Clerical Fascism in the United States



Fasces in the U.S. House of Representatives. The fasces is an ancient Roman symbol, derived from the Latin word "fascis," which means "bundle." We get the word fascism from that word, the symbol of government authority, specifically *ROMAN* government authority.

This article is from the *Converted Catholic Magazine* of which former Roman Catholic priest, Leo Herbert Lehmann (also known as L.H. Lehmann) is the editor. I don't have a bio on J.J. Murphy but I am sure he's a former Catholic priest and a good resource because of the fact that Leo Lehmann includes his works in his magazine.

Clerical fascism is an ideology that combines the political and economic doctrines of fascism with clericalism. Clerical refers to a member of the clergy, and especially in this case Roman Catholic priests.

Fascism is political philosophy, movement, or regime (such as that of the Fascisti) that exalts nation and often race above the individual and that stands for a centralized autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, severe economic and social regimentation, and forcible suppression of opposition.

Clerical fascism is, therefore, the dictatorship of the (Roman) Church over the government.

Clerical Fascism in the United States by J. J. Murphy

EUROPEANS, unlike Americans, rightly think of the Roman Catholic church primarily as a political and cultural force shaping the lives and destinies of men and nations — as an international super-State determined to restore its medieval domination. To this end it must necessarily destroy liberal democratic government, so mercilessly condemned by Pope Pius IX, and reestablish the Holy Roman Empire. Germany is the natural center of such an empire, now as in the past. This is the plan Pope Leo XIII had in mind when he said to the late Kaiser Wilhelm: "Germany must be the sword of the Catholic Church." This, too, is what Pope Pius XII thought had been practically realized when in his Christmas message of 1940 he referred to recent German victories as events that "signal the dawn of a new era." The distinguished foreign correspondent John T. Whitaker, in close touch with Vatican sources, had reported the Pope's thoughts in more specific terms a few months previously when he wrote from Rome:

"In this situation, the Vatican has indicated that it approves the Fascist government organized in France by Marshal Pétain and Pierre Laval and it hopes to sow the totalitarian regime of other corporative states, such as those in Portugal and Brazil, spread throughout the world." — (New York Post, July 18, 1940.)

It was not without reason that a Vatican politician, Msgr. Tiso of Slovakia, said on September 27, 1940: "Catholicism and National Socialism have much in common." In a similar vein Papal Chamberlain Franz von Papen, signer of the Hitler-Vatican concordat, had declared: "The Third Reich is the first power which not only recognizes, but which puts into practice the high principles of the Papacy." (Der Voelkischer Beobachter, Jan. 14, 1934.)

Standing in the way of a world 'corporative' or Fascist state was the United States of America, the arsenal of democracy. This is the point Lewis Mumford made in the summer of 1940 when he wrote:²

"Unfortunately the aims of Fascism are most deeply in conflict with those of a free republic like that of the United States. In this effort, the Catholic church… has been an ally — a potent ally — of the forces of destruction."

To the American Catholic hierarchy democracy had become something fetid and loathsome. The Jesuit magazine America in its issue of May 17, 1941, expressed itself candidly in an article we quote in part:

"How we Catholics have loathed and despised this Lucifer civilization... This civilization is now called democracy... Today, American Catholics are being asked to shed their blood for that particular kind of secularist civilization which they have been heroically repudiating for four centuries... The Christian Revolution will begin when we decide to cut loose from the existing social order rather than be buried with it."

The Vatican High Command that made pacts with Mussolini and Hitler, that gave the death blow to Spanish democracy, likewise had plans for "Christian Revolution" in the United States. It did not consider Protestantism in America an obstacle to its plans. It considered it dead, since it can be trampled on without evoking protest. It turned from counter-Reformation against Protestantism to counter-Revolution against liberal democracy, which it termed "Communism." It welcomed Protestant fascists as allies.

Backing Of The Hierarchy

The Jesuits, 'Storm Troopers of the Church,' are the power behind all church-inspired revolutions. In Austria their 'front man' was Msgr. Seipel — in the United States it is Father Coughlin. He was released from his vows in the Order of St. Basil in Canada, brought to the United States, and strategically

located in the mid-West in the important industrial city of Detroit. After becoming an American citizen, Coughlin began to preach "Christian Revolution."

To anyone even remotely acquainted with Canon Law discipline to which the Roman Catholic clergy are subjected, prohibiting all priests to publish even a word without permission of their superiors, it is evident that Father Coughlin has the complete backing of the highest authorities in the Catholic church. Moreover, without contradiction, he has attributed his Fascist doctrines to the encyclicals of Pope Pius XI. His weekly broadcasts were read and approved by his bishop. They Were reproduced weekly in numerous Catholic papers. He was never criticized or censored by either of his superiors, his bishop or the Apostolic Delegate. Neither his broadcasting nor his paper, Social Justice, was stopped by the church; in fact, this paper was sold outside most Catholic churches on Sundays. When the paper was banned by the Post Office as Seditious, the hierarchy intervened to prevent him from being tried for sedition even though he publicly declared at the time that he "was responsible and did control the magazine, its policy and contents." Without church objection, a Franciscan Father eulogized him publicly in New York on July 29, 1941, as a "second Christ" and compared his sufferings and joys with those of the Savior.

The Catholic church has allowed without protest the preaching of anti-Semitism, which paves the way for Fascism and revolution. The Tidings, official paper of the archdiocese of Los Angeles, for example, defended Coughlin's anti-Semitism in its issue of April 17, 1943. Catholic authorities have not denounced, much less prevented, the printing and distribution of the vicious Protocols of Zion by Social Justice, The Malist, The Catholic International or other Catholic organizations or publications. Nor did it ever use any of its 332 Catholic publications in this country to denounce the false Protocols. Anti-Semitism in Catholic pulpits is not unheard of (cf. The Jewish Examiner, Sept. 4, 1942).

Carlson (p. 202) observes that American fascist Seward Collins learned his anti-Semitism from The Jews, a book written by leading Catholic apologist Hilaire Belloc. Key to the Mystery by French-Canadian Catholic Adrian Arcand, fascist leader, is a classic of anti-Semitism. But, in general, the Catholic church's anti-Semitism is discreetly kept under cover as far as 29church leaders are concerned. Its most effective work is by 'whispering campaigns.' Even Catholic apologist George Shuster admitted deep-rooted anti-Semitism in the Catholic church in this country but added that it is "seldom voiced above a whisper."

The Catholic church in this country has shown its anti-democratic feel- ings in many ways. Bishop Gallagher, Coughlin's superior, on his return from the Vatican in 1936, declared to reporters: "Father Coughlin is an out- standing priest and his voice... is the voice of God."



archy's help to the Axis by opposing Lend-Lease and U. S. preparation for National

A Catholic priest cannot speak in a diocese other than his own without explicit permission of the bishop of that diocese. The fact, therefore, that Father Coughlin, Father Curran, Father Terminiello and other Fascist leaders spoke in dioceses throughout the country shows that they had the approval of all these bishops. The priests felt likewise. A poll conducted by the Jesuit magazine America in the fall of 1941 showed that 90.4 per cent of the Catholic priests of the United States were opposed to our entering World War II. Archbishop Curley of Baltimore expressed the feelings of the hierarchy, when in an interview with the press on December 7, 1941, after hearing of the attack on Pearl Harbor, he implicitly denounced the war, saying: "We're not satisfied. We're out looking for war..." — (Baltimore Sun, Dec. 8, 1941.)

The Catholic hierarchy, which as a body gave immediate endorsement to World War I, waited almost a year, until Germany's defeat was foreseen, before officially giving their approval to World War II.

Political Power Of Coughlin

Pearl Harbor and our declaration of war put a temporary end to the political organization that Clerical Fascism was in the process of forging. Coughlin

was just about to take over majority control of America First and form it into a political party, when war was declared. He had already given hints, which were seconded by Philip LaFollette and the N. Y. Daily News. He was about to replace Catholic John T. Flynn of the strategic New York chapter with a more obedient lackey.

America First, started by fascist-minded business magnates, had at first been independent of Coughlin. But by infiltration the Coughlinites became the dominant element. Catholic church prelates gave it their enthusiastic approval. At one of its mass meetings in Madison Square Garden in New York City, under the chairmanship of John T. Flynn, Cardinal O'Connell, dean of the American Catholic hierarchy and Bishop Shaughnessy of Seattle. formerly of he Apostolic Delegation in Washington, D. C., sent telegrams of congratulation which were publicly read.

Carlson (p. 260) quotes an official of America First to the effect that its membership was 80 per cent Coughlinite and would eventually be under Coughlin's complete control. General Wood had at first objected to Coughlinite dominance but later "humbled himself before the reverend-dictator of Royal Oak" in a letter published in *Social Justice*.

In addition to the Coughlinite majority, America First included large numbers of the Ku Klux Klan element who in recent years have allied themselves with Catholic Fascists in a war on Jewry and 'Communist' unions. Louis B. Ward, one of Coughlin's chief assistants, addressed the Pontiac chapter of America First four different times. This chapter was made up almost exclusively of Klan members. Garland Alderman, secretary of the National Workers League, a fascist organization of KKK members, said that he was nurtured in Fascism by Father Coughlin's Social Justice and had also attended a series of "special lectures" by Coughlin one Winter. (Under Cover, p. 305) He named Coughlin as one of the Americans who in the opinion of his organization would negotiate with Hitler after the hoped- for world triumph of Nazism.



Rev. Charles E. Coughlin,

still Pro-Fascist, Anti-British, Anti-Semitic.

The 'Christian Front' In New York

Clerical Fascism worked on a number of 'fronts' and a variety of social levels. Smooth-tongued Msgr. Sheen (the Lawrence Dennis of Catholic Fascism), Jesuit Father Hubbard and others took care of the moneyed classes. They were ably assisted by wealthy laymen such as Judge John A. Matthews and former Catholic diplomats like John Cudahy and Joe Kennedy, former ambassador to England, who in November 1940 said, "It isn't that England's fighting for democracy. That's the bunk."

But the work of Clerical Fascism on the intellectual and industrialist levels of American society is naturally shrouded in secrecy. Only what takes place among the common people has become known. This was the rabble- rousing work of Father Coughlin. In addition to his following of several million Irish-Catholic listeners and sympathizers, Coughlin needed a closely-knit and militant corps such as Hitler possessed in his Brown Shirts. To this end he formed the Christian Front. Carlson tells us (p. .35) that the Christian Front was "the outgrowth of a plan spawned by the priest of a once obscure parish in Royal Oak." Coughlin himself confirmed this when the Christian Fronters were being tried in Federal Court, saying he would stand beside them "be they guilty or he they innocent... For us there is no white flag of surrender." Units of this violent revolutionary society were soon organized throughout the country from Pittsburgh as far west as Minneapolis.

Coughlin openly urged revolution. In Social Justice of April 24, 1939, he wrote:

"22 millions subsist on dole rations — and we do not revolt! How much will we stand?"

Carlson says (p. 56) "the *Christian Front*, always under Coughlin's inspiration and guidance, shouted that a private army was the only means to 'save America.'" Coughlin wrote in *Social Justice*: "Rest assured we will fight you in Franco's way."

Carlson also reveals (pp. 33, 69) how Coughlin promised police protection to anti-Semitic terrorists in New York City but shielded his secret backing of terroristic demonstrations by use of fake telegrams purporting to declare his disapproval of such tactics.

In forming the *Christian Front* Coughlin had full support from the Catholic church. In New York City, Father Duffee of the Franciscan Order was one of its chief lieutenants; the basement of the Catholic church at Columbus Circle belonging to the Paulist Fathers was one of their regular meeting places. The mail box of the Paulist Fathers in Post Office Station G was put at their disposal. Father Edward C. Burke and other priests closely identified themselves with the movement.

Carlson (p. 51) gives similar testimony:

"I heard hate preached at a meeting which started with a prayer by Father John J. Malone. The audience blessed itself and the meeting started... 'Hitler and Mussolini are men of peace. Roosevelt is one of the most vicious.'"

Coughlin's revolutionary plot was based on the idea that a few armed men properly placed can seize a country, just as Trotsky took Petrograd in 1917 with 1,000 armed men. His *Christian Fronters* were told: "You'll get target practice and complete drilling in the art of street fighting... Each of you captains will have your own cell, your own sabotage machine, your own revolutionary group for a Nationalist America." (Under Cover. p. 98)

Under the camouflaged name of "Midtown Sporting Club" the Manhattan 'Iron Guard Unit' of the Christian Front drilled in Donovan's Hall. near the Paulist Catholic church mentioned above. Like Franco's revolutionaries they took a secret oath that said, "I will look to God for guidance." They were exhorted previous to the drill:

"You are soldiers of Christ. Men like you fought in Spain. Men like you will fight in America... You are defenders of the Faith. Your duty is to fight for Christ and Country."

On January 13, 1940, the FBI raided a Brooklyn "Sporting Club" of the Christian Front. A Federal court suit ensued. The Jesuit publication America, leading Catholic weekly in its issue of January 27, 1940, ridiculed the case, and called it a Jewish plot. Public masses were said for the "heroes on trial. Carlson sums up the case and its foredoomed failure when he says that the big boys behind the scenes were never made public." The verdict of the Catholic jury was a foregone conclusion. Father Curran, Coughlin's lieutenant in the East, slyly hinted at an acquittal celebration that a close relative of his was the jury foreman.

In 1926, in Germany, Hitler revolutionaries were similarly arrested and acquitted. As late as 1930 Thomas Mann said of the Nazis: "I regard the National Socialist Party as a flash-in-the-pan which will soon be over."

The Christian Front is only temporarily under cover. Coughlin is biding his time. Father Edward Brophy of% Brooklyn, a Christian Front leader at one of their meetings in June 1942 said — "The days are coming when this country will need a Coughlin and need him badly. We must get strong and keep organized for that day."

In *Social Justice* of Sept. 1, 1939 Coughlin predicted that it would take seven to ten years to win control. He added:

"We predict that... the National-Socialists in America organized

under that or some other name — eventually will take control of the government on this continent. We predict, lastly, **the end of democracy in America**."

Even when he was put off the radio he confidently threatened:

"I have been retired temporarily... Not until there is an opportunity for the pendulum of reaction to swing to the right will I resume my place before a microphone... I extend to them ('men powerful in the field of radio and other activities') my heartiest congratulations for all that the future holds in store for them."

Other Branches Of The 'Christian Front'

The militant organization of Clerical Fascism functioned in other cities the same as in Manhattan. Space permits only passing references to its other leaders.

In Brooklyn, N. Y., Father Edward L. Curran is the local Fuehrer. He spends his time, with his bishop's permission, propagandizing Clerical Fas- cism throughout the East.

In Boston, Mass, the Christian Front leader is Irish-Catholic Francis P. Moran. He is assisted by William B. Gallagher and also by John J. Murphy, publisher of Save America Now. Carlson (pp. 450-455) gives a good description of Moran: he was an intimate friend of Nazi consul, Dr. Herbert Scholz; he exhibited the German propaganda film Sieg im Westen to convince People that Germany was invincible; he was a close friend of Father Coughlin and Father Duffee. Moran worked adroitly "through the medium of unobtrusive underground cells, throughout New England;" he spoke in Pawtucket, R. I., with Father Curran, calling the President 'a Jew guilty of treason;' he boasted that men of top political power agree with him and protect him but are keeping under cover. Typical of his moral sabotage is his statement that follows:

"The only thing you can do now, of course, is to talk about Communism and the Jews. You can't touch the war. A whispering campaign is the best thing now. Mrs. Murphy tells Mrs. Duffy, and she tells Mrs. O'Toole, who tells it to Mrs. Smith... by the time they end up, they've got something which everybody believes."

Extremely violent outbreaks of anti-Semitism occur in Boston but are hushed up by the Boston press.

Carlson (p. 213) points out that the hundreds of units of War Mother Movements still functioning full blast were given their start by Father Coughlin. Most of them publish their own fascist bulletins. In the September 1943 issue of THE CONVERTED CATHOLIC MAGAZINE we quoted from one put out in Cincinnati.

In Washington, D. C., Coughlin's organization took the form of a lobby and a political battery. Of course, he already enjoyed the whole-hearted cooperation of reactionary Senators like Reynolds, Wheeler and Dies. Catholic Congressmen such as Barry, Sweeney, Curley, Kennedy and O'Leary were only too willing to help. Coughlin's attorney in Washington is George E. Sullivan. He is author of two anti-Semitic books. He cooperated With Mrs. 'Red Network' Dilling in the writing of America s most scurrilous attack on Jews, entitled The Octopus, published under the fictitious name of a Protestant clergyman, Rev. Frank Woodruff Johnson.

Most valuable Clerical Fascist in Washington was Jesuit-trained Senator David I. Walsh who is chairman of the vitally secret Senate Committee on Naval Affairs. Olov E. Tietzow, known as "Nazidom's traveling emissary," was a close friend of his:

"Tietzow spoke highly of Senator David I. Walsh of Massachusetts, who about the time of my interview was the victim of a public airing of an alleged personal scandal. According to Tletzow. the Senator saw eye to eye with him politically and had received and thanked him for all his literature. When Tietzow had got into trouble with the Post Office, Senator Walsh had interested himself in his problem because of personal friendship, Tietzow as- serted." — (Under Cover, p. 419)

In August 1942 Senator Walsh received much notoriety on the grounds that he frequented a Nazi spy nest In Brooklyn, N. Y. The matter was hushed up by Catholic political pressure. Walsh was not interested in challenging the accusations in court.

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AND OTHERS

Facsimile of advertisement announcing mass meeting in New York to aid Franco Spain, organized by Protestant-reactionary Merwin K. Hart, founder of "Union for Nationalist Spain." Among the names given here as sponsors are those of Marcelino Garcia Ruviera, active fifth columnist for Franco Spain in New York; two Jesuit priests: Francis X. Talbot, editor of "America" magazine, and Robert I. Gannon, President of Fordham University; two other priests, active agents of Father Coughlin's Christian Front: Edward Lodge Curran and Theophane Mac-Guire; also Patrick Scanlon of the Brooklyn Catholic "Tablet" which, together with the "Christian Front" and "Catholic Action," also sponsored the meeting.

The "Christian Mobilizers"

In the intricate crosswork of movements that form the groundwork of Clerical Fascism, there are some groups that serve a distinct purpose by appearing to be independent of Coughlin. The Christian Mobilizers are such an organization. Their leader is Irish-Catholic Joe McWilliams. He is the most notorious anti-Semite in the country. His setup is like that of the Christian Front. Little wonder, for Carlson (pp. 76, 85) says, "Joe was suckled by Father Coughlin's own elements in the East," and one of his lieutenants, Hartery, also referred to "our Savior, Father Coughlin." Only a priest fits the requirements of the coming American Fuehrer as pictured by the priest-ridden mind of McWilliams:

"A man who is a mystic. A man that the mob can look up to — but not touch. A man who has come from the people, but has reached so high that they dare not call him their own, but one appointed by God to speak for them! That's what this country needs. That's what we'll need to bring together our forces for a Nationalist America."

"Reverend Edward Brophy, another promoter of the Christian Front not only spoke at a Mobilizer meeting, but also promoted Joe's Nazi group in other ways." (Under Cover, p. 82)

Future Danger

Clerical Fascism, driven underground during the war, is certain to rise again with a cry to 'Save America for the Americans.' Those who fail to realize this threat to our future should ponder well the following facts: America First controlled by Coughlinites boasted of 15,000,000 members. In one meeting in the Hollywood Bowl in California it drew a crowd of 100,000 'patriots.' Gerald L. K. Smith, Fascist, polled 100,000 votes in Michigan last year. The Hearst-Gannett and the McCormick-Patterson newspaper chains have over 15,000,000 readers. Mrs. Finley J. Sheppard, daughter of the late Jay Gould, gave millions to American Fascists. Robert O'Callaghan, Irish-Catholic friend of Joe McWilliams and Ku Kluxer Edward Smythe, is doing confidential government work in the Chicago office of the Alien Property Custodian, Leo Crowley.

If America waits too long to wake up to its danger, it may ironically fulfill he words of Jesuit-trained Goebbels, spokesman for Catholic Hitler:

"It will always remain the best joke made by the democratic system that it provided its deadly enemies with the means to destroy it."

Pierre Van Paassen From Days Of Our Years

Piere Van Paassen, in his book, Days of Our Years, page 539, states:

"The Vatican is the uncompromising foe of liberalism. socialism, democracy, Americanism — in short, of modernism in general. It was therefore to be expected that, as soon as the reaction against all these isms should begin to concretize, the Pope was most likely to sympathize with that reaction. In our day that reaction was crystallized in Fascism, which is the synthesis of all the forces of reaction, and the Vatican has indeed chosen to take its position on that side of the barricade to triumph, as it thinks, with the pagan dictators on the ruins of Christian civilization."

- 1. The Kaiser's Memoirs, by Wilhelm II, p. 211: translated by Thos. R. Ybarra.↔
- 2. Faith For Living, p. 162, by Lewis Mumford. ↔
- 3. "The Conflicts Among Catholics" by George Shuster in the Winter 1940 edition of the quarterly, The American Scholar.↔