

Hemingway and Mussolini: A Study in Contrasts

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Abstract

The advent of the twentieth century brought with it a deep sense of historical discontinuity. The period confronted writers, artists and political players with an essential dilemma: how to revise personal perspectives in light of the new social, cultural and political contexts brought about by this rupture with the past. In this regard, Ernest Hemingway and Benito Mussolini are relevant exemplars. While this study does not concern itself with Mussolini's journey from leftist socialist activist to fascism, it will examine Hemingway's oft-forgotten early journalistic career and his growing political awareness, an undertaking for which Mussolini provides a pertinent touchstone. This evolving discernment eventually turned Hemingway into an avowed anti-fascist and provoked his bitter opposition to Mussolini's policies. While Hemingway did not generally engage in protracted political discourse when young, as events in Europe took shape in the 1920s and 30s and fascism became a growing political force, the writer began to expatiate his opposition to it. His views appeared in diverse venues: private correspondence, poetry, a short story and journalistic work. This commitment to the values of democracy continued throughout the Spanish Civil War and World War II.

Keywords: Fascism, Hemingway, Italy, journalism, Mussolini

As a young man, Ernest Hemingway is not known to have expressed explicit political beliefs. He enjoyed hunting, fishing, and socializing with friends. Yet as the United States' role in the world grew in importance with the country's entrance in World War I, Hemingway sought to cooperate in the war effort and participate in the events that were unfolding in Europe. He had poor eyesight in his left eye, probably from birth (Dearborn, 2017, p. 53). As a result, he joined the American Red Cross in 1918 to serve as an ambulance driver, since his poor vision prevented him from serving in the U.S. military (Dearborn, 2017, p. 35). As he experienced life overseas for the first time, Hemingway became more aware of the events in Europe, and he began to think more deeply about political developments there. As a result, his political acumen sharpened, and he promoted burgeoning challenges to the growing influence of totalitarian regimes that emerged in Europe after World War I (Dearborn, 2017, p. 366).

After two weeks as an ambulance driver, Hemingway's duty with the Red Cross quickly shifted to working with the rolling canteen service, which included providing snacks and cigarettes to the men in the front line on the Italian-Austrian front (Villard and Nagel, 1989, p. 267). The U.S. was serving as an associate power in support of the Allies, which included the Italians, who had joined the Allied cause in 1915 after being previously aligned with the Germans and Austrians.

While discharging his duties, Hemingway was caught in a mortar attack as he visited Italian troops in the trenches. Carrying an injured man to an aid station, the young Ernest was hit in the leg by bullets and shrapnel shot from the Austrian side. He recuperated in a Red Cross hospital in Milan (Dearborn, 2017, p. 64), and while recovering from his wounds, he toured the northern part of Italy including the Lake Como region.

Hemingway got to know the northern part of Italy well, and he also had a romance with a Red Cross nurse, Agnes von Kurowsky, who served as the model for the nurse Catherine Barkley in *A Farewell to Arms* (Dearborn, 2017, p. 258). Hemingway learned to speak a poor form of Italian, which he later incorporated into his speech and letters. Ultimately, Agnes ended their relationship, being several years older than he was and feeling that he was too young for marriage (Dearborn, 2017, p. 78). Her termination of their engagement came as a shock to Hemingway, but he moved on quickly. In 1921 he married Hadley Richardson, from St. Louis, Missouri, and they moved to Paris shortly after their wedding. Here Hemingway took up a position as a European correspondent for the *Toronto Star* newspaper, for which he had previously worked in Toronto (Dearborn, 2017, p. 87).

After he moved to Paris at the end of 1921, Hemingway was a roving reporter covering European affairs. His first encounter with Benito Mussolini came in June 1922 when he was on a trip to Milan with his first wife, Hadley. He used his press credentials to obtain an interview, which he published in an article for the *Toronto Star* entitled "Fascisti Party Half-Million" (Diliberto, 2011, p. 117). The interview took place in Italian with Mussolini choosing words that he thought Hemingway would understand. Hemingway described Mussolini as a "big, brown-faced man with a high forehead, a slow smiling mouth, and large expressive hands" (Hemingway, *Dispatches*, 1985, p. 172). He told Hemingway that the Fascisti were a half million strong and a political party organized as a military force. While Mussolini claimed he was not opposed to any government, he stated that "we have force enough to overthrow any government that might try to oppose or destroy us" (Hemingway, *Dispatches*, 1985, p. 172). The Fascisti emerged as a highly conservative movement, but it must be remembered that Mussolini had previously been the editor of the Socialist daily paper *Avanti* in Milan. He was

fired as a result of his support for Italian intervention on the Allied side in World War I; he would then go on to found his own paper, *Popolo d'Italia*.

The interview reveals that much of the growing interest in Fascism in Italy came from disaffected working-class men following the end of World War I. They felt that they had gained little from their participation in the war, and Mussolini and his followers promised them better opportunities. The Fascisti were at first a group who opposed Communist demonstrations, then they became a political party, and finally they emerged as a political and military party enlisting support from a broad cross section of workers. At the end of the article Hemingway mused about the future of Mussolini and his followers, wondering what he intended to do with his “political party organized as a military force.” (Hemingway, *Dispatches*, 1985, p. 173)

In another article from June 1922, Hemingway discussed the “black-shirted, knife-carrying, club-swinging, quick-stepping, nineteen-year-old potshot patriots” who were members of Mussolini’s political party. He argued that the Fascisti were keeping Italy in a constant state of class war. Mob violence against wealthier Italians had grown commonplace after the First World War. This included mobs of people throwing people out of first-class compartments on trains and occupying their seats. The black shirts emerged as young members of the Fascisti who organized themselves under Mussolini to end this type of mob violence. In doing so, they were protected by the police. They enjoyed going after communists and physically attacking them. Mussolini took advantage of the availability of these young men and used them to commit physical violence on behalf of his political party. On their part, the Communists created their own red-shirted shock troops as a response to the aggressions of the black shirts (Hemingway, *Dispatches*, 1985, 174-75). This political infighting showed the divisive nature of Italian politics and foreshadowed the events to come in the 1930s. While as a young man Hemingway was largely apolitical, as Europe began to divide more clearly into diverse political factions he began to be interested in the divisions and his neutrality waned.

Hemingway next directly encountered Mussolini when they both attended the Lausanne Conference in 1923 (Dearborn, 2017, p. 129). By this time, Mussolini had become the Italian Prime Minister, following his party’s rise to power in the fall of 1922. The conference was designed to settle the disputes between Greece and Turkey that stemmed from the end of World War I and the break-up of the Ottoman Empire. The signatories included the countries of the Allied forces that won the war, including Britain, France and Italy, as well as the two countries in conflict, Greece and Turkey. While he was not officially there to cover the conference for the *Star*, Hemingway wrote a feature article for the paper in which he referred to Mussolini as “the biggest bluff in Europe.” Hemingway criticized the emptiness of Mussolini’s statements, commenting “study his propensity for clothing small ideas in big words. Study his propensity for dueling” (Hemingway, *Dispatches*, 1985, p. 255).

Hemingway realized that Mussolini’s airs were no more than affectation. As he stated, “really brave men do not have to fight duels, and many cowards duel constantly to make themselves believe they are brave” (Hemingway, *Dispatches*, 1985, p. 256). Mussolini called the members of the press to a meeting, where Hemingway found him reading a book, which he claimed was a French-English dictionary which Mussolini was holding upside down. Hemingway later claimed that Mussolini was not a fool, and he was also a great organizer; yet he wrote, “it is a very dangerous thing to organize the patriotism of a nation if you are not sincere, especially when you work its patriotism to such a pitch that it offers to loan money to the government without interest. Once a Latin has sunk his money into a business, he wants results and he is

going to show Signor Mussolini that it is much easier to be the opposition to a government than to run the government yourself” (Hemingway, *Dispatches*, 1985, p. 256).

In Italy, Mussolini consolidated power through his control of the military. When he was offered control by king Victor Emmanuel, Mussolini at first politely declined, but eventually acquired control for himself and the Fascisti party. Although Mussolini claimed at first to be a republican, essentially an opponent of the monarchy, he backed away from that stance when he assumed power. As Hemingway commented in a feature article published in September 1923, “Mussolini . . . renounce[d] his old republicanism just as Garibaldi did. He has done so temporarily and he has a genius for making something he is doing temporarily appear to be permanent.” Yet, Hemingway continued, “the Fascisti party to exist must have action. It is getting a little satisfaction now out of Corfu and the Adriatic. If it needed a republic to hold it together, it would get a republic” (Hemingway, *Dispatches*, 1985, p. 298).

In 1923 Hemingway published a poem entitled “They All Made Peace – What is Peace?” in *The Little Review*. He commented that “MUSSOLINI [emphasis original] has . . . a bodyguard and has his picture taken reading a book upside down.” He continued, “I used to know Mussolini. Nobody liked him then. Even I didn’t like him. He was a bad character” (Hemingway, *They All Made Peace*, 1923, p. 8). Again Hemingway tells the story of Mussolini reading a book upside down. This poem also demonstrated Hemingway’s growing interest in politics and his dislike of fascism.

By 1924, Hemingway had grown tired of his work as a traditional journalist, becoming more interested in writing fiction. His career in fiction got off to an inauspicious start, however, when his wife Hadley, who was traveling to join him in Lausanne with a valise full of the rough drafts of his fictional stories, had the valise stolen at the Paris station as she went to buy a bottle of mineral water. While he was able to reconstruct some of the pieces he was working on, he never forgave her for the loss (Dearborn, 2018, p. 129).

While Hemingway has been commonly viewed as an apolitical novelist, it is clear that by the 1920s he began to take sides in the growing debates about Communism and Fascism. These views were not public, but they were clearly expressed in his private correspondence. In this regard, Hemingway’s letters are an invaluable resource for understanding his private thoughts, his personality, and the inner workings of his mind. In a letter to his friend Ezra Pound regarding a potential trip to join the famous poet, he asked Pound, “[c]an I . . . preserve my incognito among your fascist pals? Or are they liable to give Hadley castor oil? Mussolini told me at Lausanne that I couldn’t ever live in Italy again” (Baker, 1981, p. 77). Clearly, Hemingway’s criticism of Mussolini had reached the fascist leader.

As Hemingway wrote to his friend Robert McAlmon in December 1924 warning him on a trip to Italy not to “get bumped off by wild adolescent Fascisti.” (Spanier, v.2, 2013, p. 190) He similarly commented to his friend Howell Jenkins in February 1925, “By Gad Mussolini is running a disgraceful business. Lead pipe government and everyone who squeals gets bumped off” (Baker, 1981, p. 150). Here, Hemingway is clearly disparaging Mussolini’s style of rule – a fiercer criticism than merely commenting on his pretense of reading a book while holding it upside down.

By 1925, Mussolini had begun to consolidate power and he and his forces would violently assail anyone who questioned his leadership. In Germany, Adolf Hitler began to admire Mussolini and used his tactics in the 1923 Beer Hall Putsch in Munich. Hitler was initially

unsuccessful, but ultimately rose to become the German chancellor in 1933. While Hemingway's views on fascism were not on public display during this time, he clearly felt a growing opposition to its strong-arm tactics. As Hemingway commented to friend Ernest Walsh in August 1925, "I can't live in Italy, outside of fifty other reasons, because the political situation makes me so furious that I'm upset and in trouble all the time" (Spanier, v.2, 2013, p. 386).

Hemingway was in a self-imposed European exile for much of the 1920s, largely in response to what he saw as the vanity and shallowness endemic to the United States. It was also much cheaper to live there than in the U.S. – which was an important factor since he was living mostly from his wife's inherited income. This was also the era of prohibition in the U.S., which would be an encumbrance for anyone who enjoyed alcohol as much as Hemingway did. In writing to Ezra Pound in September 1925, Hemingway asked, "Why get excited about U.S.A.? It means nothing to me. Why the hell should it mean anything to any intelligent person? You are so indignant about it that it always sways your judgement." He went on to discuss his views on Mussolini, whom he disliked and Pound supported. "I hate Benito [Mussolini]. That doesn't [t] prejudice me in favour [sic] of all the stupid bastards who hate Benito too" (Spanier, v.2, 2013, p. 395).

Hemingway had an intellectual and political rivalry with Pound that is revealed in his letters. His hatred of Mussolini had not dimmed, but it had become much more private than it was before. He felt that just as the United States deserved its president, Calvin Coolidge, Italy deserved Mussolini (Spanier, v.2, 2013, p. 62). In a letter to Pound in November 1926, Hemingway saw his political differences with Pound as a drain on their relationship. He wrote "I will not mention politics again in a letter. Only don't you ever call me on [Italian] politics. Yes I know the lire is stabilized and all about the improvements in the TRAIN SERVICE [emphasis original]" (Spanier, v.3, 2015, p. 160). Pound was clearly advocating for the benefits of Mussolini's leadership, but Hemingway was not interested in engaging in that discussion.

In a short story published in the May 1927 edition of the *New Republic* entitled "Italy, 1927" [later published as "Che Ti Dice la Patria"] Hemingway criticized fascism using fiction. The story was based on a ten-day trip he had made to Italy earlier that year. In the story he talks about an encounter with a young fascist on a bicycle who stopped Hemingway and his friend complaining the number on their car's license plate was dirty. The young fascist said "I cannot read it. It is dirty." He then charged the men twenty-five lire for having a dirty license plate. Hemingway replied, "It's only dirty from the state of the roads." "You don't like Italian roads?" asked the fascist. "They are dirty," Hemingway replied. "Fifty lire," said the fascist. "Your car is dirty and you are dirty too" (Hemingway, *The Complete Short Stories*, 1987, p. 229).

As Hemingway finished *A Farewell to Arms*, his classic novel about World War I, he realized that it would be difficult to have it published in Mussolini's Italy. This was due in part to his open clashes with Mussolini, as well as his inclusion in the novel of the Battle of Caporetto, which was a humiliating loss for the Italian forces and had been cleansed from the national memory by Mussolini, whose interest was in promoting only the positive aspects of Italian history. Mussolini did indeed ban the book from being published while he was in power because of the discussion of the Battle of Caporetto (Dearborn, 2018, p. 508). Regarding the impending publication of *A Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway wrote to his editor, Max Perkins, in October 1929 "Caporetto has been abolished in Italy – It is not allowed to be referred to and it is not mentioned in histories of the war." He later added, "if anyone wanted to make trouble

for the book it would be the Italians.” (Spanier, v.4, 2018, p. 113). Hemingway was also concerned as about the Italian government possibly suing for libel, so he emphasized that the book was fictional, although it was based on his experiences on the Italian front. “All I know is that the book is fiction and I have not used the name of anyone I have ever known or seen,” Hemingway emphasized (Spanier, v.4, 2018, p. 114). The film version of the book, which was produced in 1932 by Paramount, was also banned in Italy because of its portrayal of the battle (Spanier, v.5, 2020, p. 264).

Hemingway and Hadley divorced in January 1927, and that summer he married Pauline Pfeiffer, who was an editor at *Vogue* magazine in Paris. While visiting Spain in August 1931, Hemingway wrote to his Catholic in-laws, Paul and Mary Pfeiffer, about the situation there. Hemingway was a big fan of Spanish life and culture, especially bullfighting, so much so that he gave his first son the name of a famous Spanish bullfighter as his middle name. He wrote that, “Spain is in fair shape – Separation of Church and State inevitable – Believe that is only logical conclusion in the modern world – Believe the Pope would be glad now if he had never decided to go in with Mussolini” (Spanier, v.4, 2018, p. 561). Hemingway was discussing arrangements that would be finalized in December 1931 as the Lateran Treaty, making Catholicism the sole religion of Italy. Hemingway may not have been correct in his assumption that the Pope would not later support “going in” with Mussolini, but it reflected Hemingway’s stance on religion and, of course, his negative view of the Italian dictator.

Hemingway wrote a piece for *Esquire* magazine for their September 1935 issue entitled “Notes on the Next War: A serious topical letter.” This article examined the political situation in Europe, especially looking at the governments of Hitler and Mussolini. Hemingway was concerned about a future European war especially because of the leadership in Germany and Italy. He wrote, “the first panacea for a mismanaged nation is inflation of the currency; the second is war. Both bring a temporary prosperity; both bring a permanent ruin. But both are the refuge of political and economic opportunists” (Hemingway, Notes, 1935, p. 19). He mentioned an earlier conflict between Italy and France over Italy’s desire to gain colonies in North Africa – an area largely under French control. Yet, he wrote, “that difference has now been settled by Mussolini’s shift of ambition to East Africa where he has obviously made a deal with the French to abandon his North African plans . . . to make war on a free sovereign state under the protection of membership in the League of Nations” (Hemingway, Notes, 1935, p. 19). Hemingway felt that patriotism ran strong in Italy and “whenever things are going bad at home, business bad, oppression and taxation too great, Mussolini has only to rattle the saber against a foreign country to make his patriots forget their dissatisfaction at home in their flaming zeal to be at the throats of the enemy” (Hemingway, Notes, 1935, p. 19).

Hemingway felt that Mussolini had altered Italy’s historical memory, especially about the Battle of Caporetto, which had been a terrible defeat for the Italians in World War I. Hemingway remarked, “he still remembers Caporetto, where Italy lost 320,000 men in killed, wounded and missing, of which amount 265,000 were missing, although he has trained a generation of young Italians who believe Italy to be an invincible military power” (Hemingway, Notes, 1935, p. 19). Thus, Mussolini made ready to invade Ethiopia to acquire colonies for Italy and make it a greater international power. Much like Hitler, Mussolini was envious of the British and the French and their large colonial possessions. As Hemingway commented about Mussolini’s actions, “he plans to use planes against a people who have none and machine guns, flames projectors, gas and modern artillery against bows and arrows, spears, and native cavalry armed with carbines. Certainly the stage is . . . set . . . for an Italian victory

and such a victory will keep Italians' mind off things at home for a long time" (Hemingway, Notes, 1935, p. 19).

Hemingway also looked at the conflict between Italy and Ethiopia from an international perspective. He understood that other European countries supported Mussolini's actions largely for their own purposes, and stated that "England is glad to see Italy fight Ethiopia. First she may be whipped which, they figure, will teach her a lesson and lengthen the peace of Europe. Secondly if she wins that removes that annoyance of Abyssinian raids along the northern frontier province of Kenya[.]" He felt that Germany also supported Mussolini's aims in Ethiopia, writing that "Germany is glad to have Mussolini try to gobble Ethiopia. Any change in the African status quo provides an opening for her soon-to-be-made demands for return of her colonial possessions." Hemingway felt strongly that there would also soon be a European war, as he argued that "Germany, under Hitler, wants war, a war of revenge, wants it fervently, patriotically and almost religiously" (Hemingway, Notes, 1935, p. 156).

Although it is a common perception that Hemingway wanted to project an extremely masculine image, he was, nevertheless, opposed to the world delving into another war. He argued that "they wrote in the old days that it is sweet and fitting to die for one's country. But in modern war there is nothing sweet nor fitting in your dying. You will die like a dog for no good reason" (Hemingway, Notes, 1935, p. 156). With his personal experience of World War I, Hemingway knew the horrors of war and questioned those who would plunge the world into another conflagration. Even though World War I had been horrific, Hemingway feared its memory would not be enough to deter another one. He wrote, "no catalogue of horrors ever kept men from war. Before the war you always think it's not you that dies. But you will die, brother, if you go to it long enough." As he reminded his readers, "in a modern war there is no Victory. The allies won the war but the regiments that marched in triumph were not the men who fought the war. The men who fought the war were dead" (Hemingway, Notes, 1935, p. 156). While he saw the inevitability of a war in Europe, he counseled Americans to avoid joining any future combat: "But of the hell broth that is brewing in Europe we have no need to drink. Europe has always fought, the intervals of peace are only Armistices. We were fools to be sucked in once on a European war, and we should never be sucked in again" (Hemingway, Notes, 1935, p. 156).

In January 1936, Hemingway wrote a special article for *Esquire* magazine entitled "Wings Always Over Africa." In referring to those men who were fighting for Mussolini, Hemingway wrote a "soldier can be so fired by propaganda that he will go to battle wanting only to die for Il Duce and convinced that it is better to live one day as a lion than a hundred years as a sheep" (Hemingway, Wings, 1936, p. 31). Yet, as he commented, "it seems doubtful that Italy can get enough money to fight through until the next rains are over. Remember that the Ethiopians live in Ethiopia and eat only one meal a day, while every Italian in the field needs a gigantic and expensive transport organization to keep him there and feed him the food he is used to" (Hemingway, Wings, 1936, p. 174). He analyzed the troop situation, commenting that "Mussolini's generals have wisely employed Somali and Danakil troops as the spear head of the Italian advance and a great part of the regularity of their advance must be credited to their wise mistrust of European infantry in Africa." The Ethiopians were on the defensive and trying to hold onto their national sovereignty. He added, "the Ethiopians are retreating and stalling and the Italians are advancing, ... spending all their available money to keep their army in the field" (Hemingway, Wings, 1936, p. 174).

Hemingway recognized the futility of war and the damage that it brought to most of those who were involved. “The only people who loved war for long were profiteers, generals, staff officers and whores. They all had the best and finest times of their lives and most of them made the most money they had ever made” (Hemingway, *Wings*, 1936, p. 174). For the Italians at home, those who lived through the last war needed to remember not the truth, but rather Mussolini’s version of it. Yet for those who talked about the last war as it was, he wrote “many of these people have been beaten because they opened their mouths. Some were killed, others are in prison on the Lipari islands, some have left the country. It is a dangerous thing in a dictatorship to have a long memory” (Hemingway, *Wings*, 1936, pp. 174-75). At this stage his political views began to be more apparent, as he criticized the non-democratic nature of Mussolini’s government. He continued, “no dictatorship can last, really, except by force and that is why no dictator or potential dictator can afford to go through any period of unpopularity which will at once force him to the use of force to stay in power. A successful dictator uses clubs and has constant newspaper triumphs. An unsuccessful dictator . . . goes out as soon as his army or police switch on him” (Hemingway, *Wings*, 1936, p. 175).

By the mid-1930s Hemingway became more interested in the political situation in Spain. He had been traveling to Spain since the early 1920s, primarily for the bullfights. When the civil war began in 1936, foreign countries entered the war: the Germans and Italians on the side of Francisco Franco’s Nationalists, and the Soviet Union aided the side of the Spanish Republic. Hemingway was a strong supporter of the Republic, not surprisingly because of his clear and often stated opposition to fascism. He wrote to his mother-in-law, Mrs. Paul Pfeiffer, in August 1937 about his interest in Spain and his fears about Hitler and Mussolini: “...in a couple of days less than two weeks I go back to Spain where, if you get your politics from direct or indirect, you know I am on the wrong side and should be destroyed with all the other Reds. After which Hitler and Mussolini can come in and take all the minerals they need to make a European war” (Baker, 1981, p. 459). Hemingway was one of those individuals who foresaw the coming of World War II and the desire of Hitler and Mussolini to expand their power beyond their native lands. He was on the opposite side of this ideological struggle from his in-laws and his second wife, Pauline Pfeiffer Hemingway, and their political differences, as well as his growing relationship with Martha Gellhorn, led to the break-up of his second marriage.

When Hemingway left Spain to return home, he promised that he would go back, something that his mother-in-law wished that he would not do. As he wrote to her, “I am sorry about going back to Spain and I think what you wrote about staying here and taking care of the boys is very sound. But when I was there I promised them I would be back and while we cannot keep all our promises I do not see how not to keep that one. I would not be able to teach my boys much if I did” (Baker, 1981, pp. 460-61). Hemingway’s growing interest in politics and anti-fascism became even more evident during his time in the Spanish Civil War, yet another instance of his avowed opposition to Mussolini’s policies.

The Republican forces ultimately lost the Spanish Civil War, and the next European war came swiftly as Hemingway and other anti-fascists had predicted. As German forces raced through Poland in the fall of 1939 and then invaded western Europe in the spring of 1940, Hemingway grew more concerned with the fate of Europe. In May 1940 he wrote to his editor, Maxwell Perkins, from his home in Cuba, to complain about the British: “what a degenerate people the English are. Their policies have been suicidal since the last war. They gave us the worst bitching anybody did in Spain where we fought both Hitler and Mussolini for them for and could have kept them tied up there indefinitely . . . if only they had given us any aid at all –

any at all.” (Baker, 1981, p. 505). Hemingway was still mulling the loss for his side in Spain and what might have been had the British decided to give up their neutrality in the war and aid the Republican side.

During World War II, Ezra Pound made several broadcasts in support of Mussolini; these led to his indictment for treason in the United States due to the pro-fascist and anti-Semitic nature of those addresses (Dearborn, 2018, p. 491). Hemingway knew about these speeches and, as he wrote to his friend Archibald MacLeish, “sooner or later he will have to be tried, of course, and I want to hear him so I can know what it is all about when such time should come.” He later wrote to MacLeish “will you please send the photostats of Ezra’s [sic] broadcasts that you have? Whenever the damned business comes up we will probably be called on . . . and I think I should know what it is all about” (Baker, 1981, pp. 544-45). Hemingway returned to Europe in 1944 ostensibly to cover World War II as a journalist, but in truth he spent much of his time engaged in irregular warfare around Paris. He again took the opportunity to oppose fascism directly as he had during the Spanish Civil War, where he was officially a journalist but nonetheless participated in sundry military actions.

After World War II, Hemingway returned to his farm, Finca Vigia, outside of Havana. He continued to write, but his military adventures were over. In a letter to Bernard Berenson of March, 1953, Hemingway reminisced about his dealings with Ezra Pound and Mussolini: “I liked Pound very much. He had this great pretense to universal knowledge and he got to be unbearable. But the things he did know about he knew very well and he had a lovely heart until he turned bitter. Fascism is always made by disappointed people. Mussolini I knew fairly well. When you had known a wicked old man like Clemenceau, Mussolini was not very interesting. Then, too, it was impossible not to remember him as a coward in the war and as a crooked journalist . . . But he did not come to too bad an end when you think of his cheap cynicism and how he really hated Italians” (Baker, 1981, p. 815).

In 1955 Hemingway sought Pound’s release from St. Elizabeth’s hospital in Washington, D.C., where he was being held for his support of Mussolini. Pound was found to be eccentric, querulous, and egocentric by those who examined him at St. Elizabeth’s (Lynn, 1987, p. 163). Hemingway wrote to Harvey Breit in October 1955: “will gladly pay tribute to Ezra but what I would like to do is get him the hell out of St. Elizabeth’s have him given a passport and allow him to return to Italy where he is justly valued as a poet. I believe he made bad mistakes in the war in continuing to broadcast for that sod Mussolini after we were done fighting him” (Baker, 1981, p. 849). Hemingway felt that it would be cruel and unusual punishment to continue to keep Pound in confinement. Ultimately, Pound was released from confinement in 1958, having been held for thirteen years after the end of World War II.

Hemingway ended his life three years after Pound’s release. His suicide followed many years of poor health and serious depression. His high level of alcohol consumption made it difficult for him to write, and when his beloved Finca Vigia was taken over by Castro’s government and Hemingway was forced to leave Cuba, his depression deepened. While Hemingway is primarily remembered as a Nobel Prize and Pulitzer Prize-winning fiction writer, he was much more than that. Beginning in the 1920s, Hemingway harbored at first a distrust and then a growing hatred of fascism. A survey of his letters and journalism clearly indicates that Hemingway was an early anti-fascist and a strong supporter of democratic forms of government.

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