

*Pelley + The Silver Shirts*

*not to be used*

THE REPERCUSSIONS OF HITLERISM  
IN  
THE UNITED STATES

It is significant that the depression had run over three years in the United States, before Hitler's accession to power in Germany, without any marked evidences of anti-Semitism. The first organized attack emanated from William Dudley Pelley, Chief of the Silver Shirts and editor of their official organ, "Liberation". This man had, in 1931, revealed a broad conception of the role of different religious and racial groups in civilization. This appreciation was expressed by Pelley in his publication, "The New Liberator", in the following words:

"Gentile and Jew, Catholic and Protestant, white man and black man - with all the gradations of color in between - they exist in the world as we find it because they are serving a constructive positive purpose in the Divine Plan of individual self-ennoblement."

(The New Liberator, May 1931, p.245)

The swing of Pelley to the pole of anti-Semitism came as a consequence of Hitler's triumph and the announcement of the Nazi program. Pelley's official despatch made the following boast of that inspiration for his movement:

"On January 31, 1933 - the day that Hitler came into power in Germany - Pelley came out from under-cover with his SILVER SHIRT NATIONAL ORGANIZATION."

The importance of this development lay in the fact that it concerned a native American who, in his psychic activities, had built up a considerable following among native Americans. It was among that group that the Silver Shirt attack was finding circulation.

William Dudley Pelley was born in 1885, in Lynn, Massachusetts, the son of a Methodist Minister. His activities have gained for him, mention in "Who's Who in America." He edited and published several newspapers in New

England, and gave up these activities to serve with the Y.M.C.A. in Siberia, during the World War. He tried Hollywood with his scripts but failed to make any headway. As a writer, he succeeded in gaining a market for his material, particularly for his article, "Seven Minutes in Eternity," which was published in The American Magazine in 1929, and later in book form, which sold in hundreds of thousands of copies. It tells of the experiences of his soul in eternity, detached from his body.

Encouraged by this wide-spread reception of his article, Pelley continued his activities in the psychic field. By 1931, after he had failed in other recent undertakings, he organized the Foundation of Christian Economics. Its lectures and lessons were sent to subscribers through the Galahad Extension Fellowship. The type of teaching that Pelley was promoting in 1931, is indicated by the following quotation from the New Liberator (June, 1931), as his organ was then called:

"The contents of this magazine, unless otherwise designated, were received "clairaudiently," via the Psychic Radio, from Great Souls who graduated out of this Three-Dimensional world into other areas of Time and Space."

By October, 1932, with the intensification of Hitlerite propaganda in the United States, Pelley changed the title of "The New Liberator" to that of "Liberation," and began his anti-Jewish attacks. He urged people to read Henry Ford's books on "The International Jew" and the speeches made in Congress by Representative MacFadden of Pennsylvania. He warned Christians of the plot to overthrow Christian governments.

His most vicious attacks of the Jew came with Hitler's rise to power, when, as I have already indicated, Pelley launched his Silver Shirt organization. He went so far as to state that Henry Ford had never signed a statement of apology to the Jews, that the statement was non-existent and that Ford was being reported in Washington and elsewhere as never having signed such an apology. The letter to which he refers, is in the archives of the American Jewish Committee, having been addressed by Mr. Ford, on June 30th, 1927, to the late Louis Marshall, then president of the Committee. As recently as May 15th, of this year, Mr. Ford re-iterated his disavowal of the material on "The International Jew," that had been issued by the Dearborn Publishing Company.

Pelley went so far as to lay at the door of the Jew, the death of Senator

Dwight Morrow. A "Confidential Official Despatch" expressed that charge in these words:

"In American there are hundreds of men who see nothing extraordinary that Senator Morrow "happened" to be stricken fatally the day after his attendance at a Jewish banquet."

The trend of his attacks and their comfort can be readily deduced from the following headlines chosen from the last few copies of "Liberation":

"The Mystery of the Civil War and Lincoln's Death."

"Silver Shirts Will Repudiate Jewish Russia's Recognition."

"Get the Name of Every Jew who Intimidates A Gentile."

"The Silver Shirts Re-write the Declaration of Independence."

"Will there be a Slaughter of Gentiles in America?"

"Facts you should know about the Gold Standard."

"Roosevelt Gold Bill attempts to Legalize Robbery."

"Will we be made to fight Japan to conserve Red Russia's Army?"

"California will suffer if the Jews embroil us with Japan."

"The World problem is a matter of Race."

"Not State Socialization, but Protocolism."

The Silver Shirt organization set up by Pelley, spread throughout the country to such an extent as to encourage Pelley to divide the country into districts, in the drive to establish the Christ Democracy, whose office holders were to be chosen only from the ranks of its Christian Militia. "The Silver Shirts are Swarming," wrote Pelley in one of the issues of "Liberation" that sought to show how considerably that organization had grown and where the posts of its Christian Militia, in each state, were established.

In the midst of the discontent of the farmers in the Middle West, Pelley hastened to found another publication, "The Silver Rangers," in Oklahoma City, but lack of support compelled him to transfer the office of the new publication further west to Los Angeles, where there was a considerable pro-Nazi group. This affiliation with the Nazis in that district, developed opposition to Pelley from within his own ranks. This

opposition group resented any tie-up with the Hitlerites, insisting that the Silver Rangers remain a purely American movement. It even attempted to oust Pelley from control of "The Silver Ranger," while he was absent in the East.

The next blow suffered by Pelley was on April 25th of this year, when the Secretary of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania refused the application of the Silver Shirts for a charter in that state. Among the organizations that signed the protest to the Secretary of the Commonwealth was the Zion Lutheran Church of Pennsylvania.

The severest of all set-backs experienced by Pelley, affected the center of his activities - his offices at Asheville, North Carolina, and "Liberation," the official organ of the Silver Shirts.

On April 24th of this year, the Judge of the United States District Court at Asheville, signed an order directing the United States Marshal to take possession of all property of the Galahad Press, Inc., publisher of "Liberation." A few days later, a petition was presented to the court, asking that the Galahad Press be declared a bankrupt. On May 2nd, Judge Webb of the Federal Court adjudged the Galahad Press a bankrupt. On May 23rd, a grand jury in Asheville, indicted Pelley on sixteen counts of alleged violation of the blue-sky laws of North Carolina. When this indictment was returned, Pelley was in California, but two of his aides were seized and released under bond. One of the chief counts was that of selling alleged worthless stock of the Galahad Press, and for stating in advertisements in "Liberation" the amount of dividends, interest and earnings that these securities would yield. The next step in the case against Pelley occurred on May 24th, when Judge Michael Schenck of the Superior Court, signed an order, impounding the records and correspondence of the Silver Shirts of America, the Foundation for Christian Economics and the Galahad Press, Inc. Up to that time, the representatives of the court were still endeavoring to reach Pelley.

There has been present, in the United States, not alone this indirect influence of Hitlerism upon the American people, through Pelley, the Silver Shirts and "Liberation." There was a direct influence, exercised by the Nazis themselves. For

several years before Hitler had gained the Chancellorship, the Hitlerite forces were at work in the United States. The climax of that activity came in September, 1932, when Hitler issued a decree, officially establishing a Nazi Party Auxiliary in the United States.

The ramifications of both the native American and Nazi campaigns against the Jew in the United States, have been extensive. No medium was overlooked in their carefully worked out plans to poison the minds of the American people against the Jew. When the Jews of the United States officially voiced their protests against the program of Hitlerism in Germany, the offensive of the pro-Nazi groups in the United States became more bitter and vicious. The Nazi followers here were blinding themselves to the fact that we were not attacking the German people. We were merely declaring our resentment at seeing any government turn the clock of civilization backward, by reducing any portion of its citizenry to the position of tolerated guests and denying them the opportunity to participate in and contribute toward the main stream of national life.

The activities of pro-Nazi propagandists in the United States sought to conceal the true trends of Germany's legislative and other acts against her Jewish population and to belittle the gravity and heinousness of what had occurred throughout the length and breadth of Germany. The most effective document for counteracting this misleading propaganda was the first White Book issued by the American Jewish Committee, under the title of "The Jews in Nazi Germany". It was a solid, factual citation of official German and other records, against which no propagandist's perversions could possibly stand up. The reception accorded this White Book by the American press and non-Jewish leaders of opinion, indicates the effectiveness of the Committee's publication.

The methods of the pro-Nazi forces in this country ran the gamut of a scurrilous letter campaign, the publication of an English supplement by German papers, the importation of tons of literature from Germany and the circulation of propagandists on the lecture platforms. The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, an alleged document on the plot of the international Jew to overthrow governments and gain control of civili-

zation, was again distributed among the American people. It was from that alleged document that the Dearborn Independent had drawn much of its material. The fact that Mr. Henry Ford, in 1927, as previously cited, had repudiated his articles on "The International Jew", based so largely on these Protocols, served as no deterrent of the Nazi element's utilization of that discredited material.

The magazine TODAY, properly characterized the activities of the pro-Nazis in the United States as an invasion of our country. Under the title of "Hitlerism Invades America", that publication presented a series of disclosures which concluded with the observation that the preaching of the doctrines of Hitlerism, fundamentally and completely in conflict with the political and social principles of America, was going on systematically throughout the United States.

The use by the Nazi groups, of uniforms of a military character and the employment of terroristic methods in a number of instances, have served to incite riots in a number of sections of the United States. The Friends of New Germany and the German-American Protective Alliance ( the DAWA counter-boycott organization) are aiming at convincing the people of the United States that the criticism of and opposition to the tendencies of the Hitlerite government are wholly Jewish in interest and inspiration. The activities of these two organizations have gone even beyond that. They have been guilty of a far greater crime - that of endeavoring to divide the American people into hostile camps, breaking the many years of close friendship and understanding between the Jews and the German-Americans in the United States. The close bond between them, inspired by the spirit of a Carl Schurz, a relentless foe of intolerance and despotism, has been considerably weakened. Jews have been virtually forced out of German-American cultural and other organizations. On this injection of Hitlerite influence into the United States, an outstanding newspaper, such as the Baltimore Sun, was quoted in the New York Times of Sunday May 27th, 1934, as follows:

"What the Hitlerites hope to gain by their demonstrations in this country is not at all clear. Certainly they cannot believe that they have any chance of establishing a Nazi regime in the United States. If this country ever does turn

Fascist, its fascism will be of the native variety. And, indeed, the definition of the term Fascist itself requires that it be based on ultra-patriotism - chauvinism, which naturally leaves no room for any influence from Berlin or from German - Americans living in this country.

"It is strange that the Germans, competent in other fields, appear to have no sound political sense."

It is a matter of gratification to see the Protestant, Catholic and non-sectarian liberal bodies of the United States place themselves on record at various times, in denunciation of the acts and trends of the present German government. Those declarations are unimpeachable evidence of the fact that the opposition to Hitlerism is not the limited one of the Jews, but the broader one of an outraged civilization.

At the outset of this paper, I had called attention to the fact that until the advent of Hitler's control of Germany, no attempt had been made in the United States to foist upon the Jew, the blame for our economic ills. The coming into power at Washington, in 1933, of a new administration, with a political program that was opposed by a large section of American citizens, gave rise to another type of attack against the Jews of the United States. In its essence, it was similar to the attack that had carried the Nazi party to victory in Germany. It was the centuries-old tactic of making the Jew the scape-goat. In view of the unpopularity of many measures and policies of the present administration, various groups sought to discredit the administration by urging that the power behind the president was a Jew and that his counsellors were largely Jewish. Pelley attacked the Roosevelt administration and the Jews on those grounds.

The economic basis of this form of attack on the Jew here, was employed even on the floor of the United States Congress, by Representative L. T. McFadden, On May 29th, 1933. That address without the reply from Dr. Cyrus Adler, president of the Committee, which had been ordered entered in the Congressional Record, has been widely distributed, under the franking privileges of a Congressman. Several native American organizations,

that are known to be wholly out of sympathy with current political trends in the United States, cooperated in the distribution of that address.

The most important of these native American organizations are the Order of '76, the Crusaders for Economic Liberty, the Khaki Shirts, the Silver Shirts, the Liberators and the Vigilantes, the latter two being found on the coast; the Blue Shirts in the Middle West; the Nationalists in Texas and in New York. Their establishment has stimulated the revival of the Ku Klux Klan, but not with the strength it had enjoyed in the period shortly after the World War. The Khaki Shirts, who openly boast of their plan to oust President Roosevelt and to set up a dictatorship of their own, have suffered a damaging blow in the conviction of their leader, Art J. Smith, for perjury in a murder case. He received a sentence of 3 to 6 years in the Sing Sing prison of New York State. The Order of '76, whose official organ is "The Awakener," has centered its attack on the policies of the Roosevelt administration and has participated in anti-Jewish activities. A letter, purporting to authorize the consummation of a merger between the Order of '76 and the Silver Shirts, was denied in the magazine "Today," by Royal Scott Gulden, one of the leaders of the Order. The Crusaders for Economic Liberty, with headquarters at Chattanooga, have threatened to fight the Jew because its leader claims the Jews are opposing his economic program.

Other activities that fertilized the soil for anti-Jewish feeling were the participation of Jews in the Scottsboro case, in industrial disturbances and in radical political movements. The presence of any Jewish labor agents in any industrial conflict led invariably to the charge that the workers had been led to strike by communists and, inferentially, by Jews. That argument has been employed by strike breaking organizations, without any concern as to its damaging effect upon the entire population of Jews in the United States. Studies of the political tendencies and affiliations of the Jews here have convincingly disproven the assertion that Jews are largely communists. The statement is so groundless that no serious student of American political life entertains it with any degree of seriousness.

Publications not identified with any particular organizations and voicing both anti-Jewish tendencies and opposition to the Washington administration, have also made their appearance and editorial policies of existing publications have been altered in these same directions. Industrial information bureaus, in letters to clients, have carried gossip that reflects resentment of the presence of Jews in some posts at Washington and links the Jew with communism and socialism.

Through the Committee of Investigation authorized in the Spring of 1934, by the House of Representatives, the American public is being afforded an opportunity to judge for itself the nature, extent and gravity of the Nazi activities in the United States and the relationship that may exist between those activities and those of the native American organizations, such as the Order of '76, Christian Crusaders and Silver Shirts. Under the chairmanship of Representative John W. McCormack of Massachusetts, that investigation is already well under way. Its findings are being awaited by a widespread public.

There are two re-assuring facts to be recorded, in telling the story of anti-Jewish movements in the United States up to the present date. The first is that no book, comparable to Hitler's vitriolic attack on the Jew, has been able to make its appearance in the United States and sweep public opinion, as the Nazi leader's book did in Germany. There is no evidence that such a book has even been written and offered to any American publisher.

The second re-assuring fact is that, though items about the various anti-Jewish organizations have appeared in the American press, no newspaper has committed itself to a policy of attack against the Jew. On the contrary, the press has uniformly condemned it. Both of these facts are unmistakable indices of the sanity of the preponderant American public opinion, and of its firm opposition to the subterfuge of making any particular element of our population, the scape-goat in this period of political, social and economic reconstruction in the United States. Protestant, Catholic and Jew walked hand in hand in the recent observance of a National Brotherhood Day, under the leadership of the National Conference of Jews and Christians. Leaders of American opinion

such as Carrie Chapman Catt, Sherwood Eddy, Raymond Moley, Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Reverend Harry Emerson Fosdick, Michael Williams and a host of others have spoken out in emphatic protest against the developments here and abroad. Their utterances are making our citizens aware of the fact that this democracy is made up of heterogeneous elements that bear a common responsibility, that of strengthening the unity of the American people instead of turning our country into a house divided against itself. These temperate and justice-loving leaders of American opinion, imbued with a deathless loyalty and devotion to the ideals of the founders of this democracy, the ideals that inspired a William Penn, a Roger Williams, and a Thomas Jefferson, the ideals that drew to these shores a Carl Schurz, a Garibaldi and an Isaac M. Wise, -- refuse to let the ruthless despotisms and religious and racial hatreds of Europe, be transplanted to these shores.

As we take encouragement and inspiration from these facts, we must not allow ourselves to become lax in our duties. The situation is one that calls for a continuance of our vigilance. It is of no avail to have men and women of eminence speak out in the interest of justice in these issues while millions are being misled by the most gigantic combination of propaganda that has ever hurled its attacks against the Jew. We must not, diminish in the slightest degree, the comprehensive program we have been maintaining to guard ourselves, the entire American people and, in truth, the entire human family against the spread of the poison of race hatreds.

The Committee's experience of these 28 years has taught it that no development must be ignored. Its experience urges it to say to you who are assembled here, to cooperate with it even more broadly and to hold up its hands with the same loyalty that you have manifested in the past years and in these recent two years. The American public looks to us to set it aright when the agents of intolerance stride through this land. The Committee will not fail in the performance of its responsibility, a responsibility that extends to our children and to our children's children, if you will walk with it in counsel, in generous moral and financial support, in cooperative activity and in understanding.