mischievousness and wit. ("The Ford Foundation is a large body of money surrounded by a lot of people who want some.") Perhaps only an autobiography would have done the man justice. If he had lived to read this book, he would no doubt have been flattered by all the attention, well deserved after all. And then, honest Dwight to the end, he would have turned on it with his rapier.

THE BIRTH OF FASCIST IDEOLOGY. *By Zeev Sternhell with Mario Sznajder and Maia Asheri. Trans. by David Maisel. Princeton. 338 pp. $29.95*

Fascism has never received the respect it deserves—or so Sternhell has spent nearly two decades arguing. A professor of political science at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, he maintains that fascism is neither a bizarre by-product of World War I nor a thoughtless Middle-European detour into authoritarianism. Rather, it is a full-fledged ideology in its own right. Formed by the confluence of the 19th century's two major ideologies, socialism and nationalism, fascism must be analyzed with all the analytical rigor applied to its major rivals, liberalism and communism. Moreover, Sternhell sees in the cultural milieu of fin-de-siècle Europe—its nihilism, its disgust with the universals of Enlightenment thinking, its festering national and racial chauvinism—a seedbed for the political ideals that were eventually to make ex-socialists such as Benito Mussolini into dictators.

Sternhell's previous book, *Neither Right nor Left: Fascist Ideology in France* (1986), generated a storm of controversy and brought on one successful libel suit, primarily because Sternhell suggested that French intellectual life in the 1920s and '30s was rife with fascism. His new book has already provoked a similar controversy in Italy, although this time his analysis is focused on the movement he believes initiated the final descent into fascism—syndicalism. If socialism is fascism's godmother on the Left and nationalism its godmother on the Right, syndicalism is its disreputable father, of troublesome origins and questionable intentions.

Launched in the 1890s in France as a trade-unionist ideology not too different from Marxism, syndicalism rapidly mutated under the influence of sometime-revolutionary and future royalist Georges Sorel. Under his direction, it became an antipolitical movement that called for direct action by workers, demonized capitalists (but not capitalism), and championed moral regeneration rather than economic transformation as the avatar of revolution. Sorel imagined that workers would be moved to violence not by a sensible platform of reform but by a chiliastic call to arms, with apocalypse to follow—or what he called the General Strike.

How did syndicalism's passionate advocacy of class warfare turn into a desire for war between nations? How did a putatively leftist desire to transform a whole society for the sake of social justice evolve into a national socialist manifesto for authoritarian social engineering? Sternhell argues that such tendencies lay barely dormant within Sorel's own theories. The General Strike blurs easily into national mobilization for war, while an acceptance of capitalism's inevitability lends itself to quietism on questions of class and the economy.

But Italy in the teens was also characterized by fiscal insolvency and jingoistic chauvinism, which produced a renewed faith in such sources of communal authority as the army and the church. Sternhell provides a strikingly simple quacks-like-a fascist test: Those leftist intellectuals who abandoned Marxist calls for economic transformation and spoke of "moral elevation," "ethical transformation," and the purging of "parasites" instead of the overthrow of the bourgeoisie were, or were on the way to becoming, fascists.

This book is so densely documented that patches of comparatively thin analysis stand out. It is quite strange, for example (though many critics will say it is not strange at all), that in making his case for the intellectual complexity and coherence of fascist ideology Sternhell should have so meticulously documented its leftist origins while leaving so murky its rightist wellsprings. He remains conspicuously silent about the Catholic corporatism and old-guard Italian conservatism that did so much to put fascism into power and that, as Sternhell rather grudgingly admits, "finally produced a regime from which all elements of socialist origin were banished."

Still, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology* adds up to compelling intellectual history. Sternhell forces us

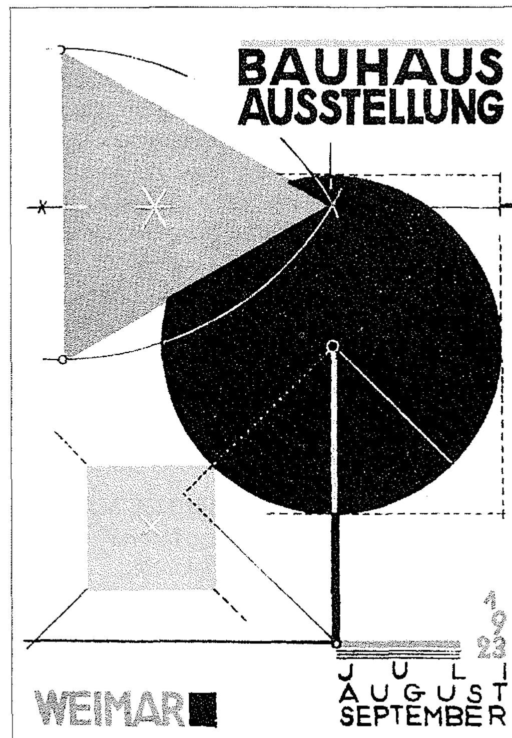
to acknowledge that it is not "age-old hatreds" but new combinations of political theory and historical contingency that we need to fear. After all, in 1912 Mussolini was a vaguely leftist editor of *Utopia*. By 1934 he was congratulating himself on having "buried the putrid corpse of liberty."

Arts & Letters

THE BAUHAUS: Masters and Students by Themselves. *Ed. by Frank Whitford. Overlook. 328 pp. $85*

In *From Bauhaus to Our House* (1981), Tom Wolfe wittily argued that Bauhaus architects—figures such as Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe, who gathered and taught at the influential German design school between the wars—were narrow-minded soldiers of socialism who created unadorned, ugly buildings that sacrificed the aesthetic and practical desires of the individual for an ideological ideal. "Every child," Wolfe charged, "[now] goes to school in a building that looks like a duplicating-machine replacement-parts wholesale distribution warehouse." Wolfe's sarcastic indictment of the Bauhaus has now become part of the conventional wisdom about the German design school. But the history and influence of the Bauhaus are a bit more complicated, as this first high-quality, full-scale art book on the school reveals.

Whitford, an art historian, has culled first-person accounts from art critics, journalists, and politicians of the day, as well as from the Bauhauslers themselves, and supplemented the usual reproductions of paintings and product designs with such original documents as notes, sketches, postcards, and book jackets. Although one of the aims of the school was to create economically efficient housing for workers, the book shows that the Bauhaus was anything but a source of dogmatism, political or otherwise. Founded by Walter Gropius in Weimar, the school was devoted to uniting all of the arts under architecture, which Gropius considered the supreme art, and to enhancing quality of life through design that was both economical and artistically sensitive. Remaining true to his original manifesto, which called for "the avoidance of all prescription" and



"a preference for the creative," Gropius consciously brought together people with different and conflicting views.

One of those people was Hannes Meyer, a Marxist who believed aesthetics should play no role in design. Gropius chose him in 1926 to head the newly formed architecture department and then to succeed him as director two years later, but Meyer's attempts to steer the Bauhaus toward communist purity repeatedly fell flat. His followers were few, and he met formidable resistance from independent-minded artists such as Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee. In 1930, Mies van der Rohe replaced Meyer and tossed the party line out. Unfortunately, the school, which had moved from Weimar to Dessau and ultimately to Berlin to flee Nazi repression, was finally shut down three years later.

While the Bauhauslers were trying to unite form with function, their guiding principles, as this book makes clear, were always aesthetic ones—line, balance, and beauty. Indeed, the Bauhaus was responsible for some of the more celebrated buildings of this century, including Gropius's Bauhaus school building in Dessau,