

AMERICAN FASCISM.

TAU BETA PI INITIATION THESIS.

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SUMMARY.

In the past, events have occurred, the study of which has led this writer to believe that if we are not careful we may some day become a Fascist nation. I cite examples of a latent spirit of Fascism and warn the reader to beware of intolerance and other characteristics of that despised form of government.

We are now engaged in the greatest war of all times. We are fighting this war for the avowed purpose of exterminating that form of government known as Fascism. I dont believe that any decent American has any doubts concerning the necessity of winning this war. We must win and we will win.

But there is another and much older war against Fascism which we have fought and must continue to fight. The Fascism being combatted in this older war is not symbolized by the fascies or the swastika nor is it imported from Europe or Japan; it is not even formally organized. It is a homegrown, native-American variety which only too often chooses for its emblem the American flag. It takes the form of nativism or nationalism invariably disguised as patriotism, of unwillingness to listen to the other side of an argument, of occasional mob violence rather than resort to the orderly processes of the law, and of the dozens of those little prejudices we all have. Most of all it takes the form of a quick willingness to condemn the one who does not conform to the pattern of those about him. (NOTE) These characteristics of American Fascism can be compared with those of the German variety listed in Propaganda and Dictatorship, Article I edited by Harwood L. Childs, published Princeton University Press, 1936.

Although traces of a Fascist spirit are found in the religious intolerance of the earliest American colonies it must be remembered that this was an intolerant age. The ideas of

William Penn and Roger Williams on religious freedom and of John Locke on political freedom had not yet begun to circulate. We must, in all fairness, disregard these early Fascist tendencies for this reason. Of much greater concern to us, however, is a series of happenings which occurred near the middle of the 19th century.

During the third and fourth decades of the 19th century the immigration of Irish began. These people at once made themselves unpopular with labor by being willing to work for low wages. Later, as they became organized and acquired political power, they became unpopular with the moneyed class. A dislike for a people brings a dislike for their religion and soon all Roman Catholics, natives or immigrants alike, were distrusted. In 1840 anti-Catholic rioting broke out in Baltimore, New York and Philadelphia. Soon thereafter the Native American Party was formed for the purpose of restricting immigration. The Mexican War diverted the interest of the people before the Party could acquire much power.

After the war nativism again appeared with the formation of the United Order of Americans. This organization grew and absorbed such groups as the American Brotherhood, the United Daughters of America, Sons of America, and The Order of the Star Spangled Banner. Shortly thereafter the combined organizations entered politics and were known as the Know Nothings.

The characters of the parents can be known from the

character of the child and the character of the Know Nothings was black indeed. Two of the membership requirements of the party are especially interesting. They were that a member of the party must always vote as the party officers instructed him to, and that no person shall be admitted to membership who has any family connection with the Roman Catholic religion. One can well imagine what sort of things the parent organizations, flaunting such patriotic names, must have been. The Know Nothing party acquired considerable power but soon made some serious political mistakes and disintegrated.

The story of intolerance could be continued in this way almost indefinitely. Negro persecution in the South, the public hysteria during the first World War, the post-war "professional patriots", and the followers of Coughlin, Pelley, Winrod, et. al, today are more examples of a spirit here at home that thinking Americans must do all they can to quell.

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