why exploitation has to be inseparable from oppression, as he puts it. Colonial regimes encapsulate a perpetual circularity between those moments, between practices of extermination, plunder and violence, and the inert functioning of the economic system itself with its seeming institutional autonomy and its institutionalised racism. The initial

⁸ Jaspers, *Question of German Guilt*, p. 25.

⁹ James Sheehan, ‘National Socialism and German Society: Reflections on Recent Research’, *Theory and Society*, 13 (1984) pp. 866–7.

¹⁰ Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (London, 2000) p. 103.

¹¹ For these references (Browning, Kershaw, etc.) see my introduction to Rosenberg in *Historical Materialism*, 20.1 (2012), pp. 133ff.

¹² Tim Mason, *Social Policy in the Third Reich: The Working Class and the ‘National Community’*, tr. J. Broadwin, ed. Jane Caplan (Oxford, 1983) p. 282.

violence of the colonisers renews itself throughout the history of the regime and the struggle between classes under colonialism is neither purely comparable to the molecular order nor simply praxis through and through, but an interlacing of these moments or forms of intelligibility.¹³

However, the really interesting aspect of the way the French war in Algeria shaped the arguments of the *Critique* would almost certainly have remained permanently opaque to us if Simone de Beauvoir had not documented precisely how that background influenced both her and Sartre at the time. In *Force of Circumstance* she writes, ‘I am an intellectual, I take words and the truth to be of value; every day I had to undergo an endlessly repeated onslaught of lies spewed from every mouth...What did appal me was to see the vast majority of the French people turn chauvinist and to realise the depth of their racist attitude. Bost and Jacques Lanzmann...told me how the police treated the neighbourhood Algerians; there were searches, raids, and manhunts every day; they beat them up, and overturned the vendors’ carts in the open-air market. No one made any protest, far from it...’. ‘It was even worse, because, whether I wanted to be or not, I was an accomplice of these people I couldn’t bear to be in the same street with...’¹⁴ And later she writes, ‘This hypocrisy, this indifference, this country, my own self, were no longer bearable to me. All those people in the streets, in open agreement or battered into a stupid submission – they were all murderers, all guilty. Myself as well.’ And she adds at the end of a powerful passage ‘Sartre protected himself by working furiously at his *Critique de la raison dialectique*’.¹⁵

What is striking here is her sense of sheer powerlessness in the face of the humongous propaganda that accompanies and justifies every war of repression (the French in Algeria, the US in Vietnam, the Indians in Kashmir and parts of the northeast). And de Beauvoir confesses to a sense of complicity in the crimes committed by the French in Algeria, by what her government was doing in the name (of course) of “all” French people, in 1957 and 1958. Now this sense of complicity resonates through large parts of the *Critique* as the powerlessness of a specific kind of human multiplicity that Sartre calls the ‘series’ or ‘serialities’. Their impotence is experienced and lived in the face of the non-series, that is, the organised groups, especially those that make up the state, the state being for Sartre an ensemble of organised groups of the kind he calls institutions. So where do classes fit in this schema? Classes for Sartre are not unified subjects capable of some common class-wide action, as a certain voluntarism imagines, but ‘shifting ensembles of groups and series’,¹⁶ hence simultaneously organised and unorganised, with a perpetual circularity between groups and series, that is, no guarantee that class-groups will not dissolve into seriality (into pure dispersion, the state of having no organised existence) or for that matter re-emerge from it in future.

¹³ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason, Volume One*, tr. Alan Sheridan-Smith (London, 1976) pp. 716ff.

¹⁴ Simone de Beauvoir, *Force of Circumstance*, tr. Richard Howard (Penguin Books, 1968) pp. 378, 381.

¹⁵ De Beauvoir, *Force of Circumstance*, pp. 396–7.

¹⁶ Sartre, *Critique*, p. 638.

The group for Sartre is the negation of seriality, it emerges as a transcendence of the state of pure impotence and dispersion that characterises the vast mass of any society. Overall it is seriality that defines the larger swathe of any class in the sense that even within the bourgeoisie it is only a minority that is sufficiently organised (formed into groups of one kind or another) to have the power to control and dominate the rest of society, that is, to dominate the serialities of its own and of other classes. The state of being part of a dispersed molecular mass defined by a reciprocity of solitudes, determined only by otherness, by what others are doing and feeling, unified solely from the outside, by some external object (unified with these people here by the bus we are waiting for; unified with this mass here that has come to Jantar Mantar to see Hazare fasting or descended on Ayodhya to demolish a mosque) is what Sartre means by seriality.

As for the relationship between groups and series, two are especially interesting. The essential point about the series is that it is inert, it can do nothing, engage in no action of its own, yet have many things done to it. It follows that the state 'can never be regarded as the product or expression of the totality of social individuals or even the majority of them, since this majority is serial anyway and could not express its needs and demands without liquidating itself as a series so as to become a large group'.¹⁷ From this Sartre concludes that 'the idea of a diffuse popular sovereignty becoming embodied in a sovereign is a mystification. There is no such thing as diffuse sovereignty'. Serialities 'do not have the power or nature either to consent to or to resist the State'.¹⁸ Our acceptance of the state's power is simply our interiorization of the powerlessness to refuse it.¹⁹ As a serialised mass the vast mass of any population has 'no means of either contesting or establishing legitimacy' for a given state.

A second more sinister relationship. Groups are constantly working series or working on them as the worked matter of their common praxis. This is most obvious in the action of the mass media which essentially addresses vast series of serialities most of which are indefinite and completely powerless in the face of the powerful groups that control and dominate the media. The most important action of groups on series is the kind Sartre calls 'other direction' or 'directed seriality'. Other-direction is a term borrowed from David Riesman's book *The Lonely Crowd* and it brings us squarely to the issue of fascism. Political propaganda works on the same principle as advertising, that is, of generating an illusion of what Sartre calls 'totalised seriality'.²⁰ The series can do nothing, it is dispersed and inert, but the magic of advertising lies in the group's ability to 'exploit seriality by pushing it to an extreme so that recurrence itself will produce synthetic results'.²¹ This sentence, obscure as it sounds, comes in a section that will end by discussing anti-semitism and pogroms. By 'recurrence' Sartre means the perpetual flight that characterises the

¹⁷ Sartre, *Critique*, pp. 635–6.

¹⁸ Sartre, *Critique*, p. 636.

¹⁹ R. D. Laing and D. G. Cooper, *Reason and Violence: A Decade of Sartre's Philosophy* (London, 1971) p. 162.

²⁰ Sartre, *Critique*, p. 644.

²¹ Sartre, *Critique*, p. 643.

milieu of the Other (collective objects like markets, inflation, public opinion, and ideology, where serial action is both indeterminate and circular). The form of conditioning contained in the work of organised groups on series is one where the means used is to ‘manipulate the practico-inert field to produce serial reactions that are retotalised at the level of the common undertaking, that is to say, reshaped and forged like inorganic matter. And the means to this means is to constitute the serial as a false totality for everyone’.²² ‘Recurrence, controlled from outside as a determination projected from everyone, through Others, into the false totality of a common field, and, in reality, into pure reflexive flight’ is what Sartre says he means by other-direction.²³ In politics the advertiser’s phantom unity of consumers fixated on the illusion of a totalised seriality (as if the unity of a flight was a real unity) finds its precise counterpart in mass mobilisations based on the manipulation of series and seriality. Manipulated seriality is the heart of fascist politics. Here in India the techniques of other-direction take a panoply of forms from sustained communal propaganda to communal mass mobilisations. If the mass element in fascism is its distinctive feature, even more distinctive is the way this mass is put together, constructed and mobilised, through what Sartre calls the ‘systematic other-direction of the racism of the Other, that is to say, in terms of the continuous action of a group on a series’.²⁴

The pogrom then is a special case of this ‘systematic other-direction’, one in which the group ‘intends to act on the series so as to extract a total action from it *in alterity itself*’.²⁵ The directing group is careful ‘not to occasion what might be called organised action within inert gatherings’. ‘The real problem at this level is to extract organic actions from the masses’ without disrupting their status as a dispersed molecular mass, as seriality.²⁶ So Sartre describes the pogrom as ‘the passive activity of a directed seriality’,²⁷ an analysis where the term ‘passive’ only underscores the point that command responsibility is the crucial factor in mass communal violence, since the individuals involved in dispersive acts of violence are the inert instruments of a sovereign or directing group. Thus for Sartre the passive complicity that sustains the mass base of fascism is a serial complicity, a ‘serial responsibility’, as he calls it,²⁸ and it makes no difference, in principle, whether the individuals of the series have engaged in atrocities as part of an orchestrated wave of pogroms or simply approved that violence ‘in a serial dimension’, as he puts it.²⁹ In both instances, what is involved for him is ‘impotence and an inert identification with the criminal’, an identity in alterity which makes all of them responsible.³⁰

²² Sartre, *Critique*, pp. 649–50.

²³ Sartre, *Critique*, p. 650.

²⁴ Sartre, *Critique*, p. 652.

²⁵ Sartre, *Critique*, p. 644.

²⁶ Sartre, *Critique*, p. 654.

²⁷ Sartre, *Critique*, p. 653.

²⁸ Sartre, *Critique*, p. 654.

²⁹ Sartre, *Critique*, p. 757.

³⁰ Sartre, *Critique*, p. 761. ‘After 1848...[French] employers were a curious historical product of the massacres for which they were collectively responsible without actually having committed them’ (p. 767).

In *The Origins of Totalitarianism* Hannah Arendt writes that ‘totalitarian movements use and abuse democratic freedoms in order to abolish them’.³¹ But in Italy and Germany the fascist movements emerged less to use/abuse democratic freedoms than to reverse the process of democratisation that flowed from the post-war crisis and create movements for the overthrow of still precarious emerging democracies. The distinctive feature of India’s fascism is that it has had to grow in a society where the mass of the population remains committed to democracy and no agenda for the overthrow of democracy can ever be affirmed overtly in those terms. Thus Arendt’s characterization of fascist movements using/abusing democratic freedoms to abolish them is, paradoxically, more true of India than it ever was of Europe.

In India fascist tendencies are currently at work in two forms, one direct, the other more insidious. The more direct form consists chiefly in the mobilisation of a communal mass base which fluctuates in intensity but is clearly seen by the RSS as the organic strategy, and the one most directly linked to its ideology of extreme nationalism. That ideology was not a product of the RSS specifically, since the Hindu Mahasabha played an equally seminal role in forging its main elements. I’m referring of course to the fanatically extreme nationalism that was embodied in different ways in Savarkar and Golwalkar and encapsulated India’s version of a fascist utopia ethnically cleansed or purged of its ‘alien’ elements. Everyone knows that both propagandists were deeply influenced by the Nazi extermination of the Jews and took that as their model for the way Muslims would have to be dealt with, in principle anyway. But mass communalism and sustained communal propaganda have been supplemented by more insidious subversions of democracy that combine the elements of a war of position with a war of movement. Thus progressive control of the media by the extreme right which includes the mainstreaming of the extreme Right by the media, so that overtly communal elements are repeatedly projected as normal and innocuous (note the repeated presence of hard-core RSS elements on the prime time talk shows of channels like NDTV and CNN-IBN) and the BJP’s relentless parliamentary agitations, consciously calculated to induce a breakdown in the functioning of parliament and project that as the bungling of a corrupt and ineffectual government, both have the character of a war of position, that is, a protracted war of attrition against India’s democracy that legitimises fascist politics and creates a dispersed revulsion against ‘the parliamentary system’. A vital part of this trench warfare has been a widespread infiltration of the state apparatuses, a molecular penetration of the police, the bureaucracy and the intelligence agencies, which creates a state within the state, and one that is barely camouflaged when investigations into the criminal activity of the RSS underground (into the RSS cadre who have drifted into groups like Abhinav Bharat) are sabotaged by the state itself, or when the police are overtly implicated in communal carnages such as the explosion of violence led by the Shiv Sena in Bombay in January 1993. The war of movement on the other hand takes the form of a strategy of tension, a term invented by the Italian Left to characterise the spate of bombings and assassinations perpetrated by neo-fascist

³¹ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, 1985) p. 312.

terrorist groups in the late sixties and seventies (from 1969 to 1980). Many were false flag bombings that were blamed on extra-parliamentary left-wing organisations, the way the RSS bombings are blamed on Muslims. About the Piazza Fontana bombing of December 1969 which was initially blamed on the anarchists, the neo-fascist activist Vincenzo Vinciguerra stated, ‘The December 1969 explosion was supposed to be the detonator which would have convinced the political and military authorities to declare a state of emergency’. The Bologna railway bombing of August 1980 was one of the most horrific in this series of neo-fascist terror strikes, killing 85 people and injuring some 200. In *Godse’s Children* Subhash Gatade has shown how the investigations into similar attacks in India have progressively revealed a unified or coordinated network of conspirators, all implicated with the RSS, with Indore as a key centre of this underground.³² That the RSS outsources the strategy of tension and publicly disowns it is of course mere subterfuge, not vastly more credible than its disowning of Godse himself.

Although fascist nostalgia is not a major characteristic of the extreme Right in Europe today, and a sort of electoral fascism is more widespread (appeals to racism and xenophobia to mobilise electoral support),³³ the Sangh parivar is in some ways a purer version of the political culture of a more traditional fascism. The pogroms in India have far exceeded in scale anything that Germany saw in Weimar or the Nazi period (short of the mass extermination of the Jews when the Nazis finally turned to the ‘final solution’). The culture of communalism is also at least as widespread in India as anti-semitism ever was in Germany, especially after the war. In republican Germany only one region, Bavaria, acted as ‘a cauldron of radical Right insurgency’,³⁴ the crucial base that allowed Hitler and the Nazis to survive when there was a general retreat of the nationalist Right in the mid twenties. In India, by contrast, RSS-controlled governments have been in power in different regions at different times and Gujarat in the past ten years has been a microcosm of what the rest of India would look like if fascism ever took over completely. What the RSS has never had and always seemed to discourage was a leadership cult. With the repeated acclamations of Modi as the next prime minister this seems to be changing now, for it is the first time this political sector has found a figurehead around whom to build a Führer cult. Kershaw points out that the Hitler cult was the ‘crucial adhesive’ of the Nazi movement, its ‘integrating mechanism’. Hitler was, as he says, ‘the sole, indispensable force of integration in a movement that retained the potential to tear itself apart’.³⁵ This cannot be said of the Sangh parivar, since Modi’s rise to what *he* would like to see as absolute mastery and the abject submission of everyone else grates with a political tradition of collective control divested of any fanatical cult of one individual. Since electoral fascism is a major part of their strategy, however, they may well be willing to make tactical concessions in this direction, unleashing a dynamic that no one can foresee at the moment. Finally, whereas German capital was split in its

³² Subhash Gatade, *Godse’s Children: Hindutva Terror in India* (New Delhi, 2011).

³³ The best recent study is David Art, *Inside the Radical Right: The Development of Anti-Immigrant Politics in Western Europe* (Cambridge, 2011).

³⁴ Ian Kershaw, *Hitler 1889–1936: Hubris* (London, 2001) p. 212.

³⁵ Kershaw, *Hitler*, pp. 260, 267.

political allegiances, and Thyssen was wholly exceptional in joining the Nazi party whereas ‘the more liberal faction of industry continued to support the Chancellor Brüning’ (this in 1932),³⁶ in India by contrast the last few years have seen a spate of well-publicised bear hugs between our captains of industry and Modi, in a display of feigned servility that shows that industrial capital at least is ready for fascism if large and overwhelming sectors of the Indian people most likely are not.

As you know, the Supreme Court was forced to intervene to transfer cases out of Gujarat. In the Best Bakery case Justice V.N. Khare even stated he had no confidence in the Gujarat government. He was quoted as saying, ‘I have no faith left in the prosecution and the Gujarat government’. There could scarcely be a more scathing indictment of the brazen subversion of the justice system that soon came to characterise the whole way in which *this* state government manipulated the machinery of the law, fabricated or suppressed evidence, eliminated potential witnesses, and even concocted a whole series of encounter killings to create the impression that the Chief Minister’s life was constantly under threat from potential assassins. Internal assassinations such as those of Haren Pandya or Sunil Joshi have been one of the cruder ways in which the right-wing seeks to evade legal scrutiny. The spinelessness of the judiciary and its overt or covert sympathies with the extreme Right was a major part of the story of the success of German fascism. We have not reached that state of judicial disintegration yet, and luckily we still have a Supreme Court that is beyond the direct reach of regimes immersed in criminality, even if its Special Investigation Teams can be subverted.

More insidious, however, is the inert grip of ideology. Much of the drive behind the emergence of a more repressive, authoritarian state in India is fuelled by a muscular nationalism that is now characteristic, in serial inert ways, of a large section of the urban middle classes, the media, the intelligentsia and capital. The Left has simply refused to campaign against this deluded form of patriotism which, because it imagines India as a global power, would rather have crores of rupees spent on defense and the nuclear industry than on constructing a viable public health system or affordable homes for the mass of people or even programmes to eradicate malnutrition. It is this nationalism, the pure self-delusion of a country that imagines it can be a major capitalist power on the back of mass deprivation and overt oppression, that has the potential for military conflict, a peculiarly destructive one when combined with that ‘continuous invocation of a threatening “other”’ that Sumit and Tanika Sarkar ascribed to the new organised Hindutva of the 1990s.³⁷ The slogan ‘India First’ rearticulates Golwalkar’s mystical nationalism, the hyperorganicism of the nation as some sort of super-individual, as an animate being, but it does so in the idiom of big-power chauvinism, of the race for global hegemony, against the looming background of a potentially huge military-industrial complex that domestic capital is

³⁶ Dick Geary, ‘Employers, Workers and the Collapse of Weimar’, in Ian Kershaw, ed., *Weimar: Why Did German Democracy Fail?* (London, 1990) p. 104.

³⁷ Tapan Basu and others, *Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags* (New Delhi, 1993) p. 113.

starting to whet its appetite for. For Golwalkar nationalism meant the dissolution of the individual in a larger whole. Gandhi therefore accurately described the RSS as a 'communal body with a totalitarian outlook'. Today those ideas have re-emerged in more sanitised and potentially more destructive ways. But where is the opposition to them? Where is the political culture that says, 'Fascism shall not pass'?