

CHAPTER IV

FASCISM: AMERICAN BRAND

THE sharpened conflict within the ranks of the bourgeoisie over the distribution of the reduced mass of profits, described in the previous chapter, is bringing about a regrouping of forces and struggles over policy which begin to assume the aspects of a "crisis of parties". This conflict has begun to take on the form of a "crisis of the constitution", as the effects of the Supreme Court decision annulling the N.R.A. become evident. The nine gray-bearded vestal virgins who guard the altar of private property slammed the door of constitutional law against social legislation and government intervention in economic questions. While the bourgeois camp is thus torn asunder, many millions of toilers are cutting their old political ties. They are restless—looking for a new road out of their difficulties, becoming more and more consciously anti-capitalist in their moods and demands.

When Roosevelt took office, an unprecedented concentration of forces supported him. Opposition from the bourgeoisie was either non-existent or silent. Among the workers, urban middle classes, and farmers, there were the most glowing illusions as to what good things the New Deal would bring them. For almost two years the only articulate opposition came from the Communist Party. But now all that is gone. The mirage of a united nation marching determinedly behind its great leader toward everlasting prosperity has faded and disappeared almost overnight. National unity has dissolved

into a chaos of conflicting interests, groups and classes. What appeared to be a straight-line course has turned out to be nothing but a swamp of confusion. The only definite policy that emerges from the conflict within the ruling class is its determination to launch renewed attacks against the living standards of the toilers.

The crisis forced all classes into active political life. The toilers are more and more abandoning their traditional indifference or hostility toward participation in politics. With increasing vigor they are placing their demands before the Government. As disillusionment with Roosevelt and with all capitalist parties and factions grows, there are developing throughout the country symptoms of a breakaway from the two old capitalist parties and the emergence of a new mass party in the American political arena.

The various leaders and groups within the bourgeoisie are by no means passive to this giant stirring among the masses. Each one of them tries with his own particular brand of social demagoguery to win the toilers for his program and the particular special interests that he represents. Despite their conflicts all of them have one aim in common: by all means to prevent this growing movement of discontent from taking the path of active struggle against the capitalist state. They further share a tendency, now only partially expressed, but growing more and more pronounced, to bring forward in their appeals, and in their practical policies, the characteristic features of fascism—in specific American forms.

The failure of the New Deal to solve the crisis and the increasing demands of the toilers for social reforms, like unemployment insurance and a shorter work week without reduction in pay, have made large sections of monopoly capital conclude that Roosevelt's policies no longer meet the situation. The opposition to Roosevelt centers around the all-

powerful House of Morgan and its strongest ally—the du Pont interests. These financial and industrial tycoons are the decisive forces in the Liberty League, the spearhead of reactionary opposition to Roosevelt. This reactionary group, with strong fascist tendencies, is convinced that Roosevelt must be replaced by someone who can do a better job for the capitalists. They are determined to reduce still further the living standards of the toilers in order to increase profits, eliminate all relief and thus balance the budget, and strike decisive blows against the trade unions and other organizations of the workers.

These advocates of the use of the most brutal methods against the toiling masses have already indicated that they will stop at nothing to achieve their reactionary aims. Their program is enthusiastically supported by the United States Chamber of Commerce, the American Bankers Association, and the National Association of Manufacturers, which have all gone on record as being opposed to Roosevelt and his policies.

All the most reactionary groups in the country are gathering in one camp in order to bring fascism to the United States. Primarily through the Hearst press they have carried on a campaign against everything that is liberal or progressive in the country. They are determined to defeat Roosevelt in 1936 and place an administration in power that will carry out their program of reaction to the full satisfaction of the Morgans, the du Ponts, the Hearsts, and the few ruling families of the United States.

Roosevelt, of course, seeks to achieve the same class objectives as his opponents from the Right. In fact, he meets most of their attacks by taking a step further to the Right himself. When they denounce relief expenditures, he cuts them to bare subsistence levels, and so on. But, although their goals are the same, Roosevelt pursues a different path and

necessarily bases himself upon different groups within the bourgeoisie. He tries to retain the support of the workers, the farmers and middle-class groups, by posing as a liberal and covering up his ruling class aims with the camouflage of ballyhoo.

It would be a mistake to underestimate the differences between Roosevelt and his Right opponents. It would be another mistake to believe that he has no support at all among the capitalists. He is the spokesman for those industrial and financial groups which are in conflict with the House of Morgan. To placate the masses, Roosevelt has made tangible concessions to the well-to-do farmers and miserly ones to the workers.

It is important to stress that Roosevelt is no obstacle to the fascist plans of his Right opponents. His administrative record proves that. Under the New Deal there has been an increase in misery, starvation and political oppression. Under the New Deal the company unions have made their greatest gains. The workers cannot fight against reaction by supporting Roosevelt, for his whole strategy of fighting against the Liberty League-Hearst group is to make one concession after another to the reactionaries.

The issues between Roosevelt and the most reactionary capitalist circles have become so sharp that the reactionaries have openly issued a call for their forces to "gang up" on the administration. And in turn, some members of the administration, like Ickes (who feel that they will be dropped by Roosevelt if he continues to take more steps to the Right), have attacked "the fascist-minded men", who wish to destroy democracy for the sake of profits.

To rely upon Roosevelt to keep fascism from coming to power plays into the hands of the Liberty League. The latter want to force Roosevelt more to the Right, and make him

abandon all of his promises to the masses which they are determined shall never be carried out. Their efforts to push Roosevelt toward their own program have so far met with good results. In addition, the reactionaries want to discredit Socialists and Communists by identifying them with the bankruptcy of the New Deal. That is why they proclaim the failure of the New Deal as being due to the inevitable failure of socialist planning. In this way, having already grabbed the profits of the New Deal, they clear their own skirts of any responsibility for its breakdown. In this way, they hope to turn the resentment of the masses against Roosevelt and take them into the channels of reaction and fascism.

The danger of growing fascism in the United States must not be underestimated. All the pre-conditions for a rapid rise of fascism to power are present in the United States. This growing and imminent danger is generally underestimated, even by Communists, because of certain specific American features. For example, incipient fascism here not only strives to differentiate itself from European fascism, but even raises the anti-fascist banner in the form of the slogan: against foreign importations of fascism and communism.

The mutual recriminations of the rival bourgeois groups, which expose one another's fascist character as they struggle to win the support of the vaguely anti-fascist masses of people, are too often discounted and disregarded as being only the ordinary hypocritical exaggerations of politicians. But it is really of enormous political significance that the Hoover Republicans denounced the Roosevelt regime for its fascist tendencies; that Ickes attacks the Liberty League and Republican Party leaders as forerunners of American fascism; that General Hugh Johnson accuses Father Coughlin of being a fascist demagogue, etc. There is a large grain of truth in these charges by capitalist politicians, and we cannot dis-

regard the facts that they bring out into the open, simply because they use them to further their own interests.

The fascist demagogy of the ruling class has a multitude of potential victims among the masses. In this respect, its main asset is the political inexperience of the majority of the toiling population, their lack of a strong tradition of political struggle against capitalism, the naiveté which makes them the gullible victims of almost any glib-tongued demagogue, and the lack of independent political organizations to carry on the fight against fascism.

The camp of American reformist leaders is divided in its reaction to the fascist danger. One tendency maintains that fascism is impossible in the United States, that "it can't happen here" because of American democratic traditions and the exceptional character of the country and the people. Another tendency looks forward to the victory of fascism as being predetermined, as being something that it is useless and impossible to struggle against. A third tendency, while joining in small-scale struggles against fascist developments, has refused to unite on a national scale against the rising tide of reaction. Many of these people agree with the thesis put forward by Hearst, propagandist-in-chief for American fascism, that it is the rise of Communist activity and organization which is responsible for the danger of fascism.

In a situation of deepening misery, when a great population becomes restless and anxious for change, the door is open not only to struggles against the capitalists who are responsible for their sufferings, but also to a mobilization of the masses against their own interests, and in the interests of the most predatory section of the capitalist class. This is the danger that we face in the United States today. It would be foolish to think that the monopolists and bankers in the Liberty League, with their tremendous resources, cannot win

a mass following for fascism. Already reaction has produced a whole series of semi-fascist demagogues, and has even, in fear of its own creation, assassinated one of them. These demagogues make the wildest promises to the toilers and by playing on their discontent hope to rally them behind the black banner of reaction. To underestimate this grave danger is to commit a crime against all toilers, since it would mean failing to warn and organize them against the fascist menace which would destroy their living standards, their civil liberties, and all their organizations—economic, social and cultural, which would, in short, throw humanity back into the dark ages.