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## *“‘Clerical Fascism’ in Interwar Europe”* *An International Workshop April 7–9<sup>th</sup> 2006*

### Overview:

This forthcoming workshop represents a joint collaboration between Dr. Marius Turda, Marie Curie Fellow at Oxford Brookes University, and Dr. Matthew Feldman, HEFCE Promising Research Fellow at University College, Northampton, with the sponsorship of the Taylor & Francis journal, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Ideologies*. Centring upon an international seminar attended by scholars in Britain and abroad (especially America and Europe, as well as South Korea), “‘Clerical Fascism’ in Interwar Europe” will offer an alternative perspective to a heavily contested subject. In light of recent debates concerning the intersecting secularisation of religion and the (usually Christian-based) sacralisation of politics employed by various fascist movements, this workshop will seek to reappraise the ways in which we write the histories of ‘clerical fascism’ in interwar Europe. As such, our intent is to provide a forum both original in intent and comprehensive in scope. To do so, we shall bring together both young scholars and established authorities in the field to explore new conceptual frameworks for studying the history of ‘clerical fascism’ in interwar Europe. The workshop will be divided into three composite units, including:

1. Examination of new methodologies for the study of ‘clerical fascism’ (Political Religion/ Clerical Fascism/ Religious fascism)
2. Overview of case-studies (c. 12-15 national case studies, from Britain and Ireland to the Baltic and Balkans); and
3. Rethinking the relationship of Fascism and Religion in Interwar Europe (towards a new consensus).

### Scheme of research:

These organising principles themselves derive from a shared sense that much scholarship on the nexus of religion and fascism in the vital interwar period in Europe is currently inadequate. Following the pioneering work by Roger Griffin and Emilio Gentile and others, a new generation of scholarship dealing with fascism, Nazism, and racism in the context of interwar Europe has emerged to challenge much post-war academic orthodoxy. In consequence, the field of fascist studies is in the process of repositioning and reinventing itself within a wider ‘European History field’, which itself reflects a broader change in academic attention. Here, the task at hand is to assess methodological models and construct viable frameworks for inclusive regional study; one able to work well in and make sense for cross-continental analysis. Another important feature will be a focus on archival materials considered by relevant experts in pointing to the intersection between institutional Christian religions, theology and

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congregations on the one hand, and the fascist ‘rebirth’ on the other, located as the latter is in the particular nations surveyed in individual presentations. Corresponding to primary source-based papers by a number of academic specialists, Emilio Gentile’s characterisation of fascist movements in terms of ‘political religions’ will serve as a point of historiographical departure. With these two methodological criteria in hand – both developed in keynote addresses by Roger Griffin and Emilio Gentile – and given the striking neglect of the specific subject matter proposed here; doubtless this workshop on the relationship of various interwar fascist movements and the respective national religious institutions, promises to significantly contribute to relevant academic historiography.

#### Added value of collaboration

In addition to the role of participants outlined above, we also intend for the workshop to focus on discussions concerning the future of the field of ‘fascist studies’, especially in terms of currently contested conceptual frameworks in approaching generic fascism; specifically, those methodological directions which may prove heuristically useful and substantial in accomplishing the goal of moving away from nationally-based and/or nationalistic historiographies, and toward regional and comparative ones. The goal of the workshop is thus, in part, to introduce and evaluate the state of art in fascist studies, present project proposals, and put plans for future collaborative activity among academics from Europe and the United States. This will be partially accomplished via contributions by Roger Griffin on the synthesis between modernity and traditional religions, and by Emilio Gentile, who will focus on the role of ‘political religions’ employed to varying degrees by fascist movements. In turn, these theoretical strategies will relate back to the detailed case studies presented by leading experts, listed above. In short, buttressing the detailed papers on putative ‘clerical fascism’ in interwar Europe will be additional considerations by leading academics on how best to harmonise the individual case studies presented with the dynamic conceptual terrain offered by fascist studies.

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