

# UNDER COVER



by John Roy Carlson

I WAS BORN in 1909 of Armenian parents in Alexandropolis, a city in southern Greece. Alexandropolis was truly cosmopolitan—it was plundered by each and every Balkan army. The defenseless Armenians were the prey of all the armies and we lived as refugees in our own home.

When it was safe to do so we fled, living in one country and then another until we eventually reached America. I was then a gawky boy of 12, so terrorized by past experiences I could hardly believe that one could live in one place any length of time in safety.

But America was good to us. Democracy became my ideal way of life.

Yet in the years following my graduation from the New York University School of Journalism, incidents occurred which made me certain that an attempt was being made to destroy democracy in the United States.

One of these took place in the fall of 1938. While riding in a New York subway, I picked up a leaflet entitled *Why Are Jews Persecuted for Their Religion?* Bearing the imprint of the Nationalist Press Association, 147 East 116th Street, New York, it included four pages of bitterly anti-Semitic quotations and urged “American patriots” to “rise up and clean house politically.” Pricked by curiosity, I decided to look up these headquarters of “Americanism.”

The address was an old tenement. Taking a deep breath, I knocked on the door. Suddenly it was flung open. With the light glaring in my eyes, I could barely make out the form of a man. I told him I would like to buy some leaflets on the Jews. Without answering, he led me into a shabby, dim-lit room. A thin, rodent-featured Italian with sharp eyes was folding printed newspaper sheets.



to go as a delegate with the Paul Revere Sentinels leaving for Washington to sabotage passage of the Lend-Lease Bill. I found Mrs. Dilling in charge of the Mothers' Movement.

"This is my thundering herd," she told me. Then she yelled, "Come on, let's picket the Senate Building."

Sixty or more women rushed to the exits and took their places in line, carrying American flags. Round and round the Senate Building they went singing *The Star-Spangled Banner* and *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*. Getting no attention from reporters, Mrs. Dilling decided to storm the Capitol steps, hoping for publicity by violating Capitol ordinances. The cops stopped the mob, which was just what Mrs. Dilling wanted. It broke into a howl.

"Don't you dare tell us we can't parade with our American flags."

"These are the flags of our Republic, but you wouldn't know that, you Jew stooges," one woman yelled.

Mrs. Dilling, who had quietly gone off, came back panting with the announcement that Congressman Clare Hoffman had agreed to see them.

A man of fanatic leanings, Representative Hoffman received the herd and commended their "patriotism." Led by him, the pack milled its way down to Roy O. Woodruff, Hoffman's colleague from Michigan. Here the Congressmen posed for photographers, while Mrs. Dilling held a placard "Kill Bill 1776—Not Our Boys."

Individually, some of the mothers were quite innocent and motherly, even though in a pack they were a nightmare to watch. But it was not all their fault. It was the Dillings and the Coughlins who were churning them into noisy "fishwives."

Before leaving Washington, I determined to visit Miss Cathrine Curtis, "one of the most dangerous women in America," who had rented an entire building to carry on a relentless campaign against H.R.-1776.

Miss Curtis moved in high Republic  
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lican National Committee circles and had many influential friends on Capitol Hill. Her role actually was to channelize the thinking of female Park Avenue "patriots" into her own interpretation of "patriotism."

As I entered, Miss Curtis stood up. Nearly six feet tall, she towered over her desk and I guessed that she weighed at least 200 pounds.

"How is the fight against Lend-Lease coming along?" I asked after the preliminaries of introduction.

"Very well," Miss Curtis said. "Our women and the Detroit Mothers are visiting all the Senators, particularly Mr. Burton Wheeler. We approach the Congressmen in groups of two and three, show credentials and talk quietly, gaining—we believe—their respect and confidence."

"That is a very constructive way of meeting the problem," I observed.

"We follow up the personal visits," she continued, "with a tremendous mailing campaign to our members, urging them to write their Senators to vote against the dictatorship bill. In this way the Senators get the impression that the women of the country are really against the Bill."

"Yes," her cohort Michael Ahearne put in, "we work with the America First Committee who also send their men and women to visit Congressmen."

"We still have a lot of work to do tonight," Miss Curtis said, rising. I shook her hand and left.

On the night of April 23, 1941, the Manhattan Center Opera House was packed with eight thousand men, women and children, each carrying an American flag. At a given signal they began to wave the flags, the band burst into patriotic music and a crescendo of "patriotism" and super-nationalism filled the auditorium.

My old "friends" led the tumult and a wide assortment of thugs and hooligans from the goon squads were scattered throughout the crowd.

"Who wants war?" the speaker asked, waiting for a reply.

"The Jews are the war mongers," the mob yelled back.

Was this a Christian Mobilizer meeting? A Bund or a Christian Front meeting? Or a coalition of all three? The last comes near being the truth.

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It was a meeting of certain units of the America First Committee. Charles Lindbergh was the featured speaker.

Another time, on the platform of Ebling's Casino, a short woman in a long bob launched into what seemed to be a cheap imitation of Hitler-Mussolini oratory. She was Laura Ingalls.

She mouthed a half dozen demagogic phrases that emotionalized the crowd, then ended with the revolutionary cry, "If they mean to have a war, let it begin here."

These were two meetings of various groups in the America First Committee which I attended. Other "patriotic" meetings fell down in attendance, while some fascistic organizations were suspended altogether as their members flocked to America First rallies.

The idea for the Committee was conceived in the spring of 1940 in the mind of a blond, wealthy 24-year-old Yale student, R. Douglas Stuart, Jr.,\* son of the first vice-president of the Quaker Oats Company. Stuart got 20 of his classmates to join. From nowhere staid William R. Castle joined the blond youth. Then to Stuart's growing circle of influential friends came experts in promotion, organization and public relations. Soon afterwards General Robert E. Wood\* took charge and set to organizing the Committee on a broad, nation-wide basis.

As Pagnanelli, the ever-helpful "patriot," I filed my application as volunteer worker. From this point on, my role as investigator required attending a bewildering array of meetings that dinned into the minds of the masses those doctrines I had already learned in the Nazi underworld.

There were many in the America First Committee who were sincere and devout. But too many were fascist party-liners who invaded the Committee and made it the voice of American fascism and a spearhead aimed at the heart of democracy, carrying to their doom many who were innocent and would have resigned in disgust had they known what went on.

The Monday after Pearl Harbor I received the December 6th issue of the *America First Bulletin* and read the headline, "Blame for Rift with Japan

\*Stuart, Wood and many others of the A.F.C. enlisted in the war effort right after Pearl Harbor.

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Rests on Administration.” And by an irony of fate, a typical letter from William R. Castle appeared in the New York Sunday *Herald Tribune* on the morning of Pearl Harbor. It read:

Why should we go to war with Japan? To that question I have never received a reasonable answer, except the answer always made by those who feel we should interfere anywhere in the world. People like our bellicose Secretary of the Navy announce that trouble is inevitable.



LIKE MOST Americans, I thought that with Pearl Harbor we had become a united nation. I believed that my “friends” would now become true patriots, stop their disruptive propaganda and back up the Congress and the nation in the prosecution of the war. Feeling sure that my work as investigator was over, I thought of enlisting in order to continue my fight against Axis aggression.

And then I received a mimeographed tract from Boston, post-marked December 8, 1941. It was from Francis P. Moran, fuehrer of the New England Christian Front. Accompanying it was another inflammatory leaflet which read in part:

Mr. Roosevelt has sent our citizens to their death. He is guilty of murder. . . . We advocate the refusal of all sincere and courageous Americans to pay such taxes on the basis that they are unconstitutional, un-American and morally unjust, and on the further premise that our first duty is to our own needy and unemployed citizens.

I realized with a shock that my work was far from finished.

All thoughts of volunteering for the United States Army were gone. We had an enemy to fight here at home and trained soldiers with three years' experience in psychological warfare weren't plentiful at the time.

I had been corresponding with Parker Sage, head of the National Workers League, a Nazi front organization in Detroit, since January, 1941. On December 27th, I received a lengthy letter from him:

We need experienced men here badly and have reason to believe that if suitable material is available that we could guarantee a position

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in *private* employment at an American wage. Our needs call for an experienced, able speaker and organizer, well qualified to handle the racial problem (both Jew and Negro). Most of his spare time would have to be devoted to the Cause here. If you are able to fill the place please do so.

I knew that when the National Workers League was founded by Parker Sage in 1938, remnants of the Black Legion gang—Klansmen, strike-breakers, convicts, rapists, released murderers and variously assorted thugs—flocked to it. Now Parker Sage wanted me as organizer of the N.W.L. I had no illusions about the job—it was dynamite!

Just as I was about to leave, I read the news of Sage's arrest and indictment with Garland Alderman, secretary of the N.W.L., on charges of complicity in the rioting against the attempt of Negroes to move into a federal housing project. I wrote him anxiously about coming. He explained that both he and Alderman were out on bail, that the N.W.L. was not involved officially, and closed with "The job is waiting."

Shortly afterwards I left for Detroit.

I had arranged to correspond with my "sister"—in reality a middle-aged lady whom I trusted implicitly with my mission. I left with her samples of letters she was to write in longhand and mail from our "home." As a matter of precaution, she was to begin writing immediately that "mother's illness" was becoming worse.

About eight o'clock in the evening I walked up the squeaking stairs of the ill-kept house at 5144 Canton Street to meet Sage. He was a tall, gaunt man, his mouth a mere thin slit, eyes cold-gray. Almost immediately he suggested that we go to Gerald L. K. Smith's meeting. I welcomed the idea.

"Take your suitcase along," he ordered. "You'll meet your future employer tonight and start work tomorrow morning."

The meeting at Maccabee's Auditorium had already started and close to two thousand people were on hand. Anxious for my first look at Smith, I found him a tall, well-built man, the evangelist type; a continual dynamo of motion. With great pomp and long-

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winded buildup he read good-will messages from Senators Nye and Reynolds on the publication of *The Cross and the Flag*, Smith's magazine which automatically replaced *Social Justice* which had been banned from the mails. Heir to the Coughlinite following in his own bailiwick, Smith made an eloquent plea on behalf of the "persecuted, Christian Father Coughlin." He reached the heights of emotional appeal just before a corps of ushers passed the plate.

After the meeting Sage and I went out to the lobby. A big, flabby, loose-mouthed tub of a man stretched out his hand. His face was dull and vacuous, riddled with whiteheads and blackheads. Garland Lee Alderman was a mess.

I grabbed a limp, moist hand and dropped it quickly to shake hands with Russell M. Roberts, my future employer. He took charge of me from then on, and with Mrs. Roberts I followed him to their car. He knew all about Pagnanelli and had agreed to give me a job in his machine shop.

Roberts lived eight miles out of Detroit at St. Clair Shores, a suburb. We left the city behind and after negotiating a series of turns and twists, we took a bumpy dirt road which was inky dark. Roberts slowed down the car, and as it stopped he said, "Well, George, here is where we work and plot against the powers that be."

The location was grim and desolate. Preceded by Roberts' searchlight, I walked into the house.

He suggested we have a beer. As we talked, he began telling me of his own part in the founding and promotion of the National Workers League. He had paid for the distribution of thousands of leaflets and had helped it financially. He had bailed out Alderman and Sage. But he had remained completely in the background.

I realized with a shock that while Sage and Alderman acted as the "fronts" and took the "rap," Roberts pulled the strings. He impressed me as the brain truster behind the N.W.L., and members of that inner circle I had come to expose.

I was awakened at seven-thirty the next morning. As we ate breakfast, I learned the Roberts' home and



machine shop, "where we can make shells and gunpowder if we have to," were located on a three-acre plot of farmland. Nestling in a clump of trees only a few hundred yards away was Bund Camp Schwaben.

Roberts and I walked to the machine shop adjoining his home. It was built sturdily of cement blocks, at one end of which was a shooting range. "We do our target shooting on Sundays," he said. "Stick around. You'll see it."

But I wasn't called to Detroit to work only as a machinist. Sage wanted me to organize and I had to make a show of some interest. One night I called at Parker's home. I asked him to tell me about those he knew in the Detroit "patriotic" movement, averting his suspicions by saying that I was keenly interested in my work as organizer, and wanted to get the background so as not to approach the wrong people. Parker readily admitted knowing Mrs. Rosa M. Farber and Mrs. Beatrice Knowles of the Mothers groups; also Robert Vietig, and many others.

From this point on my strategy was first to work for Roberts as machinist and try to keep him pacified. Then after work I'd attempt to look up Parker's friends without necessarily letting him know whom I had interviewed. At the same time I must impress him that I was earnestly engaged in organization work.

Not long afterwards Garland Alderman and I drove over to see Robert Vietig, former chairman of the Detroit chapter of the A.F.C. and supervisor to many near-by chapters. I asked



him if the Committee was dead.

"You can't take Americanism out of the hearts and minds of the people," he said sharply. He had placed in a vault a set of the America First membership lists for future use. Vietig told us of his ambition to found a political unit in Michigan with sufficient strength to hold the balance of power. It was his intention to have a speakers bureau and train speakers who were "one hundred per cent American like Garland here."

"Would you train these speakers along nationalist lines?" I asked.

"That's Americanism," he said. "Nationalism is Americanism."

Vietig, an insurance salesman, was in the respectable class and seemed an important cog in the Detroit machine.

After a particularly hard day's work at the shop, I traveled some three hours by bus to reach Mrs. Rosa M. Farber, president of the Mothers of the United States of America, at her home.

"The only way to work now," she said to me, "is through conversation." She called it that. What she actually did was to outline a whispering campaign. She recounted how she had spread defeatism at the local school. One of the teachers giving out ration cards had said that rationing was necessary for psychological reasons. But Mrs. Farber had argued back, "If they want us to know that we are in the war then let them publish the casualty lists and also send the bodies back." Another teacher had commented, "Yes, those lists haven't been published, have they?"

Mrs. Farber boasted, "You see? I planted an idea in her head, now she'll think of it again."

I learned from Mrs. Farber that Mrs. Beatrice Knowles, president of American Mothers, was holding underground meetings. Phoning, I told her of my visits to Mrs. Farber, Vietig and Parker Sage. "Come right over," she invited.

Mrs. Knowles lived in a beautiful home in an expensive section of Detroit's suburbs. Vivacious, energetic, I also found her to be a determined and forceful woman, but not blindly fanatic. She admitted she was holding secret "movement meetings" every second Monday in the homes of

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American fascist movement, I wrote him enclosing a copy of my *Christian Defender* and asking about his group, the Yankee Freemen. In my mail a few months later I was startled to receive a post card announcing his arrival in New York and inviting me to call on him.

"I'm against the government," he told me earnestly. "I'm for totalitarianism. I stand for a totalitarian form of government. I don't like to call it nationalism because they call it that in Italy and in Germany. I call it Yankee-ism."

I asked what he thought of Democracy. "Democracy is finished," he stated. "It gives the drunk and the heroic person the same rights and privileges. Hitler is the prophet of the ages. He is fighting for an ideal. The people are behind him. The Japs also are fighting for an ideal—we in America have no principles to fight for."

When I had left Detroit I was not sure of Roberts' and Sage's reaction to my taking French leave. Soon after my arrival in New York I wrote them that "mother had died" and received the condolences of both, asking me to come back. I was delighted to know that I was not suspected.

Awaiting me one morning after my return from Detroit was a mimeographed leaflet from one George E. Hornby. It was an announcement that a convention of "patriots" was to meet at Boise, Idaho, on the Fourth of July, almost exactly seven months after Pearl Harbor.

After some correspondence with him, I heard from Edward Holton James who urged, "Go to the convention if you can make it. Anything is good that spells action." I began to pack.

When I arrived at Boise, I telephoned Hornby.

"Come right over," he invited.

I met a man of about 55, tall and rangy, with a brownish complexion and moustache. Hornby's face reflected the characteristic I had found common: that of a deep-seated hate frozen on immobile features.

I registered as a delegate and asked who else had arrived. The turnout was disappointing, Hornby said. News of the convention had somehow leaked out. But two of the staunchest "patriots" in the West, Frank W.



"I'd like some pamphlets on the Jews," I said.

The Italian dropped his work, went into an inner room and returned with a tall, blond man wearing a khaki army shirt and a black tie. His tie pin was a pearl-studded swastika.

He handed me a dozen leaflets and three copies of *National American*, a newspaper in tabloid size. "That's my newspaper," he said. "I am Pete Stahrenberg, the editor and publisher. This is the official organ of the American National-Socialist Party. We're publishing a paper for real one hundred per cent Americans."

I glanced at the papers. Two black swastikas were printed under the title.

"Say, what's your name?" Stahrenberg asked suddenly.

"George Pagnanelli," I said. I had decided to pose as an Italian because Italy was a partner to the Axis.

As I turned to go, Mr. Stahrenberg said, "Come again."

But I had no intention of making another visit.

Until now I had worked for small national magazines and was eager to become associated with one of the large national publications. I had just about given up hope of making a good editorial connection when I received a telegram from *Fortune*. They were contemplating a survey on subversive activity and asked if I'd be interested in a job. That winter I plunged into a career as investigator of Nazi activity.

My first step was to become a convincing actor. I took a room near Mulberry Street and lived for a week in the heart of New York's Italian section under the name of George Pagnanelli. I studied the manners of

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Clark of Tacoma and Mrs. Lois de Lafayette Washburn of Seattle, Washington, had both arrived.

Himself a World War veteran, Clark was formerly a lieutenant in William Dudley Pelley's Silver Shirts. But he broke away from the "Goateed Fuehrer" and established his own storm troop outfit known as the League of War Veteran Guardsmen. Clark had served as underground contact man with important fascists and traveled widely on mysterious secret missions.

Mrs. Washburn was a veteran worker in the fascist cause. Although she, too, had operated from many parts of the country, she performed her greatest service to Goebbels' cause in Chicago by founding the American Gentile Protective Association, with Clark as national organizer.

At the "convention" Mrs. Washburn gave an emotional harangue about the role "we patriots" must play on behalf of "Christ and Country."

She had already expressed Japanese sympathies, and I asked how she felt about the attack on Pearl Harbor.

"The New Deal worked secretly with Japan to bring it on," she said. This was the wildest tale, the choicest Nazi lie I had yet heard on the trip.

When the Boise fascist convention was officially ended I realized that my coming had not been entirely fruitless. I had gathered some very incriminating facts against Clark and Mrs. Washburn, both of whom had camouflaged their underground work effectively since Pearl Harbor. I had learned that the pattern of fascism in the West was identical with that in the East, but that the West emphasized direct methods, while the East went in rather for propaganda scheming.

I still had stops to make before going home. In Chicago, I wanted to look up Harry Augustus Jung, director of the American Vigilant Intelligence Federation represented in the East by his collaborator, Colonel E. M. Sanctuary. He styled himself the "nation's foremost authority on subversive forces."

"I can't see you," he said when I phoned. "I've just been subpoenaed to testify before the grand jury."

I realized that the Chicago grand jury investigating un-American activ-

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ity would seriously conflict with my own work. I also knew that it would reflect on me suspiciously if I remained while the grand jury investigations were on. It was bitterly disappointing because I sensed that Chicago was the hotbed of a native fascism.

Regretting my failure to make a thorough survey of Chicago's "patriots," I turned southward to Indianapolis to visit William Dudley Pelley, under indictment for sedition. My initial impression was one of revulsion at the limp, dissipated grayness of the man before me. He smelled of decay.

And then I became aware of his eyes. In their light shone all the cunning and the wizardry which had led a half dozen investigating committees, including the FBI, a merry chase up to the time of our meeting.

Pelley outlined his plan for the coming trial. "We are going to crack this thing wide open, this issue of free speech against dictatorship. This trial is a big thing and we're getting Lindbergh and Thorkelson to come down." Pelley expected to stretch out his trial in order to get national airing for his views.

A few days after my return from the West, he was convicted. Informed of his plans to gain notoriety, the prosecution made quick work of him.



I HAD VISITED Lawrence Dennis, "dean" of American intellectual fascism, in the fall of 1942. I visited him again on February 8, 1943, and he gave me what I regard as my most sensational interview.

I had no idea of the influence which this American Nazi wielded among our Senators and Congressmen. My motive in seeing Dennis was merely to ascertain whether he knew Gerald L. K. Smith, for I had seen a startling resemblance between the January issue of Smith's magazine and some of Dennis' writings.

"Of course I know Gerald Smith. He is a good fellow; he listens to me."

Dennis talked so easily and seemed to trust me so fully that I asked if he knew Ham Fish. "Very well, very well," he answered. "But Fish has no brains. His sympathies are all right,

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but he is dumb. His influence is in proportion to his brains."

Our conversation turned to the attacks of Nye and Wheeler against the Department of Justice.

"You can give me credit for that," Dennis said suddenly. "I've been talking to them all along."

I was bursting with questions. Exactly when and where had Dennis met the Senators, who else was present? But all I dared ask was how he had met Wheeler and Nye.

"Oh, I have many friends in Washington. They invited the Senators to dinner and asked me to be there."

"We patriots are certainly thankful that a man like you can reach those distinguished Senators," I said, tongue-in-cheek, "and influence them in their actions."

"I don't mean to say I've done everything," Dennis said. "I've talked to them and they've listened. They're intelligent men, and they've used their own judgment. They are beginning to learn what it's all about."

I regard Dennis as one of the most dangerous men to our wartime unity. He is an adroit diplomat and makes expert use of well-meaning clergymen and a high official of the Civil Liberties Union to stand by him whenever he is brought before an investigating body. I am convinced he does not want democracy to emerge the victor. Yet why is he given liberty to disrupt national morale? Why must America *at war* continue to be the victim of Goebbels' taunt:

It will always remain the best joke made by the democratic system that it provided its deadly enemies with the means of destroying it.



Now, in April 1943, as I work on the last chapter of my story, I pause to look back over those stirring years since October, 1938, when I hesitantly knocked on that door on East 116th Street. I have learned many things in the Nazi underworld.

First, though some of my "friends" have been indicted and imprisoned, many are still at large plotting the slow strangulation of democracy. Fascism in America is not dead. It has been pretending sleep. Wily Nazi

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propagandists will stop at nothing to sabotage the war and the peace.

After more than four years of undercover work, I've summarized Hitler's program for the subversion of our democracy and the overthrow of our capitalist order. It includes:

1) Anti-Semitism to serve as a social solvent; 2) Red-baiting to serve as a screen for Nazi propaganda; 3) lies or half-truths to gain the support of the politically ignorant; 4) super-patriotism to arouse disciples emotionally; 5) a perverted brand of nationalism which most frequently utilizes the slogans "America First" and "America for the Americans;" 6) anti-British propaganda to rally German, Irish, Italian, Spanish and nativist sentiment; 7) an attempt to undermine confidence in the Administration in order to facilitate the acceptance of revolutionary doctrines,

8) Defamation of democracy by exaggerating its failings as a device to "soften up" resistance; 9) the systematic cultivation of mass hatred as a means of blinding reason; 10) the pitting of group against group, race against race, religion against religion to break down national unity; 11) encouraging an attitude of ridicule toward the operation of Nazi propaganda in an effort to draw a red herring across its trail; 12) the adulation of Hitler as the deliverer from, and of Nazism as the panacea for, the alleged evils of Communism, Judaism, unemployment, the national debt and anything else you choose to name; finally, 13) agitation for a "Third Party" or a "new leadership," native fascist in sentiment, to set up the American New Order by "Constitutional methods" and ostensibly in order to "preserve the Constitution," but which at the same time would be friendly to, collaborate with, or appease Hitler's New Order.

I look back upon my years in the Nazi underworld without regrets. It was a dirty job, but I felt that someone had to do it and live to tell about it. I am going back to the world I left behind to renew friendships and live in the sunshine again—if the countless "friends" I met in the Nazi underworld permit me to live.

I have written this book in order to help preserve those values which I

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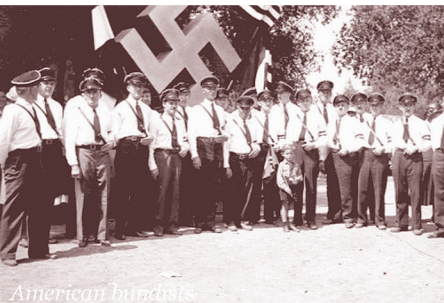
learned were synonymous with America when I first came here: freedom, individual initiative and enterprise. May this blessed nation of ours never degenerate to a system of government by some, for some. May it forever remain a government by all, for all. There is no greater privilege at this moment, no greater honor as we look upon skies free of raining death, to a land free from the barbarisms of war, to a future more promising than any on this strife-torn earth, than to serve this, our home, our country.

This is my faith.

# Coronet

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speech and gestures and modeled mine after them. I was determined to become the finest synthetic Italian-American in New York.

My second step was to offer myself as a volunteer worker to Pete Stahrenberg. He was suspicious at first, but I passed the test and was put to work assembling leaflets.

Those dingy rooms were the clearing house for a multifold quantity of Nazi propaganda. Gradually I began to learn the catchwords and become familiar with subversive publications. A large part of the material came to Stahrenberg from *U. Bodung-Verlag* at Erfurt, Germany, Goebbels' main propaganda mill, as well from countless other Nazi agencies striving to tear down democracy.

Stahrenberg's offices served as a hangout for salesmen of Father Coughlin's *Social Justice* and men selling *Liberation* and *Deutscher Weckruf*. To the offices of the Nationalist Press trooped a steady stream of fascist-minded people. Pamphleteers, crackpots, petty politicians and racketeers in patriotism. But not all of Stahrenberg's acquaintances were shoddy and frustrated. Many who came were well-dressed and respectable.

After a few months at Pete's, I felt ready to go around and enlarge my circle of "friends." With my answers prepared ahead of time, in case I was questioned, I walked up the dirty staircase of Innisfail Ballroom on Third Avenue to attend a meeting of the American Nationalist Party.

The chairman, a man named Stanley Smith, led the crowd in the singing of the national anthem. Then he stepped to the edge of the platform. The crowd waited, hushed.

Smith suddenly burst out, "This here meeting is for Americans—one hundred per cent Christian patriotic



Americans. In such a room as this the Boston Tea Party met. Wake up, Christians. See what is happening to America. The whole country is overrun with foreigners, niggers, Jews. This here country has been stolen from us Christians by a bunch of conniving rats. What are we going to do about it?"

The crowd went wild.

I attended many other meetings of the American Nationalist Party, but none proved to be as vivid as the first. I learned that different types of fascist organizations were designed to operate on each level of society. You hated the Jews, sabotaged democracy and best served the cause of Hitlerism in America with those of your own social, economic and cultural level.

The international cement that held these fascist organizations together was hate. To join a "one hundred per cent Christian-American-Patriotic" group you didn't have to be Christian or American. There was just one requirement. Hate.

I was putting together the pattern of American Fascism in-the-making.

Early in the summer of 1939, the editors of *Fortune* decided to withhold their proposed series of articles on subversive activity. I now faced the choice of continuing with my magazine work exclusively, or continuing as investigator. It meant a life of self-denial and social ostracism, of late hours and constant personal danger. But I decided to go on with my undercover activities.

Up to now, I had been working around the edges of the fascist movement. How was I to get in on the inside? After some preliminary thought I went to Stahrenberg with a bold plan.

"Pete, I'm thinking of putting out  
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a newspaper of my own—a mimeographed weekly that'll tell patriots what's going on in New York."

"That's a damn good idea," Pete said. "What'll you call it?"

"I want to call it *The Christian Defender*," I said.

*The Christian Defender* was deliberately designed to be one of the coarsest sheets published in New York. The cruder it got, the more it lied, the more it slandered the Jew and assailed democracy, the more popular it became. I had no qualms about publishing the hate sheet because it circulated only among those who already were confirmed fanatics. *The Christian Defender* gained for me the respect of countless American Nazis and also became my passport to Nazis abroad.

As Nazis in the summer of 1939 were telling their American henchmen that the collapse of democracy was but a matter of months, the Christian Mobilizers burst upon the American scene. Its new fuehrer emerged as Joseph Ellsworth McWilliams—"handsome Joe McNazi," as he was later known. When I visited Bund Camp Siegfried, I heard McWilliams say:

"This is another revolution. A revolution for a nationalist America. It's a revolution against the Jew first, then against democracy, then against the Republican and Democratic parties. We are going to drive them both out and we are going to run this country with an iron hand, the way Hitler runs Germany."

McWilliams dominated the New York fascist scene for several years with a series of clever publicity-gaining stunts, even to announcing his candidacy for Congress. As charter member No. 737, I was with him day and night during nearly three years' association. I do not recall on his part even one instance of kindness or the expression of gratitude. Unscrupulous, unfeeling, sensual to the extreme, popular idol of the masses and the ladies, Joe had the essentials of a glamour-boy fuehrer to act as the "front" for Nazi politicians.

One night after a late meeting, Joe called me aside and asked me to meet him in one of the back rooms. Lining the walls were four of the most sinister



gangsters of his goon squad.

“What’s up, boys?” I asked, trying to be nonchalant.

“There’s a leak of information somewhere,” Joe said, “and we want to ask you a couple of questions.”

“I have no secrets. You boys know everything about me,” I said. “Shoot.”

I faced Joe’s henchmen for nearly two hours, but nothing to justify their suspicions was discovered.

Joe finally broke into a smile. “Okay, boys. George is all right.”

It was the closest call I had yet had.

I began now to probe into organized terrorist organizations operating deep underground—the “rifle clubs.”

The night was hot and I was broiling as I marched in military maneuvers in a company of 24 members of the secret Iron Guard, known informally as the Midtown Sporting Club. We were being drilled on the third floor of Donovan’s Hall by Herman Schmidt, the slim, dark-haired young commandant. Schmidt’s real name was James Banahan, but he rarely used it in the fascist underworld.

Later Banahan addressed the budding storm troopers. “Members of the Iron Guard! Your duty is to fight for Christ and Country. From now on you will serve as shock troops in any internal explosion that may come. But never forget. The penalty for betrayal is death, swift and unmerciful.”

Over the next few months I proved my “loyalty” to the Iron Guard and was finally allowed to attend a really secret session. Ten of us met at James Banahan’s home.

Banahan unfolded a large poster-size leaflet entitled *American Defenders’ Protective Tactics—Plan No. 1*, prepared by a Major Frank Peace. It listed “strategic points” and “key positions” common to a metropolis.

I was assigned to the Grand Central Station district—"the most important part of the city," Banahan observed.

"Here is what you all do! You are to familiarize yourself thoroughly with the district assigned to you. Know the location of every arsenal, subway station, power house, police and gasoline station, public building and hideout in your district. Then chart those vital centers on your map. The maps will be forwarded to General Headquarters, where a master map of the entire city will be made."

I saw that I was becoming involved in situations from which I would have great difficulty extricating myself. These men were outlaws who stopped at nothing. Now was the time to call a halt *before* they carried through their threats! I presented myself at the offices of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and turned over the evidence I had gathered.

On January 13, 1940, the FBI cracked down.

That summer I came upon a copy of *Today's Challenge*, organ of the American Fellowship Forum, in the Germania Bookstore. It contained articles by Lawrence Dennis, William Castle, Senator Ernest Lundeen and Representative Hamilton Fish. It was inspired by George Sylvester Viereck, registered as a Nazi agent with the German Library of Information.

Under Viereck's guidance, the Fellowship advocated a strict nationalist policy—America for the Americans, Europe for the Europeans. Congressmen Jacob Thorkelson was advertised to speak for the Forum. But Viereck's prize catch was William R. Castle, our former Ambassador to Japan and undersecretary of state under President Hoover.

For weeks, as I weaved in and out of "patriotic" meetings, I had been seeing quantities of pro-Nazi literature bearing the imprint of Flanders Hall. I was on the verge of writing them when a mimeographed card from Mrs. Elizabeth Dilling, of the so-called Chicago Patriotic Bureau, announced that she was sending me a Flanders Hall book, *Lord Lothian vs. Lord Lothian*. What axe had they to grind?

I paid a visit to Flanders Hall at Scotch Plains, New Jersey. Siegfried Hauck, a former small-town news-  
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*Arthur Derounian (aka, John Roy Carlson)*

paperman, was seated in an office cluttered with files and stacks of books. He described himself merely as “pro-American.” “We are an American house,” he said. “We are not engaged in any propaganda.”

But in due time our Department of Justice trailed George Sylvester Viereck to the inconspicuous offices in Scotch Plains and soon established the fact that he “financed, controlled and directed” the “American” publishing enterprise. When finally arrested, he said blandly, “I have tried hard to help the President keep his pledge to which he owes his re-election.”

After visiting Hauck, I determined to go to Washington to interview Prescott Dennett, director of the Columbia Press Service and Washington representative of Flanders Hall. He proved to be shrewd and tight-lipped, but he made clear that his role was that of “contact man” between his clients (Viereck and Flanders Hall) and susceptible Congressmen.

I suggested taking some literature “to the boys back home.”

“Sure,” Dennett said and gave me a stack of envelopes containing Congressional speeches. The franked envelopes bore the signatures of 10 Congressmen, including such names as Clare Hoffman, Hamilton Fish, Gerald Nye and Robert Reynolds.

My talk with Dennett showed how Viereck had improved his propaganda technique since World War days. I realized that the enemy on the home front was infinitely more cunning and deceptive than the military enemy.

While the rest of America slept, the Nazis had even gained the ears and minds of a gullible religious following. One apostle of the hate creed was Pastor Joseph Jeffers in Los Angeles, who had taken a postgraduate course on applied “Christianity” in Germany and Italy in 1938.