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The Birth of Fascist Ideology

By Zeev Sternhell



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When *The Birth of Fascist Ideology* was first published in 1989 in France and in 1993 in Italy, it aroused a storm of response, both positive and negative. In Sternhell's view, fascism was much more than an episode in the history of Italy. He argues here that it possessed a coherent ideology with deep roots in European civilization. Long before fascism became a political force, he maintains, it was a major cultural phenomenon.



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The Birth of Fascist Ideology By Zeev Sternhell Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

"[This book] deserves to be read and, whatever one's reservations, to be considered seriously...[It] rectifies the stereotyped and narrowly derogatory image of a movement that was as representative and influential as its more acceptable contemporaries, and more original than many."--**Eugen Weber, *The New York Times Book Review***

"[This] work obliges us to ground any study of fascism in the particular moment toward the end of the nineteenth century when politics expanded dizzily from a gentleman's hobby to a matter of mass opinion and votes. [Sternhell] shows irrefutably that fascist doctrine had complex cultural origins, drawing not only from conservative efforts to adapt to the novel requirements of mass politics,...but also from dissent within the left against the materialism, positivism, and reformism that mainstream Marxism shared with social democracy in the 1890s."--**Robert O. Paxton, *The New York Review of Books***

Language Notes

Text: English (translation)

Original Language: French

From the Back Cover

When *The Birth of Fascist Ideology* was first published in 1989 in France and at the beginning of 1993 in Italy, it aroused a storm of response, positive and negative, to Zeev Sternhell's controversial interpretations. In Sternhell's view, fascism was much more than an episode in the history of Italy. He argues here that it possessed a coherent ideology with deep roots in European civilization. Long before fascism became a political force, he maintains, it was a major cultural phenomenon. This important book further asserts that although fascist ideology was grounded in a revolt against the Enlightenment, it was not a reactionary movement. It represented, instead, an ideological alternative to Marxism and liberalism and competed effectively with them by positing a revolt against modernity. Sternhell argues that the conceptual framework of fascism played an important role in its development. Building on radical nationalism and an "antimaterialist" revision of Marxism, fascism sought to destroy the existing political order and to uproot its theoretical and moral foundations. At the same time, its proponents wished to preserve all the achievements of modern technology and the advantages of the market economy. Nevertheless, fascism opposed every "bourgeois" value: universalism, humanism, progress, natural rights, and equality. Thus, as Sternhell shows, the fascists adopted the economic aspect of liberalism but completely denied its philosophical principles and the intellectual and moral heritage of modernity.

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