

# The "Christian Front"

How the organized anti-Semites under fascist leadership use religious slogans as a cloak for terrorism.

THE Christian Front is moving rapidly into high gear. Under various names it is organizing its cohorts and supporters in New York City and other urban centers throughout the country. The extent of its strength in New York City, as elsewhere, is a matter of guesswork; and it is doubtful if even the leaders of the Front more than estimate the number of its followers. The dues-paying membership in the Front, which is limited to men only, is a closely guarded secret.

This much can be said, nevertheless: About forty street meetings a week are conducted in New York City either by the Christian Front itself, or by its close allies, one of the most active of which is the Flying Squads for Americanism. The average attendance at these meetings runs to three hundred persons, mostly people from the neighborhoods where the meetings are held. A few floaters make the rounds, apparently on assignment, to lead the claque and "preserve order." Indications are that their number will increase with the growth of the Christian Mobilizers, a select group of the Christian Front, who, according to a recent issue of *Social Justice*, are to receive training in sports and athletics. Some audiences are more enthusiastic than others, but most observers agree that, as yet, many people simply stop and listen for a while and then pass on. However, the Front holds more meetings now than it did a year ago, or even two months ago. It is reaching out into new territories, invading communities where street meetings have been a rarity even during election campaigns. Its drive for five million adherents by the summer and fall of 1940 is getting under way with full force.

## SELF-MARTYRIZATION

The pattern of the Christian Front's propaganda has a significant uniformity, which varies little from meeting to meeting. Many of its technical devices—card stacking, glittering generalities, and the like—have already been exposed in publications of the Institute for Propaganda Analysis, but it is relentless uniformity which makes apparent the organized character of the Front, indicates the propaganda genius behind it, and helps to explain its growth.

One of the chief aims of the street meeting speakers is self-martyrization, and the creation thereby of a martyr psychosis for the whole movement. Many of the speakers in the New York area are young boys, ranging from eighteen to twenty-three years of age. These rosy-cheeked youths wear the blush of innocence; they speak with a fervor almost seminarian in its ardor; their gestures are studied, and their enunciation lapses only occasionally into native Brooklynese. Re-

<sup>NM 8/22/39</sup> ferring to themselves as "young men who are fighting for a Christian America," they tell their audiences in excited tones of the obstacles they meet in the course of their "work." Alleged police brutality plays a big part. Several of the youths claim to have been severely beaten up; others relate the hazards of selling *Social Justice* amidst "the hail of Marxist insults"; and still others tell harrowing tales of threats to their lives by anonymous foes.

Speaking in Queens on July 21, one seventeen-year-old orator declared:

Only last night at a meeting in the Bronx, I was brutally struck on the back with a policeman's club. This may seem unbelievable to you good people of Sunnyside, but there are some policemen, too many policemen, who are being stirred up by that little red stinkweed in City Hall to attack the rights of us young men who are out here trying to wake you up to your Christian duty. Of course, out here you have George U. Harvey [applause], a good Christian American who takes no nonsense from the anti-Christ, and so your police are fine, up-standing men.

Another speaker at the same meeting related a series of incidents which he claimed resulted in some denial of free speech for the Front. He wound up by saying:

And whose fault is this? You permit Communists to speak unmolested and preach treason from the street corners. Your money pays the cops to protect them. And here we are, fighting day and night for Christian principles, giving our time and our energy to save your country and your city from atheistic Jewish Communism. It is your fault that we do not get better support! We are fighting your battles, and it is up to you to assert yourselves and help us.

Such talk as this, uttered in all apparent sincerity, has a strong effect on the crowd, for it is interlarded in a seemingly haphazard way with impassioned but vague exhortations about religious faith, religious Jews, pure morals, and God. The issue is posed between those who believe in Christian principles and those who don't. Emotionally, the appeal is directed to the lower middle class elements and to the lumpen proletariat; frequently cries go up from the audience—"What we need is a Hitler," "Heil Hitler," "A Hitler would fix that louse!"

Right now, though, Front leaders try to softpedal talk of Hitler by catching up the cries with, "No, we don't need Hitler, but we could do with a few more men like George U. Harvey and Mayor Hague." Occasionally the name of John Nance Garner is mentioned to the accompaniment of cheers and applause.

Inevitably, of course, there is some allusion to Father Coughlin, "the greatest Christian

**CHRISTIAN FRONT**  
P. O. Box 49, Station G,  
New York City

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM**

Name (Print in Full) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Family \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Children \_\_\_\_\_  
 Sex \_\_\_\_\_ Where Born \_\_\_\_\_  
 Marital \_\_\_\_\_ Where Born \_\_\_\_\_  
 Father's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Inches \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mother's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Feet \_\_\_\_\_ Color of Hair \_\_\_\_\_  
 Height \_\_\_\_\_ Race \_\_\_\_\_ Religion \_\_\_\_\_  
 Complexion \_\_\_\_\_ Degree \_\_\_\_\_  
 Nationality \_\_\_\_\_ Rank \_\_\_\_\_  
 Citizen \_\_\_\_\_  
 School \_\_\_\_\_ College \_\_\_\_\_  
 Military Record \_\_\_\_\_  
 Lodge or Sorority \_\_\_\_\_  
 Occupation or Trade \_\_\_\_\_ Which \_\_\_\_\_  
 Employer (name firm) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address of Employer \_\_\_\_\_  
 Member of a Trade Union \_\_\_\_\_  
 What Local Chapter, etc. \_\_\_\_\_  
 I is a C. I. O.  A. F. of L.  Independent  Union (Check one)  
 Remarks \_\_\_\_\_  
 I hereby swear that the above answers are true to the best of my knowledge.  
 (Applicant's Signature) \_\_\_\_\_

Prepared by \_\_\_\_\_  
 NOTE: Applicant's registration fee of ONE Dollar and two photographs  
 (2" x 1 1/2") must accompany this form. In case of rejection of the applica-  
 tion both fee and photographs will be returned.

(This space will be filled out at National Office)

Registration No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Registration Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 REGION \_\_\_\_\_  
 STATE \_\_\_\_\_  
 ZONE \_\_\_\_\_  
 DISTRICT \_\_\_\_\_  
 INVESTIGATED BY \_\_\_\_\_  
 CHECKED BY \_\_\_\_\_  
 APPROVED BY \_\_\_\_\_  
 FILED BY \_\_\_\_\_  
 CARD NO. \_\_\_\_\_

**HOW TO JOIN THE CHRISTIAN FRONT.** Detailed information about the applicant must be submitted along with his photographs. The item "military record" and "rank" is not merely incidental. Seeking to create a world of illusion in the minds of its adherents, the Front's propaganda contains the constant assertion of ultimate victory "legally if possible, but by insurrection—the Franco way—if there is no other way to restore America to the hands of Christians." The we-are-going-to-win appeal gains immeasurably as the Front lumps its enemies as Communist, Jewish, or both, and proceeds to demolish the straw men. The union label on the application form is phony.

American of them all," "a real martyr in the service of true Americanism." Orators never tire of drawing none too subtle comparisons between the priest and "another who was pilloried for daring to tell the truth"; they retell how Coughlin is barred from the major radio networks "because he dares to tell the truth about certain people in America, and those people of a certain racial strain own and control the press and the radio." Coughlin, it is to be noted, says that the Christian Front is not his organization, but in a recent radio sermon he sanctified its cause as that of "true Christianity."

The Front has also produced a series of movie shorts, which are shown periodically at a Manhattan hall. These pictures, if Front speakers are to be believed, were filmed "at the risk of the cameraman's life," and show how "brave Christian American men and women picket WMCA in the face of police brutality, how vendors of *Social Justice* dare to give the people of New York the truth in the face of Communist and Jewish rioting, and how peaceable street meetings are broken up by those who want to keep the truth about Jewish-controlled America away from real people who should be stirred into action to defend their heritage."

Everywhere and on every side, the Christian Front is beset by its foes. Yet its young stalwarts are undaunted; at every encounter with hostility, they throw their verbal punches with more abandon. They are young martyrs.

We of the Christian Front are proud of the fact that the tools of the anti-Christ are arrayed against us, such as that little fat guinea downtown. Truly and surely, our organizations are going to elect a real Christian mayor, governors of the state, and presidents of the United States. [Prolonged applause.] We will destroy all other movements in ten minutes. I would give orders to the army to take them to town and they could. [Applause and cries of "Attaboy," "That's right."] We are going to fight for the conclusion of an absolutely all-powerful Christian America.

Sometimes the speakers call directly for a bloody riot and one speaker has been arrested for breach of the peace in this connection. In dismissing the case, City Magistrate Richard F. McKiniry said:

Concededly, the remarks were scurrilous. The one remark here that would tend to indicate a breach of the peace was the remark with regard to a bloody riot. As to the insulting remark with respect to the Jewish people. . . . Such language defeats its own purpose, and I don't think even the Jewish people would care to see this misguided individual made a martyr. . . . He has the lowest kind of ignorant and insulting type of mind.

Such do-nothing policy, however, defeats its own purpose. [ED. NOTE: See editorial, "Defense against Violence," on page 19.]

Poverty and insecurity, the WPA layoffs, and the failures of the New Deal offer topics which Front speakers are quick to exploit in the poorer sections of the city and in Harlem, where economic grievances are particularly

acute. Thus far, the Front relies mostly on the demagogic program of the old National Union for Social Justice with occasional embellishments. Fred McWilliams, a Texan, made a typical plea at Willis Avenue and 138th Street, the Bronx, on June 29—a plea which has been picked up and repeated at dozens of Front meetings since.

All Christians, Christian civilization can only be maintained if Christians get a fair share of the business of the city, the state, and the nation. Christian charity, Christian culture, and the church can only be supported when Christian business flourishes.

Directing his words to the unemployed and "those the New Deal forgot in its rush to help the Jews," McWilliams held out the bait. "Each Christian is going to have a job. New jobs, many of the better ones, will be open to you Christians with the increase of prosperity of the Christian business community."

"That means," elaborated McWilliams, "if there is a Christian grocer competing with a lot of other people, if you will use your purchasing power, he will have to put on three or four more clerks to take care of them, and he will give a Christian a job."

For those who might demur, McWilliams had this to say:

Any man who opposes you, remember this: Any man who opposes you in this policy, tell that man you are defending yourselves, you are working for your own benefit; if he tries to prevent you from doing that, tell that man he is intolerant as hell, and not of the Christians. That is your answer.

The practical effects of the Front's "Buy Christian" campaign are hard to estimate. In some sections of the city "Buy Christian" stickers and pornographic Semitic caricatures are regularly pasted on the windows of Jewish-owned stores, and there are organized boycotts here and there, especially against merchants who advertise over Station WMCA. Christian Front meetings are frequently dotted with huge posters ensloganed "Buy Christian," and early this spring a "Christian Index," listing approved stores, was published. Widely circulated, it is unsigned, but declares that "Jesus Christ Himself" ordered its publication. Its union label is faked.

At the moment, the Front is contenting itself with winning small victories, forcing certain newsstands to quit selling the *Voice*, organ of the Committee of Catholics to Fight Anti-Semitism, and *Equality*. Front speakers praise such victories in the name of the "good Christian people" of such and such a community "who have taken resolute action to prevent the sale of poisonous treason on the newsstands." Undoubtedly the Front will not allow these victories to be lost, much less the experience. Bigtime economic warfare is in the offing.

Much of the strength of the Christian

Front's propaganda derives from the ease with which it marks out its enemies. Mayor LaGuardia, and President Roosevelt, "the war monger," Jews, and Communists are identified in detail and with evident relish. As arch-plotters of treason against "Christian America," these people are pictured as working with fiendish might and main to accomplish their ends.

The Front's program is not announced. But its main outlines are clear as day through its propaganda. Its goal is against all progress; its tactics are Hitler's. That much is obvious. And in doing this it is creating a group of reckless hooligans who, under the cover of their own righteous convictions, feel they have a right to go down the line with everyone and everything with which they happen to disagree.

The fact that such a group exists at all is less dangerous than the fact that one is being systematically organized, augmented, and directed for purposes which make sense when viewed in the light of Hitler's rise. In this connection it is significant to note that the Christian Front plans a mass parade in Manhattan on August 19, the climax of which is to be a meeting in Union Square. Is this not reminiscent of Hitler's Storm Troop invasion of the working class sections of Berlin and Mosley's "marches" through London's East End?

The street meetings of the Christian Front in New York City may seem ludicrous; the spectacle of young men still wet behind the ears sounding off on neutrality, the foreign debt, the refugee question, and the like may

seem self-defeating; the fact that more people listen avidly to a mixture of hate and economic drivel may sound preposterous; the existence of a Christian terror may seem unreasonable; the organization of a picked group of Mobilizers athletic training may appear fantastic. The whole Christian Front may seem like a silly business, best ignored or simply ignored. But it is just such complacency the Front seizes upon. Their speakers continually boast that no one will dare touch so much as a hair of one of their speaker shouted at a recent meeting, "will flow in every street of New York

STEPHEN PRABO

## Heil MRA!

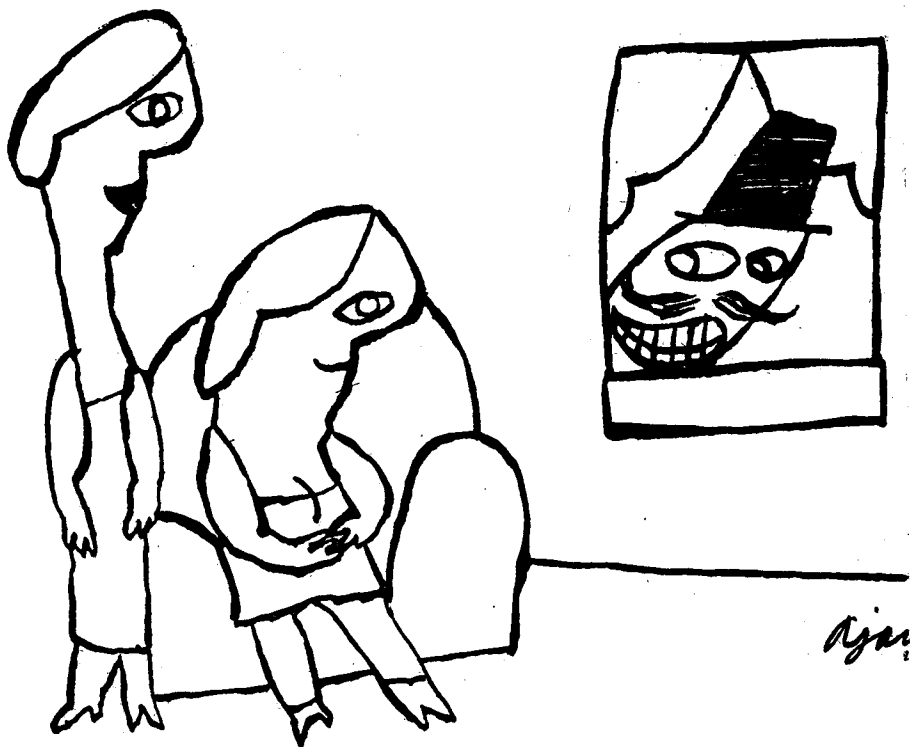
A GROUP of newspaper guildsmen at a recent convention in San Francisco coming out of the Fairmont Hotel with a cabload of Moral Rearmeters arrived from one of the many Oxford Group meetings being held on the Coast. "Moral Re-ment?" asked the newspaper people.

"Yes," beamed the Buchmanites.

"Heil!" said the guildsmen, behind their faces.

Back came the uplifters in unison, "Heil with perfect Nazi salutes.

The same ready Hitler greeting came several taxiloads of MRA disciples when pulled up to the hotel.



"That's just Mr. Bigby on his way home from his Moral Rearmament meeting."