

Fascism Hits Washington

BY PAUL Y. ANDERSON

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THE pattern of American fascism grows more distinct and menacing every day, and it is essentially an alien pattern. Henry Ford accepts a decoration from Hitler; migratory workers of old American stock are harried and dragooned through the California vineyards by uniformed blackshirts; persons who express sympathy with the recognized government of Spain are pilloried and boycotted. Until recently the local forms of American fascism seemed on the surface to have much in common with the soil on which they appeared. It could be argued that vigilantism was typically American—as truly a native product as the corruption of local authorities by interested corporations. However, in such manifestations as those I have cited, the underlying pattern is beginning to show through its coating of local soil—and the pattern is trademarked "Made in Italy." When this notion was first advanced, I was among the scoffers who attributed it to nervous jitters and the well-known tendency of some intellectuals to explain native phenomena in exotic foreign terms. I can no longer be blind to the fact; the evidence is overwhelming.

Mussolini's adventure was originally financed by the industrialists of Milan as a vigilante counter-attack on organized labor. Expanding with success, it became a revolution against all social-democratic forms, including the government. The same pattern was followed in Germany by Hitler and the barons of the Ruhr. The fact that some of the great German and Italian industrialists who put their money and their faith in vigilantism have lived to rue it bitterly is beside the point, save as it may serve to warn American industrialists who are inciting political adventurers to crush labor and resist the government.

In the last few months we have learned how the steel barons, corrupting local authorities and inciting and financing the activities of vigilante bands, made a bloody shambles of the American system in Chicago, Youngstown, Johnstown, Monroe, Massillon, and Canton. Nor was there any coy reliance placed on castor oil. Machine-guns, riot guns, revolvers, gas grenades, and pick handles were the chosen weapons. This choice was more typically American because it was a child of the gangster era—although it should not be forgotten that many of the gang methods were imported from Sicily, sometimes by original members of the Mafia. In addition to the steel "terror" we have the Hague dictatorship in New Jersey, and recently we have seen Governor Kraschel threaten to use state troops to resist the enforcement of a federal

statute in Iowa. All are pieces of the same pattern, the pattern of American fascism. Nobody, least of all the Jews, should be surprised when such manifestations are accompanied by a sudden upsurge of anti-Semitism. Careful reporters who made the Western swing with Roosevelt told me they were amazed by the extent of this feeling, and they predicted it would become vocal if Frankfurter should be nominated for the Supreme Court.

The American fascist movement has advanced to its present stage despite the lack of a central agency to assemble its ideas and serve as an outlet for their expression. That lack has now been supplied, and the agency is operating at full blast—with government funds. It is officially titled the House Committee to Investigate Un-American Activities, and its chairman is Representative Martin Dies, of Texas. It should be called the Committee to Promote Un-American Activities and Undermine the Bill of Rights, and its spiritual godfather should be recognized in Dr. Paul Goebbels, of Berlin. Since I learn, from their letters, that this country contains a number of lily-fingered intellectuals who are reluctant to face a fact if it upsets them, I shall certainly be accused of hyperbole—to say the least—in the foregoing statement. So let's look at the record.

Thus far the committee has devoted itself mainly to the following: (1) attacking the only form of labor organization which the industrialists have been unable to tame; (2) smearing the Senate Civil Liberties Committee, as a means of disparaging the value of civil liberties in this country; (3) broadcasting scandal against the legitimate government of Spain, to appease American resentment over the German-Italian invasion of that country; (4) trying to soften American horror over the anti-Jewish atrocities in Germany by circulating the intimation that they were provoked by a "Jewish boycott" in this country; (5) smearing a list of New Deal officials who are on record in favor of peace and democracy. By what method does the committee strive to achieve these ends? By applying the epithets "communist" and "communism" to every person and every principle which it hopes to discredit. How did Mussolini and Hitler justify their conquest of democracy? They never took a step without proclaiming that it was necessary to save their respective nations from "Bolshevism"! It is all old stuff—fabricated in Italy, finished in Germany, and now being peddled in Washington.

The question will be asked: Does the committee know what it is doing? I should hate to say that.

sense of the social constructiveness that a clear-headed, well-staffed government can achieve. Here he differs from the radical, who emphasizes mass movements and class support for new social constructions. Mr. Frankfurter's emphasis is on the administrative process as the spearpoint of social advance. Hence his personal history as adviser to a whole series of Presidents since Mr. Taft. Hence his brilliant work in the war administration. Hence his part in clearing the new field of administrative law. Hence his labors as a law teacher in an uneven struggle against the inertia of the American legal profession. Hence his talent for firing the imaginations and seeing the creative possibilities of the young men he has taught, and for placing persons of talent in the strategic posts of administrative responsibility in the government.

Ours is an age when survival depends upon a race between intelligent socialization and sheer collapse. Such an age requires the utmost in mind and heart of its public servants. Felix Frankfurter has a clear mind and a stout heart. There are some, and Hugh Johnson is among them, who say that a man who has had his enormous influence on successive administrations must be a Richelieu and cannot have a "judicial mind." It is hard to say what a judicial mind is, and certainly Hugh Johnson would be the last conceivable judge of it. It would scarcely be denied that the great justices of our history—Marshall, Taney, Holmes—have had extremely divergent kinds of mind. To take the three names with which his is most frequently linked, Mr. Frankfurter has the concrete economic grasp and passion for justice of Brandeis, the technical legal knowledge and the long perspectives of Cardozo, and something of Holmes's humanity and his gift for seeing life as a battle. Holmes got his military experience in the Civil War. Frankfurter has been a good soldier in the continuing war for a more humane and rational society.

Business Grows Better

THE recent decline in Wall Street, coupled with an apparent slowing down in business improvement, has raised the question whether the June-July recovery was, after all, a mere flash in the pan. In substantiation of this view, alarmists cite the abnormally low level of commodity prices, particularly for agricultural products, the plight of the railroads, and the inability of the steel companies to cut wages to conform with the recent reduction in prices. They lay particular stress on the huge agricultural surpluses which have piled up as a result of bumper harvests all over the world.

Other economists see in these same facts reasons for believing that the upturn has come to stay—at least for the second best wheat crop in American

history has naturally brought a reduction in grain prices, but there has been no approach to 1931-32 conditions. On the contrary, the total farm income for 1938 will be approximately \$7,500,000,000, well above the average for the '30's. Even if prices should drop farther, the AAA loan policy protects the farmer against loss. Any deficit that the government might incur as a result of subsidizing the farmer would not affect present prospects.

Current bulletins from other sections of the economic front are in the main highly encouraging. Business activity, as recorded in the *Journal of Commerce* weekly index, has advanced for five consecutive weeks, and is the highest it has been in 1938. The steel rate has held at above 40 per cent of capacity for three weeks. Most striking of all is the huge improvement in the building industry, which until recently has been one of the chief barriers to recovery and one of the principal sources of unemployment. Building permits in the 215 largest cities in July reached the highest level in more than seven years. This represented a gain of 54 per cent as compared with the same month a year ago, and was 60 per cent above the June level. The improvement has continued, at a somewhat diminished rate, into August.

The full effect of the government's spending program has yet to be felt. Contracts have been let and operations started in a few instances. But the substantial value of the program cannot be realized until the full quota of men are employed.

Perhaps the most substantial reason for believing in the soundness of the present upturn is the fact that commodity prices have not risen to any marked extent. When business activity increases in the face of falling prices, it means that real demand has been uncovered. It speaks especially well for the immediate future, because increased business activity generates new purchasing power which will shortly be released. The fact that prices and the cost of living have remained low means that this added purchasing power will go farther than would otherwise be the case. When economic historians record the turning-point in late June, it is probable that as much emphasis will be given to the cut in steel prices as to the benefit derived from increased government spending. Steel prices had long been out of alignment with the general price level. Their reduction, without a cut in wages, has done much to restore the economic balance.

The outstanding danger at the present time, apart from the possibility of war, is to be found in the pressure for reduced wages on the railroads and in the steel industry. Should either cut occur, it might easily initiate a wave of wage-cutting which would reverse the economic trend. Continued improvement in the next few months should eliminate this danger. But with the upturn will come other more serious threats. For there is little evidence that business has learned anything of a fundamental nature since 1929.

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fully. In the main it is composed of Congressional nonentities whose imagination was never sufficient to carry them higher than the dream of a momentary perch in the headlines. If they could grab some personal publicity and strike a blow for the corporations they would doubtless think themselves content. However, personal publicity is a habit-forming drug. These political hacks will not give it up without a struggle. The prospect of an early return to their natural obscurity will haunt them. What then? Interests which are fully alive to the possibilities of using the committee for their own purposes will begin "feeding" it. Accordingly, watch for additional discoveries of "communism" in such C. I. O. unions as those of the longshoremen, seamen, cannery workers and fruit packers, cotton-textile workers, and radio and electrical workers. Don't be surprised if they find some in the Newspaper Guild. Surely, when the professional smearers of the shipping, textile, and steel industries are on the job, it will not be said that the publishers overlooked an opportunity. Now that I recall, I believe old John Frey did find one—Julius Klyman, of St. Louis. After all

these years of trying to breathe melodrama into dreary cornfield murders for the *Post-Dispatch* Sunday magazine, Julius must be gratified to wake up and find himself an "un-American activity." If he isn't he can still sue.

For those who believe in the American way of life, there is a distinct benefit in having the phases of American fascism correlated. Heretofore the enemy enjoyed all the advantages of guerrilla warfare. Moreover, apologists for the fascist methods were in a position to deny the existence of any common plan or purpose. When the Bill of Rights was suspended at Dearborn, they could say, "Oh, that's just Henry Ford's way"; if in Jersey City, "Oh, you know Frank Hague"; if at South Chicago, "What do you expect of the Chicago cops?" and if at Monroe, "That probably is a stronghold of the Black Legion." Now, thanks to Dies and his associates, it looks as if we should have them all singing in the same key, in the same room. My backwoods ancestors used to be fond of this admonition: "The fust thing ye got to do before skinnin' a skunk is to ketch him." The trap is set—and watch them go for the bait!