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AMERICA DRIFTS TOWARD FASCISM

BY GEORGE E. SOKOLSKY

BOTH Communism and Fascism are children of Marxian Socialism, but they differ in their external manifestations. Communism abolishes the capitalist system; Fascism retains it. Communism controls production and distribution by taking them over; Fascism controls them by intervention. Communism subjects the individual to state dictatorship through the medium of democratically chosen Soviets; Fascism subjects the individual to the dictatorship of a single person. Both achieve power by revolution, murder, destruction of individual liberty. Both utilize the same weapons of suppression of the press and of individual expression of opinion, although under Communism party members may, before a decision is made, enjoy an intellectual deviation from the norm.

Communism and Fascism are children of despair. I was in Russia from July, 1917, to March, 1918, that is, during the period of Kerensky, the monarchist plot of Korniloff, the Communist Revolution, the establishment of the Socialist Soviet Republic by Lenin and Trotsky, and the beginning of the terror. It was such a moment when anything is possible. Men were hungry: when the last cats disappeared off the

streets of Petrograd, hope had gone forever. The long darkness of a Russian winter was setting in. One walked the streets—but it did not matter, for many were already dead.

Despair prepared men for anything. In Eastern Siberia, in the Caucasus, in the parts of the Ukraine where men still ate, opposition to the Bolshevik rebellion was articulate. But where men could not eat, no one cared about anything. Kerensky, Korniloff, Trotsky, Democracy, Czarism, Bolshevism—what did they matter? Let him govern who can provide bread!

No such psychological manifestation is evident in the United States. Not during a single day of the five years of depression have Americans, as a people, despaired of their future. A few bankers and brokers have jumped out of windows, but for the average American recovery has always been just around the corner. It is for this reason that neither formal, organized Communism nor formal, organized Fascism has made any progress in this country.

The people reacted unfavorably toward Mr. Hoover's paralysis in the face of the depression. They wanted action and they

wanted it immediately. So they elected Mr. Roosevelt. He assumed leadership, and he entered upon a vast experiment without guide or compass, not a Communist experiment nor a Fascist experiment, but just an experiment. His basic theory was undoubtedly Mr. Justice Brandeis's vague opinion in the Ice Company case, to wit:

There must be power in the States and the nation to remold through experiment our economic practises and institutions to meet changing social and economic needs. . . . Denial of the right to experiment may be fraught with serious consequences to the nation. . . . If we would guide by the light of reason, we must let our minds be bold.

This challenge Mr. Roosevelt accepted. He and his associates undoubtedly believed that they faced a revolution. Dr. Tugwell wrote:

But I do not think it is too much to say that on March 4 we were confronted with a choice between an orderly revolution—a peaceful and rapid departure from past concepts—and a violent and disorderly overthrow of the whole capitalistic structure.

So the Brain Trusters set about saving the capitalistic system with the New Deal. All they have achieved is to bring the United States nearer to Fascism.

II

The Brain Trusters are unwilling to associate their ideas and plans with any European system, but it is plain, nevertheless, that they are utilizing Fascistic methods and Fascistic principles. The whole N.R.A. is Fascistic in principle and method.

The essential principle in Fascism, in the words of Professor Paul Einzig, the international authority of the Fascists, is that the "respective share of the various social

classes in the proceeds of production should be determined, not by their respective strengths, but by agreement based on mutual understanding and on principles of justice and equity." This involves a recognition of the principles of class distinctions and of class-consciousness.

Now, in the United States it had been assumed and had become traditional that all men "are created free and equal." The political, social and economic system of the country from the days of Alexander Hamilton down to Andrew Mellon adhered to this democratic assumption of equality of opportunity, of escape from the medieval fixation of classes. The N.R.A. has changed all that. It clearly recognizes social classes. The A.A.A. distinctly recognizes the farmer as a distinct class. The realism of the New Deal assumes the class war, and the government intervenes, from time to time, on behalf of one class or another. This is in exact accord with Fascistic ideas. In the instance of the automobile strike, for example, government intervention clipped the rising power of organized labor, thus preventing the Fascistic equilibrium between labor and capital from being upset. Had organized labor been successful, it might have become stronger than the government; it might have eventuated in a dictatorship of organized labor, that is, the proletariat. The New Deal, like Fascism, recognizes not one class, but the equilibrium between classes.

In a Fascist state, the strike and lock-out are forbidden. In Italy the government alone can judge between right and wrong, and all men must tremble and obey. Labor courts are established to determine "equity and justice," but there is no fundamental tradition to guide the courts. Rather are they exposed to the necessities, imaginary or real, of the Dictator.

In the New Deal the strike and the

lock-out have not yet been outlawed. In fact, up to the automobile strike, there was every appearance of support for the strike. Nevertheless, Labor Boards, Compliance Boards and other devices have been organized to avert strikes. The Wagner Bill would set up a Federal agency which its sponsors hope will end strikes forever. As for the lock-out, no instance has arisen to require decision, but what would happen if, let us say, Mr. Ford decided, "To hell with it. I'll close down and stay closed"? Would the government produce motor cars as it ran the air mail and as it manufactures rum in the Virgin Islands? In an orthodox Fascist state, Mr. Ford would be told to stay open and to run his plant efficiently, and if he did not obey, anything might be done to him. I think the New Deal would do exactly the same thing with Mr. Ford.

The Fascist state intervenes to protect the interests of the whole state when the Dictator, in his personal opinion, believes that such intervention is essential to the "welfare" of the state. The individual has no rights as an individual. He is a cog, a screw, a hammer, a pen, a quill functioning for the state. But the profit system continues and the individual capitalist might become very rich, if he does not disobey. The worker is given a lollipop or two, but in the main his misery continues as before.

III

In Italy, Germany, and Austria, Fascist dictators seized power by revolution. In the United States no attempt has been made by any group to function outside the Constitution; no revolution has been staged. Instead, a device, which Dr. Tugwell describes as "permissive powers," has been employed. By means of this device,

Congress transfers to the Executive in advance, with a few purely verbal restrictions, permission to take certain steps at his own initiative. Few of the New Deal measures are mandatory; few require, instruct, obligate the Executive to act. Nearly all of them extend to him authority to act according to his own judgment.

President Roosevelt has not employed all the "permissive powers" granted to him. For instance, he has allowed his licensing power under the N.I.R.A. to lapse; he has not proclaimed a corporation of foreign bondholders; etc. I am not, however, discussing in this article his utilization of the "permissive powers"; I am concerned with the fundamental principle in support of the device. That principle is Fascism. I repeat that neither Mr. Roosevelt nor his Brain Trust has been guided by a full Fascist philosophy. They have no articulate philosophy. But their experiments are leading them into a Fascist position.

Democracy functions slowly, because it recognizes rights. Individuals and groups impede swift action in their efforts to protect what they believe to be their rights. Under Fascism only the state can have any rights. The individual must obey. This theory is naturally repugnant to Americans who are still individualists nurtured in the traditions of Calvinistic Puritanism, which involves the principle of the right of the individual to direct prayer to his God without intercession. This religious ideal has molded American political institutions. No practise offensive to it hitherto stood any chance of success, if the people grasped its implications. But the Fascist New Deal is gradually changing all this.

To act speedily in the direction of increasing employment, the devices of "permissive powers," the Blue Eagle, and the Codes were employed. These were described as temporary, emergency measures,

to be used only until recovery was actually achieved. The fact remains, however, that a device once used, in this country, becomes a precedent for the future, and as recovery is slow to be achieved, the device takes on a permanent character.

President Roosevelt dislikes being called a Dictator and the Brain Trusters are apparently offended when the label of Fascismo is attached to them. But it is true that the "permissive powers" granted the President make him an economic and social dictator; and the rights of Congress to determine the policy of the government are steadily being reduced.

The political mechanism of supporting a Republican who supported the New Deal, as is being done in the case of Senator Johnson of California, or of opposing a Democrat who did not support the New Deal, as is being done in the case of Senator Copeland of New York, has the further effect of lessening the virility of Congressional check, because as long as the President is personally popular and Mr. Farley's politics prove more or less effective, the center of authority remains with the President. It is probable that in the near future Congress will become as weak as a Fascist or Nazi parliament.

IV

In any Fascist régime, the press is the principal impediment to complete success. Freedom of the press includes the general right of opposition, criticism, scrutiny. It always involves the possibility of "unfairness and misrepresentation" of the government. In a democracy the assumption is that misrepresentation corrects itself in time by the accurate presentation of the facts. In a Fascist state freedom of the press is not a human right. Freedom of the press conflicts with authority, and may,

in times of stress, even create disorder. Thus Mussolini has seen to it that there is no real freedom of the press in Italy.

The New Deal has made many efforts to curb the freedom of the press. First, social pressure was employed by the use of the formula of the honeymoon. Many newspapers voluntarily accepted the idea that for one year they would avoid criticism of the administration. But such a self-imposed abnegation of press prerogatives did not last long, nor could it be trusted to last.

The first attempt at actual suppression of news was the Secret Documents Bill, which passed the House but was withdrawn before it reached a vote in the Senate, and then was changed to avoid any possible restriction upon the press. This measure, apparently introduced to prevent Mr. Yardley from publishing State Department secrets, would, if passed, have limited the access of journalists to government data. Subsequently this was generally achieved anyway, with the State Department as a notable exception, by the institution of an elaborate system of departmental press agents who stand between the journalist and the data.

This was followed by a long struggle between the newspapers and the N.R.A. over the newspaper code. The newspaper publishers struggled to maintain the First Amendment to the Constitution. They wanted to make certain that neither by implication nor by abnegation did they agree even to a temporary suspension of the right of freedom of the press. The government misrepresented this issue to the public, but it was unable to enforce its will to curb the press, because the press was in a belligerent mood about its rights.

The most recent attempt made to curb the press was the abortive Communications Act, of which Senator Schall said:

I fear that Senate bill 2910, to provide for the regulation of inter-State and foreign communication by wire or radio, is in harmony with the purpose to centralize authority for control of all press dispatches, all press associations, all transmissions of news, and create another Federal bureau to place all inter-State communication under the censorship and secrecy ban of a Federal autocracy.

Various administrative orders, such as Mr. Morgenthau's and General Johnson's limitations upon the access of journalists to data unhampered by the press agent, have indicated not a "gold-fish bowl" open frankness but rather a desire deliberately to channel public information.

Henry Wallace, Secretary of Agriculture, who says he is still a Democrat and whose pamphlet, "America Must Choose," is undoubtedly the strongest challenge to American Fascist tendencies, recently wrote:

I would hate to live in a country where individual thought is punished and stifled, and where speech is no longer free. Even if the strictest nationalist discipline reared for us here at home, exclusively, a towering physical standard of living, I would consider the spiritual price too high. I think, too, that this would be pretty much the temper of the rest of the country; but there is no telling. A rampant nationalist feeling grows by what it feeds on, and it swells to unpredictable proportions with marvelous speed. Once it gets going headlong it puts down objection brutally; and the speed of the march is thus accelerated.

But after detailing the dangers of economic nationalism, he ended with this definite warning, which shows the inevitability of Fascism in the program of the Brain Trusters:

But these are minor considerations, in comparison with the extraordinarily complete control of all the agencies of public opinion

which is generally necessary to keep the national will at a tensivity necessary to carry through a program of isolated prosperity.

Thus far no attempt has been made to censor news or to close down opposition newspapers. There has, however, been a definite attempt to "control" the news, to limit the news-gathering facilities of journalists, and to provide the Executive with some weapon for handling such newspapers or journalists whose conduct may not be altogether "satisfactory."

The failure of these efforts may ultimately be the chief cause of the collapse of the New Deal. The press, in the main, is still free to analyze government experimental activities and to announce the failures as well as successes. It was the press which noted the failure of the American Federation of Labor in the automobile strike, while the Administration and the A. F. of L. were carefully seeking to indicate that organized labor had not lost in a crucial test battle. The more such failures are exposed, the weaker the New Deal becomes. But I doubt that such exposures will be permitted much longer.

In a genuine Fascist state the press is an arm of the dictatorship. The press obeys the will of the Dictator. It publishes what he decrees; it suppresses as he desires. There are those in the New Deal who envisage such a rôle for the press. Thus far their efforts in this direction have failed, but I believe that they will soon tighten their hold upon the recalcitrant newspapers of the land. Everything points that way.

V

The ultimate success of either a Communist or a Fascist state depends upon the technical expertness associated with a planned economic and social system.

Capitalism and democracy involve degrees of anarchism, for individual rights and individualistic actions interfere with carrying a perfectly planned society to fruition. The planners weary of Congressional debate and press reports. They want to get on without delaying argument or criticism.

The American economic system has always been without conscious plan. Men produced for a market on the assumption that the market existed somewhere. If the market existed, the American capitalist prospered; if his judgment was in error, he failed. On the whole, he prospered. Planned arrangements in production were unfavorably regarded as "trusts," monopolies in restraint of freedom in production and distribution. Laws were passed against such planned industries.

The N.R.A. suspended such laws. The objective of the New Deal is a planned economy. The "permissive powers" granted the President centralize the planning in him, instead of in Congress, where under the Constitution it belongs. The type of planned economy which has thus far become apparent in Washington is as Fascistic as the planned economy in Italy. It follows a clear pattern. Professor Einzig, who is an apologist for Fascism, says:

It is difficult to imagine anything more irresponsible than the suggestion of creating artificial purchasing power without troubling about first solving the problems of production and distribution. It is difficult to imagine anything more illogical than to advocate the management of currency while leaving production and distribution in its present unmanaged state.

Managed by whom? By the government, of course. The codification of production and distribution under the N.R.A. is a Fascistic type of government management. It is not capitalistic, for in capitalism

the individual alone must have freedom to determine his activities, if he has the resources to reach a decision. It is not Communistic, for under Communism the government does not merely manage; it expropriates. The N.R.A. is Fascism both in spirit and in form.

The form that Fascism employs to ensure the success of the managed society, the planned economy, is the Corporation, which, in Italy, in almost every case consists of two Federations, one representing capital and the other labor. For instance, the Corporation of Industry consists of the General Fascist Confederation of Industry (capital) and the National Confederation of Fascist Industrial Syndicates (labor). These Federations involve the principle that membership is voluntary, but official recognition is granted when a syndicate represents only 10% of those engaged in the trade or profession. Once a syndicate is recognized by the government, it represents all the workers in it, members or non-members, even when the non-members are 90% of the trade or profession.

Under Fascism, capital and labor function under a strict corporate law (the code) which only the Dictator can change at will. The Corporate State finds a niche for every human being in the state. If a man does not belong, he is put in his niche. If he creeps out, he is given castor oil.

The Blue Eagle might have been something like that, for General Johnson was constantly threatening to crack down on non-conformists, except for two factors: first, because the American people could not take a boycott movement seriously and rather admired the chiseler, because he got away with it; and second, because the American capitalist soon enough discovered that the N.R.A. was a splendid arrangement for him. Its recognition of

associations (like the Italian Corporations) gave him an economic advantage tending in the direction of monopoly, which killed off the competition of the smaller capitalist. It will be noted that Mr. Teagle of the Standard Oil Company, Mr. Gerard Swope of General Electric, and Mr. Sloan of General Motors speak well of the N.R.A., while the small man complains. It is part of a planned economy that the management of production and distribution be simplified by consolidating economic activity in the largest units.

Fascism does not take over the banks, but it integrates the banks into the managed system. The purchase of bank stock by the R.F.C. is just such a Fascistic measure. In Italy, Il Duce might send for the President of a bank and say to him, "Good morning, your resignation is accepted." Here, the R.F.C. voted its stock and selected the president of the Continental Bank of Chicago. The basic operation is the same in the two instances.

It has not been possible to integrate the banking system into the New Deal because of the resistance of the bankers, so the government has organized its own banks and its Delaware corporations to create government-owned banks in competition with private banks. The government banks may not be employed if the bankers release credits as the government requires in relationship to the tempo of recovery. In Italy, "In the Corporate State, economic initiative is left in private hands; it is supplemented by state intervention only if and when private initiative is considered inadequate to serve public interests."

Fascism as a revolutionary measure depends upon the coercion of public opinion, because it seeks to wipe out six centuries of man's struggle for individual freedom. It anticipates resistance. In every Fascist

country, resistance is ruthlessly removed. In Italy and Germany, murder, arson, and imprisonment accompanied the Fascist rise to power.

In the United States this is not so, because in this country there is no organized Fascism, no organized revolution; there is only a drift in a general direction. Planned economy, the Corporate State under the N.R.A., and the "permissive powers" of the President are not evidences of a carefully considered plot to alter the character of American economic and social life. They are experiments in recovery, often contradictory experiments. How unplanned is the planning of the Brain Trust may be seen in the conflict over money, the conflict over consumer's rights, the conflict over the tariff, etc. There is no definite plan; there is no philosophy of action; there is no sacred ideal. Therefore, although Fascism appears in many of the activities of the New Deal, the United States is still a democratic country, and Congress can still hand the President a black eye on the veteran's bonus.

VI

But the rumbling sympathetic reactions to the Fascism in the New Deal can already be heard. The Silver Shirts, the most boisterous instrument of enforced adherence to Fascistic ideals, was organized by William Dudley Pelley, who believes that he is a reincarnation of something or other, that he has the gift of obscure tongues, that he once spent a few minutes in Heaven and talked with God, and so on. Pelley works out of Asheville, North Carolina, and devotes himself principally to anti-Semitic fulminations. Among his blasts are that Bernard Baruch is the real President of the United States and that President Roosevelt's ancestor was Isaac

Rosenfeld. As ridiculous as many of Pelley's activities are, he has a large following which a more effective person might some day use. A counterpart of his organization was the Khaki Shirt organization in Philadelphia, which got itself involved with the police and has apparently disappeared.

In Chicago there is a Fascist organization, called the Vigilantes, and is managed by Harry Augustus Jung. This seems to be one of many anti-Communist propaganda groups with an indefinable economic program tending toward Fascism.

George W. Christians manages the Crusaders for Economic Liberty in Chattanooga, Tennessee. His followers wear white shirts. Christians is the man who admits that he told President Roosevelt to his face that he is the Kerensky of the American Revolution. It is to be presumed that Christians expects to be the Hitler. His organization has a mixed Communist-Fascistic ideology which sounds like gibberish, but the essence of it is repudiation of the public debt as a solution to all problems.

There are many other Fascist organizations: a revived Ku Klux Klan, the Copperheads, the Order of '76, the Benjamin Franklin Society, the Industrial Defense Association, the American Vigilance Intelligence Federation, the Homesteaders, the Paul Reveres, and so on. As some disappear, others come in to take their place, but they are all indications of the Fascist wave sweeping the country. Pelley seems to be the only virile personality in the gang. He publishes a magazine, *Liberation*; he has plans for shock troops, the Silver Legion Rangers; he has a Galahad College, a Foundation for Christian Economics, a Galahad Press. But so far they

all amount to very little, except that they help the sale of shirts. His chief and easiest object of attack is the Jews in the South. His mysticism goes so far as to be able to converse with the dead. He has more recently swallowed altogether the Nazi doctrine of the Nordic, who, it now seems, is blessed with the "radio eye."

Fascism differs from Communism in that it is specifically nationalistic, whereas Communism is internationalistic. Mussolini has said that Fascism is not for export. The Italian Fascists therefore have no association with these curious American mobs. German Naziism, however, is different. It conducts a vast international propaganda to justify itself, to counteract the almost universal anti-Nazi boycott, and to increase the acceptance of the doctrine of racialism. The Nazi propaganda, therefore, includes everywhere a specific attack upon non-Aryans, that is, on the Jews. The Nazis have, in this respect, been very successful in America. All American Fascist groups are boisterously anti-Semitic.

Many will perhaps argue that these organizations are ridiculous. Mussolini the ex-Bolshevik was once thought to be ridiculous; Hitler and his mustache were once laughed at; but they have achieved their goal. No movement is ridiculous, no tendency unimportant in these days of confusion. So many positive principles have been disproved that men wander aimlessly. Whoever assumes leadership is followed. Whoever acts quickly is trusted. And when the leader fails to provide work and food, the masses turn to new leadership. No one is sure; nothing is certain. It is in such soil that Fascism flourishes. And the New Deal is in a very real sense the father of all these Fascistic tendencies.

SOCIAL WORK IS FUTILE

BY MARIA ROGERS & EDWARD J. FITZGERALD

SOCIAL work, or welfare work, as it exists in the United States today, represents a tremendous waste of money and effort, because its resources are not used to the highest potentiality of social efficiency. Its accomplishments are numerous and essential, but it labors under certain handicaps which prevent it from achieving its aim. For sixty years it has utilized an increasing army of workers and has spent untold millions of dollars in an attempt to provide the good life for the American poor. The average citizen, if he is given an opportunity to see social agencies at work, comes away filled with immense admiration for the great and noble tasks which they are performing.

He may, for example, visit a boys' club. There he sees a dozen ragged children transported with joy and forgetful, for one happy hour, of the miserable conditions of their homes and of the streets which are their ordinary playgrounds. He sees them making marionettes or engaged in boisterous games, and so moved is he by the sight of such spontaneous delight that he forgets that the one hour a week on which the agency opens its doors to these children is but one hour out of thirty-six, and that the twelve boys he sees are twelve out of ten thousand.

Or he may go to a home for the aged and see dozens of toil-worn men and women in pleasant rooms enjoying a leisure and comfort unknown to them in their active years. The happy smiles he

sees on their faces are reflected in his own. It does not occur to him to ask why people who have spent their lives from childhood to the age of seventy doing the heavy work of the world should be forced to spend their last days eating the bread of charity. Nor does it occur to him to question what proportion of all needy people are the recipients of such aid.

The average citizen may, in a settlement house overflowing with the vitality of hundreds of boys and girls who have come for the lessons and games provided free of charge, be told that such activities are "character-building." But are they? The bitter truth is that the games and lessons form only a brief interlude in the lives of these boys and girls. The few hours of attractive and stimulating activity are competing against a host of experiences in the slum neighborhoods which form the significant environment for the young individual and determine personality. The settlement house, when it claims that it builds character, claims what is obviously impossible for it to do.

As to the so-called beneficent effects of social work, one hears of thousands of hungry families fed by charity agencies, or of desperate mothers given hospital care during childbirth. And one feels that the system is admirably contrived to care for the unfortunate. Only occasionally does one ask why so many families should have no recourse save charity if the wage-earner dies or is incapacitated, or why they should