

Mosley, Sir Oswald

(1896--1980), British Fascist leader. After serving for a short time in the British Labor Government of 1929, Mosley left to help found the New Party. However, the New Party did not win even one seat in the 1931 elections. In 1932 Mosley visited Italy, where the Fascist Benito Mussolini was in power. With that as inspiration, he established the British Union of Fascists (BUF).

Like the Fascists in Italy, the British Fascists marched in formation and wore black shirts as their uniform. Their demonstrations, staged in Jewish neighborhoods, soon became violent; BUF members attacked Jews and their property. By 1934 this type of antisemitic violence caused reputable British groups to withdraw their support from the BUF and kept it from becoming a major political party. However, the violence continued: in 1936 Fascists and Jews came to blows in the East End of London in the "Battle of Cable Street." As a result, the commissioner of the London Police called for the banning of political armies, or at least the banning of their uniforms.

When World War II broke out Mosley and other BUF leaders were put in prison and the movement was outlawed. After the war Mosley unsuccessfully tried to revitalize his political organization.