RADICAL POLITICS OF RICH PEOPLE: BRITISH UPPER CLASS SUPPORT OF INTERWAR COMMUNISM AND FASCISM

by

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A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in History

Boise State University

May 2014

BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE COLLEGE

DEFENSE COMMITTEE AND FINAL READING APPROVALS

of the thesis submitted by

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Thesis Title: Radical Politics of Rich People: British Upper Class Support of Interwar Communism and Fascism

Date of Final Oral Examination: 13 March 2014

The following individuals read and discussed the thesis submitted by student Michal Rebecca Yadlin, and they evaluated her presentation and response to questions during the final oral examination. They found that the student passed the final oral examination.

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The final reading approval of the thesis was granted by Joanne Klein, Ph.D., Chair of the Supervisory Committee. The thesis was approved for the Graduate College by John R. Pelton, Ph.D., Dean of the Graduate College.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I'd like to thank my BSU professors for allowing me to write papers that guided me towards my final thesis. I'd especially like to thank Dr. Nick Miller and Dr. Lynn Lubamersky for all the time and energy they took reading my various drafts and providing feedback. I owe much of this thesis to Dr. Joanne Klein for being an encouraging chair, guiding me through a reading and conference session that helped me hone my topic and for always being interested in my research. I'm also grateful for my BSU classmates, especially Niki Willis and Mark Iverson for their support.

A special thank you to Elizabeth Al-Qadhi and the researchers at the British Library, Weiner Library, and Cadbury Research Center in Birmingham for all their help, kindness, and advice during my research trip in the UK.

My colleagues and former professors at College of Idaho must be thanked for always being interested in what I was researching and continuing to encourage me while I taught and went to school. A special thanks to Steve Maughan for introducing me to the Mitfords. My friends both in Idaho, in California, in England, and wherever else they might be for reading drafts, giving me excuses to take a break, listening to me go on about the aristocracy and the Mitfords. A special thank you to Jeanne Peck, for encouraging me from before Day 1. And most importantly to my family--my parents, Lynne and Yoram, and my three sisters, Roni, Shiri, and Youval, for everything.

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines why members of the British aristocracy and upper class supported communism and fascism during the interwar period. The pre-1900 generation attempted to hold onto their pre-war status and power by supporting fascism and its tenets of authoritarian rule, strict class division, and social regeneration through *uber*-nationalism. Meanwhile, the post-1900 generation rebelled against their elders and used communist ideology centered on an equal utopia to create a new political, economic, and social balance in the post-war era. Although the two generations aligned themselves with vastly different radical politics, their reasons for the change in support were similar. Both generations abandoned traditional politics because of disillusionment with the political and economic situation after the First World War and used these new political ideologies to attempt to either restore or reject the past. Upper class individuals from across society responded to the pressures of ancestry, upper class dictated traditions, poor familial relationships, and personal egotism by supporting of radical politics, at least temporarily. Using memoirs, biographies, letters, their own writings, and official government and newspaper documents, this thesis is a case study of why sons and daughters of baronets, lords, and landowners supported radical politics during the interwar period but also why they returned to the traditions of patriotism and Conservatism with the onset of the Second World War.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

The interwar period was full of political turmoil and deep-seeded arguments between the Conservative and Labour parties, who were forced to contend with new radical political parties like the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) and the British Union of Fascists (BUF). The aftermath of the First World War saw disenchanted upper classmen supporting these new radical politics. Unhappy with the state of the country, the upper class turned to radical politics to enact what they hoped would be extreme change. Those in the generation that fought in the First World War typically became fascists as they saw it as a way to retain their pre-war glory and prestige. Those who spent the war still in school were frustrated with the lack of change in the post-war era and aligned themselves with communism as it gave them a new and refreshing perspective so different from their class traditions. The upper class responded to the changes of the interwar period in different ways depending on their generation and their level of involvement in the First World War. The older generation of the upper class, born before 1900, attempted to hold onto their pre-war status and power, while the younger generation, born after 1900, fought against their elders and embraced the new economic and social balance found in England.

The difference in the interwar period in comparison to other periods of rebellion was the alliance with new radical politics. This thesis argues that upper class men and women were strong supporters of the new, radical politics of the interwar period as it offered them an alternative to politics of the prewar era that they found unsatisfactory in a

changing Britain. Although these individuals supported different radical political parties, the reasons why they broke from their traditions can be attributed to the following reasons: disillusionment with the post-war political and economic sectors, poor familial relationships and pressures of ancestry, frustrations with the traditional public school upbringing, which included mandatory participation in the Officer's Training Corp (OTC), and personal egotism, and preservation of privilege.

Although the two generations supported different radical ideologies, they were essentially responding to the same issues. Unstable political leadership and an uncertain economic future during the interwar period concerned both generations. The older generation, seeing the positive improvements implemented by fascism in Germany and Italy, supported a similar ideology while the younger generation, through their rejection of upper class traditions and the embracing of lower classes, felt like political and economic change benefited the most from communist ideology. Both generations reacted differently to the pressures brought about by traditions and ancestry. The older generation attempted to fit these traditions into a changing society and sought to re-establish power through fascism. The younger generation rejected their traditions by embracing communism. One of the most important traditions of the upper class was attendance at a public school and participation in the OTC. Fascism, and its emphasis of tight bands of supporters, was a way for the older generation to retain the camaraderie and support systems they had received through the OTC and, for many, their military service. The younger class, attending school and the OTC during and after the horrors of the First World War, found it difficult to reconcile participation in a program of military training

that would only serve to involve them in another war. Their support of communism stemmed from a pacifist ideology that later evolved into communist ideology.

The upper class found itself affected by these new radical politics because of the centuries-old traditions it clung to. Because of an ever-shifting upper class society in Britain, there is no mutually agreed upon definition for the upper class and aristocracy. Historians agree on common elements and characteristics that make up the upper class and the aristocracy, which are similar but not identical. The upper class can be defined as a social group, a political subset, and an economic class but there is still debate over how to concretely define the group. *Burke's Landed Gentry,* in 1883, described the aristocracy as "a class unexampled and unrivalled in Europe, invested with no hereditary generation… with the foremost place in [England, Ireland and Scotland]."[1] They used strict settlement and entail to keep their estates, houses, and titles together and lived their lives in "accordance with certain attitudes, which served to set them off from the rest of the population."[2] In the late 1800s, the aristocracy and upper class not only formed the wealth and status elites of Britain but were also the governing elite. The House of Commons was a landowner's club while the House of Lords was a "monopoly of landowners and these hereditary, aristocratic legislators remained at the apex of the power elite."[3]

Leading up to the First World War, the upper classes were "still the most wealthy, the most powerful, and the most glamorous people in the country, corporately, and

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[1] David Cannadine, *Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy.* (New York: Anchor Books, 1990), 12.
[2] Cannadine, 13.
[3] Cannadine, 14.

understandably, conscious of themselves as God's elect."[4] They were considered an economic class as well as a status elite and the "sole recipients of those highly esteemed titles of honor that defined and preserved the gradations of society."[5] The men held the titles of dukes, lords, and earls and were considered part of both the financial and the power elite. *The British Aristocracy* lists the characteristics of aristocracy before the First World War, describing aristocrats as possessing "toughness, adaptability, self-control, tenacity and self-confidence, natural outspokenness and helplessness."[6] While helplessness seems antithetical to the other attributes, they explain that helplessness is "simply a front, as the British aristocratic society has always been much more intellectual than superficial, contrary to popular belief."[7] The upper class also consisted of members of Society, which was representative of upper class leisure. Before the war, Society had a clear political function: those a part of it could either directly or indirectly expect to rule. Members of Society were not always themselves financially rich. Their glamour, opulence, and dedication to parties, charity events, and upper class sporting events was enviable to the middle and working classes. Although many in the lower classes aspired to one day themselves reach the upper levels of Society, there were also many who realized they would never attain such levels and instead sought to bring about its end.

Because there is no specific delineation for what defines a member of the upper class, I have formulated the following definition, using those at the forefront of class history like David Cannadine, Ross McKibbin, and Nancy Mitford as guides and

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[4] Cannadine, 2.
[5] Cannadine, 11.
[6] Mark Bence-Jones and Hugh Montgomery-Massingberg. *The British Aristocracy*. (London: Constable, 1979), 181.
[7] Bence-Jones and Montgomery-Massingberg, 197.

contributors. For the purposes of this thesis, the definition of the British upper class is as follows: men who, regardless of whether their actual monetary worth supports their lifestyle, own land, typically consisting of property in the country as well as a house in London for "the Season." They are not required to have a title, especially because of the British practice of primogeniture, but often have had one bestowed upon them or their family at some point during their ancestry. They have been educated at a top public school in England and have often participated in the Officer's Training Corp with a possible continuation at Sandhurst.[8] They are active in Society, especially during the London Season, and are financially able to travel, mainly throughout Europe, at various times during the year. Women of the upper class have clear roles within Society with the expectation of becoming a debutante and coming out during her fifteenth or sixteenth year. She is not likely to be educated in a traditional school setting but more apt to have governesses and is educated in the art of one day running her own household. As a married woman, she is expected to be supportive of her husband, assist in the running of the household staff and expenses, remain a positive influence upon the family's children, and become a society hostess, befitting of her husband's position.

The First World War was the first European war that required a total war effort, which included the participation of the aristocracy and upper class, both in the form of monetary support as well as service as officers. As Britain entered the period dubbed by Robert Graves and Alan Hodge as the "Long Weekend," the upper class was forced to come to terms with their changing status and role within society. Politics even more so became a means of mobility, since it opened the door to financial and position-holding

[8] Public schools in England are comparable to private/elite schools in the United States.

opportunities. The economic difficulties weathered during the First World War resulted in a declining number of very rich men sitting in parliament, and men wishing promotion to the peerage were advised to enter politics.[9] A lord did not have to be born into his position but often "became an aristocrat as soon as he received his title. The [King] or Queen turned him from Socialist leader, or middle class businessman into a noble and with the title and his outlook would forever be changed."[10] It was no longer necessary to have a long-standing family history, and members of the old dynasties struggled to identify themselves alongside new members of the House of Lords who were "great financiers like Lord Rothschild and Lord Swaythling; captains of industry like Lord Leverhulme and Lord Pirie; great magnates like Lord Vestey of the meat trust and Lord Inverchapel of the P&O combine; and finally newspaper proprietors like Lord Beaverbrook and Lord Rothermere."[11] Antiquity of family lines had no relevance to their position during the interwar period and previous checklists that preceded initiation into the upper class were done away with as more artificial peers, those without an aristocratic family history, were created by the monarchy. The war was a catalyst for major upheaval within confines of the upper class and ushered in a period that saw a struggle between a changing world and a desire to retain past values and traditions.

Upon their economic release from the strains of war, the upper class began to plan again for world travel, refitting their yachts, discussing the merits of rival designs for

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[9] Ross McKibbin. *Classes and Culture: England 1918-1951*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 18.
[10] Nancy Mitford. *Noblesse Oblige*. (New York: Harper and Brothers Company, 1956), 24.
[11] McKibbin, 21.

their new motor cars, re-opening country houses, acting as if nothing had changed.[12] Professional cricket was revived, the regatta was held at Henley, opera and ballet enjoyed a great season, and there was always some social gathering or social wedding that the upper class turned out for. However, the formal weekend hunting parties became an informal gathering of friends and strangers who came and went as they pleased and who had free range of the ground and amenities. It did not seem to matter that there was a great difficulty in affording these lavish parties: despite the economic decline, many landowners attempted to cling to whatever vestiges of their identity that they could. Often, this included shutting up the majority of a large manor house to save money on servants, heating bills, and electricity, and therefore confining weekend partygoers to a small number of rooms. Despite possessing tapestries, expensive works of art, multiple dinner services, and lavish living areas, "[family members] never used the room when [they] were to [themselves], for patches of blue mold had spoilt the wallpaper, and one always shivered there. But nobody must think of [them] as anything but drawing-room folk."[13] For a section of society deeply entrenched in their traditions, the drive to retain former glory and a return to the Golden Age of power and prestige within the ruling class was strong, despite the changing economy.

A vital part of the upper class traditions rested in the public school system, and through that, the OTC, created specifically for sons of the upper class and aristocracy. The OTC provided a standard of training that was considered sufficiently high for boys to

[12] Robert Graves and Alan Hodge. *The Long Weekend*. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1940), 12-14.
[13] Virginia Nicholson. *Among the Bohemians*. (New York: Perennial, 2002), 104.

be offered commissions immediately if war was ever declared.[14] In the nineteenth-century, schools were accused of failing to "fulfill the needs of those who paid to have their sons educated in the system."[15] Students were found unable to pass exams that would lead to careers in the armed forces, law, or civil service. Real reform came through the workings of Thomas Arnold, headmaster of Rugby School in 1827. Arnold redirected Rugby towards a school-wide attitude of hushed reverence, turning discipline from a simple case of crime and punishment to a moral question of sin and redemption. He installed prefects who were "transformed into an inner circle of responsible, pious deputies whom he trusted and in whom he confided, making them the instruments of his will."[16] This was integral for creating a hierarchical model of discipline. The next step of transformation in the public school evolution came from the expansion of the British Empire. There was a clear connection between a public-school education and Empire: "the more ennobling features ascribed to Imperialism were already dominant within the schools."[17] More and more, public schools became better equipped to provide students with a future in the Officers Corps of the armed forces.

Although rifle courses and volunteer forces had been in place in public schools since fear of a French invasion back in 1804, it was not until 1906 that the first official OTC was created, divided into "senior (university) and junior (school) branches, supported by the War Office and governed by a set of regulations."[18] Officially, the OTC was non-compulsory, yet the pressure to conform and participate was most likely

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[14] Peter Parker. *The Old Lie: The Great War and the Public School Ethos.* (London: Continuum, 2007), 18.
[15] Parker, 40.
[16] Parker, 47.
[17] Parker, 54.
[18] Parker, 63.

stronger than admitted, especially as observed at Marlborough where, "according to the official history of the school's OTC 'by 1913 almost every able-bodied boy had joined.'"[19] The Class of 1914, raised in an atmosphere of Empire, Imperialism, loyalty, camaraderie, and military, had been prepared "both implicitly, by the codes to which the schools subscribed, and explicitly, by the junior branch of the OTC, for the eventuality of war."[20] This class had been eager to sign up as none of them had yet realized the horrors of war but considered it an extension of the games they played at school. Many in the later classes despised being forced to compete in courses that would send them to their death.

The post-1900 generation had a different perspective on the world after the First World War. Many had been too young to fight but were still affected by its repercussions and rebelled against their class and station. Many detested their forced participation in patriotic exercises like the OTC that continued to teach values and tenets that were killing their family and friends. They used communism to rebel. Many were "bored with the formal functions of the Season that they invited childish and silly amusements to quench their youthful high spirits" and sought a simpler existence.[21] The rebels of the post-1900 generation took things several steps farther. Entering their late teens and early twenties when the Depression hit, and appalled by the continuing decadence of society, they became entrenched in the real lower-class life in both England and Germany, choosing to live in slum tenements that were diametrically opposed to where they had grown up. This

[19] Parker, 65.
[20] Parker, 18.
[21] Margetson, 46.

left them open to the influence of the growing radical politics of fascism and communism of the Continent.

The upper class had rebelled against their class before the interwar period. Yet while past rebels had been successful in enacting change, the rebels of the interwar period were generally unsuccessful and their shifts of allegiance were numerous but temporary. A disastrous political landscape at the end of the First World War forced the upper class to focus on their bankruptcy, political marginalization, and the potential loss of all that their ancestors had built up. Although "class war, socialism, and fascism were un-English ideas," the upper class found itself looking abroad to Italy and Germany with a desire to emulate their organizations.[22] A continuing dissatisfaction with the democratic system and the melding of classes concerned an upper class intent on finding ways to regain the power they had slowly but steadily been losing over the last fifty years.

The British political system in the post-war era was struggling just as much as the economy was struggling. Political leadership shifted between Conservative and Labour at an alarming rate until the formation of the National Government in 1931, a cross-party coalition of Liberals and Conservative Members of Parliament led by Ramsay MacDonald, a member of the Labour Party. The Abdication Crisis in 1936 left many questioning the power of the monarchy, having already lost faith in party leaders and the government. With mainstream politics failing on multiple fronts, reports of political and economic stability coming out of Italy and Germany were welcome news and were helpful in creating connections between the British upper class and fascist ideology, especially in light of the fascist tenet of strict class lines. They also saw fascism's

[22] Karina Urbach, ed. *European Aristocracies and the Radical Right 1918-1939.* (London: Oxford University Press, 2007), 55.

authoritarian leadership as far superior to the weak leadership in Britain. The older generation saw fascism as a way to retain their political and social position and thrive under a strong, capable leader. Comparatively, the younger generation, coming of age during a time of political and economic crisis, found communist principles of class overthrow, redistribution of wealth, and a destruction of the current system as a way to improve the weak areas within Britain.

The political ideologies of fascism and communism were transplanted from continental Europe. Both the CPGB and the BUF struggled to find a foothold amongst the British population, because at their core, both were seen as un-English. They had essentially disbanded by the time Great Britain declared war in 1939 when support of radical politics did not seem to align with patriotic values. Initially founded in an attempt to enact change during post-war recovery, neither were particularly successful, especially when compared to their European counterparts. While many European countries, including Italy and Germany, were just forming in the late nineteenth-century, Great Britain was already well established as the most dominant and powerful nation in the world with an empire that spanned the globe. Even though the upper classes found them enticing, radical politics failed with the onset of the Second World War. In continental Europe, both communism and fascism succeeded where there was a power vacuum. Despite the power in Britain shifting between the Conservative and new Labour Parties, the vacuum was never big enough to let radical politics make a strong impression. New radical political parties failed to pose a significant, long-lasting threat. They were simply a way for all classes to temporarily rebel against the status quo. The onset of the Second

World War brought an end to any major inroads these radical parties were attempting to make.

The CPGB was founded in 1920 after the Comintern (CI) organized the Third International Conference in Moscow to discuss an expansion of communist ideology to other nations. Despite constant ideological and financial support from the CI, the CPGB never managed to replicate the power, prestige, or influence found in other European Communist parties and struggled continuously during the interwar period to remain viable. The CPGB was initially made up of an "amalgamation of a number of small home-grown guild socialists, socialist and shop stewards' groups, although the process of making communists did not begin in earnest until after 1923."[23] The CPGB spent the interwar years shifting its political and ideological doctrine, which ensured that the experiences of members in the early 1920s was quite different from the experiences of those affiliated with the CPGB in subsequent years. The CPGB realized the importance of support from other socialist organizations like the Independent Labour Party, the Socialist League, and local trade union and Labour Party branches. The younger generations of the upper class were drawn to the Communist party because it represented a major rebellion against the status quo. The CPGB promised equality for all classes, which was in line with what the disillusioned members of the upper class were hoping for during the economic and political upheaval of the interwar period. Its lack of significant growth can be attributed to its difficulty in cultivating a uniform message and plan of action as well as the legitimacy of the Labour Party, which had originally been formed to represent working-people, trade unions, and socialist societies.

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[23] Thomas Linehan. *Communism in Britain, 1920-39*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 1.

Fascism's origins in Europe were a result of a revolt against materialism and became a synthesis of hyper-nationalism and an anti-capitalist revision of Marxism. It was an authentically revolutionary movement that wanted a clean break from the established order so that it could politically, ethnically, idealistically, and aesthetically provide a new option that was anti-decadent and anti-material.[24] The revolutionary zeal coming out of the nineteenth-century that produced fascism inspired a revolt of young people against society, parents, and school. This provided young men returning from war with a similar camaraderie that they had experienced in the trenches.[25] Although the core values of fascism were similar across continental Europe and Great Britain, different national traditions are key to understanding why fascism succeeded in the former and failed in the latter. Unification in Germany and Italy did not occur until 1860-70. Nationalism was strong in Germany and increased political tensions after the Treaty of Versailles resulted in a polarized society that "left important sections of the German Establishment totally alienated from the values of the democratic republic and its 'French' values of liberty and equality."[26] Alienation and economic depression provided the opportunity for fascism to emerge as a totalitarian power source that eventually eliminated all other political parties. Twentieth-century nationalism in Italy, combined with the poor performance of Italian troops in the First World War, reinforced the view that Italians needed to be forged into a unified nation; this occurred through Mussolini's fascism.

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[24] Zeev Sternhell. *Neither Left Nor Right*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), 270.
[25] George Mosse. "The Genesis of Fascism." *Journal of Contemporary History* 1,1 (1966):18.
[26] Roger Eatwell. *Fascism: A History*. (New York: Allen Lane, 1996), 31.

Great Britain was nationalistic and patriotic at its core yet fascism was less appealing to its citizens than in continental Europe. Britain fostered a civil sense of nation and loyalty was to a "set of evolved institutions, especially the monarchy and Parliament, rather than to a mystically conceived race."[27] Despite weaknesses in the political and economic spheres in the post-war period, most citizens did not see the need for a massive overhaul of the British political system. Although the BUF borrowed many of its traits from Mussolini and Hitler's regimes, the BUF was essentially a homegrown fascist movement. Its mission was to adapt continental ideals to British traditions but a lack of consistent ideology meant less support from its citizenry who were frustrated with the unclear and ever-shifting policies that were antithetical to long-standing British ideals.

No area in British society was free from the temporary allure of radical politics, whether it was the political, intellectual, military, or educational realm. Upper class men and women like the Mitford sisters, baronets Oswald Mosley and Osbert Sitwell, literary pioneers Christopher Isherwood, W.H. Auden, Edward Upward, and Stephen Spender or the well-decorated Admiral Barry Domvile, A.K. Chesterton, Captain Ramsay, and Sir Charles Petrie are examples of how a combination of a specific upbringing and radically different post-war experiences led to an upsurge in the support for communism and fascism. These individuals were not only members of the social elite but the elite of their individual political, military, or literary fields. Their prominent positions had attributed to their historical longevity. Many, like Mosley, Petrie, Isherwood, Domvile, and Sitwell, realized their role within the interwar period but not as expected, leaving gaps in traditional British leadership. They sought to document their experiences, triumphs, and

[27] Eatwell,18.

failures, most composing their own memoirs and autobiographies. Their private correspondence have been preserved within the National Archives or in private collections connected to the Archives and remain available for public viewing. Because the aristocracy and upper class made up a fairly small portion of the British population, the subcategory of those who supported radical politics is smaller still. Although their social and career interests differ, their affiliation with radical politics influenced communication among society and the connections between this small subset of individuals who supported radical politics are numerous. Mosley influenced the Mitford sisters to support fascism, while also working in fascist organizations with Chesterton, Domvile, Petrie, and Sitwell. Diana and Unity Mitford's younger sister Jessica supported an opposing political view and later became acquainted with Esmond Romilly who politically influenced Philip Toynbee. Isherwood, Auden, Spender, and Upward exchanged correspondence in regards to their levels of commitment to the CBGP and also shared experiences in Spain with Romilly and Toynbee. The many intersecting lines of friendship, communication, and correspondences makes categorizing this subset of individuals simple.

Although these individuals make up a small portion of the British upper class and aristocracy and their influence was short-lived, they are significant in regards to their affiliation with radical politics. Their initial lack of ideological commitment reveals that their rebellion was more against the political and economic situation than for radical belief systems. Most of the supporters of radical politics were not anti-British but turned to radical ideologies to push forward needed change. Many were natural political, military, and literary leaders meant to take up their traditional roles in those respective

spheres but outside influences, especially the changes occurring outside Great Britain, led to them becoming leaders in short-lived political parties. While they made up a small portion of the British communist and fascist parties, their choices made a large, but temporary, impact upon the larger British society. This thesis is a case study as to why these small in number but social and politically powerful individuals spent the interwar period fulfilling their class' traditions in untraditional forms.

The political, economic, and social changes of the interwar period, combined with a loss of identity, created the perfect storm for these members of the upper class to support radical politics. Although the political systems of communism and fascism seem antithetical to the long-held belief system of the upper class, many members of the upper class chose to ally themselves with these radical politics. Those in the generation that fought in the First World War mostly became fascists as they saw it as a way to regain their pre-war glory and prestige. Those who spent the war era still in school were frustrated with the lack of change in the post-war era and aligned themselves with communism as it gave them a new and refreshing perspective so different from their usual traditions.

CHAPTER TWO

Rigid upper class tradition before the war, which included separation from parents, especially for boys, enrollment in boarding and public schools and expected participation in the OTC, was simply a part of life for the pre-war generation. There was no reason to rebel against these traditions because it was what was done and seemingly always would be. Active participation in the First World War led to disillusionment with the political and economic changes in the post-war period. For many, fascism was the vehicle used to regain past power in order to re-establish upper class traditions and attempt to stem the tide of change that threatened to bring an end to the long-standing conventions of the upper class.

The pressures found within the way of life of the aristocracy and the upper class were difficult for people not of that class to understand. As enviable as the upper class was to lower class members, those living the life in the aristocracy found their existence far from perfect or idyllic. As children, future heirs to titles and their siblings found that home and school were the two places that initially cemented how important upper class traditions were. These traditions were the source of so many of the issues that plagued the upper class and aristocracy during the interwar period.

Many of these aristocrats who aligned themselves with fascist ideology were responding to either a lack of strong parental guidance or the strong expectation to follow in their father's footsteps. Fascism, as a totalitarian ideology, places power in the hands

of an authoritarian leader. This type of leader was often lacking within the homes of those in the upper class that supported fascism. Oswald Mosley, born to be the heir to a Staffordshire baronetcy and estate, was raised with an absent father and counted the family's servants as his playmates while growing up. His early life revolved around horses and dogs, hunting, shooting, and fishing. The main influences in his life were his mother and his grandfathers, who were both political actors and observers.[28] While not necessarily expected to take over his grandfathers' seats in government, he was expected to learn the tools and tricks of the trade to be a successful member of the upper class. Even before he went to school, Mosley recognized how strange the English traditions were, questioning why it seemed necessary to "maintain for the children of a small class of relatively rich people a system so tough that it would produce an immediate revolution if applied to the masses?"[29] Although Mosley was questioning his upbringing, he was not yet rebelling against it. On the rare occasions that Mosley's father appeared, it was in antagonistic forms. In one instance, Mosley's father came out against his son, attacking him as an "aristocratic *poseur* fighting on behalf of the working class."[30] Mosley struck back, saying "My father knows nothing about me," leading historians to wonder if Mosley's path might have been different had he been raised by a present father.

Similarly, A.K. Chesterton, later leader in the BUF and unabashed anti-Semite, grew up in South Africa during a time when the Empire was shaky. Because his upper class father passed away when Chesterton was still young, he found himself being raised by a stepfather with the same social background but who was emotional and "pathetically

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[28] Oswald Mosley. *My Life*. (New Rochelle: Arlington House, 1968), 23
[29] Ibid., 28.
[30] Stephen Dorril. *Blackshirt: Sir Oswald Mosley and British Fascism*. (London: Viking, 2006), 105.

vulnerable."[31] Chesterton's escape was when he was sent to Brightlands, the prep school for Dulwich College, where he excelled in both the classroom and on the playing field and was an enthusiastic member of the OTC. Similarly, Admiral Barry Domvile was expected to follow in his father's footsteps as a navy admiral. This afforded Domvile travel opportunities and the chance to observe and experience a pre-war Germany as well as the post-war changes that were enacted first by the Treaty of Versailles and later Hitler's rise to power. As part of his travels before the First World War, Domvile met the Kaiser several times and liked him, which might have been the cause of his Germanic sympathies and fascist leanings during the interwar period.[32] Sir Charles Petrie grew up observing the traditional roles of not just his parents but also his grandparents and was afforded all the opportunities of a traditional upper class child.[33] The stability found within the upper class and aristocracy was shattered with the onset of the First World War and the security that typically embodied the ruling class was lost.

Before the war, power and prestige that came with the aristocracy was a source of security. Osbert Sitwell, son of an upper-middle class father and aristocratic mother, found himself influenced and deeply shaped by his early experiences. Because of the conflicting views he was subject to as a child of a "mixed background," he was deeply affected by the "dismal nature of democracy and the boring features of the ascendant middle class."[34] Sitwell found himself eventually revolting against his father's Edwardian beliefs, which he felt were "anti-intellectual, conformist, inartistic, intolerant and

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[31] Arthur Kenneth Chesterton. *Portrait of a Leader*. (London: Action Press, Ltd., 1937), 25.
[32] Admiral Barry Domvile. *By and Large.* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1936), 52.
[33] Sir Charles Petrie. *Chapters of Life.* (London: Eyre and Spottiswood, 1950), 18.
[34] John Pearson, *The Sitwells: A Family's Biography*. (New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 43.

dominating," especially after he saw his mother's inability to properly cope with the traditions of the aristocracy.[35] Sitwell, too, found his independent belief system led to a strained and later estranged relationship with his father.

The typical journey from public school, to OTC, to a position at Sandhurst or experiences abroad cemented a foundation of order, routine, tradition, and experience that was later seen in fascism, with its uber-national, patriotic, militaristic tendencies. With the advent of the First World War, participation in the armed forces was seen an adventure and a duty. The traditional public school, through both sports and the OTC, trained the boys of the aristocracy and upper class to become soldiers. Mosley loved his OTC experience at Winchester. He felt like he was being educated in the "gentlemanly tradition of loyalty, chivalry, Christianity, patriotism, sportsmanship and leadership."[36] Having been trained to be a man at an early age and already adept in the arts of boxing, fencing, and hunting, the military traditions of the OTC were an extension of this earlier training. Mosley's success in the military maneuvers at Winchester prompted him to join the army and spend nine months at Sandhurst, which made him rowdier, more violent, and more rebellious. Devotion to military movements and the spectacle of marches and parades left a lasting impression upon Mosley as was seen later with their inclusion in BUF tradition and ideology. For Mosley, war was considered "almost a sporting event" and even injury could not keep him from transferring to the Royal Flying Corps and seeing heavy action in France.[37] War was even more exciting than the routines practiced

[35] Pearson, 53.
[36] Dorril, 9.
[37] Dorril, 15.

as part of the OTC and for the moment adventure trumped the disillusionment that came after the end of the war.

Similarly, Chesterton's love and enthusiasm for the OTC led to active involvement in the First World War. He was first sent to the German East Africa campaign and later saw active duty in France in 1917. The war cost Chesterton his youth and his health but deepened his already present patriotism. A deep patriotic connection to the British Empire at home and abroad was a core characteristic of the upper class fascists in the interwar period and Chesterton was no exception. After the war, he began an odyssey to emerge from the darkness of the trenches, which occurred through an adoption of a fascist creed that "offered the chance to reunite the soldier with the civilian into one citizen in order to create a political state based on spiritual values; to provide another chance for men to display their super-human qualities of self-sacrifice."[38]

Osbert Sitwell liked the work and games found at Eton but planned to fail the Sandhurst exams since he had no interest in fighting. His father, further undermining their relationship, oversaw Sitwell's inclusion into the Yeomanry regiment, a position meant for officers who did not have to go to Sandhurst. Because of this, Sitwell found himself a member of the Brigade of Guards, surrounded by young and leisured aristocrats of fashion: Sitwell described it as "essentially an exclusive London-based club for the sons of the very rich."[39] However, Sitwell did see active service in France and realized that school had been especially arranged to prepare him for the ordeal of war and that "through hatred of a system of public schools, the children of the upper class had been taught to bear with composure a high degree of physical hardship and spiritual misery

[38] Chesterton, 51.
[39] Pearson, 75.

while enclosed in an atmosphere of utmost frustration."[40] During Sitwell's second tour of duty, he had the opportunity to observe military debacles up close and concluded that these "terrible disasters ensued from those powerful elders who were so certain that they knew best."[41] This made him leery of leadership and unable to trust those in power. When many of these military leaders sought political office after the war, Sitwell remained uncertain of their leadership skills and turned away from traditional politics towards fascism, an ideology that relied upon clear, strong leadership.

Although not everyone saw active service during the First World War, many were affected by their experiences as well as the repercussions in the post-war era. Charles Petrie was about to go up to Oxford when war broke out in 1914. After spending a year at Corpus Christi, he began training with the Oxford University OTC. Although his eyesight prevented him from going overseas, Petrie was able to see the war through the eyes of the London bureaucracy.[42] Upon his return to Oxford, he realized that "everyone on [his] staircase at Corpus Christi had been killed in the war" and his anger, frustration, and desire to see change was manifested in his flirtations with the right in the 1930s. Similarly, Chesterton, hopeful for the constancy characterized by a centuries-long unchanged aristocracy, was strongly affected by a world that had been "turned upside-down at a bewildering speed."[43] For Chesterton, the positive changes fascism was making in Germany and Italy was the solution to his search for meaning and security lost during the war.

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[40] Pearson, 90.
[41] Pearson, 101.
[42] Sir Charles Petrie. *A Historian Looks At His World*. (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1972), 48.
[43] Chesterton, 202.

After the war ended, the Left saw "hope from a welcome deliverance from social injustice in the changing post-war world, while the Right saw little but a precipitous erosion of all it held dear."[44] Party leaders scrambled to garner public support. The Conservative Party was quickly losing power and Ramsay MacDonald was asked whether the Labour Party's anthem was "Red Flag" or "Londonderry Air."[45] Many former soldiers, including Mosley, Sitwell, and Chesterton, became involved in politics after the war ended, with varying degrees of success. Mosley explained, "the war had forced [me] to re-examine my life … to ensure the useless slaughter of war would not be repeated."[46] His lack of traditional higher education left him free from the "all-pervading, Treasury-dominated, neo-classical, liberal economic traditions of the university trained political establishment" and his platform hinged on the message that a total war must never be fought again.[47] Despite his success in the war, he realized that a war of such scale and magnitude in the near future could be disastrous.

Mosley, as well as others navigating the unknowns of the post-war period, was reacting to a lack of change within the political and economic spheres of the country. Used to the rules and regulations of first public school and then the military, this new era that seemed to highlight the shortcomings of the democratic system was uncertain and difficult to navigate. In order to gain some sort of control over the changes, Mosley and Sitwell sought seats within the government. Although initially deferential to the older politicians, Mosley's frustration that they were still stuck in the pre-war era moved him to

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[44] Robin Salskia, ed. *The Red Book: The Membership List of the Right Club, 1939.* (London: Foxley, 2010), 12.
[45] Margetson, 178.
[46] Dorill, 34.
[47] Dorill, 35.

speak up more frequently. The intoxication of political influence also faded when the Conservative Party began to decline in power and Mosley calculated that the Labour Party was the vehicle for his ambition. Just as a soldier wants to be a member of the strongest regiment in order to increase changes of victory, Mosley similarly sought out the strongest political party in order to enact the most change. This created a paradox though, as one moment he appeared to be the austere, plain-living socialist and the next, the young aristocrat, lover of fast cars, good clothes, and fine food. Even as a member of the Labour Party, Mosley never completely turned his back on his upbringing, which was confusing to many of his constituents. He appealed to the electorate explaining "the war destroyed the old party issues and with them the old parties. The party system must return in the very near future, but it will be a new party system… I am not a freelance incapable of such cooperation and am prepared to work immediately with men who hold similar opinions in the face of the great new issues of our day."[48] The clash of Mosley's politics and lifestyle proved too much for his constituents to overcome. Mosley's failure in mainstream politics forced him to turn to extremes, which in his case was by the creation of the BUF.

Democratic shortcomings and inconsistent leadership became evermore apparent as the interwar period progressed and it was clear that a political revival was needed. Admiral Domvile, who was a part of the process restoring the peace conditions after the war, was invited to go to Germany as Hitler rose to power and fully enjoyed his experiences, praising the positive changes that Hitler was making in an economically

[48] Nicholas Mosley. *Rules of The Game/Beyond the Pale: Memoirs of Sir Oswald Mosley and Family*. (Elmwood Park: Dalkey Archive Press, 1983), 48.

ravaged society.[49] His first impressions of Germany led him to wonder whether "England was really the land of the free," seeing how much better off "poor oppressed Germany" was.[50] While economic and political crises in Europe allowed Mussolini and Hitler to grab power, Britain found its upper class enamored with foreign leaders. A.J.P. Taylor noted the contradictions found in many British politicians during the thirties: "Every politician extolled the virtues of democracy, especially at the expense of Soviet Russia. Despite the rhetoric, MacDonald wrote friendly personal letters to the Fascist dictator Mussolini; Austen Chamberlain exchanged photographs with him and joined him in family holidays; Churchill sang his praises… in newspaper articles."[51] Both Mussolini and Hitler were seen as viable political leaders in their countries and were treated as such by British political leaders.

Osbert Sitwell's failed attempt to win his father's seat in the 1918 election resulted in spending a significant amount of time in Italy where his father had years before purchased a vast medieval Tuscan palace. With his political ambitions thwarted and his financial resources regrettably meager, he fell into the same category as many of his fellow inter-war patricians: he was "shy and nervous of that other big world which consists of the vast hordes of the middle and lower classes and foreigners… he was, in some paralyzing way, conscious of his own defenselessness, though he had all the defense of privilege."[52] While in Italy, Sitwell met Gabriele d'Annunzio, poet, playwright, and First World War veteran, who was to become his personal hero. His time

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[49] Domvile, 233.
[50] Domvile, 234.
[51] A.J.P. Taylor. *English History: 1914-1945*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 23.
[52] Pearson, 545.

in Fiume afforded him the opportunity to be spectator to the open rebellion against the Italian government. D'Annunzio influenced Mussolini to march on Roma and Sitwell's later erratic support of fascism is an example of sympathy for the original d'Annunzio myth of a "man of action."[53] Sitwell was enamored by the initial success of his hero and his hero's successors—especially Mussolini—and sought similar avenues for himself in Britain with the hope of emulating the success of d'Annunzio.

Similarly, unable to enact real change within the Labour Party and failing to receive any support with his "New Party, a party of youth imbued with a scientific spirit and shorn of political dogma… a party of action; a party of courage brought into being not to introduce Utopia but to prevent collapse," Mosley took some time off in Italy.[54] He returned to England with a renewed vigor, transfixed by fascism. Although Mosley had not seemed to take much interest in Mussolini's government in the 1920s, he did admire the way in which "Mussolini had created order in a nation characterized by divisive tendencies."[55] For Mosley, fascism was the vehicle for his return to the glory he had seen in the First World War and the key to do this was that "he was an aristocrat in politics, fulfilling the old function of his family in a wider sphere and under different conditions."[56] Just as many of the upper class had fought for strong leadership positions at school and had sought after strong leaders during the First World, they similarly searched for strong and stable leadership in the post-war period. Italy and Germany's strong leaders came from the fascist party and it looked as though Britain needed to

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[53] Pearson, 158.
[54] Matthew Worley. "A Call to Action: New Party Candidates and the 1931 General Election." *Parliamentary History* 27,2 (2008): 237.
[55] Eatwell, 230.
[56] Cannadine 547.

follow the same path in order to re-establish pre-war stability. Britain seemed to be just as divided as Italy was yet Italy was finding success through Mussolini: Mosley desired to be a British Mussolini and to bring about the end of his country's division.

Capitalizing on the upper class' appreciation for fascist leadership, Mosley's New Party quickly evolved into the BUF, which was made up of toughs like the boxer "Kid" Lewis as well as intellectuals and aristocrats like Osbert Sitwell and his younger brother Sacheverelle. The creation of the January Club in 1934 was an additional way for leaders in the BUF to connect with other members of the "Establishment." Led by Robert Forgan, a former leader in the New Party, the January Club was essentially a "front organization for Mosley's movement, used to infiltrate the establishment or to permeate the Establishment, depending on who was asked."[57] January Club member Sir Charles Petrie explained in a letter that the January Club intended to "represent the spontaneous effort of a number of disinterested people like ourselves, who are very anxious with regard to the present trend of events… I may say that it has received very substantial support both inside and outside parliament."[58] The idea of political clubs was nothing new to the British upper class. The January Club and others like it emulated the traditional gentlemen's clubs of the nineteenth century but focused more on political issues rather than social ones.

Fascism's insistence on the *ubermensch* and the danger of democracy was extremely enticing to those in the upper class and aristocracy, who also pushed for stringent class divisions. To many in the upper class, this could lead to a return to the "good old days," before the war created a society with less strict social divides. For this

[57] Taylor, 50.
[58] Sir Charles Petrie letter to HW Luttman-Johnson.

reason, fascist clubs were essentially reminiscent of the illicit and conspiratorial societies found rampant through the British public school system. The public school system was in place to prepare the members of the upper class for life within their class and was reliant upon a strict hierarchical structure within each institution. These strict hierarchies were replicated within the OTC and the armed forces and later within gentlemen's clubs. These fascist societies attracted members like "Sir Louis Greig, who was a Gentleman Usher in Ordinary to the King, 'Fruity' Metcalfe who was a close friend of the Prince of Wales, Lord Iddesleigh, Lord Francis Hill, Lord and Lady Russell of Liverpool, and many others."[59] Weary of the inefficiencies of the Baldwin regime, many Conservatives were prepared to embrace almost any alternative, be it the BUF, the January Club, or the Anglo-German Fellowship, an organization created with the intent of targeting the rich and the powerful. It claimed to have "fifty members of both Houses of Parliaments, three directors of the Bank of England, and many generals, admirals, bishops and bankers" as members of the organization, which was created to "promote good relationship between [Britain] and Germany."[60] It was only natural to be made up of members of the aristocracy, as it was almost an extension of their childhood experiences and later traditions of the gentlemen's clubs.

The Right Club, created in 1939 by Captain Archibald Ramsay, a Scottish gentleman and politician, hailing from Eton and Sandhurst, essentially a scion of a noble house, was just another example of how upper class traditions of patriotism intertwined with fascist nationalism. Captain Ramsay saw the Spanish Civil War as a crusade against

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[59] Richard Griffiths. *Fellow Travellers of the Right: British Enthusiasts for Nazi Germany 1933-1939*. (London: Constable, 1980), 52.
[60] Griffiths, 51.

communism and, through his interactions with Admiral Domvile, grew closer to the fascist cause. Domvile's influence came from his opinion that there was a Judeo-Masonic conspiracy and that it was using Spain as its battleground for Semitic takeover.[61] As a son in a family that grew up protecting the empire, he was convinced that anti-Semitism and, through that, fascism, was the right path. Other members of the Right Club included Lord Redesdale, AK Chesterton, the Duke of Iddlington, Sir Alexander Walker, and several MPs.[62] While fascism and anti-Semitism are not synonymous, members of the Right Club saw how the two supported each other in Germany and combined with latent anti-Semitic feelings within the upper class, which stretched back as far as Edward I's Edict of Expulsion in 1290, to create a class sympathetic to fascism.

The nature of the long-lasting upper class and aristocratic traditions dictated a certain attitude of influence and expectation that deference must be shown by the lower classes. A trend of privilege was also found within the reigning class, whether it came from rubbing shoulders with royalty, from the prestige of being able to trace ancestry, or from the physical wealth represented in multiple estates. While personal egotism, prestige, and the feeling that one is impervious to outside forces can be a positive attribute, when it is coupled with radical politics and an overwhelming sense of entitlement, it can become dangerous. The cult of personality concept is vital to the authoritarian ideal within fascism. Often members of the aristocracy expected much more than they were due, which included an assurance of success. This was seen reflected in many of the upper class individuals that became involved in politics, but especially with Mosley, who was seemingly a perfect politician, and thus expected success. Beatrice

[61] Admiral Barry Domvile. *From Admiral to Cabin Boy*. (London: Boswell, 1947), 47.
[62] The Red Book, Weiner Collection, London.

Webb wrote in her diary that he was "the perfect politician who is also a perfect gentleman… Tall and slim, his features were not too strikingly handsome to be strikingly peculiar to himself; modest yet dignified manner, with a pleasant voice and unegotistical conversation. He is also an accomplished orator in the grand old style, and as assiduous working in the modern manner."[63] Despite Webb's observations, Mosley used the privilege that came from an aristocratic title, success as a war hero, and a charismatic personality to garner support for his fascist causes. W.E.D. Allen saw Mosley as a man of the spirit of the Tudor aristocracy and this appealed to A.K. Chesterton, who held a strong admiration for Shakespeare.[64] Mosley had been a successful person most of his life: he certainly had been born into the right family and his military successes left him with the expectation that he would succeed politically as well.

Mosley used fascism as an attempt to "re-create the world he had lost, partly to avenge a class defeat, and partly because he genuinely believed that the country would be better governed in this way."[65] Mosley saw himself as a Man of Destiny and this became evident as Mosley himself, rather than policy or ideology, began to be the center of the BUF. Hitler and Mussolini had become clear leaders not only within their parties but in their nations as a whole and Mosley desired the same. This proved to be more difficult for Mosley. Despite the privilege bred from his aristocratic background and his hope to foster camaraderie found in the trenches of the First World War to be a core part of the BUF ideology, he failed to account for the traditions of not only his class but also his nation. Mosley's failures as leader of the BUF stemmed from his methods, borrowed

[63] Colin Cross. *The Fascists in Britain*. (New York: St Martin's Press, 1963), 17.
[64] Chesterton, 125.
[65] Cannadine 548.

from Italy and Germany. Seeing how Hitler and Mussolini created a cult of personality for themselves, he did the same. As the official leader and the face of fascism in Britain, he expected his followers to follow this cult of personality, as his childhood servants, fags at school, and army subordinates had. But with the onset of the Second World War, which cemented both countries and leaders as the enemy, Mosley's brand of politics was seen as unpatriotic and accounted to his failure as a fascist leader. In a renewed time of crisis and uncertainly, the British turned to King and Prime Minister instead of Mosley and his radical, un-British ways.

Women had different experiences that led them to support fascism, mainly due to their lack of formal education, which meant no involvement with the OTC or as soldiers in the First World War. Although there were posh girls' schools, education through a governess and then later through the mother was more typical. However, the pressures of aristocracy and tradition remained and many women eventually supported fascism. Rotha Lintorn-Orman, believing that the radical left was attempting to turn Great Britain towards the way of the east, formed British Fascisti, Ltd. in 1923. The objective of the first fascist party in Britain was "to receive the spirit of sane and intelligent patriotism, to uphold the established constitution and to prevent the spread of communism and Bolshevism."[66] Lintorn-Orman had been an ambulance driver in France during the First World War and experienced many of the same things as men in the trenches experienced. Having seen the perils of Eastern Europe, she was convinced they were infiltrating Great Britain, which helped dictate her fascist sympathies. Lintorn-Orman was the first of many

[66] Frederic Mullaly. *Fascism Inside England*. (London: Claud Morris Books Ltd., 1946), 12.

women who, reacting to both the First World War and the pressures of aristocracy, supported fascism.

Probably two of the most well known upper class supporters of fascism were the Mitford sisters, Diana and Unity. Both Mitford sisters rebelled strongly against their aristocratic upbringing and their Conservative background. While all seven Mitford children supported different ideologies as they matured, "in their flamboyant way they reflected many of the obscure psychological and political motives which were to afflict certain sections of the British aristocracy."[67] Just as society fractured politically and economically during the post-war reconstruction, the Mitfords chose different political and economic paths. Although they were titled, their father told them, "I hope you children realize you'll have to make your own living. I've got no money to leave you."[68] Their own living was found in class abandonment and support of radical politics, as Unity and Diana embraced fascism while younger sister Jessica turned to communism.

The Mitford sisters were responding to the same issues as upper class men. Both were born after 1900 yet were raised in a family that was emblematic of the declining gentry that found itself struggling in the early twentieth century. Their father, Second Lord Redesdale, had a title that was relatively recent and the First Lord Redesdale had not been wise with finances. As Diana saw her father sell off the family home and heirlooms, she responded by sharing the widespread aversion felt by her class for the inefficiency of the British class and political system. Diana had been educated at home—"[her father] violently disapproved of school for girls" —but was afforded the

[67] Griffiths, 175.
[68] Diana Mosley. "Desert Island Discs." BBC, November 26, 1989.

opportunity to travel and was thus informally educated in Paris.[69] Like many upper class girls, her eyes were opened by her experiences abroad and she learned that there were more political options than just the mainstream channels supported by her father and his generation.

Both Unity and Diana attempted to find happiness within the traditional means that were encouraged by upper class traditions. Diana came out as a debutante at age eighteen, spending the Season of 1928 at balls, receptions, and dances. Diana followed the traditional expectations of marriage by wedding Bryan Guinness, son of a wealthy Conservative MP, in 1929. Her marriage to Bryan afforded her new opportunities and new freedoms, especially in the financial realm, but she and Bryan had different ideas of marriage. Bryan never liked all of Diana's entertaining, detesting the costume parties that would go on all night.[70] Marital strife coupled with her views on the "waste of the talents of gifted, inventive and hardworking people under leaders like Macdonald and Baldwin" left Diana open to the heroics of Oswald Mosley.[71] Although she was not originally drawn to his fascist tendencies, she grew to empathize with them through their deepening relationship. However, had she not already been frustrated with the traditions of her class, she may have been slower in pursing a relationship with a married man, while still being married herself too.

Conceived in the town of Swastika, in Canada, just shy of the first days of the First World War, and christened Unity Valkyrie, the third youngest Mitford sister seemed destined for a life dedicated to the Nazi cause. Observing the attempts Diana was making

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[69] Anne de Courcy. *Diana Mosley: Mitford Beauty, British Fascist, Hitler's Angel.* (London: Random House, 2003), 13.
[70] Jan Dalley. *Diana Mosley: A Life*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), 65.
[71] Cannadine, 552.

to follow the social guidelines dictated by their class, and how unhappy it made her, Unity was less inclined to follow with tradition and found her way to fascism more quickly. She was initially extremely close to her younger sister Jessica, with whom she shared nearly everything, including boredom with the life they had been born into. However, because they had often been lumped together in the family, they felt a mutual desire to break free from the constrictions placed upon them by their parents and older siblings, requiring them to "prove independence from each other and [thus seek] antagonism."[72] Unity was drawn to Diana during her separation from Jessica and Diana's marriage to Mosley was a catalyst for Unity's allegiance with fascism and later Nazism.

Despite Mosley's background as a baronet, a Conservative, and a war hero, his politics as a fascist were in direct opposition to how Diana and Unity had been raised and Diana's relationship with him was seen as "the fairy princess being carried off by the demon king."[73] Diana's support of fascism was less through political activism and more because of her devotion to Mosley. Having been raised with her aristocratic traditions, she played the role of devoted wife—albeit to a fascist leader—impeccably. She was Mosley's liaison with Hitler and later in life admitted that she could not "regret [her friendship with Hitler], it was so interesting and fascinating…"[74] Diana was unique in that her support of fascism and her relationship with Hitler was less of an ideological dependency and more as a result of being with the man she loved. While the interwar period was also a period of increasing political activism among women, Diana's political

[72] David Pryce-Jones. *Unity Mitford: An Enquiry into Her Life and the Frivolity of Evil*. (New York: The Dial Press/James Wade, 1977), 5.
[73] Jonathan and Catherine Guinness. *House of Mitford*. (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1984), 325.
[74] Diana Mosley, Desert Island Discs.

involvement in fascism was at its core a tenet of upper class tradition. Upper class women were expected to support their husband's aspirations and, in her own way, Diana did this with Mosley. It did not hurt that her disillusionment with her own upper class upbringing allowed her to believe in the fascist traditions Mosley introduced to Great Britain, especially after their marriage and political involvement with Hitler.

Unity espoused right wing causes in an incredibly flamboyant way, perhaps without exactly understanding what it all meant: although they grew to be deeply and ideologically entrenched in the fascist cause, "her thoughts were [at first] far from high-flown or ideological, as the fascist movement simply sounded like great fun to her."[75] This initially emotional response to fascism was typical of fascist followers. In older sister Nancy's novel *Wigs on the Green*, Eugenia Malmains, a new recruit to the Social Unionism cause, was essentially Unity. Nancy's portrayal of Unity/Eugenia's over-the-top passion for politics could only be seen as ridiculous.

> 'Britons, awake! Arise! Oh British lion,' cried Eugenia Malmains in thrilling tones. She stood on an overturned washtub on Chalford village green and harangued about a dozen aged yokels… 'The Union Jack Movement is a Youth movement.' Eugenia cried passionately. 'We are tired of the old. We see things through their eyes no longer. We see nothing admirable in the debating society of aged and corrupt men which muddles our great Empire into wars or treaties, dropping one by one the jewels from its crown, casting way its glorious Colonies, its hitherto denied supremacy at sea, its prestige abroad, its prosperity at home… We insist upon the right to be heard without interruption at our own meetings. Let the Pacifists hold their own meetings, we shall not interfere with them at all, but if they try to break up our meetings they do so at their own risk.'[76]

While initially her support of fascism was a childish whim, Unity did later come to deeply identify with fascist ideology. Mosley was able to primarily give her the

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[75] Pryce-Jones, 76.
[76] Nancy Mitford. *Wigs on the Green.* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010), 7.

recognition that she craved, but when the BUF failed to make the progress Mosley had promised, Unity threw herself into the more successful Nazi party in Germany. Although it had started out as "*such* fun," Unity's hatred for the rites and rituals of her class left her seeking other outlets. For her, "fascism was debutante life in reverse."[77] Fascism gave her the ability to set herself apart from the society she had been constrained by, especially since she felt that "if the class system was about to flounder, there was no reason for her to go down with it."[78] Unity was unique in how far she took her support of radical politics. Lord Rothermere, owner of the *Daily Mail*, was not silent about his pro-Nazi leanings, socialist Lady Cunard came back from a 1934 trip to Nuremberg "full of enthusiasm for Hitler" and author Wyndham Lewis saw Hitler as a solution for the "moral decline for the age."[79] Unity's support for Hitler and his ideology came at the expense of British loyalty and ended tragically with the onset of the Second World War.

The pre-1900 generation may have begun their lives with the typical traditions of the upper class but the First World War changed everything. For many, participation in the war was first an extension of the upper class traditions seen in public schools. Yet once the interwar period began and not enough changes were seen politically or economically, many in the upper class began to support fascism. Fascism, seen as a way for change to become enacted swiftly, was supported by upper class as a means to retain their pre-war identity and power. Yet, by the Second World War, those who supported fascism found themselves paying for their affiliation with the radical politics of Mussolini and Hitler.

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[77] Pryce-Jones, 84.
[78] Pryce-Jones, 85.
[79] Griffiths, 178.

CHAPTER THREE

Predominantly, the post-1900 generation grew to support communism during the interwar period. By the time Europe was entrenched in the First World War, those born during and slightly after 1900 were adolescents and seeking normalcy in a period where normality had disappeared. While they may not have had vivid memories of the war itself, they were deeply affected by the war's aftermath on society and culture. This generation's elders reacted to the quickly changing yet at the same time stagnant post-war era by supporting the ideology of fascism. Although the upper class traditions that informed the pre-1900 generation were applied to the post-1900 generation, the results were not the same. Life in the post-war period merited an evolution in upper class values and while the older generation clung with their antiquated beliefs, many in the younger generation sought new philosophies that fit better with the quickly changing world. Instead of embracing traditions or fitting them into the mold of fascism, members of the younger generation reacted to this new era with rebellion. This rebellion was against their class, their traditions, their parents, and anyone who tried to shoehorn them into a specific mold. They turned their backs completely on their upbringing as communism seemed antithetical to the decadent traditions typical to upper class life. Distressed by the stagnation of post-war change, constrained by upper-class traditions, angered by their compulsory participation in the Officer's Training Corps, and invigorated by the passion seen in the Russian Revolution and European Communist parties while living abroad, many of this younger generation of the upper class tied their futures to communism.

Although the divide between the older and younger generation tended to fall around a 1900 birthday, the line was not hard and fast. Birth in the first years of the twentieth century did not automatically mean allegiance with communism rather than fascism. Those born just before or just after 1900 could just as easily have been drawn to either end of the political spectrum. The strongest factor determining whether one supported communism or fascism was the First World War. Oswald Mosley and John Strachey were only five years apart in age yet were more like a generation apart. Mosley's slightly older age meant that he was old enough to actively participate in the First World War. This changed his worldview. On the other hand, Strachey was afforded the opportunity to focus on education over military service. Although both were from the same background and both pursued politics during the interwar period, they were operating under very different worldviews. Mosley's desire to emulate the camaraderie found in the trenches pushed him towards fascism while Strachey's concern for the economic issues in the postwar period as well as his academic background helped him find an alliance with communism. While Mosley saw fascism's nationalistic tendencies as a cure for the economic and political diseases that were a result of the First World War, Strachey saw the cure as stemming from communism's espousal of getting rid of class organization and great power for the lower classes.

Political instability within the Conservative and Labour Parties was a driving force behind John Strachey's allegiance to communism. After his travels opened his eyes to the plethora of political options that abounded, Strachey joined the Labour Party in 1923, writing that he believed "Conservatives were selfish... Liberals had no cause… and

Labour aimed to change the whole configuration of society as we knew it."[80] Dissatisfaction in how the current government was handling the post-war economic and social issues plaguing England led to Strachey standing for a seat in the House of Commons and becoming an MP for Birmingham. Strachey became increasingly worried about England's economic situation, especially when the Labour government, which lacked a majority and was forced to ally with the Liberal Party to pass any legislation, was voted in just as Wall Street crashed in the United States. Continued dissatisfaction led to Strachey's alliance with fellow upper class, conservatively-raised Oswald Mosley. Strachey and Mosley both agreed that immediate change was needed and both felt that an immediately interventionist, reflationary policy that intended to keep Britain from following in America's footsteps was the solution.[81] Mosley was a man of action and Strachey a man of ideas and the two worked well together, writing a manifesto to form a new national central party with an economy directed by a Cabinet of Overlords, subject to general control of Parliament.[82] Mosley was expelled from the Labour Party for this manifesto and Strachey, along with other political allies, quickly resigned in order to form the New Party, which intended to be an alterative to the impotent mainstream parties.

Although both came from a similar background, Mosley's involvement with fascism and Strachey's support for communism could be traced back to their generational divide. Mosley began to use the term fascism more and more, but Strachey did not want to be seen as anti-working class. Mosley's connection to the Labour Party and to the

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[80] Hugh Thomas. *John Strachey.* (London: Methuen Publishing Ltd., 1973), 40.
[81] Noel Thompson. *John Strachey.* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 1993), 28.
[82] Thomas, 90.

working class had been his vehicle for greater power and influence, but Strachey felt a genuine connection to the working class, especially after his travels abroad. As Mosley began to see socialism as a pathological condition, Strachey abandoned the New Party to find a new intellectual harbor: communism excited him but also made him feel like nothing else could save western civilization from fascism.[83]

Many in the post-1900 generation found their way to communism through their dislike of the constraints of old upper-class traditions in a clearly changing and evolving world. While Strachey did not seem to have much to say publicly about his experiences in public school and with the OTC, he was not unfamiliar with the pressures of living up to the expectations set by his parents and his class as a whole. While his involvement in socialism and later communism came from, as he jokingly explained, "failing to get onto Eton's cricket team."[84] In actuality, the premature death of his eighteen-year-old older brother meant Strachey, the new heir to the baronetcy, had much to live up to. His family was blamed for his hatred of Eton, as they had failed to teach him how he was supposed to behave. All he had been taught was to follow in his father's footsteps and thus was forced to attend first Eton and later Oxford. He was expected to go on and work for a liberal union paper and eventually inherit the baronetcy. A constantly strained relationship with his father, brought about through the class-supported distance between father and son, led Strachey to claim that his affinity to socialism was because he "hated his father, hated his childhood, hated publics schools."[85] His rebellion stemmed from his

[83] Thomas, 111.
[84] Thomas, 16.
[85] Thomas., 36.

loss of religious belief at Oxford and the moral implications entrenched in the upper class.

Despite being older than most of the radical supporters of communism, he shared many traits with those younger than him. Strachey was among the first to weigh the importance of conforming to the traditions expected of him in the light of a drastically altered world. He responded to the doctrines of repression felt through public school, Oxford, and familial expectations with a more practical and thoughtful form of rebellion. While many younger supporters were full of childish zeal for radical change, Strachey, with his economics background, was able to academically visualize ways to improve British society. Many of the younger rebels committed themselves to extreme acts of rebellion meant to shock and to annoy their elders, originally using communism only as the vehicle to shock. Strachey was committed to enact real change, in practical and useful ways. Although he and those younger than he responded to the same issues, just in the same way that Strachey was responding to the same issues as those supporting fascism, generational differences resulted in varied responses.

One of the younger—albeit unofficial—leaders of communism, and undoubtedly the most famous individual that epitomized his generation's rebellion against tradition was Esmond Romilly. Despite being born into a well-known family that was deeply entrenched in its own history, Romilly had absolutely no respect for his class or its traditions. As the nephew of Winston Churchill, he was a target of the British papers and a British public who were fascinated by the Conservative Party member's rebellious nephew. Despite growing up with everything he could have wanted, his greatest desire was to forsake class and background. Although he was over a decade younger than

Strachey, he was under similar pressures because the traditions of the upper class lasted through the war. It was not easy for young Romilly growing up in a famous aristocratic family with many pressures and expectations and close friend Philip Toynbee, also a rebel against his class, described Romilly as "launching an assault on the world."[86] Romilly's way of throwing off the mantle of expectations laid on him by his family was by embracing ideas that were completely antithetical to those his family supported.

Upper class education at the elite public schools like Eton, Winchester, Repton, and Harrow intentionally instilled an ideal of manhood, as "manliness meant patriotism, physical prowess, courage, and energy, as well as fair play and chivalry."[87] While the older generations embraced this idea of manhood, the younger generations, attending school during the First World War, found it difficult to grow into the role that they were expected to embody. While the OTC was seen by many of the older generation that fought in the First World War as a place for camaraderie, brotherly connection, and a way to support their country, to the younger generation, it was only a promulgation of the same values that were killing their family members. Esmond, his older brother Giles, and author Christopher Isherwood held the same views on the OTC: the Corps and its many leaders were perpetuating the British upper class traditions that had killed their "fathers."[88] The OTC pushed its participants to become class-conscious protectors and saviors of the British Empire. Many of these young rebels saw it as making them into anti-intellectual, anti-working class, and anti-egalitarians. Communism values were the

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[86] Toynbee, 16.
[87] Mosse, 60.
[88] David Garrett Izzo. *Christopher Isherwood: His Era, His Gang and the Legacy of the Truly Strong Man*. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 10.

opposite of the OTC values and by rejecting the OTC, many saw communist philosophy as a more viable and more desirable option.

Isherwood's family only verged on the aristocratic—his paternal grandfather was a country squire and his mother was from the upper-middle class—but he found himself being raised in the same way as the Romillys. Isherwood's mother had a mystical reverence for tradition and was almost militant in her quest to learn more about the aristocratic ancestry she had married into. Although Isherwood respected his mother's view, he himself felt that the "social life in the upper class had little appeal."[89] Despite being born into a provincial upper class of respectability and affluence, and expected to inherit the family's wealth and property, the "poshocracy," as he called it, was not part of his world. For Isherwood, the aristocracy represented everything that was wrong with Britain. Isherwood's life of privilege could not save him from the difficulty of attending school as the "Orphan of a Dead Hero." His father had been killed at Ypres during the First World War and the pressure Isherwood felt having to be the living representation of his father caused him to become an anti-hero. Like Romilly, Isherwood's class rebellion began at school where he "denied his duty toward the Hero-Father... the authority of the Flag…the Old School Tie… the Unknown Soldier, the Land that Bore You and the God of Battles."[90] Rebellion at school was a rebellion against his class as well as against his country, his family, and their conservative ideals.

The OTC turned many students in the post-war age against the military and towards pacifism, and eventually communism. The Romilly brothers were forced to

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[89] Jonathan Fryer. *Isherwood: A Biography*. (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1977), 9.
[90] Kathleen and Frank, 502.

participate in the OTC as uniform fags, or slaves to a specific prefect, which required immediate responses to any request, and then later as an official member of the Corps. Giles' hatred of Field Day, the weekly Corps parade, led to his identification as a pacifist and his "revolt against the military spirit."[91] Isherwood was described as "a physical coward who lacked team spirit," a far cry from what the spirit the OTC embodied. Upon meeting life-long friend Edward Upward, he became convinced that the OTC should not be taken seriously.[92] Upward, also born into the lower levels of the upper class, pushed against the tradition ties of OTC and its institution of "fagging," a tradition that required younger students [the fags] to be servants to the older students and prefects [fag-masters]. At St. Edmund's School, pupils like Isherwood and close friend Wystan Hugh Auden, were "subjected to rousing speeches about the honorable actions going on in Europe in defense of Decency."[93] Auden later explained, "the best reason I have for opposing fascism is that at school I lived in a Fascist state."[94] While the older generation had no idea what to expect when applying their OTC experiences to actual war, the younger generation were more than well aware of the horrors of war and wanted no part of the OTC.

Isherwood, Auden, Stephen Spender, and Edward Upward were raised in upper class homes, sent to public school, and rebelled against the constraints found in centuries old traditions. All four "attacked jingoism, patriotism and flag-waving" and demonstrated

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[91] Giles and Esmond Romilly. *Out of Bounds: The Education of Giles Romilly and Esmond Romilly*. (London: Hamish and Milton, Ltd., 1935), 135.
[92] Peter Parker. (*Isherwood: A Life Revealed*. New York: Random House, 2004), 34.
[93] Parker, *The Old Lie*, 269.
[94] Parker, *The Old Lie*, 274.

against the OTC.[95] Isherwood was far more influenced as a writer and an intellectual by his classmates than his tutors and teachers. At Repton, Isherwood found a community of intellectuals who informally educated and supported him. Upward, Spender, and Auden's commitment to communism was also influential and could be seen as part of the driving force behind Isherwood's eventual class rebellion. While all individually might have found their way to communism as a means to break from their intended societal roles, the process was quickened by their friendship and their commitment to each other. Although Isherwood did not have much of an opinion about the OTC until his father had been killed, it was his friendship with Upward that not only pushed him farther away from the OTC beliefs but also into the formulation of "aesthetes versus hearties" distinction. Aesthetes were highbrow intellectuals while hearties were anti-intellectual athletes. This later was the basis for Isherwood's first memoir *Lions and Shadows,* which was not only about the fear in public schools of the hearty athletes but also the fear and paranoia over the rise of Hitler and Mussolini in the late 1920s.[96]

Similarly, Philip Toynbee's rebellion against his class came through the influence of Esmond Romilly. Although Toynbee had initially been content with the natural hierarchy and assigned roles inherently found within an upper class public school, losing his seat of honor at Rugby School led him to wear the hammer and sickle in protest, despite not fully understanding the implications of such iconography.[97] When by 1934, Esmond's notoriety had spread like wildfire, especially in the English gossip tabloids after the publication of *Out of Bounds*, Toynbee wanted nothing more than to follow in

[95] Parker, *The Old Lie,* 75.
[96] Izzo, 11.
[97] Toynbee, 16.

Esmond's footsteps. The "Red Menace of the Public Schools" resonated with Philip who was "straining resistively against the infuriating restrictions of Rugby" and "began to pretend that [he], too, like the bold Wellington boy, would run away from school and become a rebel in London."[98] For many upper class boys, fascist leaders were tantamount with their OTC leaders and the older prefect boys that had taunted them in a system defended and perpetuated by their parents. It was not enough to fight against fascism with democracy: for many, their rebellion against the fascist tendencies seen in school and in the OTC was done under the banner of communism.

While Esmond seemed intent on never returning to his Conservative background, the initial euphoria of anti-fascist protests, the dirty living quarters, and passing out communist pamphlets soon wore off for Toynbee who found himself "assailed with terror and shame for the enormity, the irrevocability of [his] offence."[99] Tradition temporarily trumped rebellion and Toynbee returned to a society where he was expected to go back to school and try for an Oxford scholarship. This was only temporary as his experiences in London with Esmond and the Left Book Club removed his rose-covered glasses. Toynbee was the first communist to be elected president of the Oxford Union and many colleagues and friends at Oxford influenced his active participation both at school and in the Communist Party: "Philip's diary entries for those years are a dizzying *mélange* of Communist Party activities interspersed with deb dances, drunken episodes and night-long discussions with fellow Oxford intellectuals."[100] Toynbee did differ from Esmond in several ways, despite Esmond's initial influence in converting Toynbee to the communist

[98] Jessica Mitford. *Faces of Philip*. (London: Heinenmann, 1984), 13.
[99] Mitford, 14.
[100] Mitford, 24.

cause. Just as Oswald Mosley seemed to never quite reconcile his upper class background with his participation in the Labour Party, Toynbee seemed to be "unable or unwilling to forgo the personal and social pleasures open to him" while remaining "intellectually and emotionally attracted by revolutionary politics."[101] While Esmond took up residence in a working-class London neighborhood, Toynbee was often "shuttling between the rugged life of class struggle and the seductive, readily available delights of upper class living."[102] Toynbee was an example of how rebellion was a lifestyle to some of these early supporters of communism while others first attempted to reconcile upper class lifestyle with lower class ideology. Like Mosley, Toynbee attempted to live in both worlds simultaneously, while Esmond was unable to do so.

Toynbee struggled to find a footing within the lower classes but Jessica Mitford embraced life amongst those not of her own class. Jessica spent her childhood battling against not only her family but her class system as a whole. She grew up surrounded by Conservative ideals that clashed with fascist inclinations and socialist leanings. Jessica found the "protected upper class life insufferably boring" and compensated for that with a life-long passion for "controversy and combat."[103] Unlike Isherwood and the Romillys, Jessica was not rebelling against the connection between the OTC and militarism nor against her public school education upbringing, as her Conservative, Victorian-minded parents forbad a formal education. Instead, Jessica was rebelling against the ideologies inherent in her class that she felt were stifling and oppressive.

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[101] Ibid., 25.
[102] Ibid., 26.
[103] Peter Sussman, ed. *Decca: The Letters of Jessica Mitford*. (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2006), xi.

Jessica's desire to become educated and the competing influences she was constantly privy to led her to discover more about the society that surrounded her. She began to realize the inequalities found within her Conservative, aristocratic society and sought an alternative option. Jessica's choices, while ultimately her own, were influenced not only by her immediate family but also her ancestry. The Mitford paternal grandfather, Algernon Bertram Mitford, Lord Redesdale, had been a close friend of Richard Wagner and had written the forward to the English version of Houston Stewart Chamberlain's *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, an influential book because it "vulgarized plain nationalism … and claimed that the entrance of the Jews had exercised a large and in many ways an undoubtedly fatal influence on the course of European history since the first century."[104] While this seemingly familial tradition with tinges of anti-Semitism influenced older sister Unity forwards fascism and Nazism, Jessica's close, yet at times combative relationship with Unity, as well as other sibling rivalries and resentments, sent her towards communism and socialism.

Esmond influenced many around him towards communist ideologies, both through his underground magazine, *Out of Bounds,* and through personal relationships, as with Toynbee. As integral as Esmond was to Jessica's conversion to communism as well, the main impetus for her was her family and the traditions they espoused. Jessica and Unity had been close growing up but in a way, seemed divided in the same way that 1900 divided the older and younger generations. "In spite of frequent alliance of brief durations for Boudledige [the secret language between Jessica and Unity] … relations between

[104] Pryce-Jones, 15.

Unity and [Jessica] were uneasy, tinged with mutual resentment."[105] As family dynamics shifted in the post-First World War era, Jessica looked to pull away from her sisters and find influence elsewhere. Her only brother, Tom, had been sent to Eton and Jessica was incredibly jealous of his opportunities for education as well as the travel opportunities that followed. A new, intimate relationship between Diana and Unity was also a source of jealousy for Jessica and when Unity declared herself a fascist and carved swastikas on the glass window of their shared bedroom, Jessica carved a hammer and sickle. When Unity teased Jessica about joining the BUF, Jessica replied, "I hate the beastly fascists. If you're going to be one, I'm going to be a Communist."[106] Although at first she was only a "ballroom-Communist," Jessica began to recognize the politicization of the interwar generation and how "the old concepts of patriotism, flag-waving, and jingoism were under violent attack by the younger writers… and the students organized demonstrations against the Officers Training Corps."[107] One of the students demonstrating against the OTC was her cousin Esmond and his rebellious nature against his upbringing strongly influenced Jessica into becoming an active communist. Through Esmond, Jessica found that she was not the only member of the upper class grappling with clashing traditions and ideology and threw herself headfirst into promotion and promulgation of communist philosophy.

Although Esmond was slightly younger than Jessica, his gender had afforded him an opportunity to become a "romantic right-winger, a Jacobite" at an earlier age.[108] The experiences in public school that had led to his and his brother's defection from the OTC

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[105] Jessica Mitford. *Daughters and Rebels.* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960), 7.
[106] Mitford, *Daughters and Rebels,* 68.
[107] Mitford, *Daughters and Rebels,* 61.
[108] Guinness, 396.

proved to be a slippery slope, as their new freedom led to a revolt against all traditions at once. Giles was the first to become a Communist and atheist, "without in the least considering what it meant to 'be' either."[109] Giles and then later Esmond's conversion to communism dismayed their upper class mother whose hatred of communism "was genuinely due not so much to the fact that she thought her social position would be whisked away by Commissars, because communism to her was 'Russian' and 'anti-English."[110] While Giles' support of communism began more on a whim, Esmond's was through his hatred of the conservatism he saw in his relatives. He "hated militarism, as this meant the OTC, and had read a good deal of pacifist literature."[111] Esmond rebelled against his education by running away from school to work for the Left Book Club, although rumors circulated that he was under the power of a group of London Communists.[112] Technically he was only a pacifist by the time he left Rugby in 1933 and was well aware of the dangers of war. Responding to the same hatred of militarism and extreme patriotism as Isherwood and Upward, Esmond's personal philosophy shifted closer to communism, especially after realizing that it was impossible to live materially in a conventional, Conservative world, and spiritually in a Communist one.[113]

Jessica and Isherwood also came to communism through pacifism. Pacifism was an easier concept to understand, accept, and defend. Although communism and pacifism were not seen as synonymous, both had goals of new societies: pacifists desired a warless

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[109] Romilly, 140.
[110] Romilly, 180.
[111] Romilly, 194.
[112] Andrew Barrow. *Gossip: A History of High Society from 1920-1970*. (New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, Inc.,1979), 70.
[113] Kevin Ingram. *Rebel: The Short Life of Esmond Romilly*. (London: E.P. Dutton, 1986), 52.

society while communists desired a society without exploitation.[114] While communists were not satisfied with "destroying the poisonous: fruit- war- which has hitherto been the only aim… of the great majority of pacifists," [they were] intent on killing "the deepest roots of legal, collective mass-murder- capitalism."[115] Although neither Jessica nor Isherwood were actively involved in the First World War, both, along with Esmond, were avid readers about the physical and psychological effects of the war and became committed to pacifism. With a "violent antipathy to conservatism… hatred of militarism, and a good deal of pacifist literature," natural progression to a more intense ideal was towards communism. [116] The younger generation was deeply affected by the war and questioned why their generation was "being taught to believe in and serve the ideals that were destroying the generation a little older than [their] own."[117] While the older generation saw the war as a continuation of the gentlemen traditions, Isherwood, Romilly, Upward, and Jessica were convinced that there would never be peace until "that mixture of profit seeing, self-interest, cheap emotion, and organized brutality called fascism had been fought and destroyed forever."[118] This was antithetical to the upper class and aristocratic traditions of patriotism and loyalty to Great Britain and her empire.

Upper class traditions included time spent abroad but the younger generations found continental Europe vastly different than those born before 1900. The former experienced continental Europe in two ways: first through the thrill of lavish holidays and

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[114] J. Epstein. "Pacifism and Communism: An Appeal to Pacifists." *The Communist Review*, 4,7 (1923). Accessed January 28, 2014. Doi: Marxists Internet Archive.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Sussman, 6.
[117] Brian Finney. *Christopher Isherwood: A Critical Biography*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 27.
[118] Toynbee, 104.

expensive tours and second through the trenches and the horrors of the First World War. The younger generations witnessed a very different scene on the continent. While Strachey had not witnessed the horrors of war first-hand, his experiences traveling in continental Europe in the post-war era made of lasting impression on him, as it did upon many later supporters of communism. Strachey saw his entire upbringing challenged on a trip to Vienna, in 1922. After observing first-hand the distress Europeans were experiencing in the post-war era, he began to drift away from the romantic, well-intentioned conservatism of his father's generation and nearer to socialism. Travel abroad gave him the feeling that life in Oxford was too trivial, which influenced his later decision to leave university and his writing job at his father's paper. Travel also opened up his social circle and expanded his worldview from narrow traditions to a larger, more complicated world. These new friends challenged his traditional way of thinking and helped ease the transition from conservatism towards socialism and communism.

Jessica was also no stranger to European travel but found her trips were heavily chaperoned, which left little time for personal or political pursuits. By the time she met Esmond, he had already been an active participant in the Spanish Civil War after leaving his job in London to join the International Brigades. It was odd that a self-proclaimed pacifist and someone who abhorred the OTC would voluntarily enlist, especially with a lack of military training. Esmond's rebellion had taken on a form of actual action, despite the "awful disorganization in the International Column, [the] disgruntlement, disgraceful retreats, cold, uncongenial company, military discipline and the rapid fading of romance."[119] While others passed out propaganda and tracts and demonstrated in London,

[119] J. Mitford. *Faces of Philip*, 16.

Esmond's revolt against the passivity of the upper class manifested itself through military action. It gave him a sense of purpose in a life that had become aimless. Spain provided an escape from the pedestrian routine and Esmond's time there afforded him the opportunity for physical rebellion, not only against the fascists, but also against his entire upbringing. It also opened his eyes to the plight of the communists in Spain, which only served to increase his zeal for the movement.

Upon hearing about her cousin's experiences in Spain, Jessica also wanted to be an active participant, to fight, to agitate, to be a nurse, to do something. As she read about the social and fiscal problems growing around Europe, her personal ideology became more and more defined. She had been taught at an early age that socialism was not fair: as her mother explained, "You wouldn't like it if you saved up all your pocket-money and [sister Deborah] spent hers, and I made you give up half your savings to [Deborah], would you?"[120] She realized that "by instinct she was a socialist" and if life in the upper class was already unfair, she might as well support an unfair philosophy.[121] The shift to communism came from a massive aversion to the ideology supported by her brother-in-law, Oswald Mosley, and her closest sister Unity as well as admiration for her cousin Esmond. While Diana and Mosley's initial attraction had been physical, Esmond and Jessica's attraction was ideological. They both committed to their ideals unconditionally and, despite familial obstacles, found acceptance from their families even when they took up residence in a lower-class neighborhood in London after their marriage.

Isherwood also took up life amongst the lower classes. His adventures in Berlin, recounted in *Christopher and His Kind*, were incredibly important to his alliance with

[120] Mitford, *Daughters and Rebels*, 24.
[121] Lovell, 119.

communism. Having been raised in a traditionally conservative household, it could have been easy to fall under the spell of the Nazi influences while living in the heart of Nazi Germany. However, Isherwood's non-traditional role in the upper class could not have been more evident than during his few years in Berlin. While Diana and Unity Mitford dined with Nazis, Isherwood originally went to Berlin because "Berlin was for boys."[122] He took up residence in a squalid old hotel in the heart of Berlin, which could not have been more different than his childhood home of Marple Hall. His relationships with Jews, homosexuals, and communists set Isherwood diametrically opposed to fascism just as his alliance with Bolshevik ideology was a direct push back against his upbringing and his lingering anger about the First World War.

Isherwood's travels also placed him in a unique position as social commentator on the perils of radical ideas. His earlier classification of "aesthetes" versus "hearties" was manifesting in Nazi Germany. While his attraction to the working class in Germany highlighted failures in British society, his commitment to communism as an aesthetic ideal brought a political vision to life. Upward assured Isherwood that writing was his weapon and Isherwood, while abroad, felt that "[his] place is in England with communists."[123] The duty that he had been taught to uphold all of his life was being fulfilled in a different manner: he was not concerned anymore with what other people said was his duty but believed "your duty is what you find out for yourself."[124] For Isherwood, that duty was standing up for those who were being marginalized by the

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[122] Christopher Isherwood. *Christopher and His Kind*. (London: New Directions, 1978), 5.

[123] Christopher Isherwood. *Lions and Shadows*. (Norfolk: New Directions, 1947), 58.

[124] "Christopher Isherwood: A Born Foreigner." Interviewed by Derek Hart. London: BBC, 1966.

fascist dictatorship of Hitler. While not officially a political commentator and never an official member of the CPGB, Isherwood was able to highlight the dangers of fascism through his writing and recruit unofficially for the Communist Party.

Writers could help the public understand political truths and feel political emotions, as well as discuss politics in a literary manner. In their co-authored play "Dog Beneath the Skin," Auden and Isherwood warned their readers about the perils of fascism by depicting a pessimistic view of England "characterized by provincial insularity, nationalist fervor, political demagoguery and corruption, obsession with an idealized past, and denial of a troubled present."[125] Honeypot Hall heir Francis Crewe, who by the end of the play has spent most of the action traveling through a fictional yet representational version of Europe, pleads with the villagers of Pressan Ambo to be wary of the monarchical and fascist regimes found in the countries of Ostnia and Westland. He is called a traitor and responds with "traitors to *you*, Pressan General," describing how the ruling class have become "barking, mewing, grunting, squeaking animals."[126] Instead of heeding Francis' warning, the barking, mewing, grunting, squeaking mob kills him. This is a clear metaphor for Auden and Isherwood's belief that England was not far from being a fascist nation itself and how serious the repercussions of such a thing occurring could be. The clear lack of stability found in England during the interwar period provided the fuel for these communist writers of the 1930s since "many believed great art was

[125] William Ostrem. "The Dog Beneath the Schoolboy's Skin." In *The Isherwood Century: Essays on the Life and Work of Christopher Isherwood,* edited by James J. Berg and Chris Freeman, 162-171. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 171.
[126] John Morris. *Writers and Politics and Modern Britain*. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977), 70.

impossible without social stability."[127] Not only was there no social stability, there was also political instability as traditional parties grasped for power and attempted to inhibit the new radical political parties.

Like Isherwood, Strachey was never actually a member of the Communist Party. He was originally alienated by the class hatred of the Communist Party because he was a member of the upper class: at the time he wanted to join, Strachey had not broken away from his family and his closest friend was a member of the Conservative Party.[128] His application for the Party was rejected in 1923, especially since the CPGB leadership distrusted intellectuals, especially those with checkered political pasts, but they were happy to use him as a writer and unofficial leader. Strachey arguably made more of an impact as an unofficial leader both during the interwar period as well as during the Second World War than he would have as an official member. As an economics writer, publishing books about socialism, communism, and the *Menace of Fascism,* Strachey had a huge impact upon the public, converting many people to communist ideology, as his books were simple and easy to understand. He occupied a similar role as Isherwood, Spender, Auden, and Upward. Although done by different means, all were able enlighten a fairly ignorant population to the importance of political action and, in their case, communist ideology.

Although Toynbee joined the Communist Party at the end of his first term at Oxford, he was not able to convince Esmond, who saw the institution of the Communist

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[127] John Harrison. *Reactionaries*. (London: Gollancz, 1966), 201.
[128] Michael Newman. *John Strachey*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 24.

Party as "petty, dictatorial, and antithetical to the rebels' personal philosophy," to join.[129] Isherwood and Auden never joined the Communist Party officially either, unlike Spender and Upward. Auden's reasons for not joining might have something to do with how near the upper-middle class he resided. While his mother was from the upper class, able to trace her lineage far beyond their connections to Queen Victoria and Edward VII, his "father's forbears were all Midland yeomen/Till royalties from coal mines did them good."[130] Despite his appointment as physician to the Country Hospital in York, Auden's father accepted a more "arduous and unremunerative job as school medical office for Birmingham."[131] During the First World War, the Auden children were sent to boarding schools and had no settled home for the next four years: this mirrored to his later nomadic travels through England, Europe, and later Asia and the United States. Although his father was involved in the war, unlike Isherwood's, Auden's father eventually returned and thus the war had little effect on his place at school. He participated in the OTC but his fight was less against the German hostilities and more against the "perpetual struggles of school life."[132] He too, though, came to see his OTC leaders and unyielding teachers in the same way as he saw fascist leaders. His fight against the perpetual struggles of life was strengthened through his support of communist ideology.

Auden's interwar life was marked by passing fashions and attractions. He was eternally devoted to his friends and fellow rebels like Isherwood, Spender, and Upward, and their collaboration and individual writings. However, larger core values like religion

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[129] J. Mitford, *Faces of Philip,* 26.
[130] Richard Davenport-Hines. *Auden*. (London: Pantheon Books, 1995), 6.
[131] Davenport-Hines, 9.
[132] Humphrey Carpenter. *W.H. Auden: A Biography*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1981), 18.

and politics were passing fads. While in Berlin, Auden was vaguely aware of the political unrest and had become friends with members of the German Communist Party (KPD). Like Isherwood, Auden's close quarters to German communists made their plight far more real and relatable, especially after observing first-hand the clashes between the KPD and the Berlin police. Because of their class, both Isherwood and Auden could have easily become fascists as Auden saw fascism as "an attempt to make a man's world; the fascists' repudiation of weakness is a repudiation of their idea of femininity."[133] Auden's support of communism instead of fascism may have come also from his homosexuality and its conflict with fascist ideas. Fascist leaders made their views on homosexuality quite clear but while homosexuality was illegal in Britain at the time, the CPGB did not make clear their views, especially since there was nothing in the Communist Manifesto regarding homosexuality. The world's deterioration around him and his experiences in Spain during the Civil War also prompted an alliance with communism but not formally ally himself with the CPGB.

Like Auden, Spender was affected by the situation in Spain. While Spender did not record his thoughts about his time in the OTC, he detailed the impact that his father's early death had upon him, especially during his experiences at school. Like Isherwood, Spender recounted that "[his] father turned everything into rhetorical abstraction, in which there was no concreteness, no accuracy" and Spender became too deeply involved in his surroundings: "a game of football ceased to be just the kicking about of a leather ball by bare-kneed boys. It had become confused with the Battle of Life."[134] His father's

[133] Davenport-Hines, 108.
[134] Stephen Spender. *World Within World*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 7.

influence on Spender's idea of morality deepened when Auden and Spender spent time in Spain. Spender had been in Berlin with both Auden and Isherwood and was not impervious to the "sensation of doom to be felt in the Berlin streets… with the Nazis at the one extreme, and the Communists at the other, with their meetings, their declamatory newspapers, their uniformed armies of youths, their violence against the Republic and against one another."[135] Spender was influenced first by the news that Upward had joined the Communist Party, and his experiences in Spain during the Spanish Civil War in 1936, after watching the "bases on which European freedoms had seem to rest, destroyed" coupled with the consciousness of the moral condition of the world instilled by his father, caused an alliance and affiliation with the Communist Party.[136] Spender realized the virtue of a United Front that came through class warfare on an international scale and joined the Communist Party since its members were the "best workers… and the people with the most dignified standard of life."[137] This philosophy was diametrically opposed to the belief system of the upper class and by aligning himself with the CPGB, Spender indicated he would rather be a member of a communist party and their standards than find his identity in the traditional and struggling upper class.

Because they were younger, more volatile, and more aware of the repercussions of the war felt at home, the younger generation of upper class members tended to support communism as a way to rebel against their class' traditions that, to them, informed why the war happened in the first place. Their support of radical politics was more evident in their writing and philosophies than direct political activism. Frustration with their forced

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[135] Spender, 129.
[136] Spender, 188.
[137] A. Kingsley Weatherhead. *Stephen Spender and the 30s*. (Philadelphia: Bucknell University Press, 1975), 60.

traditional role in public school and the OTC and unhappy with the direction Britain was heading in the post-war period combined together to help the younger generation realize that change was needed. Mainstream parties were unable to provide the stability a post-war Britain desperately needed and to the younger generation, fascism was simply a continuation of the traditions that had gotten Britain into the position it was in to begin with. Through pacifism, many found their way to communism and used its philosophies to bring about a more equalizing change to the interwar period.

CHAPTER FOUR

The violence seen during the First World War and repercussions of millions of fathers and sons killed in combat left families—and in a larger sense, society—trying to rebuild. It was marked by rising frustrations with unchanging aristocratic traditions despite the changes seen in culture, gender roles, and society. When comparing the stagnation in British society to the successes seen in Italy, Germany, and Russia with the creation of fascist and communist parties, the appeal of radical politics becomes clearer. No matter how privileged this class was, many individuals were not satisfied with the traditions that had dictated their class for centuries.

With the advent of the Second World War, the upper class and aristocracy was forced to again re-evaluate their role in society and re-identify itself. They had spent the interwar period either trying to reclaim what had been lost during the First World War, or finding a new sense of purpose in politics of the far left and right, and the war brought about for a many a renewed sense of unity and patriotism. The Second World War accelerated the declining cultural supremacy of the upper class and enforced the decay of the Society that had once reigned supreme; it forced a diffusion of power and status, resulting in a much-changed upper class during the second half of the twentieth-century.[138]

[138] McKibbin, 54.

Very few of these upper class radical supporters initially followed fascism or communism because of political commitment. Since many had grown up with grandfathers and father involved in local and national mainstream politics, fascist and communist values were never passed down. At first, radical politics were simply a means to an end: they were the vehicle that could be used to either exact greater social and economic power or the way to make clear the dislike for upper class traditions. Although most grew to deeply believe in the ideologies of these radical politics, initially this was not the case. Mosley, although later embracing the ideology whole-heartedly, at first used fascism primarily as a means to further his political career. His egoism was fueled by his role as authoritarian dictator within the BUF. For Admiral Domvile, Sir Petrie, AK Chesterton, and Captain Ramsay, fascism linked with anti-Semitism was a means to ensure supremacy within Britain similar to the supremacy the Nazis in Germany intended to create. Chesterton's break from the BUF indicates that fascism was the vehicle to gain increased political and social influence. Just as Mosley migrated from a Conservative and a Labour ideology to a fascist one as a way to advance his political control, so Chesterton shifted from a fascist ideology to a more anti-Semitic one. Diana Mitford never considered becoming a fascist until her relationship with Mosley merited a conversion and Unity Mitford explained numerous times that her initial support of fascism was to shock her family. The longer these individuals remained allied to the fascist tenets, their support became far more ideological, but initially it was simply for personal advancement. Those members of "God's elect," seeing their kingdom fail, used fascism's push for clear class divisions, social regeneration within a failing society, and survival of the strongest class as a means to retain their pre-war power.

The same was true for the supporters of communism. Esmond Romilly, Jessica Mitford, and Philip Toynbee grew up in privileged homes that were anti-communist. Their support of communism was not out of an alliance with its ideology but as a way to manifest their rebellion. For them, communism was the ideological way to cause a fit between them and their familial obligations and traditions. Additionally, their previous support of pacifism before communism reveals a search for a fitting ideology rather than an inherent sympathy towards a certain ideology. Strachey's support of communism did not come without much contemplation. His work for a liberal paper, then the Labour Party, and then New Party before eventually aligning with the communist ideology is indicative of a search for the best means of social, economic, and political change as opposed to a simple ideological adherence. While the literary cadre of Isherwood, Auden, Spender, and Upward were all supporters of communism to varying degrees, their communist beliefs came out through their writings. Ultimately, they identified themselves first as literary figures and as communists second. Their success in the literary world was a way for them to explicate their communist beliefs but their longevity as writers as opposed to communists signifies which was in the end more important to them.

The Second World War had a similar effect on the aristocracy as the First World War had. When fascism and communism ceased to bring about increased influence, change, or control, many supporters of radical politics began to drift back towards traditional politics. The Second World War was the final nail in the coffin for the failure of both the BUF and the CPGB. When England and Germany declared war in September 1939, memory of the previous war was still fresh in the minds of radical political supporters. Their affiliation with radical politics gave them different experiences in this

second war in comparison to the first. With war on the horizon in early 1939, the British government decided to pass an Act of Parliament to create regulations for the possibility of war. Defense Regulation 18B allowed for the internment of "any person to be of hostile origin or association or to have been recently concerned in acts prejudicial to the public safety or the defense of the realm or in the preparation or instigation of such acts and that by reason thereof it is necessary to exercise control over him, he may make an order against that person directing that he be detained."[139] This mainly targeted those who had Nazi sympathies and removed their rights of habeas corpus.

The severity of experiences of those in the pre-1900 generation faced during the Second World War was contingent on the depth of their involvement in formal fascist and anti-Semitic parties. Oswald Mosley, despite his successes in the First World War, was imprisoned in Brixton Prison in May 1940. Although she never had a formal role in the British Union of Fascists, Mosley's wife, Diana, was also imprisoned. Because of her actions and words speaking out against Britain, in favor of Germany, Unity Mitford most likely would have been high on the list of those to be detained under Regulation 18B. Less than a month before the onset of the Second World War, she expressed her delight over the Nazi-Soviet pact for "surely this would make Germany so strong that England would never dare oppose Hitler."[140] However, when war was officially declared, the reality of her adopted country fighting against her ancestral country was overwhelming and she attempted suicide. British officials felt that she would not be suited for prison, having survived the suicide with a bullet lodged in the back of her brain. Yet they refused

[139] "United Kingdom House of Lords Decision." Defense Regulation 18B [1939] http://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKHL/1941/1.html.
[140] Lovell, 290.

to let her convalesce on the family island off the coast of Scotland, as it was too close to British military bases and there were too many rumors that the suicide attempt had been faked as a means of espionage.

Despite their service to their country in the First World War, both Captain Ramsay and Admiral Domvile were imprisoned under Defense Regulation 18B for their involvement in the January Club and the Right Club and the anti-Semitic beliefs. Mosley flirted with anti-Semitism, but it was from an opportunistic stand, rather than an ideological foundation; he was a professional politician who knew how to play his game and if he could tap into an emotion or belief already latent in British tradition, he did so only to keep his edge and power. Ramsay and Domvile strengthened their anti-Semitic beliefs while in prison. After release, both fell into near obscurity, seen only as conspiracy theorists with no credibility. Mosley, despite having re-evaluated his political affiliations, was unsuccessful in his re-election campaign. Unwilling to watch Britain make the same political, economic, and social mistakes, and unwilling to make the same personal mistakes, Mosley and Diana both left Britain.

Not all fascists were imprisoned and this was due to the level of their involvement in radical politics. Osbert Sitwell, while sympathetic to fascism, ultimately advocated pacifism and intellectualism. Obligation to familial affairs and his role in society after the death of his father trumped flirtation with radical politics and he used his influence and talents in the intellectual and literary fields as opposed to the political field. Chesterton had also taken a step back from his support of fascism and because of this was not imprisoned under Defense Regulation 18B. Chesterton broke from Mosley's inner circle in 1938, disillusioned by Mosley whom he accused of "favoring the party bureaucrats at

the expense of the ideals of the movement."[141] His decision to re-enlist in the British army and fight against Germany seemed to trump any political involvement he had prior to the war. Chesterton left England for a short while after the war and upon his return became involved in fringe political groups and in journalism. He was unsuccessful in these endeavors.

While they may not have been old enough to enlist during the First World War, the Second World War saw the enlistment and active service of those that had spent the interwar period supporting communism. Due perhaps to a latent patriotism instilled in them by their class traditions, John Strachey and Esmond Romilly saw service within the British and Canadian armed forces, respectively. When Esmond realized England was no longer in a Phony War, he realized that "this would be no replica of Spain, no thrilled adventure of self-propelled action directed against the oppressors. The machine was rolling, a machine whose every cog was cluttered up with Wellington prefects grown older…the upper classes, even the most pro-Hitler of them, would now swing into line to do their duty to King and Empire."[142] Patriotism trumped pacifism and Esmond saw a year of combat before his plane was tragically shot down in 1941. Strachey and Jessica continued to support the communist party in an unofficial capacity but turned their focus to other affairs, such as becoming an MP for the Labour Party in Strachey's case, and civil rights and muckraking for Jessica. Both formally ended their relationship with the communist party when Stalin's actions drifted from original communist ideology.

The intellectuals—Auden, Spender, Upward, and Isherwood—left Britain just prior to the onset of the war. All believed that they could do more good in their literary

[141] Chesterton, 134.
[142] J. Mitford, *Daughters and Rebels*, 217.

circles outside of Britain as observers. Realizing that becoming a “Man of Destiny” did not have to revolve around politics, Isherwood turned to religion to find his destiny, turning his back on communist sympathies and converting to Hinduism. Auden focused his energies on writing and teaching, determined to use his influence as a professor to warn of the dangers of radical politics and war. Ultimately, all of these communism-supporting intellectuals found their new calling in a pacifism that allowed them to invest in their writings as a way to enact social change.

In the post Second World War era, fascist revivals were immediate failures and the CPGB continued to struggle with a clear, unchanging ideology that attracted potential supporters. Long-lasting instability and a fairly traumatic Second World War for many of its followers indicated that both radical political ideologies had run their course, at least within British society. It makes sense then that pacifist ideology remained a viable option through the Second World War and into the second half of the twentieth century. It was one thing to recover from a Great War but a very different thing to recover from nearly ten years of war in less than thirty years, as well as from the political and economic instability that were also present. Pacifist ideology prevailed over radical politics because it remained viable. The mistakes that had been made in the interwar period, both politically and economically, would not be made again. The government, stagnation, and tradition were no longer the enemy: communism and fascism had failed to stop a second war and pacifism was now seen as the new vehicle for staying out of future wars.

CHAPTER FIVE

This thesis looks at why sons and daughters of baronets, lords, and landowners, who grew up to become politicians, writers, activists, and career military officers, supported non-traditional political parties on opposite ends of the political spectrum. It also looks at why these individuals returned to the traditions of patriotism and main-parties lines with the onset of the Second World War. Fascism appealed to those with ultra-nationalistic tendencies and so the supporters saw their affiliation with radical politics as a form of patriotism. For the older generation, support of fascism stemmed from their patriotic experiences in the First World War as well as their frustrations over a lack of change during the interwar period and a lack of policies that were aimed at preventing a second war. For the younger generation, support of communism was out of a search for an alternative that would make Britain better. Through their politics, writings, and rebellions, both generations attempted to make Britain stronger and more united, albeit in a less traditional manner.

Members of the upper class abandoned tradition in exchange for radical politics. Responding to the traditions of public school and the OTC, immediate and one degree of removal from fighting in the First World War as well as the disillusionment that spread during the interwar period, many of the upper class and aristocracy turned towards radical politics as a means to break with the traditions of their family and of their class. Those supporting fascism did so out of an attempt to redeem past power and prestige while a

younger generation supporting communist did so in hopes of bringing about a change to what they saw as antiquated traditions in a world that was quickly changing in all areas.

Just as Great Britain as a whole attempted to regain its metaphorical footing in the post-war period, British aristocracy and upper class struggled to retain its place in society. Their support of radical politics during the interwar period was a manifestation of their struggle. Those that supported these radical politics had no idea that their choices could mean a return to war in twenty years time but after the Second World War, all realized that radical politics were clearly not the answer for change. This permanently altered the aristocracy after the Second World War. While there was at first a "sudden and spectacular 'aristocratic resurgence', [the Second World War's] deeper and more lasting effect was to accentuate those very trends towards patrician marginality that had become so pronounced during the previous half-century."[143] The second half of the twentieth century brought about massive political and social changes, including the evolution of the Welfare State, and the consolidation of the Labour Party's position. Although aristocracy and upper class continued to decrease in size, there was no resurgence of radical politics. Hitler and Mussolini's defeat in the Second World War meant that fascism was dead and its leaders either dead or in prison. Josef Stalin's new policies dictated a heavily altered communist ideology from the ideas disseminated by the CI and the CPGB. The only more radical ideology that remained was pacifism and this grew as the world wearied of two world wars within fifty years. As the second half of the twentieth century opened, the aristocracy and upper class accepted the changes that were

[143] Cannadine, 617.

set in play and made their own attempts to keep their traditions alive without the help of radical politics.

When the Second World War broke out, a more traditional version of patriotism overcame the support of radical politics and many of those members of the aristocracy or upper class that had spent the interwar as fascists or communists returned to a mainstream support of their country. When neither the CPGB nor the BUF succeeded in enacting any lasting change in Great Britain and a more traditional version of patriotism trumped radical politics, its followers returned to more traditional support of their country. Patriotism was not dead during the interwar period—it was, however, embodied by these radical supporters in a skewed manner: through their politics, writings, and rebellions, both generations of radical supporters attempted to make Britain stronger and more united but did so in a non-traditional, and ultimately unsuccessful manner.

Despite being small in number, the influence these radical members of the upper class had was immense. By snubbing tradition to support radical politics, they stepped away from their expected role within traditional political and social life. Their influence was key in gaining lower class support of radical politics. Stepping away from the traditional roles left a power vacuum that was filled by the middle class not only during the post-Second World War period but also during the interwar period when their absence called for lesser men to step forward and lead. Although the aristocracy and upper class never stopped being appealing to the rest of the social spectrum, their flirtations with radical politics allowed a more equal balance of power during the second half of the twentieth century. With weakening power and influence, the aristocracy and upper class returned to enacting change through mainstream avenues, having seen the

failure of extreme politics both at home and on the continent. Ultimately, they found themselves adapting their traditions to fit the changing world, instead of altering their world to fit their long-standing traditions, as the latter had clearly been a failure during the interwar period.

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APPENDIX

Biographical Sketches

Wystan Hugh Auden (1907-1973) Born in York, the youngest of the three sons of George and Constance. Father was a physician who took a position in Birmingham and who later saw action as a doctor in the First World War. Auden was educated at St. Edmunds during the war, then the Gresham School, a liberal public school. Continued his education at Oxford where he met several writers and poets and formed the "Auden Group". They supported each other in their literary pursuits for their whole lives. Taught at several schools both in England and the United States and spent much of the 1930s traveling to Berlin, Spain, China and later America. Split his time after the war between the United States and England, working as a writer, journalist, essayist, teacher, and collaborator on various projects with other members of the Auden Group. Came full circle when he took up a position as an English lecturer at Oxford University in 1956-7. Died in Vienna, Austria, in 1973. (Carpenter: *Auden, a Biography*; Davenport-Hines: *Auden*)

A.K. Chesterton (1899-1973) Born in England but raised in South Africa. Attended the Brightlands School in England and then later served in Africa during the First World War. His experiences destroyed his health, which affected him for the rest of his life. Work as a journalist introduced him to Mosley and led him to join the British Union of Fascists. Was also a member of the January Club and was highly anti-Semitic, which may have been a reason for his split from the BUF, despite his work as editor of *Blackshirt*, the BUF newspaper. Led the fascist and anti-Semitic National Socialist League with several other former BUF leaders. Before their split, published a biography about Mosley entitled *Portrait of a Leader*. Was an active participant in the Second World War before returning to England and assuming leadership roles in several anti-Semitic organizations until his death. (Baker: *Ideology of Obsession*)

Admiral Barry Domvile (1878-1971) Son of Admiral Sir Compton Domvile and followed in his father's footsteps by joining the Royal Navy in 1892. Rose up through the ranks in the Navy after his service in the First World War and eventually served as President of the Royal Naval College. Frequent traveler to Germany and attended the Nuremburg Rally with several leading Nazi officials. Founded the Link in 1937 in order to bring together the ideas and views of

the German and British people while simultaneously fighting back against anti-German propaganda. The Link included members like Lord Redesdale and Archibald Ramsey, founder of the Right Club. Interned in Brixton Prison under Defense Regulation 18B. (Domvile: *By and Large/From Admiral to Cabin Boy*)

Christopher Isherwood (1904-1986) Born at Marple Hall to Frank and Kathleen Isherwood. Frank's death in the First World War set the tone for Isherwood's later writing. Educated at St. Edmunds and later Repton and attended Cambridge University to become a doctor but purposely failed his exams. Worked several jobs between 1927-1931, including as a secretary to a violinist and a tutor to various children. Moved to Berlin in 1931 and took up with communists and Jews. His plays, novels, autobiographies, and poems informed such of his writing, which were warnings against the growing power of fascism. Spent time in Spain during the Spanish Civil War and also traveled to China and the United States with Auden. Move to the United States after the Second World War and became an American citizen, residing in Los Angeles until his death. (Parker: *Isherwood*; Finney: *Christopher Isherwood*; Fryer: *Isherwood*)

Diana Mitford (1910-2003) Fourth child of David Freeman-Mitford, 2nd Baron Redesdale and Sydney *nee* Bowles. Raised in Oxfordshire in several different country estates and was educated at home by her mother and a governess. Sent to Paris for six-months in 1926. Married Bryan Guinness, 2nd Baron Moyne, in 1929 and the couple was known for hosting aristocratic society events involving the Bright Young Things. Embarked on an affair with Oswald Mosley in 1932 and after the death of his first wife, married him in 1936. Through her husband's influence, became an apologist for fascism as well as Nazism and was Mosley's personal ambassador to Hitler. During the Second World War, was imprisoned at Holloway Prison under Defense Regulation 18B and then later left the country with her husband. (de Courcy: *Diana Mosley*; Dalley: *Diana Mosley*)

Jessica Mitford (1917-1996) Six child of David Freeman-Mitford, 2nd Baron Redesdale and Sydney *nee* Bowles. Raised in Oxfordshire in several different country estates and was educated at home by her mother and a governess. Had little formal education despite her desire to be afforded the same educational opportunities as her older brother. Supported communism in spite of her sisters' support of fascism and eloped with her second cousin, Esmond Romilly, to Spain. After the Second World War, continued her support of the Communist Party and saw much success through her investigative journalism and her support of the Civil Rights Movements. (Brody: *Irrepressible;* Mitford: *A Fine Old Conflict/Daughters and Rebels*)

Unity Mitford (1914-1948) Fifth child of David Freeman-Mitford, 2nd Baron Redesdale

and Sydney *nee* Bowles. Raised in Oxfordshire in several different country estates and was educated at home by her mother and a governess. Although initially a supporter of the British Union of Fascists due to her sister Diana's relationship with Oswald Mosley, she soon found Nazism a more appealing political movement. She moved to Germany in order to learn German and eventually made the acquaintance of Hitler. She gave several anti-Semitic speeches and wrote anti-Semitic articles for both German and English papers. When England and Germany declared war, Unity attempted suicide but survived and was brought back to England. The attempt left her with limited mental and physical capabilities and much more susceptible to infection. She passed away at the family-owned island in Scotland due to meningitis caused by cerebral swelling around the bullet. (Pryce-Jones: *Unity Mitford*)

Oswald Mosley (1896-1980) Eldest son of Sir Oswald Mosley (5th Baronet) and Katherine Edwards-Heathcote and later become 6th Baronet, raised at Rolleston Hall in Staffordshire. Educated at Winchester College before enrolling at Sandhurst. Fought on the Western Front in the First World War and received several injuries. Was elected in 1918 to the seat in Harrow for the Conservative Party but crossed the floor to become an Independent on the opposition side in 1921. Joined the Independent Labour Party in 1924 and when the Labour Party won the general election in 1929, he was appointed the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The outcry after his Mosley Memorandum forced him to form the New Party, which eventually evolved into the British Union of Fascists. Upon the death of his first wife, Labour Party MP Cynthia Curzon, he married Diana Guinness, *nee* Mitford. His involvement in the BUF, later called the British Union, resulted in his imprisonment in 1940 under Defense Regulation 18B. Was unsuccessful in his post-war political endeavors and in 1951, left Britain for Ireland and Paris. (Mosley: *My Life*; Dorril: *Blackshirt*; Mosley: *Rules of the Game/Beyond the Pale*)

Sir Charles Petrie (1885-1977) Born in Liverpool to a baronet and later succeeded the baronetcy in 1927. Of Irish lineage and educated at Corpus Christi College at Oxford before enlisting during the First World War. Educated as a historian, he later published histories and biographies of monarchs of the 17th century. Although never a supporter of Nazism, he was a member of the January Club and a supporter of the fascists in the Spanish Civil War. Continued publishing historically based books until his death in 1977. (Petrie: *Chapter of Life/Historian Looks At His World*)

Archibald Ramsay (1894-1955) Born in Scotland to Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Ramsay. Educated at Eton and Sandhurst Military College before joining the Coldstream Guards and serving in France and at the War Office in the First World War. Elected to the House of

Commons as an MP for the Conservative Party in 1931. Supported General Franco during the Spanish Civil War and formed the United Christian Front and the Whites Knights of Britain, an off-shoot of Nazi Germany's anti-Semitic Nordic League. Also founder of the Right Club, a secret society that attempted to unify the various right wing groups of Britain. Another member of the Right Club was Lord Redesdale. Interned under Defense Regulation 18B in Brixton Prison with Mosley. (Saiskia: *The Red Book)*

Esmond Romilly (1918-1941) Son of Colonel Bertram Romilly and Nellie Hozier. Nephew by marriage of Winston Churchill. Father distinguished soldier in the First World War. Educated at Wellington College where he distributed pacifist leaflets. Left school to move to London and work at communist bookshop before joining the International Brigades and fighting in the Spanish Civil War. Eloped with second cousin Jessica Mitford and returned with her to Spain to report on the war. After moving with Jessica to the United States, Romilly served in the Royal Canadian Air Force in the Second World War until his plane was shot down in 1941. (Ingram: *Rebel: the Short Life of Esmond Romilly)*

Osbert Sitwell (1892-1969) Oldest son of Sir George and Ida Sitwell and later 5th Baronet. Grew up with a strained relationship with his parents, which resulted in a strong unity with his older sister Edith and younger brother Sacheverelle. Educated at Ludgrove School and Eton College before being gazetted into the Yeoman Guards and serving in both England and in France during the First World War. Stood at a Liberal Party candidate in 1918 but failed to win the seat and decided to take up a life in the arts as a writer and social commentator. In 1943, inherited the baronetcy and almost simultaneously published a series of autobiographies about his parents, his siblings, and the many high-ranking members of British society that he considered friends and acquaintances. Was highly supportive of his brother and sister's artistic endeavors and at times donated his family's large estates to BUF party meetings. (Pearson: *The Sitwells*)

Stephen Spender (1906-1995) Born in London and educated at Gresham School, where he met W.H. Auden. Continued education at Oxford although did not finish a degree. Moved to Germany after leaving Oxford and became aware of social issues and dedicated his life to fighting in justice around Europe. Was also a writer and a member of the "Auden Group". Social and political issues were highlighted in his novels and poetry. Joining the Communist Party after his experiences in Spain during the Spanish Civil War. Strongly opposed fascism in his writings, along with Isherwood, Upward and Auden. Became disillusioned by the Communist Party in the 1940s after Stalin came to power and eventually rescinded his membership. Continued to fight

social justices issues after the war, especially through writings and journalism. (Weatherhead: *Spender and the 30's*)

John Strachey (1901-1963) Son of John Strachey, second son of Sir Edward Strachey, 3rd Baronet, and editor of *The Spectator*, a weekly conservative magazine. Educated at Eton College and Magdalen College, Oxford before joining *The Spectator*. Elected as a Labour Party MP for Birmingham Aston in 1929. While serving as Parliamentary Private Secretary to Oswald Mosley, he joined the New Party but resigned to become a support of the Communist Party. Author of several works that explained the political and economic landscape of the interwar period. Joined the Royal Air Force in 1940 before serving as Under-Secretary of State for Air in 1945. Continued in politics until his death in 1963. (Thomas: *John Strachey;* Thompson: *John Strachey*)

Philip Toynbee (1916-1981) Son of historian Arnold J. Toynbee, and was a member of a prominently intellectual family. Educated at Rugby School where he reacted against the public school system and the OTC. After his expulsion from the Rugby School, worked with Esmond Romilly and the Left Book Club in London. Educated at Christ Church Oxford and was the first communist president of the Oxford Union. Visited but did not fight in Spain during the Spanish Civil War and was active in protesting against the British Union of Fascists before the Second World War. (Mitford: *Faces of Philip)*

Edward Upward (1903-2009) Educated at Repton with Christopher Isherwood, with whom he co-authored stories about a fictional world named Mortmere. Joined Isherwood at Corpus Christi College in Cambridge and later became friends with Auden and Spender. After several teaching jobs at public schools around England, he became a member of the Communist Party in order to oppose fascism and the growing fear of Nazism in Germany. Wove socialist ideals into his writings. Left the Communist Party in 1948, after becoming disillusioned with their new policies. Before his death in 2009, at age 105, was considered the oldest living author in England. (Upward: *Spiral Trilogy)*