

WILLIAM DUDLEY PELLEY

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William Dudley Pelley, spiritualist, mystic, red-baiter, Jew-hater, and union buster, founder of the League of the Liberation, Galahad College, the League for Christian Economics, the Silver Shirts, and the Silver Legion, is today one of the most active and best publicized of American Fascists. At present the head of the Christian Party and the Councils of Safety, it is his aim to replace American democracy with a regime patterned after Hitler's Germany.

According to Who's Who in America, Pelley was born in Lynn, Massachusetts, on March 12, 1890, the son of a Methodist minister. He was educated in the local public school and, at an early age, went to work for the W.A.S. Pelley Tissue Corporation in Springfield, a toilet paper manufacturing firm, owned by members of his family. He left this firm in 1909 to edit and publish the Philosopher's Magazine in Fulton, New York. Within a year this venture failed and he returned to the Pelley firm as treasurer and general manager. Within three years he left to establish himself in the job printing business in Springfield, Massachusetts.

During the next seven years, Pelley edited and published several newspapers in various New England towns. At the same time, he was contributing articles to nationally circulated magazines, such as Collier's, Good Housekeeping, Red Book and the American Magazine. When the war broke out, Pelley served as a Y.M.C.A. secretary with the Japanese forces in Siberia, in 1918 and 1919.

After the war, Pelley resumed his literary career. He went to Hollywood, hoping to break into the movie business as a scenario writer, and remained there until about 1927. Unable to make the grade - and this fact is reflected in his later writings - he returned to New York.

Pelley achieved nation-wide notoriety for the first time in 1926 when the American Magazine published his article, "My Seven Minutes in Eternity." In this article Pelley announced that his soul had left his body for seven minutes and ascended to heaven. He intimated that he had interviewed Christ. The article caused a great stir. It was reprinted in pamphlet form and distributed throughout the country. Spiritualist circles began to take notice of it, some of them hoping to find in him a genuine medium. Within a short time, he had gathered about himself a group of devoted followers. One very wealthy lady even proposed to erect a building as a meeting place for Pelley's followers. But Pelley could not make the grade. Soon spiritualist authorities were pronouncing him a fraud, and would have nothing more to do with him.

Pelley, however, continued his spiritualist work and in 1930 he established the Galahad Press in New York City. In the course of several months, he published a number of books of a psychic nature. He issued a magazine, The New Liberator, devoted exclusively to spiritualism and psychic thought. Pelley wrote all the articles in this magazine himself, claiming that they were psychically dictated. The magazine bore the following inscription: "The contents of this magazine, unless otherwise designated, were obtained clair-audiently via the Psychic Radio from great souls who have graduated out of this three-dimensional world to other areas of time and space."

The New Liberator was not a financial success. It would not appear regularly and, in order to bolster up his finances, Pelley organized the League of the

Liberation. He also began to sell shares in the company sponsoring his publication.

Up to this point, the ideas Pelley preached were purely spiritualistic. But with the organization of his League, a new note crept into Pelley's writings. He began to speak of Christian economics, of Christian civilization, as against non-Christian civilization; he began to emphasize 100% Americanism.

Early in 1931, Pelley left New York, wandered to Washington, D.C. and thence to Asheville, N.C. There he organized the Foundation of Christian Economics and the Galahad Extension University, which mailed lessons and lectures to subscribers upon payment of an enrollment fee.

It is rather difficult to explain in simple terms Pelley's theory of Christian economics. It involved a curious sort of mysticism, compounded of astrology, mythology, and spiritualism. It appears, though, that the basic idea was to organize the United States as a corporation, in which all citizens were to be stock-holders and were to be guaranteed a minimum monthly income. This was Pelley's platform in 1932. He was not successful with it, and, as a result was constantly in financial difficulties. Towards the end of that year, he came in contact with Friedrich Heiss, a former German Socialist, who had been in New York a good many years prior to Hitler's rise to power. Like Pelley, he was interested in spiritualism, but he had become an ardent Nazi. Heiss was the first editor of America's Deutsche Post, a National Socialist newspaper, published in New York. Heiss' influence soon began to be felt in Pelley's writings. Whereas only the year before Pelley's publication had expressed tolerance of all men, irrespective of race, creed, or cult, he now suddenly turned against the Jews and preached a doctrine of hate.

Pelley's active entrance into anti-Jewish fields began when he organized the Silver Legion, early in 1933, coinciding with the rise of Adolf Hitler to power in Germany. The influence of the Nazi ideology upon Pelley is evident. Not only was he closely connected with Heiss, but throughout his career as head of the Silver Legion he actively cooperated with the Nazi organization in America. Thus, we find that Fred J. Buttry, head of the Silver Shirts in New York, was also an active Nazi. In California, the Dickstein Committee revealed that the Nazi leaders, Schwinn, Thelmitz, and Winterhalder, divided their activities between the Friends of New Germany and the Silver Shirts. Pelley's chief lieutenant, and so-called foreign adjutant, von Lilienthal-Toal, was an employee of the German Steamship Lines, controlled by the German government.

Pelley went about organizing his Silver Legion in a most business-like manner. He inserted in the classified sections of newspapers all over the country advertisements for salesmen, and organized crews to sell memberships. He inaugurated a regular radio broadcast over Station W.N.N.C. in Asheville. State organizations were established in a number of states. In Oklahoma, a Ranger Division was established, headed by Major Powell, whose members were uniformed and armed. His New Liberator Magazine was succeeded by "Liberation," which preached the doctrine of hate against Jews and Communists. In Oklahoma City he published the Silver Ranger, edited by James Craig. In California, a Silver Shirt Rifle Club was headed by Willard Kemp. According to Pelley, his organization numbered some three million members. Actually, it has been estimated as nearer 75,000. Despite the wide ramifications of the Silver Legion,

Pelley's movement was still not a financial success. Although he evidently had been receiving money from unknown sources, Pelley was, at the end of 1933, hard pressed for money. He was forced to resort to various means to bolster up his finances; one of these was the selling of stock in his financially insolvent enterprises. Finally, he ran afoul of the law. About a year after the forming of the Silver Shirts, Pelley was indicted for fraud in North Carolina. He was convicted in February, 1935, and sentenced to from one to five years' imprisonment with a fine of \$1,000 and costs. The costs amounted to an additional \$2,000. The prison sentence was suspended, but he was barred forever from issuing any publication in the state of North Carolina. He went into bankruptcy and his assets were sold at public auction. This marked the end of Pelley's activities for some time. His organization collapsed and Pelley's career seemed to be at an end.

But Pelley did not remain idle for long. Although there were judgments of over \$110,000 against him, he resumed his activities and, in the summer of 1935, organized the Christian Party and Councils of Safety. To provide the motive force for his new movement, Pelley uncovered a new prophecy - the "iceberg prophecy." He related that a certain clairvoyant had in 1929 gone into a trance and had predicted that in 1936 "after sitting on an iceberg in the midst of hostile humanity," he would awaken one morning to discover that the people of the United States would follow him like sheep. The date of the realization of this prophecy was set for September 16, 1936.

The Councils of Safety were to form a "vast grape-vine system," covering the nation. Pelley traveled throughout the country organizing these councils, but he appears to have received the best response on the West Coast. His most successful meeting was held at Seattle, Washington. In January, 1936, Pelley announced himself as a candidate for president on the Christian Party ticket, with Willard Kemp, California oil speculator and former head of the armed militia of the Silver Legion, as his running mate. Other state organizations were set up in the Middle West and in the East. To replace "Liberation," Pelley started a new magazine, "Pelley's Weekly" and in defiance of the state authorities he is publishing it from Asheville, North Carolina, his old headquarters. M. Helen Pelley is listed as publisher.

Although the Christian Party is now active in many states, its greatest strength is concentrated on the West Coast: in Oregon, Washington and California. Pelley himself, although his headquarters are still officially at Asheville, North Carolina, has been spending his time there during recent months. He travels from town to town with his retinue, organizing meetings almost daily.

From available information, it is difficult to estimate the present-day strength of Pelley's organization. However, it can safely be said that it now possesses only a fraction of its former strength. But Pelley appears to be as confident as ever that he will eventually succeed in overthrowing the government and establishing Christian economics as the basic law of the land.

What these principles are can be learned from "Pelley's Weekly" of August 19, 1936. One must be familiar with Pelley's style of writing to understand the gist of them. However, they can be summarized as follows:

The nation is to be organized as one great corporation in which each citizen will be the owner of one share of common stock, for which he will be guaranteed \$1,000 a year as perpetual "hunger" insurance; Negroes and Jews are to be made

"wards of the Republic," under a Gentile Secretary of Jews and Aliens in the Presidential cabinet; one city in each state is to be set aside as a city of Jews who are not to be permitted to own property anywhere else; mortgages and foreclosures on private property are to be made illegal forever; a course in practical civics is to be introduced in the public school system and children are to be taught that the Jew is a menace to America; finally, the secret ballot is to be abolished and all elections are to be conducted by means of the postal system, and the citizen who does not vote is to be punished.

The above, of course, is only a summary of Pelley's ideas of government. But one may feel certain that only few of his followers are truly familiar with his aims; for Pelley's writings always were of a mystic and spiritualist character, couched in terms which have no clear meaning. Pelley has built up a peculiar vocabulary which includes such words as "clairaudiently," "cosmic knowledge," "esoteric doctrines," etc., exact definitions of which are never entirely clear. His articles are usually long-winded and pointless, and it is generally very difficult to be certain of his proposals. The following excerpts from Pelley's writings are a fair example of his style. In "Liberation" of July 15, 1933 we read:

"Out of the vastness of Cosmos the Psychic Antennae tunes in on a Voice. If the Word was made flesh and spake once to men, how much stronger may be its pronouncements when the handicaps of the flesh are perished? If we cannot believe this, to Whom or What shall we look for authority of commitments like the following?"...

From "Liberation" of July 29, 1933, we read:

"Ye have no way of seeing what I see, beloved; ye possess little knowledge of time-to-time developments; ye have no means by which ye can determine without fault what men are doing, or saying, or contending. Ye are groping in a Great Darkness, and I enlighten you; I send you ministers, ministering unto you; they do come to you with despatch; lo, ere they reach you to tell you that which happeneth, the manner of the fact hath altered." ...

From "Liberation" of February 18, 1933, we read:

"On the evening of January 30, 1933, in a colonial-styled structure at the corner of Charlotte Street and Sunset Parkway in the little southern city of Asheville, North Carolina, American history was made.

"No one knew American history was being made. The usual evening lamps were burning in the building that is locally known as Galahad College. Asheville was going about its customary evening business. Great America was in the throes of a mysterious 'depression.'

"But in the eastern wing of the building, in a room made up on two sides of glass windows, an office worker had laid down the current copy of the night's local paper on the desk of the Chief. In heavy black type across the eight columns of its front page were the screaming headlines:

"'Adolf Hitler Named German Chancellor.'

"Pelley paused in his Liberation script work, saw the headlines and picked up the newspaper with a strange constriction in his spirit.

"Four years previously he had been 'inspirationally' instructed:

'When a certain young house-painter comes to the head of the German people, then do you take that as your time symbol for bringing the work of the Christian Militia into the open!'

"The 'certain young house-painter' had come to the head of the German people!

"Pelley pressed an office buzzer and called about him the handful of workers still remaining in the building.

"'Tomorrow,' he declared, 'we launch the Silver Shirts!'"

In Pelley's Weekly of September 2, 1936, we read:

"The mystical number '17' which has symbolized all major operations in Chief Pelley's career to date, has operated again without design on the Chief's part. He has delivered seventeen public speeches since 'coming into the open' in the West on the 9th of June, and the outermost point of the northwest Silver Trek is reached. Forthwith, the Silvershirts turn into a statewide convocation, awaiting the developments of September 16th."

One cannot always be certain of what Pelley favors, but one is seldom left in doubt as to what Pelley opposes, and he opposes many things. The Jews, of course, are his chief objects of hatred. To Pelley, the Jews are the root of all evil. Whenever he is against anything, it is because Jews are connected with it, and if he can't find Jews, he creates them. Thus, his chief objection to Communism is its alleged Jewishness. According to Pelley, Jews brought on the World War, the depression, and the N.R.A. Negroes must not be granted racial equality because Rabbi Wise is for it; unions must be destroyed because Jews are among the most prominent leaders. He opposes Roosevelt because Roosevelt is a Jew named Rosenfeld; but he also opposes Landon, charging, in the issue of August 19, 1936, that Landon's campaign manager, Hamilton, has been following him from town to town organizing meetings on the same day, so as to counteract the effective work done by the Christian Party. To prove that he plays no favorites, he has also announced that Hearst is a Jew named Hertzog.

If Pelley is to be believed, most of the prominent men in public life whom he dislikes are Jews. These include George Arliss, former Vice-President Dawes, the Van Sweringen brothers, and Newton D. Baker. Pelley has attacked the Catholic church from time to time, and his issue of May 13, 1936, contained a long diatribe against the Christian Science Church. In a petition circulated in Iowa in 1933, he attacked the Greeks. He has consistently followed the method of availing himself of every slight discontent due to the economic crisis to attack every organization, group, or development which was in any way open to misrepresentation and abuse.

It is little wonder then that in spite of his repeated failures, Pelley has always managed to obtain some sort of following. There is always a sufficient number of discontented, unemployed human misfits, there are always enough fanatics of

either a religious or political variety ready to accept demagogues of the Pelley type as their saviors.

In common with most other subversive anti-Semitic fascist groups, Pelley suffered a great setback after the Presidential elections of 1936. As a result, Pelley's Weekly was discontinued and the constant flow of anti-Semitic circulars emanating from Silver Shirt headquarters practically ceased. By January 1st, 1937, however, Pelley resumed the publication of his New Liberation as a monthly retaining some of the anti-Semitic features of his Weekly and combining them with the mystic articles of the New Liberation. His main activities were centered on the Coast and by the middle of 1937 he considered himself strong enough to put up his own ticket in the state of Washington. Here, too, Pelley suffered a crushing defeat since out of a total of nearly a half a million votes, he polled just a little more than 1500.

It is characteristic of Pelley that he always remained at a distance from the various attempts by other anti-Semitic groups to form a coalition. Most of these other anti-Semitic groups have found Pelley to be a "lone wolf" who refused to cooperate in any way unless he himself was given dictatorial powers. It is because of this that it is difficult to estimate the present strength of the Silver Shirt movement. It is known, however, that he has several able lieutenants, notably Roy Zachary, who, in the past few months has organized meetings in various parts of the country including New York, Henry Kay Allen who has been spending a good deal of time in Washington, and Kenneth Alexander whose activities are centered mainly on the West Coast. In New York a number of secret Silver Shirt meetings have been held recently at Steinway Hall. It is significant, however, that most of the attendance consisted of known Nazis and that among the literature distributed, a number of pro-Japanese pamphlets, including a regular publication entitled "The Japanese America," were prominent. According to reports, there has also been much Silver Shirt activity in Ohio and in several other middle western states, most of this being due to the energetic efforts of Roy Zachary.

During the past two years, Pelley has been steadily increasing the range of his activities as a publisher. In addition to continuing the publication of Liberation, a weekly magazine, he has written a number of small booklets that are violently anti-Jewish. The organization of his Silver Shirt movement appears to be directed along underground channels, although every now and then a meeting of one of these groups is held with considerable attendant publicity.

Pelley has found it difficult to consort with any of his fellow travelers. Although he is in sympathy with anti-Communist activities, he appears to nourish a vicious hate for Martin Dies. He has threatened that if Dies subpoenas him for investigation, "he will bust the Jewish question wide open." Whether this threat is directed against Dies or against the Jews, he does not say. He has also attacked Cong. J. Farnell Thomas, a member of the Dies Committee, for what Pelley considers attempts by Thomas to usurp the rightful privilege of Dies to impeach Secretary Perkins.

In Liberation of February 21, 1939, he was comparing George Washington and Franklin Roosevelt. In the course of his remarks, the following appears about Washington:

"He did not require to be whelled up to the fireplace whenever he felt a chat coming on; he did not smoke cigarettes in 14-inch holders; he heaved no ink-wells at fellow officials when they undertook to cross him."

His program against Jews may be summarized as follows: anti-Jewish riots, disenfranchisement, segregation, and sterilization of all male Jews. Thus he writes in Liberation for October 14, 1938, pages 10 and 11:

"Lament it though they do, avoid it as they would, people of brains who are not too squeamish to look facts in the face are becoming convinced that a wave of race vengeance approximating the aspects of a coast-to-coast pogrom is inevitably ahead for the Jews of America as more millions of them crowd in with immigration barriers lifted!...

"Just how bad these anti-Semitic riots are going to be, is as conjectural as the length of time that they may be found to run. But one thing is not conjectural--The man or set of men that stops them, and gives the Jew the opportunity to cry "Kamarad!" and surrender himself, is going to be the man or set of men that dictates the financial and political policies of the United States for the succeeding decade--and mayhap generation--and fix the Jew so he does no more mischief.

"Two solutions of the Jewish Problem are now being discussed where Gentiles gather with no Jews present. The first is to defranchise the Jew, after the anti-Semitic riots have been stopped, and designate one city in each State where he can gather with his kind and dwell in security against further goy reprisals. By making that specified metropolis the only city wherein he can own property, a condition will be effected where great power-loving Jews will be forced from the American scene as individuals, and where the small-fry Yiddisher can live his life without coming in frictional contact with Gentile neighbors. The second solution to the Jewish Problem is more drastic. It consists of a congress of Aryan nations getting together and making a common cause of sterilizing all male Jews over a period of years, so that the race as a race gradually dies out."

"STERILIZATION, once decided upon, can be performed painlessly, humanely. Male Jews can simply be stopped from breeding successive generations of new little Israelites to keep up this racial psychopathy of which Rabbi Wise speaks so frankly and histrionically. Present Jewish families need not be disrupted. Present young Jews and young Jewesses need not be kept from marrying. But no more Jewish babies will come from such unions. Jewish families will be childless..."

April 14th, 1939.