

The Men Behind Coughlin

The lords of reaction whose gospel is preached by the Royal Oak rabble-rouser come to light. Where does the money come from?

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THEY are beginning to catch up with Father Coughlin. Four and a half years ago the Communist press first sounded the alarm and charged that Coughlin was a fascist and anti-Semite. Now this is no longer news; his fascism and anti-Semitism virtually leap at you from every issue of his weekly magazine, *Social Justice*. Four and a half years ago the Communist press declared that Father Coughlin was being subsidized by the very Wall Street interests whom he was so noisily denouncing. If the Dies committee means business, it ought to be able to provide us with documentary verification of this charge too.

As one who has had a hand in the exposure of the Royal Oak Goebbels, I should like to call attention to a few of the more salient facts concerning his activities during the past four and a half years.

When Father Coughlin launched his National Union for Social Justice on Nov. 11, 1934, he was still known publicly as an ardent supporter of the New Deal. It was he who had issued the slogan "Roosevelt or Ruin," and as late as April 9 of that year he had broadcast to the faithful: "I will never change my philosophy that the New Deal is Christ's Deal." In Congress he was most closely associated, not with the reactionaries, but with men like Senator Thomas of Oklahoma and Senator Nye of North Dakota, who were known as liberals. He was widely regarded as a neo-Populist, a sort of clerical Bryan, and even his enemies described him in terms no worse than money crank or crackpot.

On Nov. 1, 1934, the American Jewish Committee, which represents those wealthy Jews who advocate a hush-hush policy in regard to fascism and anti-Semitism, sent this letter to editors of Jewish newspapers:

We have not seen in the Jewish press any reference to Father Coughlin's first radio address of the year. The enclosed excerpts reflect a gratifying state of mind on the part of the reverend gentleman which we believe ought to be conspicuously noted in the Jewish press, for obvious reasons.

It seems that the gentlemen of the American Jewish Committee had been a bit perturbed by a statement Coughlin issued on April 28, 1934, following the Treasury Department's revelation of his silver speculations. In that statement he denounced Secretary Morgenthau as an enemy of "Gentile silver" and frothed at the "internationalists—the European Warburgs and Rothschilds." Apparently, the American Jewish Committee made the proper representations, and Coughlin obliged in a broadcast on October 28, in which he went out of his way to praise

Morgenthau, and, in addition, declared: "If there is anti-Jewish propaganda being maliciously circulated, it will never find support from a Catholic pulpit."

Coughlin was right about the vast majority of Catholic pulpits. The Catholic Church's opposition to anti-Semitism has been made abundantly clear in various pronouncements of the late Pope Pius XI and other high Catholic authorities. But there is one Catholic pulpit in this country, that at Royal Oak, Mich., which is an exception. It has become a fountainhead of the most un-Catholic doctrine—and not only on the question of anti-Semitism.

"A CHRISTIAN NATION"

Just a little more than a month after the American Jewish Committee sent out its letter urging the Jewish press to give the radio priest a clean bill of health I sat in the Shrine of the Little Flower and heard him inject an anti-Semitic innuendo into a lecture he was giving before an audience of about a thousand persons. And some six weeks later, on Jan. 22, 1935, at another lecture in his church, I heard him speak even more explicitly in the same vein. "We've got to say that we're either Christians in this country or not," he shouted. "We're so open-minded as to say to the Jews, the Mohammedans, the Burmese, and the others that while we love each other, remember this is a Christian principle, and when it comes to law, when it comes to representatives in Congress, don't forget this is a Christian nation! Let's not overwork this democracy."

These lectures were not broadcast. Newspapermen were present, however—yet not a line was carried by any paper or news service. And the Detroit Jewish *Chronicle* secured an exclusive statement from Father Coughlin which dripped with love for the Jews. Only the Communist press, so far as I am aware, published the facts.

During the next couple of years Coughlin increasingly emphasized Jewish names—Kuhn, Loeb, Rothschild, Warburg—in his attacks on "international bankers," but he avoided anything overt. Then at Cleveland on Aug. 16, 1936, he "forgot himself." It was at the open-air rally that concluded the convention of the National Union for Social Justice. Coughlin stood on a platform in the hot sun, the perspiration pouring down his face. Declaring that the Jewish doctrine was "a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye," he challenged "every Jew in this nation to tell me that he does or does not believe" in the principle of "love thy neighbor as thyself."

All of which is of course mild compared to the fine frenzy of Jew-baiting that one

finds today in certain of Coughlin's broadcasts and in the columns of *Social Justice*. This reflects a new phase in the evolution of his fascism. After his debacle in the 1936 elections Coughlin apparently abandoned hope of being able to seduce any large number of average Americans into building a mass fascist movement. He has, instead, directed his appeal to smaller groups of the most backward elements, inciting them against Jews, the labor movement, and the New Deal by methods borrowed from the Nazis. *Social Justice* has, in fact, become the chief Nazi organ in the country.

And pay for this fascist piper undoubtedly comes from those who call the anti-New Deal tune. The National Union for Social Justice was launched three months after the founding of the American Liberty League. At the time there seemed to be no connection between the two, and publicly the relations between Coughlin and the league seemed to be most uncordial. Both organizations, however, represented a crystallization under the aegis of big business of the reactionary forces opposed to the New Deal. As the struggle against the New Deal sharpened, Coughlin dropped all criticism of the Liberty League and, in fact, adopted its favorite shibboleths. His patriotic efforts during the 1936 campaign won him lavish praise from no less a person than former Gov. Joseph Ely of Massachusetts, member of the league's national executive committee.

THE MONEY-CHANGERS' FRIEND

Father Coughlin established contact with Wall Street at least as far back as 1932. His monetary ideas—and perhaps something more than ideas—were derived, not from the inflationary tradition of the agrarian Midwest and Northwest, as is popularly supposed, but from those very money-changers whom he pilloried so savagely. In his pious biography of the Royal Oak fuhrer, Louis B. Ward, Coughlin's chief publicity man and all-around stooge, has told the story of the visit of two Wall Street emissaries, George LeBlanc and Robert M. Harriss, who came to Coughlin "to persuade him that he should launch into an explanation of the gold subject." This was on Oct. 23, 1932.

Mr. LeBlanc, whose office is now at 44 Wall St., was at one time vice-president of the Equitable Trust Co. of New York and later president of the Interstate Bank & Trust Co., both of which merged with Rockefeller's Chase National, the country's largest banking institution. Mr. Harriss, a silver speculator and member of the New York Cotton Exchange, is a partner in the investment house of Harriss & Vose, 60 Beaver St., in the Wall Street district. Both these gentlemen

subsequently became leading figures in the Committee for the Nation, a big business inflation lobby of which James H. Rand, Jr., president of the anti-union Remington Rand, Inc., was chairman. The chief "theoretician" of the Committee for the Nation was the late Frank A. Vanderlip, former president of the National City Bank. The group's secretary was Dr. Edward A. Rumeley, who later served in a similar capacity with Frank E. Gannett's National Committee to Uphold Constitutional Government, spiritual heir of the Liberty League. The relations between Father Coughlin and the Committee for the Nation were extremely close and in his speeches on monetary questions he merely added the appropriate evangelistic touches to the committee's program. Just what this cost the committee is not known.

Eloquent of the character and direction of Father Coughlin's activities is the fact that he has for several years been on extremely friendly terms with the two archetypes of American big business fascism, Henry Ford and William Randolph Hearst. The May 22 issue of *Social Justice*, announcing that Hearst's New York radio station, WINS, has agreed to broadcast Coughlin's speeches, published the front page headline: "Jews Boycott Hearst for Aiding Father Coughlin." This is really more damaging to Hearst and Coughlin than it is to the Jews, who, of course, constitute only a minority of the participants in the Hearst boycott. Coughlin and Hearst have for long seen eye to eye on many questions. In May 1932 the priest spent part of a vacation on the publisher's California ranch. In 1935 he warmly endorsed Hearst's proposal for the organization of an anti-New Deal "Constitutional Democratic Party"—and a year later gave birth to the Union Party which had all the signs of Hearstian paternity. And today *Social Justice* is printed at the Cuneo Press, Chicago, whose chief customers are two Hearst magazines, *Good Housekeeping* and *Cosmopolitan*.

Incidentally, the Union Party first saw the light of day on the Great Barrington, Mass., estate of Francis P. Keelon, foreign exchange speculator, whose New York office is at 76 Beaver St.

HENRY FORD'S DEFENDER

As for Henry Ford, there too the affinity is of long standing. "Coughlin Defends Ford as a Patriot," read a headline in the *New York Times* of Sept. 6, 1933. And he has continued to defend the motor manufacturer at every opportunity. In 1937 the volatile priest, with the consent of Harry Bennett, head of Ford's private Gestapo, the service department, sought to organize at the Ford Dearborn plant a disguised company union called the Workers Councils for Social Justice. It didn't take. Whereupon Coughlin turned his attention to disrupting the CIO United Automobile Workers from within. It was he who served as go-between for Homer Martin, deposed president of the UAW, in his secret negotiations with the Ford Motor

Co. Martin was soon elevated to Coughlin's hall of fame and in the columns of *Social Justice* he was spoken of in terms reserved only for Hitler, Mussolini, and Ford.

Last December there emerged fresh evidence of Coughlin's intimate relations with the Dearborn rugged individualist. On two occasions Harry Bennett used the priest's broadcasts to issue statements designed to clear Ford of the stigma of having protested the Nazi pogroms. Coughlin has undoubtedly learned much from Ford's pioneer work in anti-Semitism. It is not so many years since the auto magnate's Dearborn *Independent* was, under the editorship of William J. Cameron, publishing articles of the same type as those now appearing in *Social Justice*.

It would be surprising if some of these friends of Coughlin were not contributing their share to "the cause." Nor is there reason to believe that the Nazis are proving less generous, in view of the fact that Dr. Goebbels' speeches have been known to find their way into *Social Justice* over Coughlin's signature. Certainly the activities of this high priest of fascism cost a lot of money. The bill for his weekly broadcasts over forty-six stations is about \$8,000 per hour. For a year

this totals up to \$416,000. *Social Justice*, a twenty-four-page illustrated weekly, carries no advertising. It claims a circulation of 230,000, but Coughlin is not notorious for veracity. The magazine's actual press run is 92,000, which means that it operates at a heavy loss. Copies of the priest's speeches may be obtained free on request, which adds another big sum to the printing bill. When Ward wrote his biography in 1933, he estimated that postage for these printed speeches amounted to \$450,000 a year. Even assuming that this has been considerably reduced, it is still quite an item. Then there is the clerical force of 105 girls, as well as other employees. Clearly, these huge operating costs cannot be covered by the small individual contributions from the radio public. The big money must come from other sources.

To speak for the poor while serving the rich is the essence of fascist technique. Father Coughlin, whose preachments have been repudiated by Cardinal Mundelein as not representing "the doctrine or sentiments of the church," fully measures up to this specification. It is time the Dies committee did a little unfrocking job and revealed the brown shirt under the cassock.

A. B. MAGILL.



"Lay off the Catholics awhile, boys, just a little while. Let's not embarrass our friend in Detroit."

Herb Kruckman