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Fascism and Nazism in the United States: News media response

TIME magazine and the New York Times coverage of the rise of Fascism and Nazism in America

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Foreword

This paper is the result of one year of research and writing, it has been a stressful yet exciting process where I have learnt a lot about what is needed to research a topic. This paper would not have been possible without the academic and emotional support of several people. First, I would like to thank my supervisor Elisabetta Cassina Wolff for her invaluable assistance which allowed me to finish this paper. Next, I would like to thank my fiancée Sanna Kaldhussæter who despite her own master thesis writing has taken time to listen to me when going over the topic and given valuable feedback. I would also like to thank my friend group: Jakob, Alvilde, and Maykal for keeping me somewhat sane throughout the entire writing process. Lastly, I need to thank Petter for helping me manage my emotions and stress throughout the entire process.

Summary

The United States between the First and Second World War was a nation going through unprecedented change. Relatively unaffected by the destruction and shared trauma of the first world war, but yet emerging as victor, it found itself in a unique position in the world. Yet not all was peaceful in this new post war world, communists in Russia and fascists in Italy were something the world had yet to see. The rise of 20th century totalitarianism rose up the ashes of the shattered battlefield that was Europe. Yet, American prospered to such an extent that it would become known popularly as “the roaring twenties”. Standard of living in the United States grew quickly in the wake of the war as goods and entertainment became more readily available.

The roaring twenties were however not without its flaws, with a rise in living standards came increased immigration, and with it those who few who resisted them. Groups such as the racist KKK reached unimaginable heights during the twenties, and immigration reform would be put in place. This unprecedented state of development would end abruptly in 1929 when the stock market crashed, and the United States would enter the great depression. With this crash came lower standards of living and the people began looking for different alternatives. Some looked to Roosevelt and his new deal, while some blamed “the other” such as the Jews, immigrants, or Catholics. At the same time new ideologies in Europe blossomed, Nazism and Fascism, these terrible ideologies brought a veil of security and prosperity, appealing to some few Americans. American Fascists would begin to rise up all across the country, some adapting from the racists and religious past of the nation, while others embraced the old world.

During this time news coverage of these groups and developments would be widespread and the public were eager to learn about what occurred in the nation. Two large sources of news TIME magazine and the New York Times were popular and served as an easy access to information. This paper looks at these two media houses to see how they contributed to the failure of American Fascism. We will see that not only were there little to no chance for the success of Fascism to succeed in America, but that the media played a pivotal role in its failure.

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Introduction

The Topic: American Fascism, the media's role in its failure

Historian Richard Steigmann-Gall published a paper about the historiography of the American right wing during the interwar period. He argues that there is a lack of focus on Fascism in America during the interwar period and that it is necessary to rethink this period as Fascism probably played a bigger role than first anticipated.¹ While Steigmann-Gall makes some excellent points in his paper, and I do agree with most of what he states, I believe that by looking at why Fascism and Nazism in the United States failed during the interwar period might help answering how much of a threat Fascism actually posed. I will therefore look at what role American news played in the portrayal of Fascism and national socialism, as a factor in its failure. As This is an extremely broad topic with hundreds of newspapers all around America I will be focusing on New York, and more specifically the newspaper *The New York Times* and the weekly news magazine *TIME*. By looking at how these reported on these new radical right-wing ideologies it can help us understand how and why they failed, and if Steigmann-Gall was correct in his statement that Fascism and Nazism posed a greater threat than first assumed. The question this paper will answer is: How did *TIME* and the *New York Times*' cover Fascism and Nazism in America, and how did the coverage contribute to ultimate failure of Fascism and Nazism as a valid option in American politics, in the eyes of the readers?

New York is particularly interesting as the city was large melting pots of ideologies, ethnicities, cultures, and religions, populated by large numbers of Italians and Germans living close by Jewish communities. It is also here we see the emergence of the German American Bund, one of the most influential national socialist movements in interwar America. In the Midwest we have the KKK and its collapse in the early thirties and the emergence of more radical groups such as the Black and Silver legion. At the same time, we see the emergence of the somewhat infamous radio host Charles Coughlin. While being merely one person he is by far the most influential person on the radical right in interwar America, excluding Charles Lindbergh.² The reason I do not consider Lindbergh as an influential person in this sense is because I do not believe he was an avid fascist nor very politically engaged. If Arthur

¹ Richard Steigmann-Gall, "Star-Spangled Fascism: American Interwar Political Extremism in Comparative Perspective," *Social History* 42, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 119, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03071022.2016.1256592>.

² Seymour Martin Lipset, *The Politics of Unreason: Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1977*, 2nd ed., vol. P75, A Phoenix Book (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 10.

Derounian, writing with the author's name John Roy Carlson, is to be believed, Charles Lindbergh was a naïve man who was easily influenced and controlled by the people around him.³

Structure

This paper consists of an introduction to the theme and paper, and a short history where some of the most comprehensive works will be summarized as to give better understanding as to why the theme of this paper is a necessary addition to the historical debate. I will then give a short explanation as to why I think this theme is important and why I believe it is missing from the historical debate. The paper will then consist of 3 chapters discussing different topics, the first section will be historical context as to better understand what led up the social and political climate of the 1930s. I will primarily be utilizing secondary sources for this section as it is technically outside the focus of this paper and is only needed for context of the main theme. The second section will look at how the aforementioned news media reported on the rise of Fascism and Nazism in Europe, as well as its rise in America. The last chapter will be a culmination of my thoughts and the different factors covered, bringing it all together into a final analysis and conclusion.

The historical debate

This section serves to show what has already been discussed in the field of history, as well as giving some context to what has been written about the various individuals and groups that will make appearances later in the paper. It is also necessary to go through some other topics such as economy and politics briefly as to better understand the circumstances that surrounded the people who were exposed to the news. This section will provide some context, as well as showing why my paper is a necessary addition to the historical debate. Other topics, such as quickly summarizing how Germany tried to influence America, will also be briefly mentioned in this section and will provide some well needed context.

The historical debate surrounding fascism in America has been presented through many different points of view. One noteworthy work is that by Michael Joseph Roberto *The coming of the American Behemoth*.⁴ Having been published in 2018 it is a very new work covering

³ John Roy Carlson, *Under Cover: My Four Years in the Nazi Underworld of America : The Amazing Revelation of How Axis Agents and Our Enemies within Are Now Plotting to Destroy the United States* (New York: EPDutton, 1943), 249–50.

⁴ Michael Joseph Roberto, *The Coming of the American Behemoth: The Origins of Fascism in the United States, 1920 -1940*, 1st edition (Monthly Review Press, 2018).

the period, totaling several hundred pages it is one of the largest contributions to the historical debate in recent years. It follows a trend in the study of American interwar fascism by looking at the economic link between fascism and the American capitalist system. His main arguments cover the struggle between fascism and communism from 1929 to 1934. He claims that America was close to turning fascist during the early 1930s and points out how the former treasury secretary said that America needed a Mussolini.⁵ He continues to point out that several Marxist thinkers in America saw “The New Deal” as fascistic in nature. The reason for this is because the president himself created a planned economy. Regarding the planned economy under the New Deal and the national recovery act, Roberto says:

Yet the character of the planning was “not capitalistic,” he insisted, “for in capitalism the individual alone must have freedom to determine his activities.” Rather, the NRA codes indicated a “Fascistic type of government management.” Fascism relied on the “Corporation” rather than the individual “to ensure the success of the managed society, the planned economy,” since under fascism “capital and labor function under a strict corporate law (the code) which only the Dictator can change at will.”⁶

He does however conclude that fascism did not settle fully in America, but it had laid the foundation for doing so. His main argument in his book is on the danger of “monopoly-finance capital” and that the historical debate has spent too much time looking at America the same way we look at Germany and Italy in the same timeframe. He repeatedly uses the expression “embryonic fascism” to describe the state of America during the interwar period.

The ties between American capitalism and its corporations with Fascism can seem quite direct when looking at American business dealings in the Axis nation’s leading up to and during the second world war. Edwin Black has potentially one of the most well documented accounts of the interaction between an American corporation and Germany. In his book *IBM and the Holocaust*⁷ he looks at the ties between IBM and Germany in the years before and during the war. Specifically, how IBM machines were used to hone the efficiency of the Holocaust as well as the German war machine. He points how IBM through its subsidiaries made several deals with Germany and Italy, as well as other Axis states and occupied territories. He says how IBM in a sense played both parts in the war as even after America joined the war IBM “executives in New York could still monitor events and exercise

⁵ Roberto, 211.

⁶ Roberto, 246.

⁷ Edwin Black, *IBM and the Holocaust: The Strategic Alliance between Nazi Germany and America’s Most Powerful Corporation*, Expanded ed. (Washington, D.C: Dialog Press, 2012).

authority in Europe through neutral country subsidiaries”⁸. He also points out how IBM played a vital role on the side of the allies as well during the war, thereby playing both sides. He concludes that it is unclear how much IBM executives knew about what their machines were used for. These ties between an American corporation and fascist nations are particularly interesting as it tells us how American corporations viewed Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Black states that “not a single document was uncovered anywhere in any country indicating that IBM, either in New York or Europe, ever moderated its strategic alliance with the Third Reich.”⁹

IBM was however not the only American corporation to profit from business with Nazi Germany before and during the war. Edwin Black’s book *Nazi Nexus*¹⁰ covers how American corporations and business leaders made deals with Nazi Germany as well as potential Nazi sympathy. The first he mentions is Ford, and specifically Henry Ford. Ford (The company) followed a similar path as IBM did, trading with Germany before the war and their local subsidiaries continuing to operate after America joined the war. It was estimated in 1945 that one third of Germany’s truck were produced by Ford, and a U.S army report called Ford “the arsenal of Nazism”¹¹, a play on word in stark contrast to Roosevelt’s “The arsenal of democracy”. Henry Ford is also covered in some detail, specifically his antisemitism and the publication of his infamous *The international Jew*, which was heavily distributed in Germany before the war, and potentially influencing Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* in some aspects. Black points out how Baldur Von Schirach claimed to have become an anti-Semite because of Ford’s *The international Jews* claiming it was the decisive anti-Semitic book.¹² It is clear that Henry Ford shared some viewpoints with national socialism, specifically the anti-Semitism. Ford as a company is however yet another unclear situation as it is difficult to say whether they were seeking profits or were actually sympathetic. Black also covers GM in some detail, but it is similar in practice to Ford’s conduct so does not need spelling out here.

While Black’s writings on American corporations dealing with Germany is not the same as what Roberto talks about in his work *The coming of the American Behemoth*. It is still interesting as it shows us that several of Americas largest corporations had no seeming moral

⁸ Black, *IBM and the Holocaust*, 376.

⁹ Black, *IBM and the Holocaust*, 439.

¹⁰ Edwin Black, *Nazi Nexus: America’s Corporate Connections to Hitler’s Holocaust* (Washington, D.C: Dialog Press, 2009).

¹¹ Black, *Nazi Nexus*, 14.

¹² Black, *Nazi Nexus*, 8.

reluctance to work with Fascistic governments. Anything that could give a company an economic or political advantage would be highly valuable to any American corporation, and Nazi Germany was a perfect candidate for profit considering its government spending. This part of the historical debate is very in line with Marxist theory, this is also said out loud by Roberto, saying “My approach is grounded in the principles of Marxist political economy set within the epoch of contemporary world history.”¹³ This focus on the economic aspect of Fascism in America is very interesting as it has seen a rise in recent years and has been lacking in the discussion of Fascism in America during the 20th century. Many have focused on the political, racist, anti-Semitic, social, aspects of Fascism and have in a sense forgotten the economic element of fascist ideology.

When it comes to other approaches in the study of American Fascism there has been a variety of creative ways to tackle this issue. One in particular, Sander A. Diamond’s *The Nazi Movement in the United States*¹⁴ is particularly interesting as it does a deep dive into the German population in America and specifically the activities of the German American Bund. Diamond focuses on how the German-American population viewed Germany, how Germans viewed America, and the rise of the “friends of new Germany” (later the German American Bund). He points out how many Nazi officials believe that Germans living in America were prime candidates as foreign supporters of Nazi Germany. He begins his book by telling the story of the German Foreign Institute (Deutsches Ausland-Institut) which played a vital role in tracking and organizing foreigners of German descent. He tells how the institute, originally established during the Weimar republic, was used by the NSDAP during their years in power to attempt to influence German-Americans.¹⁵ The main section of his book covers the rise and fall of the German American Bund with an emphasis on the falsehoods which led to its demise. He places a particular focus on Fritz Julius Kurtz, a man born in Germany who emigrated to America and was appointed the head of the Bund. He concludes that the German American Bund failed due to the lack of German-American support, as the main support for the Bund came from German nationals, not naturalized or born German-Americans.¹⁶ The book also briefly mentions how the Bund interacted with other radical right organizations and groups such as the KKK.

¹³ Roberto, *The Coming of the American Behemoth*, 11.

¹⁴ Sander A. Diamond, *The Nazi Movement in the United States: 1924-1941* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1974).

¹⁵ Diamond, 75–81.

¹⁶ Diamond, 337.

Another book which deserves mention when discussing the historical debate is Seymour Lipset and Earl Raab's *The Politics of Unreason*.¹⁷ While it covers the right wing from the founding of America to the time it was written it sheds a very interesting light on the progression of the radical right in America during the interwar years. Being a book that seeks to cover all American history it gives the authors a unique perspective on how the American right changed and adapted over the years. The most relevant chapters for this topic is four and five which covers the 20s and thirties respectively. Chapter five is by far the most relevant as it overlaps with all the other works, as well as the overall theme of this paper. Chapter four is still highly relevant, as it gives us a very important context to better understand the shift "from protestant nativism to a more abstract nativism".¹⁸ It also provides us with statistics and tables from survey results regarding the religious diversity of the supporters of Charles Coughlin, as well as showing the political diversity of his followers. It does need mentioning that Lipset was a fellow of the Hoover Institute which is considered a more conservative research center.¹⁹ As the radical right is often associated with the conservative elements of American politics, this deserves mention. I do however not believe that this invalidates Lipset and Raab's work as if one were to discredit any work based on the ideological leanings of its author, we would also have to discredit any left leaning authors as well when covering an ideological topic.

There has been loads of study on the German-American community and Germany during the interwar years. There is however a notable lack of Italian-American focused research, which notable considering the large number of Italian-Americans and the fact that the rise of Fascism was first witnessed in Italy. Diggins *Mussolini and Fascism, The view from America*.²⁰ Diggins covers the same topic as Roberto does in his book, with the notable addition of both journalistic and political view of Mussolini's Italy in the United States. The book has much broader view than Roberto's, this does however result in less focus on particular person or group. It focuses on a key topic which I find quite lacking in the historical debate, namely public perception. As an example, he mentions that there was a form of duality to the view of Italy in the American mind. One was focused on a romantic view of Italy and its classical culture as well as the *Risorgimento* movement. The other view

¹⁷ Lipset, *The Politics of Unreason*

¹⁸ Lipset, 202.

¹⁹ Christian Science Monitor. "HOOVER INSTITUTION; Leaning to the Right," *Christian Science Monitor*, March 27, 1980, <https://www.csmonitor.com/1980/0327/032756.html>.

²⁰ John P. Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism: The View from America* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1972).

was that of a need to change Italy to a more Americanized lifestyle.²¹ He closes his book by stating that Fascism was viewed as Europe's problem by most Americans and that they mostly believed that it could never happen in America. He states: "Yet if we regard Fascism as a state of mind and not merely as an authoritarian state, as an attitude and mentality as well as an institution and ideology, the problem remains as much America's as Europe's."²²

Diggins book is fascinating as it adds something to the historical debate which is generally lacking, namely the focus on Italy as well as the idea of public perception.

The last book which deserves mention is that of Gerald Horne's *The color of Fascism* which covers Lawrence Dennis, an author and diplomat who advocated Fascism as an alternative to Communism and Capitalism.²³ Gerald Horne takes a deep dive into the mind of Lawrence Dennis' life and vision. Horne focuses a lot on the hypocrisy that a man who was born as black does his best to pass as white and advocate a racist ideology. He speaks of how Dennis became the face of Fascism in America and had meetings with Mussolini and other fascist leaders. He also worked for the state department for a time and was later charged with sedition.²⁴ What is so fascinating about Dennis is that he was not part of any organized group, he was simply one man with a vision, very similar to that of Charles Coughlin.

So far only books have been covered, there are however numerous invaluable articles that have contributed to the historical debate. When it comes to other radical right-wing groups in America Peter Amann's *Vigilante Fascism* deserves mention.²⁵ It covers the infamous Black Legion which split from the KKK and has been alleged to conduct murders, kidnapping, threats, and various other activities. Their membership was equal or greater to that of the German American Bund, yet has not gained the same infamy and focus in the historical discussion. Another which deserves mention is Andrew Palella's *The Black Legion: J. Edgar Hoover and Fascism in the Depression Era*, which covers the FBI investigation of the group and Fascism in general during the depression era.²⁶ Palella also states that the article's purpose is "not only to shed light on the curious story of the black legion, but also to help

²¹ Diggins, 21.

²² Diggins, 495.

²³ Gerald Horne, *The Color of Fascism: Lawrence Dennis, Racial Passing, and the Rise of Right-Wing Extremism in the United States* (New York: University Press, 2009).

²⁴ Horne.

²⁵ Peter H. Amann, "Vigilante Fascism: The Black Legion as an American Hybrid," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 25, no. 3 (1983): 490–524.

²⁶ Andrew G. Palella, "The Black Legion: J. Edgar Hoover and Fascism in the Depression Era," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 12, no. 2 (2018): 81–105.

preserve its rightful place in the historiography and narrative of American radicalism and the Great Depression”.²⁷

Another group which deserves mention, mostly due to their infamous leader, is William Dudley Pelley and his Silver Legion. Here two works spring out, Eckard Toy’s *Silver Shirts in the Northwest*²⁸ and Suzanne Ledebor’s *The man who would be Hitler*²⁹. Both articles focus on the silver legion, a militant wing associated with the Christian Party. Both articles cover the same topic, that being the silver legion and Pelley. They cover the rise of the Silver Legion and Pelley, as well as his run for public office and his later arrest and imprisonment for high treason. *Silver Shirts in the Northwest* does however have a more narrowed scope as it primarily focusses on his activities in the Northwest of the United States.

Lastly to cover is some writing on how the theme was covered in media, here an interesting is that of red Fascism. It is the theory that Fascism and communism were often seen as one in the same, both as authoritarian and anti-democratic. This is covered well by Les Adler and Thomas Paterson in their article *Red Fascism*³⁰ and in Thomas Maddux’s *Red Fascism, Brown Bolshevism*³¹. Both cover the same topic; however, Maddux’s text is a direct reply to that of Adler and Paterson and many of their text’s shortcoming and critiques. In many ways Maddux’s text is supplementary to that of Adler and Paterson as he does not directly disagree with their conclusions, but mostly add to the debate by giving more context and a different focus. He focuses a lot on public perception as well as on how the Roosevelt administration tackled the issue.

My contribution

I find there is a lack of attention paid to the public perception of Fascism in the United States from the angle of media presentation. I would argue that Fascism as an ideology is not represented by any group, individual or nation, but is as Diggins puts it in his book, a state of

²⁷ Palella, 99.

²⁸ Eckard V. Toy, “Silver Shirts in the Northwest: Politics, Prophecies, and Personalities in the 1930s,” *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 80, no. 4 (1989): 139–46.

²⁹ Suzanne G. Ledebor, “The Man Who Would Be Hitler: William Dudley Pelley and the Silver Legion,” *California History (San Francisco)* 65, no. 2 (1986): 126–36, <https://doi.org/10.2307/25158370>.

³⁰ Les K. Adler and Thomas G. Paterson, “Red Fascism: The Merger of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia in the American Image of Totalitarianism, 1930’s-1950’s,” *The American Historical Review* 75, no. 4 (1970): 1046–64, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1852269>.

³¹ Tomas R. Maddux, “Red Fascism, Brown Bolshevism: The American Image of Totalitarianism in the 1930s,” *Historian* 40, no. 1 (1977): 85–103, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6563.1977.tb01210.x>.

mind that is as much America's problem as it is Europe's.³² It is my belief that the failure of Fascism in America was not solely due to the collapse of any group or the outbreak of war. It is my belief that the success of any political ideology is dependent on either public support or a power gap within in the nation. None of these things were present for Fascism in the United States, particularly the foremost mentioned. While some might argue that there was some sort of instability and a power gap in the American political landscape at the dawn of the great depression, this was before Fascism had been established in any country other than Italy. Fascism was a one-off ideology new ideology and adopting a herby untested ideology that had only been around for around 10 years in Italy would probably not make it attractive to a very conservative America.

Media is the most accessible way for the public to access news from around the world, and therefore the media have a responsibility to accurately report on the events of the world and how the world is changing. While ideally any news media should be unbiased and objective in their reporting, the reality is often far from the ideal. The author and editor hold loads of influence over what makes it into the newspaper or magazine and therefore their own reporting will often reflect their own opinions on the matter, either consciously or subconsciously. These opinions can as a result be conceived as facts by some readers, and therefore the way in which a newspaper covers a subject can easily influence its readers.

While there are countless media houses in the United States that operated and had a great number of readers, I will only be covering the New York Times (NYT) and TIME magazine due them both being based out of New York and being relatively large, but different in the way they publish their works. NYT is a daily newspaper, while TIME is a weekly news magazine, as a result they operate quite differently. While NYT might not have time to report on something if it happens right before the cut off for the morning newspaper, TIME has the time to plan ahead about what they want to publish each week. As a result, TIME has the capability to spend more time articulating exactly what they want to communicate. There are several reasons I chose these two sources, and I will go over that in the next section. While I do acknowledge the readers of these two do not equate to all Americans, that is not the goal. The aim of this thesis is to look the readers of these two papers, which would mostly be a limited number of New Yorkers.

³² Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 495.

On sources

The sources used in this paper will be a combination of primary and secondary sources. Several primary sources are sadly unavailable in Norway and can therefore not be used. I want to make clear that this does not mean that I will be basing my conclusions solely on secondary sources, every topic covered after section one will consist of at least one third primary sources, and ideally half. Secondary sources will only be used to support my arguments, give context, or when primary sources are completely unavailable. I will also use direct quotes of primary in secondary literature if it is not possible to locate the source quoted. I do acknowledge that many quotes in historical text might be framed in such a manner that it excludes potentially vital information relating to the quote, and I will therefore not do this if I believe the quote would be a disservice to the credibility of this paper.

As travelling to the United States was out of the question during the 2021/2022 Covid-19 pandemic, most of the primary sources are digitalized and links to the relevant archives will be given with in the reference. In other cases, I will be using later publications of a particular source if the original is unavailable, as for example with the 1930s Gallup polls, having been published in its totality in a book from 1972. I will be using that book as a primary source, even though it was published long after the relevant period. I believe this decision is justified as the information within the book is raw data from the late 1930s and not already processed material. This paper will be based on the sources I believe is the most relevant to the topic and appear to be the least unbiased.

I will also be challenging some of the works used in this paper as I believe it is necessary to challenge biased or misleading information. I do want to make clear that even if a source is biased, it does not mean it is factually incorrect or inaccurate, every secondary source and to some extent primary source, is shaped by its author. This shaping does not outright invalidate any source, but it should be brought up when used for the sake of the factual credibility and objectivity of this paper. I will also do my best not to misrepresent any source used in this paper, it is not my intention to ever frame or present a source is such a way to solely support my own narrative. Lastly in the conclusion of the paper I will be mentioning some works, such as that of Gary Klein, who have covered a similar theme as my paper, but with a different approach.³³ He will be used as a point of comparison to my thesis. All in all, I will

³³ Gary Klein, "When the News Doesn't Fit: The New York Times and Hitler's First Two Months in Office, February/March 1933," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 78, no. 1 (March 1, 2001): 127-49, <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900107800109>.

do my best to conserve the credibility and objectivity of this case, I am however as all authors biased when it comes to political issues. Yet I will do my best to not let my inherit biases effect my writing.

Method

- On New York Times and TIME

NYT and TIME will be the main two media outlets for this thesis is due to two simple reasons, they are both based out of New York and therefore have the same target audience, and they have both digitized their entire archive. As a result, it is easy to find the publications necessary for the analysis as travelling to a physical archive was not an option due to the reasons mentioned earlier. As the sources are digitized the references will always take you to the website where the archives are stored and to the respective page. I will nonetheless treat each newspaper and magazine publication as a primary source, although they may not seem like so when looking at the referene. Other newspapers will be used as to give some context on what other medias were writing about a topic but will only be used where necessary.

- Method, theory, and approach

This paper will by its nature be comparative, comparing two different media houses with several similarities. They are also different in the way the published their papers, one daily and one weekly. The paper is also comparative in that it analyses the coverage of different individuals and groups by the media. The analysis of several different actors results in neither being covered to a great extent, as this is not necessarily due to this paper attempts to answer a quite broad question about a trend, not one specific individual or group. Therefore, solely focusing on group or individual would work against that very essence of this paper. This paper is primarily about public perception as a factor in the failure of American Fascism. This paper will rely on secondary sources to lay a foundation to better understand what other factors contributed to the failures of Fascism. As a result, this paper will be utilizing two different approaches to the methods used. The primary subject will be comparative, as mentioned earlier, while the secondary topic, namely why fascism failed, will have a broader focus as it attempts to summarize different conclusions made by other historians. I want to make clear that the focus is public perception and opinion, and that my secondary focus is only intended as supportive evidence based on what ahs been written by earlier historians.

The study of public perception and opinion can be difficult as often one might get the impression that what one reads is the full truth. Public opinion and perception is not the full truth as it is impossible to know exactly what a person in the past actually believed. As Boyle puts it when referring to historians: “Above all he must beware the pitfall of claiming that what he cites as an example amounts to a proof.”³⁴ This is an easy pitfall to fall into and should be mentioned here as a result, again as Boyle says: “The historian of public opinion, with hundreds and perhaps thousands of examples to choose from, has a particularly onerous task in this respect.”³⁵ To avoid falling into a pitfall where the only source used is the primary source which would influence public opinion, I will utilize secondary other primary sources to show what is known about the specific group or individual covered as to give a clear representation of the historical reality in regards to the groups and individuals.

The history of public opinion and perception are inherently linked as one’s opinion is often based off of one’s perception:

For public opinion is mainly what contemporaries perceived it to be. One scholar defined public opinion as ‘those opinions of private persons which governments find it prudent to heed’, and the governments will themselves be shifting, searching for what they should heed, trying to anticipate the shifts and movements of opinion, trying to carry the public along with their policies.³⁶

This asserts the importance of public opinion in the policies of a country, therefore understanding the perceptions and opinions of the public is vital to understand what policies and political changes took place. As this paper is intended as a study in the perception the readers of NYT and TIME would have of the events in their life, there will be little focus on the factual accuracy of the news articles. By this I mean, I will not comment on whether what is written in the newspaper is true to history as that would have no impact on public opinion at the time. That is not to say that public opinion might have shifted over time, but this paper focuses on the opinions the people would have gotten at the time reading the news.

This is also not a deep dive into the inner workings of TIME and NYT as other such as Gary Klein did.³⁷ This is similar to the reason as to why I decide to avoid scrutinizing the historical accuracy, the public would not have known what took place behind the closed doors of the media houses. Therefore, it would not have had an effect on public perception and opinion.

³⁴ D. G. BOYCE, “PUBLIC OPINION AND HISTORIANS,” *History* 63, no. 208 (1978): 228.

<https://ezproxy.uio.no/login?url=https://www.jstor.org/stable/24411094>

³⁵ BOYCE, 228.

³⁶ BOYCE, 225–26.

³⁷ Klein, “When the News Doesn’t Fit.”

As Klein states himself, his coverage covered aspects that the public would not have known about.³⁸ I am therefore deliberately not following his method in research and coverage of the topic, although our topics are very similar. The same goes for Kenneth Heinman's approach who covers bias in media coverage.³⁹ This is again a very similar paper to this paper, but with a different approach and utilizing a different method of study and approach. Heinman also focuses on the injustices of the bias, resulting in public opinion being swayed in a false direction. I do find such an approach admirable but would not fit with my theme as I feel it takes away from the important question, which is what the actual public perception and opinion was, not if it was in line with the truth.

To sum up, I will be approaching the paper from a comparative angle, comparing different media houses with different approaches and coverage of the same topic. As well as a comparison of how coverage differed between each group and individual. My paper will dabble in nationalism, religious, ideological, media, and political history. There will be a heavy focus on context as we are dealing with a mostly educated public in New York who would probably be somewhat versed in the history of the United States, therefore some of that history will be covered to give context. During this paper I will also go through different theories such as American exceptionalism as that is something indicated in many different conclusions.

- American Exceptionalism

To quickly summarize the theory of American exceptionalism, Hilde Restad defines it through three aspects: America being distinct and different, America having a mission and role in the world, and that America does its own thing and resists outside influence.⁴⁰ As she also explains it:

the united States as haven for the serving, a new beginning of the persecuted of the Old World. It portrays the New World as morally, physically, and psychologically superior to the old world, a status that can only be maintained by isolating the New World from the old.⁴¹

³⁸ Klein, 139.

³⁹ Kenneth Heineman, "Media Bias in Coverage of the Dies Committee on Un-American Activities, 1938–1940," *The Historian* 55, no. 1 (1992): 37–52.

⁴⁰ Hilde Eliassen Restad, *American Exceptionalism: An Idea That Made a Nation and Remade the World*, Routledge Studies in U.S. Foreign Policy (London: Routledge, 2015), 3–4.

⁴¹ Restad, 7.

This is a narrative which will be mentioned numerous times in the paper, and while I am not a follower of this theory in modern times, I am more susceptible to it in terms of the pre second world war American history. Whenever the theory of American exceptionalism presents itself in my own analysis or in a secondary source, I will do my best to mention it. It will however be a common occurrence and can therefore not be brought up every time it rears its head, it is therefore important to keep in mind when reading this paper. American exceptionalism can be seen as an alternative to globalism and can often be seen as the same as isolationism as it shares some of its aspects.

1. Historical context

This section will give historical context for the later chapters and the general history of the American radical right. The United States is one of the earliest modern nation states and their history revolving race, religion, revolution, and radicalism is in essence their national history. Having been founded on the premise of freedom from the British crown, the United States ventured into the world as a federation of states. It is the history of these old and newer states that is vital to understand the history of the United States. There is a historical, religious and political split in America depending on the state in question. Radicalism in New York is quite different from what one would see in Georgia. While it is valid to study American history as the history of one nation, it is a disservice to the diversity of America not to acknowledge the social, religious and political differences between the different states in the nation. While the United States today might be more unified in a common identity as Americans, it is important to keep in mind that this was not always the case and states hold a lot of political, as well as cultural power.

While this section mostly covers non-media related topics, it is vital to have this context in mind when looking at how media reported on Fascism as most things mentioned here would be common knowledge to many New Yorkers. Groups such as the KKK were well known in New York and therefore briefly mentioning them is necessary to understand what association people might have to the radical right and racist groups. Other events such as the first red scare of the late 10s and early 20s is also vital as it helps to inform and show us the lengths America is willing to go to preserve their own political system. This event can also help us better understand how people would view communism when mentioned in the news. If a newspaper focuses on the communist hostile nature towards Fascism, it might sound more appealing to an American due to the red scare. Other contexts such as perception of German

Americans is also important to understand as it can again help us understand what preconceptions Americans might have had for groups such as the German American bund.

Before the 1900s

To better understand why Fascism failed to gain footing in the United States it is vital to understand the ideological, political, and cultural past of the nation. In the early years of the nation's existence, it was primarily an agrarian society, and that is also what the politics surrounded. During the 19th century this short-lived agrarian lifestyle and politics would begin to change, eventually ending in during the 1890s with rapid technological development and innovation across the United States. The American Civil War is potentially the biggest event in American history, it was a groundbreaking turn in domestic American politics and society, it also enforced the duality of American politics, namely the Democrat and Republican parties' role as the two sole players in America. The United States was for the first hundred years of its existence shaped by slavery and racism. What changed with the civil war was the outlawing of slavery and, at least on paper, equal rights for every American regardless of race. Although federal racism was technically illegal this did not limit the individual states rights to implement racist and discriminatory laws infamously known as Jim Crow laws.

Lipset's *The Politics of Unreason* quite clearly supports the idea that the civil war was a turning point, his book is supposed to cover 1790 to 1977, yet it only dedicates one chapter of its 13-chapter length to the period leading up to the civil war.⁴² One aspect of Right-Wing extremism which is very prevalent in the book is religion. As Lipset puts it:

It was this brand of Protestant moralism which helped bind together the elites and masses, helped charge the conspiracy theories and bigotries, all of which shaped the monistic impulse in America for the next three-quarters of a century.⁴³

The prevalence of religion in early American right-wing extremism is perhaps not so surprising, America was after all founded by many mostly protestant sects throughout Europe such as the famous "pilgrims" who are credited as the first Americans arriving on the Mayflower, something every child in America learns. Many denominations of Christianity were very prevalent in America, and many are still around today. Just to name a few we have Baptists, Mormons, Presbyterians, Pentecostal, and Jehovah's Witnesses. As a nation

⁴² Lipset, 34–67.

⁴³ Lipset, 67.

founded upon Protestantism (evangelism) and religious legal freedom, the United States has seen greater religious diversity than many other nations in the new world. If you look to other nations in the Americas that gained full independence before the 20th century the Catholic church hold quite strong prevalence as s unifying force. While most Americans were part of small religious denominations with generally little unity. Local churches and priests held a lot of influence over their respective congregants resulting in little unison between the different protestant sects. In 1890 only about half of all protestants belonged to the two largest denominations, Baptist and Methodist, the rest were split amongst many different denominations, especially in the cities.⁴⁴ The fact that the greatest religious diversity was seen in cities is quite notable as it indicates that the majority of small-town America was dominated by very small and specific denominations of Christendom.

Further evidence of the importance of religion in American life, and particularly in the social divides can be seen in groups such as the KKK (which will be covered later) and the American Protective Association (APA) which was an anti-Catholic association that rose to prominence in the last quarter of the 19th century.⁴⁵ Similar to the “Know nothing movement” of the mid 1800s it was an anti-Catholic political and social movement, primarily based in the working class. They feared the rise of catholic immigration to America and catholic immigrants taking their jobs.⁴⁶ Unlike their more radical counterpart, the KKK, the APA held great numbers all across America, having a large number of members from the western states of the U.S.⁴⁷ Lipset’s book also briefly mentions the prevalence of anti-Semitism in America during the 19th century but it does not appear to be as prevalent as the anti-Catholic movement in the same period.⁴⁸ In contrast Judaism had no central power such as the pope or Vatican and they were often associated with rich professions such as bankers and had a deep-rooted stigma towards them, originating from the old world.⁴⁹ Lipset points out “that antisemitism was limited to a few prominent individuals.”⁵⁰ But that their perception in the American mind as bankers and secretive had risen. From these two examples it is quite easy to see that religion played a large role in American society, and particularly on the right.

⁴⁴ Lipset, 115.

⁴⁵ Lipset, 79.

⁴⁶ Lipset, 81–83.

⁴⁷ Lipset, 88–89.

⁴⁸ Lipset, 92–93.

⁴⁹ Lipset, 92.

⁵⁰ Lipset, 95.

When we will look at the second Klan, the importance of religion in the ideas of the extreme right will become more evident, and the line between race and religion will begin to blur.

The era of the Klan

While many today might only see the Ku Klux Klan as a solely racist anti-black movement, as often portrayed in media, they were also a protestant right wing extremist group who despised Catholics, Jews, and other religious and/or ethnic minorities. Kelly Baker points out that the foundation of the second Klan rose out of the lynching of a Jewish northerner, after they kidnapped him from jail where he was serving a life sentence for murder.⁵¹ Baker's book looks heavily on the religious aspect of the Klan, rather than just their racist actions. Baker emphasizes that in much of religious history writing, the KKK has been classified as a reactionist movement. She argues that the Klan must be a part of American religious history, not as a strange outlier.⁵² This argument, in my belief, is entirely justified and logical as the United States is a nation founded and settled by protestants. The United States has little to no ethnic unity as a nation, while most nation states were built for the ethnic peoples of that country, America was not. America consists of many different nationalities and ethnicities; therefore, it becomes difficult to form a community on one common factor such as ethnicity, therefore religion steps in and unifies them. This theory is supported when looking at the diversity of religious make up in America. The KKK is therefore an integral part of American religious history as it was just yet another movement trying to unify America under one religion. As Baker puts it "The Klan hoped to unite the forces of Protestantism by moving past the strictures of denominationalism."⁵³ This is notable as it tells us that attempting to unite white protestant America was primarily based in religion and not in nationalism, something which was more commonplace in other industrialized nations. This religious aspect is vital for context when looking at how Fascism and national socialism was viewed in America during the 1930s. The KKK is a uniquely American movement, it therefore innately understands the American mind, and particularly the American protestant mind.

Nationalism was however still an important aspect of the KKK, they were after all an American protestant extremist movement. The Klansmen and women took oaths both to

⁵¹ Kelly Baker, *Gospel According to the Klan: The KKK's Appeal to Protestant America, 1915-1930*, Culture America (Lawrence, Kan: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 3-4.

⁵² Baker, 19-20.

⁵³ Baker, 63.

Protestantism and to America, as they believed in the fundamental idea that America was a protestant haven for the white man. Baker puts it quite clearly:

Klansmen proclaimed Protestantism, and their Americanism reverberated with religious overtones. From their view, America was primarily protestant, and the Klan romanticized the Founding Fathers and their “Protestantism” as the keystone in the creation of America.⁵⁴

This merger of religion and nationalism, while not necessarily unique, is significant considering the membership numbers of the KKK at their height in the 1920s numbering three to six million members.⁵⁵ Baker concludes by pointing out how the KKK played to the nationalism of Americans, but with twist. They created the perspective that America was founded and given to the white protestants by God himself, and that any non-protestant white, Jew, or ethnic minority was a threat to the nation God had created for them.⁵⁶ The Klan played to the fears of Americans that their way of life would be uprooted by foreigners or non-protestants in their midst. They lynched and discriminated against blacks, Jews and Catholics alike. Sadly, history has shown us that the African American community in America were more “easy pickings” than other minorities due to their law enforced segregation and history of slavery. On the other hand, we have Rory McVeigh, who argues that

The emergence of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s, as I have argued in this article, was also a response to economic and political power devaluation. While the movement may not have achieved all of its goals, it went into decline when its members felt that their grievances were being adequately represented within traditional political institution.⁵⁷

This is a slight contrast to what Baker seems to emphasize, namely that the KKK was an integral part of American religious history, as mentioned earlier. However, something can be both reactionary as well as integral to the religious history of America. The KKK has risen three times in history, often amongst social and/or political changes affecting white protestant America. The first Klan rose in the aftermath of the Civil war in response to the newly gained rights for the freed slaves. The second Klan rose according to McVeigh, in part due to an agricultural and economic crisis, while at the same time being an integral part of American

⁵⁴ Baker, 74.

⁵⁵ Rory McVeigh, “Structural Incentives for Conservative Mobilization: Power Devaluation and the Rise of the Ku Klux Klan, 1915-1925,” *Social Forces* 77, no. 4 (1999): 1463, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3005883>.

⁵⁶ Baker, *Gospel According to the Klan*, 241–45.

⁵⁷ McVeigh, “Structural Incentives for Conservative Mobilization,” 1492.

society merely showing its face when able.⁵⁸ The third Klan rose to prominence during the civil rights era and equal rights for every American and an end to segregation.

Understanding the Klan is vital to understand the radical right in America, the Klan in a sense did everything correctly when it came to convincing white protestant America, they appealed to their sense of nationalism, faith, fear, personal economy, and family values. The Klan was not merely a political or religious movement, or even an ideology, it was a way of life. Their duality as both an American and protestant movement can help us understand why it gained such a large following compared to other right-wing movements that would rise during the 1930s. No other radical right-wing movement has gained even close to the following the Klan held during their prime. The KKK's history is grand and going into extensive detail is outside the scope of this paper and can therefore not be covered in the detail as it deserves. The Klan will however be mentioned numerous times throughout this paper as a point of comparison to the movements that would rise during the depression. Now that we understand the success story that was the Ku Klux Klan, we can begin to understand why Fascism and National Socialism failed so miserably in America, when several of their core messages were already so prevalent in the nation. The KKK because of their sheer power and prevalence will serve as the goalpost every other group will be compared to.

The red scare and red Fascism

- The red scare

Fascism was often lumped together with communism as simply an authoritarian ideology. This was of course a gross misunderstanding and misrepresentation of two different totalitarian ideologies that were at odds with one another. The red scare of the 1950s is perhaps the most famous one, but the red scare of the early 20s is equal in how it shaped American perception of all totalitarian ideologies. Afterall, if Americans had an ingrained fear of communism, the association of Fascism as the same as communism might help to explain why the United States was so seemingly resistant to the Fascism seen around the world.

Robert Murray wrote a book, *Red Scare A study of National Histeria 1919-1920*, he focuses on the major incidents and causes for the red scare and how it contributed to a great degree of

⁵⁸ McVeigh, 1490–92.

fear of communism in the American mind.⁵⁹ He explains that at the end of World War 1 the United States was psychologically a tired nation, tired of all the progress and war that had affected the people the previous few years.⁶⁰ The United States ended war production within a month of the armistice leaving countless workers without work, and not only that, over 4 million soldiers were demobilized and sent back into the labor market and as a result, unemployment ran rampant and was combined with staggering inflation of the dollar.⁶¹ It is quite obvious that such an economic crisis would lead to some people feeling like the current system did not work anymore, and it turned out to be potentially true as a very vocal minority would begin advocating for communism in the United States.

Many people and the government believed that the protests for lowering of prices and economic change was caused by communist insurrectionists wanting to take control. As a result, the common people and government got the impression that communism was way more widespread than it was within the United States.⁶² Murray does also point out that communists and socialists within the United States were able to unify within a party and movement, The socialist party and the Industrial Workers of the World. The groups consisted of outright Marxists, socialists, pacifists, and anarchists just to name a few.⁶³ The socialist party was headed by an Austrian immigrant named Victor Berger having been the leader of the socialist party for several years before the Red Scare. However, it is noted that Berger was not a revolutionary and believed that socialism could only come about by peaceful means.⁶⁴ What is so notable about Berger is the fact that he was a member of the United States congress as a representative of Wisconsin, so he held political office before being charged and found guilty for espionage during the war.⁶⁵ At the end of 1919 the tone of the communists would change to a more revolutionary idea inspired by the soviet revolution in Russia.⁶⁶ As a result of all the fear spread by the media and government, the average American feared anyone who was not within the norm of political or social discourse was a communist.⁶⁷ He does eventually conclude that the red scare of 1919-1920 arose as a result of

⁵⁹ Robert K. Murray, *Red Scare; a Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1964)

⁶⁰ Murray, 4–5.

⁶¹ Murray, 5–8.

⁶² Murray, 16–17.

⁶³ Murray, 18–19.

⁶⁴ Murray, 20–22.

⁶⁵ Murray, 22.

⁶⁶ Murray, 32.

⁶⁷ Murray, 167.

intolerance towards anyone who was outside the norm, not an actual communist threat.⁶⁸

Murray's analysis is interesting as it shows us how much fear can influence public perception of a perceived threat. He emphasizes several times how fear feeds of fear and that the people's feelings and perception can have just as much impact on political and social discourse as actual threats, especially in an interwar America having been fed stories of spies and insurrectionists for years.

While I have only really covered Murray in summarizing of the Red Scare, there are several other works that cover the topic extensively, especially Regin Schmidt's book *Red Scare*⁶⁹. Which covers the FBI and other anticommunist campaign in the United States between 1919 and 1943. Due to the book's scope, it will be covered when analyzing the concept of "red Fascism" as to better understand how the 1930s communist perception might have influenced the perception of Fascism. One approach that I should briefly mention is that of Stanley Coben and his: *A study in Nativism: The American Red Scare of 1919-1920*.⁷⁰ As nativism is a prevailing theory as to why the United States is so resistant to outside influence, this approach is particularly interesting as it can help lay a foundation for further study into nativism and its conflict with Fascism.

Coben starts of his article with showing some examples of how much American nativism can take control of the people, he mentions three instances which he feels best represents this, a man getting shot to applause for not rising for the national anthem, a two minute acquitting for a murder of a man saying "To Hell with the United States" and the six month imprisonment of a man who said something positive about Lenin.⁷¹ He describes how Americans enter a hysteria whenever something mildly foreign or unknown threatens them and sum up some of the prevailing theories as to why this happens. Coben cites a study that found that the largest cause of prejudice was that of nationalism and patriotism. He explains how the studies found that the cause of most prejudice is an inner turmoil when facing something which can disturb the social status quo.⁷² He states that the main cause for nativism in the United States is a fear of the nation being changed by foreign forces and influence, and that this is one of the main reasons so many feared communism. It was seen a

⁶⁸ Murray, 281.

⁶⁹ Regin Schmidt, *Red Scare: FBI and the Origins of Anticommunism in the United States, 1919-1943*, 2004.

⁷⁰ Stanley Coben, "A Study in Nativism: The American Red Scare of 1919-20 on JSTOR," https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.uio.no/stable/2146574?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents.

⁷¹ Coben, 52.

⁷² Coben, 53-54.

foreign ideology which was not helped by the fact that the USSR supported and propped up American communists with financial aid after 1920.⁷³ He does however note that nativism seemed to lessen once unemployment decreased, and when America refused to join the international community in the League of nations.⁷⁴ It is interesting to see how Murray and Schmidt seem to have two quite different approaches to the topic but conclude almost the same thing, that the red scare was the result of exaggerated fear and prejudice of anything that did not fit into the norms of society. It is also notable that nativism declined when the United States decided to become isolated from the international community as they feared even the mildest influence from the outside. While it is not stated whether these nativist ideas were commonplace in a majority of Americans, it was certainly common enough to result in a severe crackdown on communists and further polarization of the American people.

- Red Fascism

The basic idea of “Red Fascism” is that communism and Fascism oftentimes were lumped together under one umbrella of totalitarianism. Instead of framing communism and Fascism being at odds with one another, American media essentially framed Fascism as just another ideology equal to communism, and particularly Stalinism. Red Fascism has not been recently covered in the historical debate, last seeing substantial discussion during the 1970s. I believe that to understand the perception of Fascism in America we must understand the perception of Communism. Since access to information was limited to the media during the 1930s it is noticeable that Fascism and communism was often seen as the same by the media. This framing just ten to twenty years after the red scare and lasting fear of communism can help us understand why so few were willing to embrace Fascism. The two main works on this topic is *Red Fascism*⁷⁵ by Les Adler and Thomas Paterson and *Red Fascism, Brown Bolshevism*⁷⁶. Thomas Maddux. These two works are partially interesting as they fundamentally disagree with each other but support the same concept.

Adler and Paterson explain that the origin of red Fascism arose during the 20s but became quite prevalent during the 30s. During the early 30s several American scholars noted that Fascism and communism were in essence the same due to their dictatorial nature and

⁷³ Coben, 54–75.

⁷⁴ Coben, 74.

⁷⁵ Adler and Paterson, “Red Fascism.”

⁷⁶ Maddux, “Red Fascism, Brown Bolshevism.”

opposition to individual freedoms.⁷⁷ Later on several political figures such as President Herbert Hoover would comment that he thought that both Fascism and communism was an infection of democracy, this would also be echoed by media such as the New York Times who stated both were an attack on constitutional governments.⁷⁸

German Americans and Germany in the mind of America before World War 2

- The German American

The United States had previously been at war with Germany during the first world war, and anti-German sentiment had been part of the public discourse during the late 1910s. The United States painted Germany as a nation run by a dictator king and as a threat to American democracy and world peace. While the United States was officially neutral at the start, the administration was supportive of the Entente. The United States sent material and supplies to the Entente countries and obeyed the British blockade of Germany. German Americans found themselves in a peculiar situation, were they loyal to their old-world nation or to the nation they currently resided in? While this chapter is not focused on how German Americans were treated in America during the first world war, it is relevant to mention as it will help us better understand how and why German Americans were not as susceptible to influence from Germany later. America being a country of immigrants, and their ancestry being an important part of their identity, it is possible to look at how many viewed Germany by looking at the perception of German Americans.

Looking at the US census of 1910 we can see that there were 8,2 million Americans of German 1st or 2nd generation immigrants and with on immigrant parent (Referred to as “Foreign white stock”).⁷⁹ It should be noted that these numbers only include those who were born in Germany or have at least one parent born there. This means that German Americans made up 25.7 percent of the “Foreign white stock” in the United States.⁸⁰ Considering the United States had a population of almost 92 million at the time⁸¹ that would mean the German American population of 1st and 2nd generation immigrants makes up almost 9 percent of the entire American Population. It should be noted that the native white population (Non 1st or

⁷⁷ Adler and Paterson, “Red Fascism,” 1048.

⁷⁸ Adler and Paterson, 1048.

⁷⁹ US Census Bureau, “1910 Census: Volume 1. Population, General Report and Analysis,” Census.gov, 875, <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1913/dec/vol-1-population.html>.

⁸⁰ US Census, 891.

⁸¹ US Census, 22.

2nd generation immigrants) in the United States at the time was only 50 million.⁸² This would mean that German Americans made up 16,4 percent of the entire white population in the United States. Considering that the majority of foreign immigrants were male, it can be assumed that the German American population would make up over 16.4 percent of eligible voters. The majority of German Americans lived in the Midwest where they made up 30-40 percent of the “Foreign white stock”.⁸³ If you include the Austrian (whom might have been confused as Germans due to the same language) the percentage of German-Austrian Americans become 31.9 percent of all foreign stock, surpassing the 24 percent of British and Irish “Foreign Stock”.⁸⁴ It is important to keep in mind how many German Americans there were in the United States pre-World War 1 so we can better understand how many millions of people were affected by the propaganda and assimilation campaigns that occurred during the first world war.

Walter Kamphoefner wrote the article *Language and Loyalty among German Americans in World War I* about German Americans during the first world war.⁸⁵ His article covers how German Americans of different immigration status reacted to America’s role in World War 1. There were attempts to frame German Americans as potentially disloyal before the United States entered the war. As Kamphoefner points out, in 1915 the former president Theodore Roosevelt states that German Americans who did not assimilate “are not Americans at all, but Germans in America.”⁸⁶ Roosevelt also later stated in 1916 that those who did not learn English when immigrating should go back to their country of origin.⁸⁷ This can be seen as quite a direct attack against the German American population as it is stated in the Census how “there is a considerable non-English speaking element in the native population of German descent.”⁸⁸ This would mean that, not only was there potentially little English legibility amongst first generation immigrants to America, there was also a noticeable lack amongst American born people of German descent. This fact would undoubtedly frame German Americans as a “people” who refused to assimilate into American culture. German American media was also heavily controlled, almost all German language periodicals in America had to

⁸² US Census, 125.

⁸³ US Census, 891.

⁸⁴ US Census, 877.

⁸⁵ Walter D. Kamphoefner, “Language and Loyalty among German Americans in World War I,” *Journal of Austrian-American History* 3, no. 1 (2019): 1–25, <https://doi.org/10.5325/jaustamerhist.3.1.0001>.

⁸⁶ Kamphoefner, 1.

⁸⁷ Kamphoefner, 1–2.

⁸⁸ US Census, “1910 Census,” 1278.

be also published in English.⁸⁹ It is quite evident that the German language was under attack during the years leading up to and during World War 1.

When war eventually came, it is interesting to see that German second generation immigrants served in the US military at almost the exact same rate as other whites.⁹⁰ As Kamphoefner points out: “It is evident from this data that second-generation Germans hardly stood out from their fellow Americans in their rates of military service.”⁹¹ This is a trend we see with many other second-generation immigrants from other nations as well. It is quite clear that very few second-generation German Americans were loyal to the Kaiser. He finishes his paper up with a quote from a German WW1 officer who stated that German, Dutch, and Italians in the American military saw themselves fully American.⁹² The reason I wish to point out how German Americans were treated during the war is quite simple, it was this generation of German Americans who would become parents and notable members in the German American community during the interwar years. The reluctance to identify themselves with Germany can help us better understand why so few American born German Americans were willing to turn towards Nazism as even during the first world war most would rather focus on the American part of “German American”.

- American perception of Germany before Hitler

As mentioned previously there had been a notable degree of vilifying German Americans and of German influence in the United States. The United States was officially neutral for most of the war, and they officially held no allegiance to either. However, we have seen that influential figures within American politics were quite critical of Germany. Hundreds of American sailors were killed in submarine attack, and infamously the sinking of the Lusitania, which is commonly seen as the lead causes for American entry into World War 1, together with the Zimmerman telegram. While the idea that Germany could ever invade the United States was farfetched at best, a German victory in Europe would significantly shift the power in Europe and the world. At the time the British Empire held the second highest population in the world, just behind China. A British defeat could potentially have long lasting economic consequences for the United States, so it was in the nation’s best interest that the entente won. Since an American entry into the war, or at least strengthened support,

⁸⁹ Kamphoefner, “Language and Loyalty among German Americans in World War I,” 2.

⁹⁰ Kamphoefner, 6.

⁹¹ Kamphoefner, 7.

⁹² Kamphoefner, 22.

seemed inevitable it was essential that the Wilson administration had the support of the American people.

David Kennedy wrote a comprehensive book, *Over here: the First World War and American society*⁹³, about the United States role in the first world war. His book focuses on how the First World War influenced American society. This is of course relevant to the topic at hand as it can help us understand the perception of Germany that arose as a result of the war. Kennedy describes how the Wilson administration had an almost impossible task due to the political and social issues that had risen in America over the last two decades all coming ahead at once. He argues that Wilson could not risk what would happen if he was to bring the United States into the war.⁹⁴ After the Germans had declared that they would conduct unrestricted submarine warfare, Wilson asked of congress to allow the merchant navy to be armed, something they did not allow. The United States did however break off diplomatic ties with Germany, and he spoke on how the United States was already involved and had stakes in the war to some extent.⁹⁵ After Wilson was elected for a second term on a, ironically so, a no-war platform he quickly ramped up American involvement in the war. During several speeches to congress he emphasized how the United States held strong interest in supporting the Entente. He also emphasized how there were millions of men and women in America who were sympathetic to the German cause.⁹⁶ It is clear from this that the United States certainly had a political interest in vilifying Germany in the mind of Americans and considering the eventual entry into the war and numerous German American soldiers, and it is clear that it was successful.

The Zimmerman Telegram was the last straw for any potentially positive view of Germany by Americans. It was a telegram from Arthur Zimmermann, the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs for Germany, it called for Mexico to invade the United States in an attempt to make them stay out of the war in Europe. As one of the lead causes for American entry into World War 1, it cannot be covered fully here. Barbara Tuchman wrote perhaps the best and most comprehensive work on the Telegram in her book: *The Zimemrman telegram*⁹⁷. Her book covers the entire background for the telegram and why it was written and sent in the first place, as well as its consequences. As I am only covering how the Telegram affected

⁹³ David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (Oxford University Press, 1982)

⁹⁴ Kennedy, 11.

⁹⁵ Kennedy, 10–11.

⁹⁶ Kennedy, 11–14.

⁹⁷ Barbara Wertheim Tuchman, *The Zimmermann Telegram* (New York : Dell, 1965)

American perception of Germany, those chapters in the book are the most relevant. The book also provides a translation of the decoded telegram which I will be utilizing for my own analysis as it is the most readily available source to the primary source due to my inability to read German.

From the telegram it very clear that Germany had strong interest to keep America neutral and knew that the unrestricted submarine warfare could potentially bring them into the war. The telegram suggests that in the event America joins the war on the side of the entente, Mexico should invade from the south and attempt to take back Texas and New Mexico from America, as well as other territories lost to the United States. Germany also outright state that they would be willing to assist such an invasion with financial aid and claimed that eventually the British and Americans would sue for peace.⁹⁸ In essence, the Telegram makes it evident that Germany was willing to pay another nation to invade the United States to keep them out of Europe, presenting a clear disregard for American civilian life. Asking another nation to invade America is just short of declaring war on America themselves. With this it became quite evident that Germany was willing to go to any stretch to keep American boots out of Europe. The subsequent breaking of ties with Germany and later declaration of war.

Tuchman describes how the news labeled the Zimmermann telegram “Prussian invasion plot” and that previously all German correspondence about America had been noticeably neutral, and this sudden change in tone had completely spoiled any long-lasting peace with America. She also points out how several German American newspapers had originally challenged the validity of the Telegram, but eventually declared it authentic and declared their loyalty to the United States.⁹⁹ Several English newspapers spoke of how Mexico, Germany and Russia would together carve up America if they were to succeed and many called for Wilson to go to war.¹⁰⁰ The medias portrayal of Germany as a country willing tare America apart for their own gain undoubtedly changed many Americans perception of Germany.

Woodrow Wilson would eventually declare war upon Germany, and he directly mentioned both the unrestricted submarine warfare and the Zimmermann telegram in his war speech. He also emphasized how the German people were not the enemy, only their government, and that

⁹⁸ Tuchman, 185–86.

⁹⁹ Tuchman, 171–72.

¹⁰⁰ Tuchman, 172–73.

Germans in America were deserving of friendship and sympathy.¹⁰¹ This is quite notable considering the fact that the German empire ended after World War 1, and it is unclear whether most Americans viewed the interwar government the same way they viewed the imperial government.

Lastly, we have the Committee of Public Information (CPI) which was the primary tool used by the United States government to spread propaganda to the American people. The CPI published several shorter works on German Americans and Germany in general. Perhaps the most extensive work covering the CPI is a book written by the former head of the committee, George Creel. In 1920, the year after the CPI was dissolved, he wrote the book *How we advertised America*¹⁰² in which he writes about how the PCI functioned and carried out their different jobs. It is the first half of the book, *The domestic section*, which is the most interesting as it covers how the PCI operated within the United States during the first world war and explains how they went about “informing” the public about Germany. It should be mentioned that Creel was the head of the committee and can therefore not be seen as an unbiased source. The PCI under his leadership has been criticized as full-on propaganda, and that his portrayal of the PCI’s intentions might not be the full truth. As Chris Hedges explained in 2010 “By the war’s end Creel had some seventy-five thousand speakers who gave four minute talks on topics prepared for them by the committee.”¹⁰³ He goes on to say that, while no newspaper was ever fully censored, they were highly encouraged to print what the committee wrote and the few who resisted were framed as disloyal and pro-German.¹⁰⁴

The PCI was by no means a full-on censorship branch of the US government, this supported out in *How We Advertised America* where it is stated how, instead of forcing the public to think a certain way, they would instead give the people all the information needed to make the right decision.¹⁰⁵ While they might not have been a censorship bureau they were part of

¹⁰¹ National Archives “Transcript of Joint Address to Congress Leading to a Declaration of War Against Germany (1917)” <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/address-to-congress-declaration-of-war-against-germany>

¹⁰² George Creel, *How We Advertised America; the First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on Public Information That Carried the Gospel of Americanism to Every Corner of the Globe* (New York, and London, Harper & brothers, 1920)

¹⁰³ Chris Hedges, *Death Of The Liberal Class* (New York: Nation books, 2010) 77

¹⁰⁴ Chris Hedges, 77-78.

¹⁰⁵ Creel, *How We Advertised America; the First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on Public Information That Carried the Gospel of Americanism to Every Corner of the Globe*, xiv.

the war effort, and worked together with the Army and Navy during the war to help bolster morale at home. As they state:

it was of the greatest importance that America in this war should be represented not merely as a strong man fully armed, but as a strong man fully armed and believing in the cause for which he was fighting for.¹⁰⁶

This is a common argument used several times through the book, their job was to persuade and inform the public about why they were supporting the entente, and why they later joined the war. It is highly evident throughout the book that they would keep pushing out information as to make every American believe their story. It is specifically their story which is important, as much of what they wrote directly influenced how the American public saw Germany.

While the eighteen points given to the press by the PCI might not seem very controlling at first.¹⁰⁷ Their ambiguity leaves almost no room for actual war reporting as no media could report on troop deployments, location of where fighting took place, or even publish pictures showing troop deployments. While these were merely guidelines, no respectable media corporation were willing to put themselves out there disobeying the PCI and being labeled as disloyal as a result. As Hedges points out, the loosely worded espionage act made it an offence to publish any material that undermined the war effort.¹⁰⁸ Since the PCI held the authority to “suggest” what was considered alright to print, they deemed what might undermine the war effort. The espionage title 1 section 1 is particularly vague in its wording stating that to be charged, there must only be “reason to believe the information to be obtained is to be used to the injury of the United States”.¹⁰⁹ This vague wording combined the vagueness in what determines treason could easily result in that most would follow the PCI guidelines in fear of being charged under the espionage act.

The attempt to persuade German Americans to be solely loyal to the United States as a government policy is quite clear when reading the PCI *American Loyalty*¹¹⁰ which tells stories

¹⁰⁶ Creel, xv.

¹⁰⁷ Creel, 21–23.

¹⁰⁸ Chris Hedges, *Death Of The Liberal Class*, 78.

¹⁰⁹ Department of State. 9/1789- (Predecessor) and National Archives and Records Administration. Office of the Federal Register. 4/1/1985-, *Act of June 15, 1917, Public Law 24 (Espionage Act), An Act to Punish Acts of Interference with the Foreign Relations, the Neutrality, and the Foreign Commerce of the United States, to Punish Espionage, and Better to Enforce, the Criminal Laws of the United States, and for Other Purposes*, 291.1-2.

¹¹⁰ United States. Committee on Public Information, *American Loyalty by Citizens of German Descent* (Washington : The Committee, 1917)

of several prevalent German Americans and how they should all give their full loyalty to America. The testimonies discredit Germany several times, and make sure to emphasize that German Americans were not the enemy. The continuous discrediting of Germany as a country by German Americans in media is a powerful tool for the United States in persuading the American public about the German threat. One telling angle which is often used by the PCI is tying Imperial Germany with socialism, in one of the more comprehensive publishing's by the PCI *The German Whispers* the PCI brings forth several accusations against Germany, everything from slandering US Soldiers to the war being a rich man's war. It is however the section titled *The Prussian Socialist*, which is the most interesting as it does not directly attack socialists in Germany or the United States. It seemingly attempts to frame the Kaiser as the enemy of both socialist and capitalist alike, stating that: "The independent socialists in all countries are fighting the Kaiser and his commercial war of imperial conquest".¹¹¹ Earlier in the section the PCI mentions how previously the German socialists supported the Kaiser, but now they are fighting him.¹¹² This is a relevant angle taken by the PCI considering what we know about "red Fascism" in media during the 1930s, in this example socialists are framed as friends of Germany, not as enemies. They also often frame the war as a nationalistic war on Germany's part, and this angle is also interesting considering the nationalistic importance of national socialism.

The PCI did however begin targeting Bolsheviks towards the end of the war with Germany, and interestingly they emphasized the part Germany played in the Russian revolution. In the publication *The German-Bolshevik conspiracy*.¹¹³ They write about how the German government propped up the Bolshevik revolution, it was later translated into German and expanded after the war.¹¹⁴ This is in line with what Hedges wrote about the period, where he points how "The Hun, the object of hatred and scorn during the war, was supplanted by Bolsheviks."¹¹⁵ The targeting of the Bolshevik and communist movements right after the war shows us that the American public continued to be subject to fear mongering of an enemy. The fear of communism would eventually lead to the 1920 red scare and considering the

¹¹¹ United States. Committee on Public Information and Harvey Jerrold O'Higgins, *The German Whisper* ([Washington, Govt. Print. Off.], 1918), 19

¹¹² United States. Committee on Public Information and O'Higgins, 18.

¹¹³ United States. Committee on Public Information, Edgar Grant Sisson, and National Board for Historical Service, *The German-Bolshevik Conspiracy* ([Washington, 1918])

¹¹⁴ United States. Committee on Public Information, *Die deutsch-bolschewistische Verschwörung; 70 Dokumente über die Beziehungen der Bolschewiki zur deutschen Heeresleitung, Grossindustrie und Finanz.* Hrsg. von Committee on Public Information United States of America (Bern Der Freie Verlag, 1919)

¹¹⁵ Chris Hedges, *Death Of The Liberal Class*, 81.

previous framing of Germany supporting the Bolshevik might had left a lasting impact of associating Germany with socialism and communism.

In the aftermath of the first world war, the American PCI had kept pushing stories about Germany and their warmongering and mockery of the United States. This would eventually evolve into a framing of Germany propping up the Bolsheviks in the Russian revolution. This combined with the fear of communism in America might have stayed with the German population for some time after the war. The rise of national socialism in Germany might have revived some thoughts about Germany being tied with socialism and communism. It should also be briefly mentioned that the United States condemned the harsh war reparations placed upon Germany in the treaty of Versailles. After Germany failed to pay their reparations in 1923, Belgian and French troops occupied the Ruhr valley. After which the United States enacted the Dawes Plans which provided Germany with economic assistance and assisted the withdrawal of French and Belgian troops. Trade between Germany and the United States increased heavily during the 1930s and relations can be considered quite descent. This period is however too long to be discussed in the same detail, and public perception of Germany in this time would not have shifted significantly, and the little change that might have occurred would have been slowly dissipated with the rise of Hitler. Mentions of changed after 1920 will be mentioned briefly when necessary for context in the chapter about the rise and perception of Hitler. To better understand how the rise of national socialism was seen from America, we must look at the perception of Hitler and his nationalist socialist movement.

2. The New York Times and TIME magazine's coverage of Fascism and Nazism

This chapter is the main focus of this thesis, it will cover all the different groups and individuals that were often seen as either fascistic or fascist friendly by the American media and historians later. I am in no way calling any of the people I am covering in this chapter fascistic, but I would say they were right winged and their eventual political and social goals would benefit Fascists and Nazis to some degree. Most sections of this chapter will be structured in the same way, firstly a small introduction using mostly secondary sources will be given as to give some more specific context to each group and individual. After a quick introduction I will be looking at how TIME and NYT reported on the person or group during the relevant timeframe. Afterwards I will go over how each outlet reported on the group/individual and see what impression a reader might have. I will then judge whether they

presented them in a fair light, and if I feel like they fearmongered or underplayed the threat they posed. The next chapter will be a full analysis using all the different sections of this chapter.

- Racism vs. Fascism

I feel it necessary to make a quick point about the differences between racism and Fascism. As Fascism is an authoritarian ultranationalist ideology it does have a lot of elements that are racist against anyone not perceived as “the people” of the nation. As the modern nation state is often based on the idea of a people with a common heritage and struggle, this often leads to one nation being tied to a specific broader ethnic group, or race as some might classify it at the time. The United States, while not fascist, has a history of quite extreme racism and white supremacy, as we have seen. I therefore feel I should mention that while many individuals and organizations covered by American media are portrayed as racists and antisemites, this does not make them fascists outright. I would also say that racists who are in support of some of Nazi Germany’s and fascist Italy’s policies are not outright fascists either. If one used the label “fascist” on everyone who is racist or nationalistic it degrades the strength of the label when someone is an actual fascist.

As to keep “fascist” reserved for those worst people in our history, I will not call a simple nationalistic racist for a fascist. When the NYT and TIME might refer to someone as a fascist, I will critique it heavily to see if they were actually fascistic. I do feel it important to specify that when I am denying someone as not being a fascist, I am in no way defending their action, I feel like one should show caution whenever someone is accused of being a fascist or Nazi. However, if a person or group is called fascist by the media, that is the message the people will hear and often believe. As this is a paper on public perception of Fascism in America based its portrayal in media, how one perceived the threat of American fascists is in essence more important than them being one.

Fascism on the march

As there was a sizable amount of New Yorkers of Italian heritage in New York during and after the power seizure it is also interesting to see some of the reactions reported in the media from the Italian population in New York. As we have seen, there was quickly a dissociation between ones country of origin and their new lives in America. We see that particularly with German Americans and other second-generation immigrants. It is interesting to see whether or not that is reported upon as a phenomenon by the press or not.

- Mussolini's rise and the fall of Italian communism

In October 1922, Benito Mussolini performed a power grab in Rome setting in motion the beginning of fascist rule in Italy as well as establishing the first fascistic government in the world. America at the time was in its prime as part of the roaring twenties and Italian immigration to the United States was at an all-time high. Mussolini's coup occurred at the end of "The Great Arrival" marking the end of the greatest number of immigrants, especially from Italy, arrival in the United States. Two years later the United States would enact the immigration act, heavily restricting future immigration to the United States.¹¹⁶ In 1920 about 10 per cent of the population in New York were Italian immigrants.¹¹⁷ It should be mentioned that TIME did not start publishing before March 1923 and therefore Mussolini's march on Rome was not covered by them.

The New York times (NYT) coverage of Mussolini's coup began on the 26th of October 1922 when they reported that: "Fascisti to Seize Italy, Leader Swears, Unless Power Is Given Them Peacefully".¹¹⁸ They briefly mention the motivation of Mussolini, and that he claimed that the current Chamber did not represent the country. There is not much more coverage than this, but it was deserving of a first page spot. The following day the coverage was greater, and NYT reported how there were rumors that the fascists would march to Rome and seize power.¹¹⁹ News coverage would continue to make frontpage news for the next few days and finally stop completely on the 2nd of November where Italy is only mentioned in a small column on page 7. The coverage up until November 1st goes into detail about what occurred in Italy at the time, and on the 31st they added a comment about US-Italian relation where they mention how Mussolini said: "Nothing but good can be said about the United States. One always must speak well of one's creditor- and we all owe the United States money."¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Department of State. 9/1789- (Predecessor) and National Archives and Records Administration. Office of the Federal Register. 4/1/1985-, *An Act of May 26, 1924, Public Law 68-139, 43 STAT 153, to Limit Immigration of Aliens into the United States for Other Purposes*, Series: Enrolled Acts and Resolutions of Congress, 1778 - 2006, 1924.

¹¹⁷ As seen when comparing the population of New York with the amount of Italians living in the state. US Census Bureau, "1920 Census: Volume 1. Population, Number and Distribution of Inhabitants," Census.gov, 16, <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1921/dec/vol-01-population.html>; US Census Bureau, "1920 Census: Volume 2. Population, General Report and Analytical Tables," Census.gov, 904, <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1922/dec/vol-02-population.html>.

¹¹⁸ "TimesMachine: Thursday October 26, 1922 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1922/10/26/issue.html>.

¹¹⁹ "TimesMachine: Friday October 27, 1922 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 1-3, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1922/10/27/issue.html>.

¹²⁰ "TimesMachine: Tuesday October 31, 1922 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 5, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1922/10/31/issue.html>.

The coverage on the 29th and 31st also speaks of how Mussolini held the support of the king as well as clashing with communists. They also frame Mussolini's coup as a peaceful one, in which the king willingly gave power to Mussolini, and not enacting a state of siege. NYT also emphasizes that Italian press are all seemingly in favor of Mussolini's coup and hope:

that Mussolini's strong hand in demolishing will be equally strong in reconstruction, in pacifying, in restoring the spiritual, economic, and political greatness.¹²¹

They do also report on the world tension resulting from the takeover, but leave it to the end of the column, briefly mentioning how the Swiss fear that Mussolini will try to seize Ticino.¹²²

The last thing which deserves mention is that the president of the United States was reported on the 31st of October as saying: that the United States would not intervene in European countries but does warn the people of dictators.¹²³ NYT coverage would continue with the same narrative for the next few months, talking of what Mussolini and the fascists have done in Italy, and how opposed the fascists are to communism.

TIME's first coverage of Mussolini is quite eye catching. Instead of following in the footsteps of the NYT, writing about fascists opposed to communists, they chose to write their first article about Italy on the fight between freemasons and fascists.¹²⁴ Something which the NYT covered on the 14th of February 1923.¹²⁵ TIME also seems it fitting to emphasize the closeness between Mussolini and the Catholic Party. They emphasize Mussolini's choice to reintroduce religion into schools and say Mussolini: "is becoming almost subservient to the Vatican."¹²⁶ It almost seems like TIME in their first entry are trying to tie Catholicism with Italian nationalism and presenting freemasons as victims of nationalistic oppression. It is clear that TIME is more opposed to Mussolini than NYT was in their earliest coverage of Mussolini. They continue with the narrative of freemasons being oppressed and Mussolini not granting women the right to vote.¹²⁷ The narrative of a bond between the Vatican and Mussolini continues as well.¹²⁸

¹²¹ "TimesMachine," 5.

¹²² "TimesMachine: Wednesday November 1, 1922 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 3, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1922/11/01/issue.html>.

¹²³ "TimesMachine," 4.

¹²⁴ "The TIME Vault: March 3, 1923," *TIME.Com*, 9, <http://time.com/vault/issue/1923-03-03/page/11/>.

¹²⁵ "TimesMachine: Wednesday February 14, 1923 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 9, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1923/02/14/issue.html>.

¹²⁶ "The TIME Vault," 9.

¹²⁷ "The TIME Vault: March 10, 1923," *TIME.Com*, 9, <http://time.com/vault/issue/1923-03-10/page/3/>.

¹²⁸ "The TIME Vault: March 17, 1923," *TIME.Com*, 10, <http://time.com/vault/issue/1923-03-17/page/12/>.

It is interesting how NYT in the same timespan barely mentions what the TIME focuses so heavily on. On March 3rd 1923, NYT still continues with the fascists anticommunist narrative, giving a column to the arrest of the socialist leader Serrati.¹²⁹ While TIME does mention Serrati, they cover it quite differently. NYT frames it as a strike against communism in the world, and seemingly praising how Mussolini dared arrest him. TIME, Instead of presenting the arrest as a blow against international communism, frame it as a blow against socialism in Italy. Also, interestingly NYT states that no one lifted a hand when he was arrested, while TIME reports: “With exception of the Socialist press not a dissenting voice was heard in all the land”.¹³⁰ It is interesting that NYT emphasizes how Fascism is the enemy of socialism, and for the Italian people a seemingly better alternative. This coupled with how TIME often critiques and write negatively about Mussolini it is interesting to see how these two new media cover the same events in the same way, but with a different focus and narrative.

Neither media appears to be in support of Mussolini and his policies, NYT holds a quite professional objective stance, with the exception of their covering of socialism and communism in Italy, where they favor Mussolini. TIME also seems happy with how Mussolini stood opposed to the socialists and communists but are far more critical of his opposition to masons and also women’s suffrage. There is very little to no mention of how this impacts the United States, or how Italian New Yorkers reacted to Mussolini. It seems like NYT and TIME are decently satisfied with Mussolini’s economic changes. While one might look at their coverage of Mussolini and critique them for their lack of criticism of the dictator, it does not mean they were in support of Mussolini and Fascism. There is also no sign whatsoever of Fascism posing a risk to settle in the United States.

Rise of Nazism

Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933 which ushered in the start of national socialism as an established ideology to run a country. TIME Magazine published a rare 2 full pages about the German election result.¹³¹ The article recalls how Hitler came to power in Germany and describe Hitler and his ideas and ideology. They are careful not to insult him but do use some vague supportive language that might be seen by some as ironic. It is quite tame and doesn’t

¹²⁹ “TimesMachine: Saturday March 3, 1923 - NYTimes.Com,” *The New York Times*, 3, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1923/03/03/issue.html>.

¹³⁰ “The TIME Vault,” 9.

¹³¹ “The TIME Vault: 1933,” *TIME.Com*, <http://time.com/vault/year/1933/>.

make any true critiques before the last section of the article. They quickly establish that the national socialist party were not communists, despite the name as well as briefly mentioning the animosity towards Jews and Versailles treaty. They also brush past his opinion on war reparations, claiming he would stop paying those, yet TIME brushes it aside by stating: “all German statesmen have those aims!”¹³² They emphasize the fact that one of the former emperors sons, Prince August Wilhelm was a member of the Nazi party and this resulted in them having several safeguards and legitimacy. Lastly, the article briefly touches on Nazism in America, writing:

Enterprising Manhattan reporters managed to find local “Nazi” headquarters in the beery Yorkville neighborhood. Patient knocking at last aroused six preoccupied Teutons, some curiously clad in pajamas, all with well thumbed newspapers in hand. “Maybe we send a cable,” said the spokesman. “Maybe we celebrate tonight.” Pointing to the new Chancellor’s photograph he added proudly: “Just like Mussolini ja?”¹³³

As we can see, the journalists over at TIME magazine clearly thought it necessary to explain who Hitler was, as well as his ideology. They also found it necessary to mention that there were, although few, supporters of Hitler and Fascism in the United States.

Historian Gary Klein wrote an extensive paper titled: *When the news doesn't fit*¹³⁴ on how Hitler was covered in media the first two months of his rule. The paper is a full-on deep dive into the New York Times and their coverage of Hitler, based upon articles written, communication amongst writers, and memorandums. It should be mentioned that the paper is mostly a critique of the NYT’s coverage of Hitler and what was going on in Germany. He points out how the NYT published 444 new items over the course of two months about Germany, much higher than any other paper. Even though their coverage was extensive, Klein states that their coverage led to the public to be misinformed about the actual circumstances of what had occurred in Germany.¹³⁵ He explains how many newspapers at the time framed Hitler’s chancellorship as being weakened by the other members of his cabinet.¹³⁶ In the January 31st issue of the NYT we see the claim that “Hitler puts aside aim to be dictator”¹³⁷ This is reasoned due to that Hitler had not been able to seize power a full on

¹³² “The TIME Vault,” 22.

¹³³ “The TIME Vault,” 22.

¹³⁴ Klein, “When the News Doesn’t Fit.”

¹³⁵ Klein, 127–28.

¹³⁶ Klein, 131.

¹³⁷ “TimesMachine: Tuesday January 31, 1933 - NYTimes.Com,” *The New York Times*, 3, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1933/01/31/issue.html>.

dictator due to the fact his government was made up of members of different parties, such as Alfred Hugenberg who was the head of the DNVP, German national people's party.¹³⁸ Later reporting on Hitler and Germany follows a similar tone, they speak a lot about what is happening in Germany, but nothing about any threat towards America or real threat of war, with the exception of a brief mention of a Polish newspaper warning that Hitler's rise might be cause for worry. This claim was however again calmed on the 1st of February.¹³⁹ The news for the next few months is quite close to what Klein wrote, mentioning the new German government and the violence occurring in Germany, but making no outright claims of danger or threat. While I do agree with Klein that the coverage was poor and vague in its portrayal of Hitler and national socialism, they did emphasize its ties to Fascism in Italy and the violence and repression seen in Germany after Hitler came to power. From reading several months of coverage about Hitler, I can see no indication that anyone would see them in a positive light. One notable exception is the coverage of how the Nazi's cracked down on socialism, which some Americans might find enticing.

Other major newspapers did not do much better when it came covering Hitler's rise to power. One example of a strange focus by American media is that of *The Pittsburgh Press* who, during the rise of Hitler in Germany focused on the risk of civil war between communists and fascists in Germany.¹⁴⁰ This is similar to what we see in the NYT and TIME earlier, where the focus early on shows a struggle between Fascism and communism. There is also a focus on the closeness between Hitler and Mussolini. Other papers focus a lot on classifying him as a dictator and an enemy of democracy. We can see this in for example: *Daily News, Ithaca Journal*, and *The Indianapolis News*.¹⁴¹ There is also a mention of the struggle between communists and Nazis quite often in the same news covering Hitler. There is however a clear lack of any mention of a threat to America in any of the papers.

¹³⁸ "TimesMachine," 1–3.

¹³⁹ "TimesMachine: Wednesday February 1, 1933 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 10, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1933/02/01/issue.html>.

¹⁴⁰ "5 Mar 1933, Page 12 - The Pittsburgh Press at Newspapers.Com," Newspapers.com, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/146818086/?terms=Hitler&match=1>.

¹⁴¹ "7 Mar 1933, 132 - Daily News at Newspapers.Com," Newspapers.com, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/414684211/?terms=Hitler&match=1>; "6 Mar 1933, Page 1 - The Ithaca Journal at Newspapers.Com," Newspapers.com, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/254999231/?terms=Hitler&match=1>; "6 Mar 1933, 1 - The Indianapolis News at Newspapers.Com," Newspapers.com, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/311161046/?terms=Hitler&match=1>.

It must be said that none of the newspapers seem to be openly in support of Hitler, or even portray him in a positive light within the first week of his election. He is shown to be a dictator who despises republican government. Again, like with the NYT, the only narrative that could be seen as positive the frequent mentions of him wishing to wipe out communists and their continued fighting. The representation of Fascism and Nazism as clearly anti-communist might have had some negative consequences, however. We have seen that there is heavy anti-communist sentiment in America at the time, and this framing as fascists being an ally in the fight against communism has the potential to sweeten the image of Fascism. Most Americans first introduction to Hitler through media is him being: a dictator who is opposed to communists.

Media coverage of Hitler's reign continues to be quite negative when it comes to the new regimes treatment of Jews in Germany. They often mention how German Jews are losing rights and freedoms in Germany. The focus does however seem to be on the reaction of Jews in America, instead of the actual atrocities themselves. Such as in *Chicago Daily Tribune* and *The Boston Globe* where they often mention how American Jews are raising funds and protesting the treatment of Jews in Germany.¹⁴² They also do on occasion mention how some American media or books have been banned in Germany, but again no framing of Germany being a threat to America as a whole. If one cared about the treatment of Jews, then one would from reading these entries clearly be opposed to Hitler. However, antisemitism was quite widespread in America at the time, Jews often being seen a different race and people compared to other Americans. It is unlikely that most would be very swayed by these reports of antisemitism in Germany.

Dies committee

The House Committee on Un-American Activities, also known as the Dies committee will make frequent appearance in this chapter. It therefore needs a brief introduction As many of the groups and individuals mentioned would see their influential rampage end at the hands of the Committee it deserves a quick introduction. Martin Dies had been a stern anti-communist and anti-fascists during his time in America. He had in 1935 proposed to congress the

¹⁴² "12 Jun 1933, 13 - The Boston Globe at Newspapers.Com," Newspapers.com, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/431718840/?terms=Jews%20Germany&match=1>; "27 Mar 1933, 11 - The Boston Globe at Newspapers.Com," Newspapers.com, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/430598432/?terms=Jews%20Germany&match=1>; "28 Mar 1933, 4 - Chicago Tribune at Newspapers.Com," Newspapers.com, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/355006152/?terms=Jews%20Germany&match=1>.

expulsion of all foreign communists and Fascists from the United States while part of the Committee of Immigration and Naturalization.¹⁴³ In 1938, before the creation of the Dies Committee, Dies defended his request to establish the committee and stated that despite worries, the intention of the committee was not to target German-Americans specifically.¹⁴⁴ There was strong debate in the House whether or not the Committee should have been established, some saw it as an attack on American liberals and some saw it as a necessary measure to “save the country before it was too late”.¹⁴⁵ The Committee was eventually established with a large majority and Dies got his committee to hunt down and charge those he considered Un-American.

In 1939 the Committee would begin to investigate antisemitic and Nazi activities in the United States at the behest of Representative Dickstein who deemed it necessary after the rally at Madison Square Garden. It was deemed that such events had captured the public's interest in such groups, and therefore an investigation was necessary.¹⁴⁶ The committee would grow more and more strict in their investigation and hearings, and halfway through 1939, witnesses were obligated to provide information instead of volunteering it.¹⁴⁷ The committee was controversial in its time, often holding too much power with little oversight, it was also argued that the House (who created the committee) should not have held sole authority, as the Senate also held responsibility.¹⁴⁸ The tactics used by the Committee were often seen as Un-American as well, while the results the Committee gave were valuable, the way it achieved such results were unjust.¹⁴⁹

The goal of the Dies Committee was to investigate and persecute enemies of the United States, mostly communist and fascist ones. They did this by integrating and investigation several individuals and groups in the United States, as well as advocating against their rights. They did see some short conflict with other parts of government such as the FBI, as the Committee often overextended their reach and did some questionable things. Yet, as we will see, the media did mention the Committee numerous times and often times made sure to point out that those accused by the Committee were a threat to America.

¹⁴³ August Raymond Ogden, “Dies Committee: A Study of the Special House Committee for the Investigation of Un-American Activities, 1938-1944.” (Washington, Catholic University of America, 1945), 38-39.

¹⁴⁴ Ogden, 43.

¹⁴⁵ Ogden, 45.

¹⁴⁶ Ogden, 114.

¹⁴⁷ Ogden, 117.

¹⁴⁸ Ogden, 296.

¹⁴⁹ Ogden, 296–98.

Charles Lindbergh

This section about Charles Lindbergh will be quite different from the others that will be covered in this chapter as he is a man with a long and complicated history within American media. A lot of context will also be needed to best present him in a fair light. His pre 1930s fame and media coverage will also help set a stage for how NYT reported on something they deemed vital for people to know about. Therefore, the discussion about Lindbergh will be split into two sections as to better represent the immense influence this man held in America, and the far-reaching consequences of his actions. This section is meant to show how NYT reported on what they deemed worthy of immense coverage and will serve as context for chapter 3.

- Celebrity pilot turned political activist

Charles August Lindbergh was born on the 4th of February 1902 in Detroit, and he would grow up in Minnesota and Washington. He began studying at the University of Wisconsin when he was 18 but would drop out to pursue his dream of flying.¹⁵⁰ It was his dream, flying, that would earn him celebrity status as perhaps the most famous aviator of all time. His famous flight from New York to Paris was an exceptional event being the first non-stop solo flight between America and Europe. This one event in his life would forever cement his name in the mind of virtually every American, he was also exceptionally popular abroad, especially in France but also in Germany. One infamous and tragic event in his life was the kidnapping and murder of his son in 1935, which resulted in Lindbergh moving abroad to avoid harassment by the media.¹⁵¹ His time in Europe is quite interesting as he received a firsthand experience to what occurred in Europe in the years leading up to the war.

It is only fitting to start off with the event that made Charles Lindbergh famous, as his later political activity was given credibility by his fame as an aviator. His entire life up until right after that famed flight is documented in his book, *We* where he goes over everything that led up to the flight and what occurred during it.¹⁵² His later book *The Spirit of St. Louis* named after his famous plane is much more comprehensive when it surrounded his flight.¹⁵³ I will

¹⁵⁰ Charles A. (Charles Augustus) Lindbergh and Fitzhugh Green, *We*, (New York, London, G. P. Putnam's sons, 1927), 19–25

¹⁵¹ Tom D. Crouch, Wayne S. Cole, and National Air and Space Museum, *Charles A. Lindbergh : An American Life* (Washington : National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution ; distributed by Smithsonian Institution Press, 1977), 49

¹⁵² Lindbergh and Green, *We*.

¹⁵³ Charles A. (Charles Augustus) Lindbergh, *The Spirit of St. Louis* (New York : C. Scribner's Sons, 1953)

be utilizing both books when discussing how his flight went and the reaction of the media afterwards. I will also look at media reactions from the media.

A pursuit of a non-stop flight between New York and Paris had been underway for almost a decade before it was achieved by Lindbergh.¹⁵⁴ Having always had a dream of flying he decided to make an attempt at the seemingly impossible task. Having worked as an air-mail pilot for many years he went ahead and received financial support from men in St. Louis. He spent approximately one year planning, getting maps of the route and building his plane, The spirit of St. Louis.¹⁵⁵ On the day of the flight, there was a surprising lack of media coverage for his soon to be world famous flight. The New York times, perhaps New York's largest newspaper, barely reported on the event. They only dedicated a single small part of the front page to announcing his flight, Mostly just describing the events that occurred before his flight, only mentioning the weather and some of the reactions of other pilots and investors.¹⁵⁶ This is quite surprising considering how big of an event it would come to be, it seems like NYT did not have faith in Lindbergh.

This would change the day after however, as reports from Ireland stated that Lindbergh's plane had been spotted south of the Irish coast. Lindbergh's face was plastered over the front page of the NYT and a while 6 pages of the paper was dedicated to him, detailing every little bit of his flight so far.¹⁵⁷ This immense media attention even before his landing is a sign of what would come to be. The day after we see the exact same thing, five pages with his face and flight all over it. The 22nd of May is perhaps the most interesting as it details the reaction seen in America and Europe to the news of his landing. They state how the celebrations were like the ones seen after the end of the first world war, the constant praise and excitement he received from people in France and all over the world is mentioned several times over. They also make a point to tell the readers that Lindbergh's own story of the trip will come on the 23rd.¹⁵⁸ On the 23rd there would be four full pages talking about his flight and telling his story, they also bring up the fact that he was praised by Mussolini, and is set to receive thousands of

¹⁵⁴ Lindbergh and Green, *We*, 198.

¹⁵⁵ Lindbergh and Green, 199–212.

¹⁵⁶ "TimesMachine: Friday May 20, 1927 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 1–2, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1927/05/20/issue.html>.

¹⁵⁷ "TimesMachine: Saturday May 21, 1927 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 1–6, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1927/05/21/issue.html>.

¹⁵⁸ "TimesMachine: Sunday May 22, 1927 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 1–5, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1927/05/22/issue.html>.

dollars from others around the world.¹⁵⁹ The next few days would just be echo of what had already been said, the perhaps most noticeable addition that would come out of the papers is how Lindbergh received the Cross of Legion of Honor from France and was set to receive similar awards from different nations.¹⁶⁰ It would take until June 21st before Lindbergh is not mentioned on the front page of the NYT, he is mentioned further in, but the extensive media coverage for an entire month is exceptional and his several awards from world leaders is noteworthy.

After his flight to Paris, Lindbergh would just continue to receive attention for his flight. His name was now ingrained in most of America's mind. He had certainly received public recognition as a great man and a hero. His fame would not go away, he would again receive media attention after the tragic kidnapping and murder of his son in 1932. This event would eventually result in Lindbergh being embroiled in European international politics and flying now infamous German fighter planes just a few years before the war. While I would love to go into detail about this fascinating murder case and investigation it is outside the scope of this essay. Lloyd Gardner has written a fantastic book about the entire kidnapping case and its consequences.¹⁶¹ One notable extract from the book is that the sentenced kidnapper and killer was a German immigrant who "one reporter noticed that Hauptmann's daily attire matched the colors of German World War 1 uniforms."¹⁶² While this is probably just a reporter looking for something unique to write, it is an interesting mention. What is the most important to mention however is the fact that the case was:

Widely regarded as the pivotal case for determining whether the United States had the ability to govern itself, the Lindbergh kidnapping focused the nation's attention on the seeming power of the Underworld to dictate its own terms¹⁶³

While this statement might be and seem highly exaggerated, it is supported by a newspaper article from the time.¹⁶⁴ This also somewhat supported by legal scholar and historian Barry Cushman who wrote an article about it, concluding that while the federal kidnapping act was

¹⁵⁹ "TimesMachine: Monday May 23, 1927 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 1-4, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1927/05/23/issue.html>.

¹⁶⁰ "TimesMachine: Tuesday May 24, 1927 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 1, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1927/05/24/issue.html>.

¹⁶¹ LLOYD C. GARDNER, *The Case That Never Dies: The Lindbergh Kidnapping* (Rutgers University Press, 2004), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5hjfh>.

¹⁶² GARDNER, 398.

¹⁶³ GARDNER, 398.

¹⁶⁴ "The Owosso Argus-Press - Google News Archive Search," <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=slo1AAAAIIBAJ&sjid=w6sFAAAAIBAJ&pg=2635%2C754661>.

in some way connected with the Lindbergh kidnapping, it was not a result of it. He argues that since the new law would not actually have changed anything to with the Lindbergh kidnapping as it did not meet the criteria for the new act. He does agree that had it not been for the Lindbergh kidnapping, the law might not have been enacted quite so soon or in the form it took.¹⁶⁵ In either case, it is the common consensus that Lindbergh had a lot sway with the American public and administration, to the point that events effecting him resulted in the passing of new laws due to public pressure.

The point of mentioning this kidnapping is to show that Charles Lindbergh had not lost any sway with the American public by the mid-30s. It would change a bit the next few years seeing that he moved abroad, but he would continue to involve himself in politics, to a greater extent than before. Wayne Cole wrote a chapter in *Charles A. Lindbergh: an American life* about Lindbergh's time abroad and his activities when he returned to the United States advocating for neutrality in the second world war.¹⁶⁶ The book only covers his time in Europe over two pages, it is a quite short summary of his time there, which had little to with his continued fame, but it is important to summarize his time there as to show what he learnt in Germany particularly. At the request and invitation of the United States military attaché in Berlin he was asked to inspect German military development, specifically in aerial warfare development. During his time, he would pilot several German aircrafts and conclude that German airplane development exceeded any other nation in Europe. He was also convinced that France and Britain would not be able to defend against Germany in the event of a war, and only the USSR or Japan would benefit from a new world war.¹⁶⁷ It should be mentioned that Cole's book appears to be quite biased in framing Lindbergh in a favorable light. I have chosen to exclude the statement that Lindbergh was never pro-Nazi as I can not see any proof of this statement in the book. I will look into this in the next sub chapter when I cover his political activism in during 1939 to 1941.

Nevertheless, what the book says about his time in Germany shows us that he would have had firsthand experience of Germany war capabilities, he would also have been in Germany during the Anschluss and invasion of Czechoslovakia as he left from Germany on the 8th of

¹⁶⁵ Barry Cushman, "Headline Kidnappings and the Origins of the Lindbergh Law," *Journal Articles*, January 1, 2011, 1316, https://scholarship.law.nd.edu/law_faculty_scholarship/268.

¹⁶⁶ Crouch, Cole, and National Air and Space Museum, *Charles A. Lindbergh*.

¹⁶⁷ Crouch, Cole, and National Air and Space Museum, 49–50.

April 1939.¹⁶⁸ It is quite interesting however that in his *The wartime journals of Charles A. Lindbergh* the invasion of Czechoslovakia is left out of the book, merely receiving a mention.¹⁶⁹ As Lindbergh was the one who wrote the journals the book is based on, as well as the book, it is quite possible that he did not include his journal entries from the 12th to the 16th of March. His journal mentions a lot about the war and the angst felt amongst the people of Germany, but nothing about his own thoughts on the matter. He does praise Germany to a quite great extent in his journal however, on the 20th of March 1939 he wrote how “I found the most personal freedom in Germany”¹⁷⁰ when complaining about the lack of freedom he found in the United States. It should however be mentioned that on the same page he writes that in the event of a war he would be loyal to the United States, despite his fondness of Germany. He does state that if England were to stop Germany, they should have done so in 1934 and by waiting they have doomed Europe.¹⁷¹ What I find quite strange about the entry from the 31st of March is that he does not really criticize Germany for their expansion, but he is quick to critique England for threatening to start a war if the expansion continues. While he might not have been pro-Nazi, or even pro-German, it is quite clear from several entries in his journal that he is most certainly anti-British. This fact is important to remember, as it will not subside after the start of the second world war.

- Lindbergh post 1933 news coverage

As a result of Lindbergh’s fame, I will only pick a few news columns and articles I feel are relevant to the overarching narrative. However, the TIME and NYT entries on Lindbergh will be brought in as supportive evidence in the last chapter of this paper, where I will bring together all which has been discussed and drafted up to that point.

Black legion

The black legion, as briefly mentioned earlier, was an offshoot of the KKK that were in many ways more radical and violent. Many would probably also call them a terrorist group advocating white supremacy. While not active in New York, NYT did cover them extensively over the years, especially after the murder of Charles Poole. TIME also did their

¹⁶⁸ Charles A. (Charles Augustus) Lindbergh, *The Wartime Journals of Charles A. Lindbergh* (New York : Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1970), 175–76

¹⁶⁹ Lindbergh, 165.

¹⁷⁰ Lindbergh, 166.

¹⁷¹ Lindbergh, 171–72.

first short entry about the Black legion on June 1st, 1936¹⁷² as well several other entries later. While not being considered fascistic by most media at the time, they are often considered as being close to fascists by historians. They were quite numerous than most outright self-proclaimed fascist group and therefore it is interesting to see how much coverage this group received in comparison to the fascists.

Peter Amann wrote an article about how the black legion played with fascistic ideology as part of their own nativist agenda.¹⁷³ As my main goal is to study media coverage of the Black Legion I will be using this article as context for what the black legion was doing during their short lived lifetime. He goes into detail describing their recruitment, oaths, size, and organization. What makes the black legion so interesting is that it was in 1932 modeled as an army, with companies, battalions, and regiments.¹⁷⁴ The black legion was also clearly prepared to take control of the American or state government, as Amann emphasizes, the Russian government had been taken over by 30,000 Bolsheviks. The Black Legion had clear plans and were ready to take control when the signal word was sent out.¹⁷⁵ The black legion also prided themselves on secrecy, trying to keep the public in the dark. Amann credits this as one of the key reasons as to why the Black legion ultimately failed in their endeavors.¹⁷⁶ He interestingly concludes that the Black Legion failed due to their revolutionary ideas, stating that any talk of revolution in the United States was unspeakable, and that any movement advocating revolution would fail. He finishes by saying that: “vigilante nativism and revolutionary Fascism were fundamentally incompatible”.¹⁷⁷ I do agree with his reasoning completely, as he state, American nativism is grounded in: “the only national myth available: the Constitution and the American Republic, One and Indivisible.”¹⁷⁸ He also credits the lack of fascistic ideology in America to the fact that the United States did not suffer through World War 1 like Europe did, and they also did not have intellectual crisis through 1890-1914 like Europe had, where authoritarian regime became a tempting idea.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷² “The TIME Vault: June 1, 1936,” *TIME.Com*, <http://time.com/vault/issue/1936-06-01/page/13/>.

¹⁷³ Amann, “Vigilante Fascism.”

¹⁷⁴ Amann, 504.

¹⁷⁵ Amann, 511–12.

¹⁷⁶ Amann, 513.

¹⁷⁷ Amann, 524.

¹⁷⁸ Amann, 524.

¹⁷⁹ Amann, 523.

Some, like historian Andrew Palella would however argue that the Black Legion were fascistic in nature and that the United States were as susceptible to Fascism as Europe.¹⁸⁰ I do agree with Amann's points as to why the black legion, and Fascism in general, failed to root itself in America. However, the United States went through a highly tense time at the height of the Black Legion's reach, and fear of a communist takeover was rampant in the United States, having been covered extensively by the media. A communist takeover, in my opinion, was as unlikely to occur if one accredits his reasoning as to why Fascism failed. Yet we saw much more fear of communism than of Fascism. Therefore, I do also agree with Palella, that Fascism was a threat to the United States at the time, but probably not the extent he presents it. It should be pointed out that Amann did consider the Black Legion "fascoid" in nature, meaning they were close to becoming fascists but lacked some of the key characteristics. Palella argues that they were in some aspects more fascistic than Amann thinks.¹⁸¹ Palella also puts forth a good reason as to why this was the perception many had of Fascism in America. He argues that Hoover, the FBI director, did his best to disregard the radical right, and instead focused his resources on combating the radical left. Hoover was only to focus on the radical right if they were specifically German or Nazi.¹⁸² While this may be correct, it cannot be denied that the media dragged the image of the Black Legion through the dirt, and after they emerged out of the shadows they quickly fell apart. Communism might have been targeted more by the media and FBI, but the media were not friendly to either and did their job dismantling the vague support the Black Legion held.

The first TIME report on the Black Legion was on the 1st of June 1936 after the murder of Charles Poole. This event is seen by some as the end of the Black Legion's secrecy as it resulted in the director FBI personally investigating the legion, as well as brining the previously shadowy Black Legion into the light.¹⁸³ TIME first describes the Black Legion as "wearing cheap black & white robes and hoods"¹⁸⁴, they go on to describe how the "colonel" of the Black Legion decided on hanging Poole. TIME describes how the arrest and charging of 16 Black Legion members "unearthed a sinister and hitherto little know U. S nightshirts organization."¹⁸⁵ . They draw clear comparison and connection to the KKK and describe how the groups agenda is against Jews, Catholics, African Americans, foreigners, and

¹⁸⁰ Palella, "The Black Legion," 98–99.

¹⁸¹ Palella, 97.

¹⁸² Palella, 91–92.

¹⁸³ Palella, 87–89.

¹⁸⁴ "The TIME Vault: June 1, 1936," *TIME.Com*, 12, <http://time.com/vault/issue/1936-06-01/page/15/>.

¹⁸⁵ "The TIME Vault," 12.

communists.¹⁸⁶ They also emphasize how one becomes a member, and that owning a firearm is expected of all its members. They also explain how the suspected number of Black Legion members in Michigan is expected to be between 3000 and 135,000.¹⁸⁷ The next entry from TIME on the 8th of June documents quite clearly the large amount of public uproar against the Black Legion.¹⁸⁸ Several members had been brought into the public light, and a request to the U.S congress had been sent requesting an investigation. TIME reports how the public wanted to find who was involved in the group, and that the public in general were strongly opposed to the group.¹⁸⁹ The last entry is perhaps the most telling as to what narrative TIME wanted to run with as they write:

“For beating his wife,” Charles A. Poole, Detroit WPA worker who did not beat his wife, was shot and killed last May by member of an insignificant secret society which had delusions of vigilante grandeur (TIME, June 1 & 8). Last week twelve members of the shoddy “Black Legion” stood up in Detroit court to be sentenced¹⁹⁰

It is quite clear from TIME’s coverage of the Black Legion that they did not see them as a real threat. Describing them as “a nightshirt organization”, “insignificant”, and “shoddy”. The first description immediately conveys them as a cowardly group working in the cover of darkness, and the second simply shows that they do not oppose any real threat to America, similar to the description of shoddy. It is however quite clear that the public was outraged and demanded answers and consequences for such a murder. This was not some simple murder, it was the result of a violent group with several thousand members. The group was never described as fascistic or presented as any real threat. The description given by TIME seems to be quite accurate to what later historians have concluded regarding the threat the Black Legion posed.

NYT’s first entry on the black legion was on the 23rd of May 1936 when they reported that “Seven ‘vigilantes’ accused of murder”¹⁹¹ reporting that seven members of the Black Legion were charged with murder, and an additional 34 were hunted. Their coverage starts off less mocking than TIME’s and presents them as a secret society that had previously been investigated as some its member had been carrying concealed weapons.¹⁹² The following day

¹⁸⁶ “The TIME Vault,” 13.

¹⁸⁷ “The TIME Vault,” 13.

¹⁸⁸ “The TIME Vault: June 8, 1936,” *TIME.Com*, <http://time.com/vault/issue/1936-06-08/page/1/>.

¹⁸⁹ “The TIME Vault,” 11.

¹⁹⁰ “The TIME Vault: October 19, 1936,” *TIME.Com*, 19, <http://time.com/vault/issue/1936-10-19/page/21/>.

¹⁹¹ Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES, “SEVEN ‘VIGILANTES’ ACCUSED OF MURDER,” *The New York Times*, May 23, 1936, 1 & 3.

¹⁹² TIMES, 1 & 3.

NYT reported that many other deaths are potentially linked to the Black Legion are going to be investigated, as well as reporting that police has seized several weapons as well as arresting a prison guard who was a member of the Black Legion. As well as blatantly stating that the group appears to be more numerous than first assumed and that the group was politically, racially, and religiously motivated.¹⁹³ They also say that the Klan denies any connection to the group, which we now know is untrue. The following report on the 26th of May simply goes over the developing charges as well as detailing the oath the members of the Black Legion made, reciting it in its entirety and making sure to point out that it calls for its members to kill.¹⁹⁴ They also report that the groups official “history” tries to tie the group back to the revolution, but this is quickly debunked by NYT stating that they had ties to the KKK. It also becomes evident that other states were worried that the Black Legion was operating in their territory, as the NYT details how several states has asked that the FBI get involved, as well as launching their own investigations. There was also worry on the east coast as the Governor of Massachusetts asked its police to find out if the group was active in the state.¹⁹⁵ The entry on the 6th of June is also vital to mention, even though it is short, it details how three boys had tried to hang two other boys for getting better grades than them. The allegedly claimed that their method of killing was inspired by the Black Legion.¹⁹⁶ One June 7th NYT states that the public demands the group be punished, and NYT expects the group to dissolve as a result of the investigation.¹⁹⁷

NYT and TIME never described the Black legion as fascistic directly, but NYT did have a headline where they reported that fascist groups were spreading and described these groups as like the Black Legion. They also directly compared the Black Legion with more outright fascist groups such as “the friends of new Germany”.¹⁹⁸ They also credit the dissolution of the group to the murder of Poole, and in the same column state that the Communist Party has accused the Black Legion of being: “the birth of an American Fascist movement”.¹⁹⁹ It is

¹⁹³ Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES, “MANY DEATHS LAID TO ‘BLACK LEGION,’” *The New York Times*, May 24, 1936.

¹⁹⁴ Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES, “BLACK LEGION OATH HAS PLEDGE TO KILL,” *The New York Times*, May 26, 1936, 15.

¹⁹⁵ WILL LISSNER Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES, “WASHINGTON TO GET BLACK LEGION DATA,” *The New York Times*, May 29, 1936, 1 & 4.

¹⁹⁶ Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES, “Boys Copy Black Legion, Try to Lynch ‘Scholars,’” *The New York Times*, June 6, 1936, 34.

¹⁹⁷ Will Lissner, “BLACK LEGION EXPOSED IN TIME,” *The New York Times*, June 7, 1936, 65.

¹⁹⁸ “SPREAD OF FASCISM REPORTED IN WEST,” *The New York Times*, July 9, 1936, 8.

¹⁹⁹ Special Correspondence and The New York Times, “MURDER CASE HELD BLACK LEGION DOOM,” *The New York Times*, October 4, 1936, 88.

quite interesting to see that NYT did compare the Black Legion to fascists, and in essence implied it as well, and did not do anything to disregard the communist party's claim that they were fascistic. It is also quite clear that neither NYT nor TIME were soft on the Black Legion. TIME mocked them, describing them as shoddy and poor, while NYT portrayed them as an actual worry for the nation, outright saying that there was a public panic.²⁰⁰ It is clear that the public perception of the Black Legion was highly negative, and them getting all this attention in the media resulted in their downfall, which is also what Amann and Palella argues. NYT did present them as more of a threat than TIME did, but both were responsible for bringing along the groups demise by rightly swaying the public against them. NYT also decided to cover the story of the three boys attempting to hang two other boys, this is guaranteed to be seen as a warning of what kind of influence the Black Legion holds.

It cannot be outright concluded that either NYT or TIME presented the Black Legion as being fascists, at least not directly. The public was however clearly disturbed by the actions of this group, and it can easily be assumed that they would not be any fonder of the group had they been called fascists. NYT explains several times that the Black Legion had been accused and investigated by several other papers and journalists and that this was a leading reason as to their demise. This just proves that the public perception, as presented by the press, was a leading factor as to why this group failed and might be an indication as being a factor in why all fascistic groups failed in their goal.

Charles Coughlin

The reverend Charles Coughlin is undoubtedly one of the most interesting figures in the history of the American Radical right. His now infamous radio broadcasts are one of the most popular regular broadcasts in American history. Charles Coughlin was a Catholic priest originally from Canada. Despite his stemming from a minority religion and a foreign country, his message was carried far and wide over the radio waves to the masses of America, many of whom he did not share a religion. While never having been outright fascist or national socialist, his messages were quite radical and right wing, his broadcasts ended soon after the outbreak of the second world war in Europe. His newspaper *Social Justice* was allowed to continue for two more years. Coughlin has been the center for many historical

²⁰⁰ Special Correspondence and The New York Times, "BLACK LEGION PANIC ENDS," *The New York Times*, June 21, 1936, 75.

discussions and is one of the earliest examples of “hate speech vs. free speech”, as detailed in David Goodman’s article.²⁰¹

Coughlin was man whose influence was feared by many, all the way up to the president of the United States, after Coughlin concerning remarked about the state of the American economy.²⁰² The feud between Coughlin and Roosevelt is an interesting one as Roosevelt is known to have seen him as quite the threat as he was very outspoken of the administration and the New Deal. He was also very critical of Coughlin’s view on Jews and him naming several prominent jews in America on his radio show.²⁰³ Coughlin did not only make an enemy of the president, but also within the catholic church and the Vatican. In 1936 a Vatican representative went to Coughlin to remind him that he was a priest first. It is also several signs that the Vatican feared that Coughlin could muddy the image of the catholic church with his radio broadcasts, an article in NYT is specifically mentioned as a point of worry for the church.²⁰⁴ His rampant antisemitism and advocating against intervening in the war had become a contagious topic once war began brewing in Europe.

- TIME’s coverage of Charles Coughlin

The seemingly earliest mention of Charles Coughlin by TIME magazine was on August 4th, 1930, when he is quoted in support of Henry Ford. While this might not be noteworthy alone, it is the context that is interesting as he quotes in regards to economy and politics, not religion.²⁰⁵ The largest early coverage of Coughlin in TIME came on August 20th, 1931, when they had a column on religious radio.²⁰⁶ While not directly about him it covers him extensively, and he is mentioned numerous times. His reach is already obvious when reading the article, he is used as an example of someone who has impressive reach and would be affected by the new changes. The article explains how Columbia Broadcasting System would no longer sell radio time to religious bodies or individuals, something Coughlin was relying on. The article goes on to state how Coughlin will continue to broadcast from Detroit over an independent line.²⁰⁷ TIME does however make sure to note that these new Columbia

²⁰¹ David Goodman, “Before Hate Speech: Charles Coughlin, Free Speech and Listeners’ Rights,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 49, no. 3 (May 27, 2015): 199–224, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.2015.1048972>.

²⁰² Earl Boyea, “The Reverend Charles Coughlin and the Church: The Gallagher Years, 1930-1937,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 81, no. 2 (1995): 215–16, <https://doi.org/10.1353/cat.1995.0044>.

²⁰³ Boyea, 216.

²⁰⁴ Boyea, 222.

²⁰⁵ “The TIME Vault: August 4, 1930,” *TIME.Com*, <http://time.com/vault/issue/1930-08-04/pages/>.

²⁰⁶ “The TIME Vault: August 24, 1931,” *TIME.Com*, 26, <http://time.com/vault/issue/1931-08-24/page/28/>.

²⁰⁷ “The TIME Vault,” 26.

guidelines are in line with the national broadcasting guidelines and were not any form of attack on religious free speech.

Charles Coughlin's dabble in other fields is also documented well by TIME, as well as his political reach. 85 congressmen wished that Coughlin represent the United States in at the London economic conference. TIME is quite explicit in stating that the reason he was considered was because of his fame around the United States and his extensive reach.²⁰⁸

TIME is however clearly not too fond of Coughlin, stating that he is nationalistic and trying to limit his actual political reach by stating that the 85 senators only asked Roosevelt to send him after the American delegation were already on route to London. They also state that: "In fact, last week's petition was in the nature of a reward for the help and encouragement he gave Senator Thomas' currency inflation amendment to the Farm Bill."²⁰⁹ Seemingly indicating that Coughlin was only considered as a sort of "thank you" by the politicians, not because he was an actual candidate. TIME also seems to point out the fact that Coughlin is originally Canadian, seemingly to discredit earlier claims of him being American.

Coverage of Coughlin would continue to become more and more prevalent as his career and fame expanded. TIME has written too many articles about him that it is impossible to cover them all. The most notable ones will however be mentioned as to better understand how TIME's reporting evolved over the years. The next major coverages of Coughlin by TIME were on April 10th, 1933, after someone had exploded a bomb in his basement, and September 4th the same year regarding his dealings and interest in Finance. A full introduction to Coughlin was given by TIME on the 11th of December 1933 in their weekly religion article.²¹⁰ This article was written about him seems to have been written as a way to inform the public about who this now famous priest was, especially how he was also quite popular in New York. They make sure to emphasize that he is quite the controversial man, writing how he has stepped on the toes of several important individuals in the church and in politics.

An article from April 29th, 1935, goes on to describe a lot of the controversy surrounding Coughlin, and how many within his own faith wished that he stayed silent. TIME goes on to state that a priest can only be silenced if he strays in faith or morals, something Coughlin had

²⁰⁸ "The TIME Vault: June 26, 1933," *TIME.Com*, 10–11, <http://time.com/vault/issue/1933-06-26/page/12/>.

²⁰⁹ "The TIME Vault," 11.

²¹⁰ "The TIME Vault: December 11, 1933," *TIME.Com*, <http://time.com/vault/issue/1933-12-11/page/56/>.

yet to do.²¹¹ His relation to the soon to be assassinated politician Huey Long was also briefly mentioned, as Coughlin was a vital supporter of Long's governorship. A later entry a few weeks later on June 3rd details how Coughlin had come to New York and spoken to tens of thousands of new Yorkers, criticizing Roosevelt and his new policies. TIME also makes sure to point out that the greatest applause came at the moment Coughlin criticized Roosevelt.²¹² TIME's coverage of Coughlin would continue to remain quite vague, avoiding any opinions or attacks on him. He makes appearances quite often in the *Religion* section of the magazine and it is often reserved for the back of said section.

The silence and lack of opinion would eventually come to an end however, as we can see when Coughlin makes a small entry in TIME on October 18th, 1937. At the end of this entry TIME focuses on the failings of Coughlin, and how he is being challenged by both the state and church.²¹³ The small hit piece would come on November 28th, 1938, when TIME went all out on criticizing Coughlin, seemingly no longer fearing backlash. They go on to describe how Coughlin has shown mild support for the Nazis and done what he can to connect Jews with communism. They describe how Coughlin has been spreading lies to his viewers and not taking responsibility for his lies, and that Coughlin's future on the air was at risk.²¹⁴ On December 19th the same year a true hit piece would come as TIME opened up by saying:

Rev. Charles Edward Coughlin, Detroit's rabble-rousing radio priest, has repeatedly offended large sections of the U. S. population, has repeatedly been rebuked by leading U. S. prelates. But he has never been silenced by the Roman Catholic Church, which possesses crushing machinery to deal with heretical or inconvenient priests. Lately Father Coughlin has been abusing Jews.²¹⁵

He was also publicly critiqued by a bishop due to his words and actions, stating that Coughlin did not speak for the church. Lastly, the TIME issue of July 31st, 1939, is in many ways the most vital one to understand the demise of Coughlin and how he was viewed by America at the dawn of the war. They continue the narrative of Coughlin being anti-Semitic and state how soon no network would let him keep broadcasting, and that he has lost validity and trust.²¹⁶

²¹¹ "The TIME Vault: April 29, 1935," *TIME.Com*, <http://time.com/vault/issue/1935-04-29/page/30/>.

²¹² "The TIME Vault: June 3, 1935," *TIME.Com*, <http://time.com/vault/issue/1935-06-03/page/19/>.

²¹³ "The TIME Vault: October 18, 1937," *TIME.Com*, <http://time.com/vault/issue/1937-10-18/page/64/>.

²¹⁴ "The TIME Vault: November 28, 1938," *TIME.Com*, <http://time.com/vault/issue/1938-11-28/page/75/>.

²¹⁵ "The TIME Vault," 26.

²¹⁶ "The TIME Vault: July 31, 1939," *TIME.Com*, <http://time.com/vault/issue/1939-07-31/page/1/>.

While TIME's coverage of Coughlin was mostly factual, with very little opinion-based writing it is still interesting to see how it evolved over time. From the articles covered so far it is an interesting change in how TIME wrote about Coughlin. When he was relatively unknown they were more critical of him, calling him a nationalist. At his height they spoke more factual about him, not giving any opinion on him. Once he began losing followers and he went from being famous to infamous TIME were much more willing to say what they thought of him, talking of how he supported the Nazi's and him being anti-Semitic.

- NYT's coverage of Charles Coughlin

Due to NYT's nature as a weekly newspaper, they did of course have many more mentions of Coughlin than what TIME had. From what I could find Coughlin was mentioned in NYT over a hundred times between 1931 and 1941. In the early days of Coughlin's coverage in NYT he was only mentioned in relation to his radio broadcasting program, in the broadcast section of NYT. It was not before January 12th, 1931, that anything substantial was written regarding Coughlin. On page 12 there was a short column about Coughlin's comment on the economy in one of his recent broadcasts. It is merely a summary of Coughlin's broadcast, but it does show some of his political opinions and makes clear his interests going beyond merely religion.²¹⁷ A later column showed how he had some quarrels with the church, when he stated that birth control was an economic issue, after the church had deemed it pagan.²¹⁸

Similar as with TIME, coverage of Coughlin rose quickly after 1933, exemplified by a full-page article about him in NYT on the 29th of October 1933.²¹⁹ It should be noted that this entry was written in the New York Times Magazine by John Carlisle from Detroit. The article mostly goes through how Coughlin rose to such prominence as well as the controversies surrounding him. It is quite tame when it comes to critique of the famous radio priest, like what we saw in TIME during the same period. One interesting thing NYT does however is that they plaster Coughlin and Huey Long's name on the front page together with taboo terms such as "Revolution" and "Dictatorship", in column about Hugh Johnson's speech.²²⁰ I also feel the positioning of this article on the front page is particularly interesting

²¹⁷ "TimesMachine: Monday January 12, 1931 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 12, accessed April 10, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1931/01/12/issue.html>.

²¹⁸ "TimesMachine: Monday March 23, 1931 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 22, accessed April 10, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1931/03/23/issue.html>.

²¹⁹ "TimesMachine: Sunday October 29, 1933 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 128, accessed April 11, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1933/10/29/issue.html>.

²²⁰ "TimesMachine: Tuesday March 5, 1935 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 1, accessed April 14, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1935/03/05/issue.html>.

as it has been placed on the right-hand side together with mentioning of the Reich and tensions in Europe. Positioning such as that is never at random, and it is feasible that it was placed in such a position to awaken some ideas of comparison. On page 10 of the same paper, the Coughlin section is also placed ahead of that on Huey Long, who was actually a politician and presidential candidate, and would have therefore warrant more attention than Coughlin.²²¹ It should also be mentioned that Coughlin was given the opportunity to respond to the accusation by Johnson a few days later on the 12th.²²²

Coverage of Coughlin through April consisted of short entries, mostly focusing on criticisms and attacks of him. On the 23rd of May 1935 Coughlin would once again made headline news as he held a rally at Madison Square Garden in New York. This entry in particular is very interesting due to how NYT decided to frame its coverage of the event. From the get-go we get the headline “23,000 here cheer Coughlin attack on the president”.²²³ This is combined with a heavy focus on how opposed Coughlin was to Roosevelt, as well as notably Coughlin being opposed to capitalism. They write in one of the headlines “Capitalism Must Be Voted Out of Existence if Scales Goes Through, He Declares”²²⁴ referring to Coughlin’s speech which also appears in the issue of NYT. He is also referred to as attacking several other prominent people in America and those attacks also getting answered by boos from the crowd, in support of Coughlin words. Direct comparisons between Coughlin and Nazism is also mentioned by NYT. They go into detail about how several prominent anti-fascists warn of Coughlin being Nazi-like.²²⁵

On July 3rd there was a small column about how communists have come out in support of Coughlin’s right to free speech. While being a pretty minor event it seemed that NYT believed it worth to print, with the headline “Communists aid Father Coughlin”,²²⁶ a quite misleading title when one actually reads the column. It is however interesting as it is sign of potential framing of Coughlin and Communists being equally bad for America, which would be supported by previous mentions of anti-capitalist statements. There were a few short

²²¹ “TimesMachine,” 10–11.

²²² “TimesMachine: Tuesday March 12, 1935 - NYTimes.Com,” *The New York Times*, 1 & 13, accessed April 14, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1935/03/12/issue.html>.

²²³ “TimesMachine: Thursday May 23, 1935 - NYTimes.Com,” *The New York Times*, 1, accessed April 15, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1935/05/23/issue.html>.

²²⁴ “TimesMachine,” 1.

²²⁵ “TimesMachine,” 19.

²²⁶ “TimesMachine: Wednesday July 3, 1935 - NYTimes.Com,” *The New York Times*, 21, accessed April 15, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1935/07/03/issue.html>.

columns over the next few months, but nothing major, as it mostly covers his controversies and conflicts with others. The trend of focusing on Coughlin's controversy and hostility towards the government would continue into 1936, exemplified by an entry from January 9th where NYT writes about how Coughlin is going to test the federal reserve law.²²⁷ His attacks against the New Deal and Roosevelt are often placed front and center whenever possible, as we can see in that specific example. His new political movement, National union for Social Justice, is also mentioned quite frequently, and is often emphasized as a political movement.

The next major notable mention of Coughlin was on June 30th, 1936, when he came out in support of William Lemke, short-lived politician from North Dakota, representing the union party and a presidential candidate. It is also notable that Coughlin is seemingly mentioned more than Lemke, the actual candidate.²²⁸ He is even given half a page, just recounting his radio address in support for Lemke, while the story of Lemke announcing his run for president is only given a short column. On July 17th Coughlin is again placed front and center when discussing the Union Party, despite him not being the candidate in question. His numerous attacks on Roosevelt is placed front and center in the headline, and the coverage of developments in the party are only accredited to Coughlin.²²⁹ A full transcript of his speech is also once again given and Lemke's point of view is limited to a tiny addition after everything about Coughlin.²³⁰ A similar sentiment is seen on August 14th when the Union party is again mentioned, but with the focus on Coughlin's role in it. It is also made absolutely clear in that entry that Coughlin is the true leader of the party, and without him they would fail, they also hint at Lemke being some kind of puppet for him as he manages it and makes all conditions.²³¹

As previously there are a few minor entries for the next few weeks, before yet another notable entry on the 3rd of September. Even though it was a minor story, the fact that Coughlin was debunked by the Vatican is placed front and center on that day's issue of NYT,

²²⁷ "TimesMachine: Thursday January 9, 1936 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 11, accessed April 15, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1936/01/09/issue.html>.

²²⁸ "TimesMachine: Saturday June 20, 1936 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 1 & 3, accessed April 15, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1936/06/20/issue.html>.

²²⁹ "TimesMachine: Friday July 17, 1936 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 1 & 6, accessed April 15, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1936/07/17/issue.html>.

²³⁰ "TimesMachine," 6.

²³¹ "TimesMachine: Friday August 14, 1936 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 1 & 11, accessed April 15, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1936/08/14/issue.html>.

clearly showing that they want people to know.²³² Similar stories would follow on October 12th when Coughlin was accused of misquoting the people.²³³ The most important, yet short entry came on October 10th, 1937, when Coughlin was openly forced to end his broadcasts by order of the Archbishop.²³⁴ There is very little opinionated in this entry but it was placed on the front page, and it clear that they wanted to bring attention to it. On the 24th of April 1939 Coughlin was again mentioned due to him advocating isolationism and being compared to Hitler by other ministers.²³⁵ While not a large or important entry, it shows that NYT is willing to air stories accusing Coughlin of being like Hitler in his message. His influence clearly continued after all of this, but his influence was clearly weakened, as we can see when Wendell Willkie rejected his support due to his followers and message going against his own.²³⁶

While there are countless other entries that could have been brought up, I feel the ones covered here represents the narrative NYT took to Coughlin during the 1930s. Interestingly, they seem to have been harsher on Coughlin than what TIME was. NYT also decided to make a comparison between Coughlin and Nazism very early on, while TIME took their time making the same comparison. NYT did of course present their stories with some degree of objectivity, and they never made any outright allegations of Coughlin being an outright Nazi or Fascist, but they kept framing him in a bad light and when they could not associate him with the radical right, they associated him with communists. They also brought his dislike of capitalism to the front and whenever he was mentioned in relation to politics, he was the focus despite the story covering the candidacy of someone else. Coughlin was always presented as the brain behind the political campaigns he were involved with, and his failings often made headlines. Numerous mentions of him being “Nazi like” were mentioned, especially leading up to the war. Just as in TIME, coverage of Coughlin became far more critical as his popularity and following dwindled.

²³² “TimesMachine: Thursday September 3, 1936 - NYTimes.Com,” *The New York Times*, 1, accessed April 20, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1936/09/03/issue.html>.

²³³ “TimesMachine: Monday October 12, 1936 - NYTimes.Com,” *The New York Times*, 18, accessed April 20, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1936/10/12/issue.html>.

²³⁴ “TimesMachine: Sunday October 10, 1937 - NYTimes.Com,” *The New York Times*, 1, accessed April 20, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1937/10/10/issue.html>.

²³⁵ “TimesMachine: Monday April 24, 1939 - NYTimes.Com,” *The New York Times*, 5, accessed April 20, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1939/04/24/issue.html>.

²³⁶ “TimesMachine: Wednesday August 28, 1940 - NYTimes.Com,” *The New York Times*, 1 & 12, accessed April 20, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1940/08/28/issue.html>.

The way TIME and NYT presented Coughlin is very interesting as they both made outright comparison of him with Fascism and Nazism. It is clear that neither media liked Coughlin and were highly critical of him. The way they wrote about him differed slightly, but their coverage portrayed him in the same way and tried to discredit him. Neither TIME nor NYT ever directly present him as an outright threat, although NYT did at times show how large his following was. NYT never tried to silence him and often printed his speeches in full for people to make up their own opinion instead of being told what to believe. I would say they represented what Coughlin was like quite well, but I do feel like they underplayed his influence to some extent. They also did not focus a lot on the extremely racist and antisemitic comment and statement he has made, as would potentially color him in a much darker light. The presentation of him was accurate, but they did not convey the real threat he posed to American democracy and freedom.

Silver legion of America and William Pelley

The Silver legion, or Silver Shirts as they were often called were a radical right movement from 1933 to 1941 headed by William Dudley Pelley also known as “The Chief” by his followers. Perhaps the most public fascist and Nazi in America, coined as the “The man who would be Hitler” by Suzanne Ledebor.²³⁷ There is surprisingly little written about Pelley, but there is enough to get a good image of who this obscure, yet public man was. As previously I will give a short account of who Pelley was using secondary sources before looking at TIME and NYT’s coverage and presentation of him. It should be mentioned that due to Pelley being such a controversial figure in America it can be difficult to separate falsehoods and exaggerations from reality. Therefore, a lot of different secondary sources from different authors must be used to thoroughly try and determine who he actually was and the reach of his influence and power.

In William Pelley early life he was sent to Russia as a journalist and missionary. There he got the idea that Jews and Communists were one in the same, and that they were both opposed to Christianity.²³⁸ He lived in New York for some time after his return from Russia, working as a writer in many different fields. This would be his entry into the movie industry, and he

²³⁷ Suzanne G. Ledebor, “The Man Who Would Be Hitler: William Dudley Pelley and the Silver Legion,” *California History* 65, no. 2 (1986): 126–36, <https://doi.org/10.2307/25158370>.

²³⁸ KEVIN J. HARTY, “William Dudley Pelley, An American Nazi in King Arthur’s Court,” *Arthuriana* 26, no. 2 (2016): 64.

would eventually move to California to work on Hollywood productions.²³⁹ He would work on a hit film during his career which would only help further his mild fame. During the great depression he founded a small college that taught several different courses. His political career would kick off the day after Hitler came to power in 1933, as Pelley founded the Silver Legion the following day.²⁴⁰ As Harty describes this period, Pelley was the first American to openly support Hitler and all his Nazi ideology. The legion also shared several aspects similar to the Nazis in terms of uniforms, antisemitism and ideology. The Legion was most popular in the west of America, making it an odd one out in comparison to most other radical right organizations. Their membership is estimated to have peaked in 1934 at 15,000 members.²⁴¹ Pelley ran for president in 1936 racking in just over one and a half thousand votes, after a long slander campaign of Roosevelt, as well as his usual antisemitism. He was accused of being unamerican and for wanting to replicate Hitler's rule in America. His support for Hitler was so vibrant that he openly admitted he wished to do so when questioned by members of Congress.²⁴² The Legion would eventually disband after the United States were attacked by Japan at Pearl Harbor in 1941.

Pelley would also influence other types of media, such as fiction. The world-famous novel *It can't happen here* was according to its author inspired by Pelley amongst others.²⁴³ Pelley also had several connections with other people mentioned here such as Coughlin and Lindbergh. He expected that he would rule the country together with Coughlin and Lindbergh. He seemed to be so close in fact with Lindbergh that Lindbergh was a character witness in Pelley's trial for treason.²⁴⁴ Pelley and the Silver Legion was also a quite spiritual bunch, dabbling in spiritualism and metaphysics.²⁴⁵ His entire following surrounded religion and Pelley believed he was destined for greatness, and that he would succeed in his political objectives as a result.²⁴⁶

Pelley was a man familiar with media and swaying the public, having been a screenwriter, journalist and missionary he knew how to get his message across. He also published several magazines over the years advocating for his campaign and for the legion. It is therefore quite

²³⁹ HARTY, 65.

²⁴⁰ HARTY, 69.

²⁴¹ HARTY, 69.

²⁴² HARTY, 70.

²⁴³ HARTY, 72.

²⁴⁴ HARTY, 73–74.

²⁴⁵ Toy, "Silver Shirts in the Northwest," 143–44.

²⁴⁶ Toy, 142–43.

interesting to see that he was fiercely unpopular with quite low member counts. One would assume that a man, with a background in journalism would know how to handle himself in the media landscape, it is therefore interesting to see how he was portrayed by the media of his time, in comparison to who we know him to be today.

- TIME coverage of the Silver Legion and William Pelley

TIME's coverage of Pelley is surprisingly lacking considering his controversial nature. The first time Pelley and the Silver Legion were mentioned in TIME was on May 7th, 1934, when a federal judge ordered seizure of assets belonging to a press used by Pelley. They give a quick run down of Pelley, quickly establishing him as someone who has held different occupations and being a spiritualist. They quickly link him and the legion to Fascism and explain how they have been investigated for spreading Nazi propaganda through their paper "Liberation". They described him and the legion as the KKK mixed with Fascism and economic nostrums.²⁴⁷ They lump them together with other Fascist, Nazi, and racist groups under what they call "Shirt business" referring to these groups choice in wearing colored shirts as a uniform. Amongst them we can find other notable American fascist groups like the Khaki shirts, White shirts, Black shirts and Brown shirts. Neither of these lasted long except for the Silver Shirts, and Brown shirts who would evolve to become the German American Bund. This entry focuses on telling its readers about Pelley before linking him with fascists, Nazis, and other criminals. Making sure to emphasize that those who share his vision are now in jail, and their movement crumbling.

Interestingly, there is a 7-year gap between the first and second story about Pelley and the Silver Legion. His next mention was in 1940 on the 12th of February and covered the trials of several fascists in the Dies Committee. While others were mentioned in the context of these trials, Pelley was clearly front and center in TIME's coverage of the inquiry. They present him as a fugitive and have no issue calling him a fascist and a plotter.²⁴⁸ He would again appear the following week as TIME once again reported on the Dies Committee, they also gave a transcript of some of Pelley's answers to questions where he outright makes statements such as "I feel exactly as the Nazi Party in Germany felt regarding the Jewish

²⁴⁷ "The TIME Vault: May 7, 1934," *TIME.Com*, 16, accessed April 24, 2022, <http://time.com/vault/issue/1934-05-07/>.

²⁴⁸ "The TIME Vault: February 12, 1940," *TIME.Com*, 16, accessed April 25, 2022, <http://time.com/vault/issue/1940-02-12/page/18/>.

element in our country”²⁴⁹ He also has no issue stating he is fascist and would implement Nazi like policies against Jews in America had he come to power.²⁵⁰

The next two and last entries came in 1941, once on January 20th when he was mentioned as part of a list of American Nazis. As well again on the 27th when he was mentioned in greater detail. They cover his move to Noblesville. He was also described quite bluntly as “the goateed, vitriolic leader of the Hitler-aspiring Silvershirt Legion of America, investigated last year by the Dies Committee, William Dudley Pelley.”²⁵¹ The short entry about him covers how unpopular he is and who some of his previous associates were and how he still tries to print papers, but is always denied the opportunity by local publishers. He is presented as a racist, no better than the Klan.²⁵² There are other entries after this one, but they are outside the scope of this paper and will therefore not be mentioned here.

TIME’s coverage of Pelley is short but very direct and clear, they see him as a fascist and convey him as such. Making clear he is aspiring to be Hitler and that he far from the only one wishing to bring Nazism to America. They try to quickly dismiss him by calling him a spiritualist and present him as a kind of amateur with no real skill. His crimes and unpopularity is often put forth and his measly election result in 1936 was not even worth mentioning. It is evident that TIME did not see him as a real threat, and did not present him as such. They did however do due diligence and presented him as the clear Nazi he was and made sure to let people know how despicable he and his Legion were. The first entry mentioning placed his name together with other failed Nazi and Fascistic movements, indicating that he was no better than them and were just another figure in the line up of failed American radical right movements built on hate.

- NYT coverage of the Silver Legion and William Pelley

NYT’s coverage of Pelley started a mere month before TIME’s on May 24th 1934 where they reported on how the “Silver Shirts” had been indicted in North Carolina, related to his press. They give a short run through of the events before interestingly deciding to outright compare Pelley to Hitler and the Silver Legion to the KKK. They describe Pelley and the Legion as

²⁴⁹ “The TIME Vault: February 19, 1940,” *TIME.Com*, 17, accessed April 25, 2022, <http://time.com/vault/issue/1940-02-19/page/2/>.

²⁵⁰ “The TIME Vault,” 17.

²⁵¹ “The TIME Vault: January 27, 1941,” *TIME.Com*, 44, accessed April 25, 2022, <http://time.com/vault/issue/1941-01-27/page/43/>.

²⁵² “The TIME Vault,” 43–44.

antisemitic, pro-Nazi, anti-communist, anti-Catholic, and anti-Roosevelt. As well as stating that the group was inspired by Hitler's rise in Germany. They finish by stating that the Silver Legion claims to have a large membership base as well as great financial support.²⁵³ A similar narrative was also seen on April 6th when another small entry about Pelley was published in NYT, once again focusing on his hatred of Jews and his aspirations to be like Hitler.²⁵⁴ On April 25th they reported on the failure of Pelley's paper, making sure to mention Pelley's name as the head of the Legion.²⁵⁵ The following day they reported on how a secretary of the Prison Association of New York had to resign after it came out he was a member of the Silver Legion.²⁵⁶ They would continue to mention his shortcomings and failures, exemplified by a short column on June 16th 1934 where NYT reported on how Pelley and the Legion surrendered to North Carolina as a result of the charges of fraud against him and some of the Legion's prominent members.²⁵⁷ Over the next two years, coverage would continue to follow the trial and the eventual conviction on January 22nd 1935.

Similar to TIME, there was a hiatus of coverage of Pelley and the Legion. The next entry was on August 29th, 1939 and covered the Dies committee and how Pelley had diverted around 100,000 dollars into his own or other accounts of money earned by the Legion's publications.²⁵⁸ On the 20th of October they once again cover accusations made against Pelley and emphasize that he is un-American and wishes to overthrow the American government. They list numerous charges and accusations against him, they present him as a criminal sponsored by foreign and un-American figures.²⁵⁹ On February 7th and 8th Pelley makes shorty entries as his situation develops, but nothing mentioned in these columns are relevant enough to be covered. The following entry on February 9th, 1940, covers the trial of Pelley in the Dies committee and follow a similar narrative to that of TIME, mentioning how he wished to be like Hitler. They do however go into much more detail to discredit the Silver

²⁵³ "TimesMachine: Thursday May 24, 1934 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 12, accessed April 25, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1934/05/24/issue.html>.

²⁵⁴ "TimesMachine: Friday April 6, 1934 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 12, accessed April 25, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1934/04/06/issue.html>.

²⁵⁵ "TimesMachine: Wednesday April 25, 1934 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 5, accessed April 25, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1934/04/25/issue.html>.

²⁵⁶ "TimesMachine: Thursday April 26, 1934 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 32, accessed April 25, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1934/04/26/issue.html>.

²⁵⁷ "TimesMachine: Saturday June 16, 1934 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 2, accessed April 25, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1934/06/16/issue.html>.

²⁵⁸ "TimesMachine: Tuesday August 29, 1939 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 14, accessed April 25, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1939/08/29/issue.html>.

²⁵⁹ "TimesMachine: Friday October 20, 1939 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 15, accessed April 25, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1939/10/20/issue.html>.

Legion, showing how his Legion was based on a military pattern but had no arms.²⁶⁰ They clearly try to discredit him and write him as no real threat.

The most condemning report of Pelley in NYT came on April 3rd 1940 when his entire “plot” was brought forth to the Dies Committee as well as for NYT.²⁶¹ This column is deserving for a bigger dive as it really presents Pelley in a very negative light. The column covers the testimony of one Dorothy Waring who held lots of information about Pelley’s plan for America and the Legion. She details how Pelley was planning on marching on Washington and establish a Nazi regime as far back as 1935. As well as mentioning several prominent figures in the Legion and its ties to the KKK. It is also revealed that Pelley had used army resources to train his Legion in Detroit and attempted to get his members into prominent positions in New York. Pelley also allegedly had ties to an American general as well, indicating he had support within members of the US military.²⁶² This was the last notable column written by NYT about the Silver Legion and Pelley. Smaller entries were written updating on the case, but it is clear that NYT did not see it necessary to continue with Pelley in full after the Dies Committee.

TIME and NYT had no issue attacking Pelley and the Legion and present them as the Nazis they were from the very beginning. TIME’s coverage was a bit more, sensational, focusing on scandal and the more bizarre aspects of Pelley, while NYT mostly stuck to a calmer approach. There is no sign of any fear mongering, and both wrote him off as a man with a dream that could never be achieved. He was presented as a man who would fail just as others had failed before him. Unlike with Coughlin and Lindbergh, both TIME and NYT had no issue calling him a Nazi, as there was presumably no fear of slander seeing that he considered himself one and was public about it. While being barely covered in TIME, his coverage was more extensive in NYT and the facts also seem to have been more accurate in NYT than in TIME when comparing to what we know now.

It is clear that Pelley held no real threat, and therefore TIME and NYT did not present him as such. They followed a similar coverage timeline as that is when Pelley was presumably important enough to be covered. His height and his downfall are was put in focus, and he was

²⁶⁰ “TimesMachine: Friday February 9, 1940 - NYTimes.Com,” *The New York Times*, 11, accessed April 25, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1940/02/09/issue.html>.

²⁶¹ “TimesMachine: Wednesday April 3, 1940 - NYTimes.Com,” *The New York Times*, 4, accessed April 25, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1940/04/03/issue.html>.

²⁶² “TimesMachine,” 4.

from day one colored as a criminal and Nazi who wished for the downfall of America and the values it held. His anticatholic stance would also make him and Coughlin incapable of seeing eye to eye, as Pelley was a hardline protestant while Coughlin was a catholic priest. It is interesting that a protestant radical right politician with media experience saw less succeed than a catholic priest from the Midwest. More about this will be covered in the final section of this paper.

German American Bund

The German American Bund is often described as the biggest and most frightening fascist movement in the United States. Not only were they loud and unapologetic, they also had ties to the German Nazi party.²⁶³ The Bund was so prominent in fact that Hitler took notice of its rise and power. The Bund was in the sight of the government and law enforcement for a long time and attempts to limit German influence over the Bund had varying success. The publicity of the Bund according to Remak was one of the reasons so many Americans viewed Nazism negatively. As he explains:

In sum, it is hard to exaggerate the harm which the Bund did to German-American relations during the 1930's. Without it, American opinion might well have reacted less vigorously than it did to Hitler's policies, regarding Nazism as no more than one among many disagreeable, yet harmless, foreign ideologies. But with uniformed youths parading the swastika around Madison Square Garden, the wildest of stories about the Nazi menace became plausible. The Bund's attempts to rally the German-Americans to the Nazi cause had failed ingloriously. Instead, its clumsy efforts to make proselytes had unwittingly helped to alert America to the Nazi danger.²⁶⁴

The Bund were relentless in their projection of loyalty to the Nazi cause, and they held a noticeable amount of members at their height. The Bund were however mostly targeted at German Americans, and whenever someone attacked or critiqued the Bund, they saw it as an attack on all German Americans. Their greatest failure was also the fact that they were fiercely loyal to an aggressive nation²⁶⁵, not an ideology in of itself like what the Silver Legion was. As a result of this their representation was also tied to that of how Germany was presented. Yet despite their prominence, there was not a lot of media coverage of them as one might have expected during the 1930s.

²⁶³ Joachim Remak, "'Friends of the New Germany': The Bund and German-American Relations," n.d., 38.

²⁶⁴ Remak, 41.

²⁶⁵ Leland V. Bell, "The Failure of Nazism in America: The German American Bund, 1936-1941," *Political Science Quarterly* 85, no. 4 (1970): 595–99, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2147597>.

- TIME's coverage of The German American Bund

Despite their importance to historians, there is surprisingly little mention of them in TIME, a mere five times were they mentioned in sufficient detail. It also took TIME all the time until 1938 before the first mention of the Bund appeared. The first mention of the Bund in TIME follows the usual model, giving a quick introduction to the group about their past and current standing.²⁶⁶ They introduce them instantly as a viable threat by stating that “If a nationwide vote were taken to discover the most despised politico-social organization currently extant, the Amerikadeutscher Volksbund would stand at least a fair chance of winning.”²⁶⁷ They present them as a group hated both in the US as well as in Germany, they mention how the group has previously made headlines for their activities and controversies. They explain how the group rose out of other groups formed as far back as 1923.²⁶⁸ They continue to discredit them, stating that they are not innocent at all and are in fact full on Nazi's with their very own Führer named Fritz Kuhn, and he is described as being “an embryo Göring” and describe how he and other prominent unsuccessful Nazi's were in a meeting the prior week in Brussels.²⁶⁹

The next major entry came on October 10th during the now well-known Dies Committee where a witness had gone undercover into the Bund and testified against the group. It is stated that the Bund had 500,000 supporters and that they received lots of funding from wealthy supporters. It was also claimed that Kuhn had a special agreement with Hitler that if any member had an issue, to take it up with the ambassador. TIME does point out however that the German ambassador states that Germany has repeatedly claimed that it denies its citizens from joining the Bund.²⁷⁰ On August 28th more Dies Committee news emerged as the investigation continued and a new witness, Helen Vooros, came forth. She described how the Bund were not only wrong in their politics, but also immoral and disgusting. She describes how during a Bund trip to Germany, there was a lot of sexual immorality that took place, and that after she left a Bund member continued to pursue her.²⁷¹

²⁶⁶ “The TIME Vault: March 14, 1938,” *TIME.Com*, 15–16, accessed April 25, 2022, <http://time.com/vault/issue/1938-03-14/page/19/>.

²⁶⁷ “The TIME Vault,” 15.

²⁶⁸ “The TIME Vault,” 15–16.

²⁶⁹ “The TIME Vault,” 16.

²⁷⁰ “The TIME Vault: October 10, 1938,” *TIME.Com*, 9–10, accessed April 25, 2022, <http://time.com/vault/issue/1938-10-10/page/12/>.

²⁷¹ “The TIME Vault: August 28, 1939,” *TIME.Com*, 17, accessed April 25, 2022, <http://time.com/vault/issue/1939-08-28/page/19/>.

The next mention of the Bund in TIME was during the infamous Maddison Square Garden rally. The most well-known instance of Nazi activity in America, it was the biggest gathering of fascists in America and would also be the last such event. They did not seem to find it worthy of a lot of mention however as it was only briefly mentioned a month after it happened. It mostly just mentions that the Bund held a rally on Washington's birthday cheering Hitler and Charles Coughlin.²⁷² The next entry would be a bit more substantial as on June 5th when TIME described how no one really took the Bund seriously in New York before the rally happened. TIME angles the article in such a way that they focus on presenting Kuhn as a criminal, stating how he stole funds from the Bund and that he is no more than just a thief.²⁷³

TIME's December 4th, 1939, entry was a fitting end to Kuhn and the Bund's influence. Their coverage of the event was detailed, telling the reader every event that had led up to the end of his trial, including how Kuhn had been allowed a meeting with Hitler. Even after having gotten a boost of energy, there were no great rush of people jumping on the "Bundwagon" as TIME fittingly called it.²⁷⁴ They present how Khun seemed to seek attention from several women at once, using his position to attain their affection. His love letters were read around and his disloyalty towards those he claimed to love became evident.²⁷⁵ Lastly on December 11th, 1939, TIME reported that Khun had been sentenced to prison for two and a half to five years. Ironically enough he was sentenced for stealing funds from the Bund.²⁷⁶

TIME were clearly not afraid of mocking and presenting Khun and the Bund in the worst light possible. They focused on their failures and their ties to Nazism in Germany, clearly showing that these were real Nazis wishing the downfall of American democracy. They presented the Bund and Khun as unfaithful and immoral, being nothing more than mere beer drinking thugs. They make it clear that the Bund had a following and from the first mention of them, they outright state that they would have a chance of winning in an election. The accuracy of such a statement might be doubtful, but they did convey them as a real threat, and continued to do so to some extent until the Bund's downfall. Coverage was however quite

²⁷² "The TIME Vault: March 27, 1939," *TIME.Com*, 50, accessed April 25, 2022, <http://time.com/vault/issue/1939-03-27/page/50/>.

²⁷³ "The TIME Vault: June 5, 1939," *TIME.Com*, 17, accessed April 25, 2022, <http://time.com/vault/issue/1939-06-05/spread/18/>.

²⁷⁴ "The TIME Vault: December 4, 1939," *TIME.Com*, 18, accessed April 25, 2022, <http://time.com/vault/issue/1939-12-04/page/20/>.

²⁷⁵ "The TIME Vault," 18.

²⁷⁶ "The TIME Vault: December 11, 1939" 22.

lacking considering the scale the Bund operated, which is quite odd considering how clear of a threat they presented them as at first. The main focus of their coverage was of the Dies Committee, at the very end of their time. The Madison Square Garden rally was also oddly left out of any major mentioning, despite it today being quite widely known in the study of the Bund and Radical right in interwar America.

- NYT's coverage of the German American Bund

The New York Times has a lot more coverage of the Bund and Khun than TIME had, from my findings I would say that in the span of 5 years they have more cover than any other group or individual covered so far except for Charles Lindbergh. As a result, I chose to exclude coverage of Friend of New Germany (FNG), as this section only focuses on the Bund. Even though FNG was a predecessor to the Bund, what is written about them before 1936 would be irrelevant for this paper. Similar as before, as coverage of the Bund was so extensive, only a few issues of NYT will be looked at, as there is simply not enough space to cover it all. Coverage of the Bund is however more consistent than any other topic covered, and therefore I will cover at least two columns per year to best represent how coverage evolved over the years.

The first coverage of Khun in 1936 was on March 29th, 1936, covering how he was a candidate for being elected as the leader of the organization. It is quite interesting that in the column, Khun denies being a Nazi stating that he and all his members are American citizens, and therefore they cannot be a member of another country's political party.²⁷⁷ The next entry was on April 1st when NYT reported on that Friends of New Germany changed their name to "Amerikadeutcher Bund" or "The German-American League" as they called it.²⁷⁸ This was however just a different translation and was now the German American Bund we all know and loathe. NYT this time around does however outright call them a Nazi group and states that it is open to those of German blood. Their purpose is presented as fighting communism and the Jews as well as spreading Nazi ideology.²⁷⁹

The continual struggle between communists and the Bund is again mentioned when NYT reports on a Nazi rally organized by the Bund in 1937. The Bund rally brought speakers from

²⁷⁷ "TimesMachine: Sunday March 29, 1936 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 31, accessed April 25, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1936/03/29/issue.html>.

²⁷⁸ "TimesMachine: Wednesday April 1, 1936 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 22, accessed April 26, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1936/04/01/issue.html>.

²⁷⁹ "TimesMachine," 22.

all around the world, spreading the word of national Socialism. Nazi salutes were given, and non-German Americans were also invited to attend this rally.²⁸⁰ NYT once again shows that the Bund is a strictly German American organization and not intended to be for the masses. On the 30th of August 1937 NYT once again covered the Bund and one of their rallies, with 25,000 attendees. NYT also covers rumors of military drills taking place in Bund camps. The Bund's relationship with other fascist groups is also mentioned in the column.²⁸¹

On March 1st, 1938, the Bund made headlines after Hitler ordered German citizens to immediately end any membership in the Bund and other such groups. NYT estimates that this will affect 400,000 people. The German regime justified this request due to them wanting their subjects to be fully loyal to Germany, and no other group or nation.²⁸² On September 15th it was reported that the Bund was denied partaking in a German American meeting due to their controversial nature.²⁸³ NYT makes sure to show its readers through context that most German Americans do not support the Bund, rather the opposite. A vital report regarding the threat the Bund posed came on the 6th of October when they wrote about how the Bund wished to unite all fascists. This came out during the now well know Dies Committee and the Klan was also asked to partake in a unified fascist movement.²⁸⁴ On October 17th they reported on clashes between the Bund and anti-fascists.²⁸⁵ This clearly shows that there are signs of violence against the Bund's actions and NYT makes sure to let the public know that they antifascists oppose the bund and that they are law abiding people who oppose the Bund.

The Bund would once again make headlines in February 1939 after the infamous rally at Madison Square Garden. NYT focuses its coverage of the event on the chaos surrounding it, talking about the 1700 policemen that had to be called in to assist, as well as a crowd of 100,000 in the area, where over half were protesting the rally.²⁸⁶ One interesting note they

²⁸⁰ "TimesMachine: Saturday February 13, 1937 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 5, accessed April 26, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1937/02/13/issue.html>.

²⁸¹ "TimesMachine: Monday August 30, 1937 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 3, accessed April 26, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1937/08/30/issue.html>.

²⁸² "TimesMachine: Tuesday March 1, 1938 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 1 & 6, accessed April 26, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1938/03/01/issue.html>.

²⁸³ "TimesMachine: Thursday September 15, 1938 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 9, accessed April 26, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1938/09/15/issue.html>.

²⁸⁴ "TimesMachine: Thursday October 6, 1938 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 11, accessed April 26, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1938/10/06/issue.html>.

²⁸⁵ "TimesMachine: Monday October 17, 1938 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 34, accessed April 26, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1938/10/17/issue.html>.

²⁸⁶ "TimesMachine: Tuesday February 21, 1939 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 1 & 5, accessed April 26, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1939/02/21/issue.html>.

reported in however was that the Jewish community of 386 Fourth Avenue supported the Bund's right to have a rally at the Garden. They did however also point out that even though the group supported the Bund's right to rally and free speech, they did not support the Bund at all and were clear that they only supported their right to freedom of assembly and freedom of speech.²⁸⁷ NYT gave a thorough coverage of the rally and made sure to get all the facts across. They did however frame the rally as chaotic and very Nazi in nature. They also made sure to point out that Coughlin was praised during the rally. Five days later, the German government stated that they had no ties to the Bund, and claim they have no link whatsoever with the Bund and its operations. NYT also reported on what some German newspapers printed about the Bund's rally. Indicating that there was no apparent like for the Bund in Germany.²⁸⁸

On May 26th, 1939, Kuhn was arrested for having stolen money from the Bund, this news was apparently important enough for NYT to make headline news that day. They point out how he was allegedly fleeing as he was caught in Pennsylvania with three of his aides. NYT goes on to list all his charges, making sure that they mentioned Nemours times that he stole from the Bund as well as another German American group.²⁸⁹ They also cover the same story TIME did about Helen Vooros who accused the Bund of immorality during the Dies Committee trial. This was given headline status and it was pointed out that this was the youth unit of the bund. Accusations of Kuhn and the Bund being German spies were also brought up.²⁹⁰ Details about the Bund's trip to Germany was also put forth as to better show what actually went down with the Bundwagon's trip to Germany. On August 23rd NYT reported that the Dies committee has been able to tie the Bund to the German embassy as well as a visit by the Bund to the Italian one. They also point out that German Americans are requesting being allowed to testify in the trial as to show that not all German Americans supported the Bund.²⁹¹ On the 26th of October, NYT would report on the beginning downfall

²⁸⁷ "TimesMachine," 5.

²⁸⁸ "TimesMachine: February 26" 68.

<https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1939/02/26/issue.html>

²⁸⁹ NOTE: In the source the page number is 24, but due to some missing pages, it appears as page 20 on the website. "TimesMachine: Friday May 26, 1939 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 1 & 24, accessed April 26, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1939/05/26/issue.html>.

²⁹⁰ "TimesMachine: Saturday August 19, 1939 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 1 & 4, accessed April 26, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1939/08/19/issue.html>.

²⁹¹ "TimesMachine: Wednesday August 23, 1939 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 9, accessed April 26, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1939/08/23/issue.html>.

of the Bund as the Seattle Bund disbanded. The Bund continues to claim that all of its members were American Citizens.²⁹²

The continued downfall of the Bund would be shown on the 11th of August 1940 as NYT reported that the Bund has stopped using Hitler pictures, Swastika, and uniforms. They report that the new direction would be focused on American patriotism. They also report that attendance at the Bund camp Nordlund has decreased despite a lowering in costs. Part of the reason behind this decision was so called war hysteria in the United States.²⁹³ In December there were reports stating that the Bund had between 1500 and 2000 soldiers and sailors in the United States armed forces. They also pointed out that an investigation by the FBI was underway in an attempt to figure out if these claims were truthful.²⁹⁴ This shows us that despite claims of the Bund losing members it is clear that they still posed some sort of threat.

In 1941, connections between the German American Bund and the America first Committee were brought into the light as NYT reported that the Bund gave their support for the Committee, but that the AFC denied to accept its support due to its Nazi ties. As a letter from the AFC states: "The America First committee is against America's entry into the war not because it approves of the philosophy, the government, the aggression, or the methods of Hitler's Germany"²⁹⁵ They repeatedly point out that the AFC do not want members who support Hitler or are Nazi's. Despite this however, on May 25th it is reported that 60% of those at an AFC rally were pro-Nazi and former or current Bund members who had attended Bund rallies in the past.²⁹⁶

Both TIME and NYT had a very similar coverage of the Bund, although TIME had a very limited reporting on them when compared to other individuals and groups they have reported on in the past. NYT's coverage was extensive, more so than with most other and they had no issue presenting them as Nazi's and as a threat to American democracy and freedoms. TIME does however do a poor job in getting across the real scale of the Bund and the actual threat it posed. NYT however seems to have presented exactly as we knew them to be, they also

²⁹² "TimesMachine," 14.

²⁹³ "TimesMachine: Sunday August 11, 1940 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 8, accessed April 26, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1940/08/11/issue.html>.

²⁹⁴ "TimesMachine: Friday December 20, 1940 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 17, accessed April 26, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1940/12/20/issue.html>.

²⁹⁵ "TimesMachine: Friday May 9, 1941 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 12, accessed April 26, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1941/05/09/issue.html>.

²⁹⁶ "TimesMachine: Sunday May 25, 1941 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 3, accessed April 26, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1941/05/25/issue.html>.

follow their typical reporting style by never inserting opinions or mockery into their coverage. It is however clear that NYT did what they could to present them in a negative light without it being seen as slander. The focus was more on Kuhn than the Bund itself, but that was not surprising seeing as the group and its leader was interconnected. Constant discrediting of the Bund and Kuhn were done by both, especially when it came to them presenting them as immoral Nazi racists.

3 Media's role in the failure of Fascism – Conclusion

This chapter will mostly consist of references back to what has already been written in this paper, cumulating everything and bringing it together to give a concise answer to the question posed in the introduction. The question was how: How did TIME and the New York Times' cover Fascism and Nazism in America, and how did the coverage contribute to ultimate failure of Fascism and Nazism as a valid option in American politics, in the eyes of the readers? None can agree on whether Fascism ever held a chance to actually succeed in America. As mentioned earlier, Gary Klein was one of those who believed that NYT did not present the rise of Nazism accurately.²⁹⁷ This is of course in relation to Nazism in Europe, so it is interesting to see if they were accurate in America. But before we try to answer that question we need to look at if Fascism held a chance of succeeding.

Incompatible ideology – Fascism's failure

This section will draw in information already covered and will therefore cite few new sources as they have already been covered in the previous chapters. It is an analysis of the information already covered with my own thoughts on the matter. After my own thoughts on what has been covered in the last chapters and sections, I will mention some of the conclusions drawn by other historians to support my arguments. To summarize what was mentioned in chapter 1. The United States was founded by revolutionaries, the constitution and common heritage being the basis of the union of 48 states at the time of the interwar period. The United States as a nation state faced an uphill battle to justify its existence. While Latin American countries could justify their existence based on a common ethnic heritage, language, religion, and suffering. The United States had no such privilege, as a nation built up by numerous ethnic, cultural, religious, and racial backgrounds therefore it is clear that creating a common national spirit would be difficult. The common ground the United States

²⁹⁷ Klein, "When the News Doesn't Fit," 144.

held at its founding was a common wish to be independent from the British based on them being Americans. This worked well for some time as the elite were also the majority, white protestant Anglo-Saxon men. In of itself this is not a bad basis for a nation, it does however not work when there are large numbers of minority groups in the supposedly unified nation. Infighting and immigration only added to the divide in the nation. Expansion west by manifesting their destiny, the United States national foundation of the United States continued to dwindle as they could no longer claim to be just the 13 original states anymore. As a result, they always needed new ways to define their own nation, and this would come in a multitude of ways. The idea of the American melting pot is one that is popular in media and in different fields of studies. It essentially boils down to the United States being founded on and for all the different types of people living there and calling themselves Americans. Some were however not fond of such an idea, and believed in concepts such as white America, protestant America, and many others. This also resulted in hostility towards anyone who were considered “The other” be they communists, Jews, Catholics, Italian, or Irish just to name a few.

With close to half the population being some sort of minority, the fabric holding the nation together grew ever weaker. Different groups and individuals believed their view and belief were right. We can see this in figures such as Pelley and Coughlin, both being considered part of the radical right, but with very different views. Pelley, a protestant extremist, and Coughlin a catholic priest would never see eye to eye on religion. As both figures were popular, but not unified there was no cooperation towards a common goal, as their end goals were incompatible. This combined with a semi-stable duopoly of politics, with the Republican and Democratic party, made it difficult for any radical group to win through politically resulted in revolution was the only real option.

The two most popular right-wing individuals, Coughlin and Lindbergh held two qualities that made them unsuitable as the head of any fascists America. Coughlin was often portrayed as the brain behind the parties he supported but could never actually run himself due to his status as a catholic priest. The only way he could receive any sort of real political power would be if he became a politician. While his words might have been powerful, as we have seen they were in news coverage, he was simply one man with a following which had diminished by the late 30s and his own church would eventually turn against him. His loyalty was first and foremost to the catholic church, and as a result he could never support Fascism without the church also openly supporting it. We can see this in the news covered when the

church asked him to stop, and he obliged. His true failing was also his greatest strength, his background as a priest.

Coughlin was also a minority, being a Catholic in protestant America, he would therefore also be incompatible with most extreme protestants such as Pelley and the Black Legion. He was highly influential, no one is denying that, but he lacked any real power to implement any real change. This was proven when at the height of his influence, he was not able to sway the election by any real margin. His support for Lemke only resulted in a small share of the vote, and there was no real threat to the duality of American politics. Had he stood behind a republican or democratic candidate, and had Huey Long lived long enough to see the election things might also have gone very differently. He stood alone in a sea of different politics and ideologies, many he could associate with and many which opposed his very existence as a catholic immigrant.

Lindbergh, who has only briefly been covered was not a fascist, while supporting policies that would have benefited fascists in America, he did not advocate for Fascism to take hold in America. He was however clearly a racist and he was also portrayed such by the media, his main advocating against the war was on the basis of him not seeing the war as Americas fight. As he stated:

These wars in Europe are not wars in which our civilization is defending itself against some Asiatic intruder. . . . This is not a question of banding together to defend the white race against foreign invasion. This is simply one more of those age-old struggles within our family of nations—a quarrel arising from the errors of the last war. . . .²⁹⁸

He would continue to advocate for isolation as the war progressed, becoming part of the America First committee. AFC, while being a large movement did not come about before the 40s and did not exist for long enough to leave any real impact. The committee and Lindbergh were also not fascists, while some members might have been. But we have seen that the Bund and AFC had some connection, which was covered by the media (See page 74). NYT does report on Nazis seeing Lindbergh positively but makes no claim that the feeling is mutual.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁸ "The TIME Vault: September 25, 1939," *TIME.Com*, 14, accessed May 8, 2022, <http://time.com/vault/issue/1939-09-25/page/1/>.

²⁹⁹ "TimesMachine: Wednesday October 25, 1939 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 12, accessed May 8, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1939/10/25/issue.html>.

Lindbergh did support working with Germany in the event they won the war, but still advocated America staying neutral.³⁰⁰ He repeatedly advocates for American staying neutral for the sake of America, not for the sake of Germany and the media does what it can to also portray this angle. The fact that Lindbergh's advocating benefits Germany was however also covered.³⁰¹ Lindbergh was however openly opposed to Roosevelt and stated that if Roosevelt got his way, congressional elections would cease to be held and that the president's action would eventually lead to war.³⁰² Accusations of Lindbergh potentially having political aspirations were however mentioned on the 31st of October 1941, when members of the *Friends of Democracy* accused that Lindbergh would be the type of American Hitler.³⁰³

We have seen the Dies committee tear apart the least bit of Fascism in the United States, and as previously stated. The only way Fascism could have set foot in America would be through revolution. Lindbergh as a patriot and member of the US air force for most of his life was unlikely to advocate revolution and an end to American democracy in the first part. This is supported by what he wrote in his wartime journal, where he states the importance of democracy.³⁰⁴ While Lindbergh was undoubtedly a racist conservative antisemite, he was not a fascist and was not portrayed as one by the media. The media did however make clear, as is true, that his wishes would benefit the Axis powers.

Groups such as the Black Legion were simply too unpopular to achieve any real power and influence. They were isolated to a small corner of the Midwest and draped in secrecy. Their origin as an offshoot of the Klan certainly did not help their case as the KKK had just had a massive falling out with the public. Their first major coverage in NYT and TIME was after a brutal murder, and this murder would also bring forth the end of the Legion at the hands of the FBI. They were undoubtedly the most revolutionary nativist group in America, being prepared for armed takeover of local, state and national government. While in theory being a potential threat their emergence out of the shadow would be their downfall, just as we have seen. I agree completely with the conclusion of Peter Amann that the ideology of the Black

³⁰⁰ "TimesMachine: Monday August 5, 1940 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 1 & 4, accessed May 8, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1940/08/05/issue.html>.

³⁰¹ "TimesMachine: Thursday October 17, 1940 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 10, accessed May 8, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1940/10/17/issue.html>.

³⁰² "TimesMachine: Saturday October 4, 1941 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 1 & 8, accessed May 8, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1941/10/04/issue.html>.

³⁰³ "TimesMachine: Friday October 31, 1941 - NYTimes.Com," *The New York Times*, 3, accessed May 8, 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1941/10/31/issue.html>.

³⁰⁴ Lindbergh, *The Wartime Journals of Charles A. Lindbergh*, 166.

Legion was incompatible with the ideology of America.³⁰⁵ As a nativism movement, they could not go against the only nativist myth in America, democracy, and constitution. They were framed as scared and cowardly men hiding in the shadows and breaking at the slightest scrutiny. While the Black legion was of course a threat to those who were influenced directly by their hate, they had no political following or will beyond spreading fear. The Black legion like Coughlin and Lindbergh did not have any political following behind them.

Amann, who covered the Black Legion earlier, states that the reason Fascism failed was due to:

In twentieth-century Europe, this liberal tradition was to be weakened by the tides of Irrationalism and total war, conditions which eased the way for a fascist assault, the success of which depended on a varying circumstance. In America there was no such tides, but at most a few small breakers. Liberalism, in the broadest sense of that overworked term, therefore remained too solid to invite a serious authoritarian challenge.³⁰⁶

This is close to a common conclusion as to why Fascism failed, Fascism was never a threat to America due to incompatibility. It is also what I personally think, without falling into the idea of American exceptionalism, I do believe that at the time the United States was stable enough not to fall to an ideology as Fascism. America prides itself on its diversity, in theory at least, so importing a foreign ideology that serves only one minority like the Bund did would never work. The biggest threat was that of the nativist movements such as the Silver and Black Legion, but they made enemies of everyone who did not fall within a very certain demographic, far too small for any real support. The few who could unite across demographics were Coughlin and Lindbergh, but neither were outright fascists, they were nationalists for sure, but cannot be accurately called fascists, and they were not portrayed as such.

The Bund has a bit of a different reason for failing however, they had a sizable following and media presence. They were however only advocating for the supremacy of the German “race” and were therefore incompatible with any other potential fascist who were not of German origin. They show clearly that disunity was the biggest obstacle for American Fascism. They would never see eye to eye with the Silver or black legion due to the Bund being so primarily German focused, instead of American aspects. We saw in media coverage that after the

³⁰⁵ Amann, “Vigilante Fascism,” 523–24.

³⁰⁶ Peter H. Amann, “A ‘Dog in the Nighttime’ Problem: American Fascism in the 1930s,” *The History Teacher* 19, no. 4 (1986): 579, <https://doi.org/10.2307/493879>.

demise at the hands of the Dies Committee the Bund attempted to become more nativist American, but as always, it happened too late to leave any real impact. As Remak remarks, they did more to hurt the image of Nazism than help it.³⁰⁷ They were discredited by every notable American, and even by Germany. They had no political support, all they had was a violent and extreme following of a few thousand German-Americans wishing to grow closer to Germany. Many members of the Bund had never even seen what Nazi Germany was like, merely believing whatever reports came from Germany.³⁰⁸ They never achieved anything beyond fear and causing further split in the fascist movements in America.

Media's role

We have already seen how TIME and NYT portrayed Fascism in America, and it cannot be said to be positive whatsoever. They repeatedly emphasized the racism and cruelty of these groups, and sometimes of the individuals. To say that they did not present Fascism in a negative light would be false. While I can agree with Klein that coverage of Hitler's rise to power was lacking, they did portray him as a threat.³⁰⁹ To be fair to NYT, very few knew exactly what would happen just a few years later. While Klein made a more extensive coverage of NYT's coverage in the early weeks of Hitler's reign, going into the decision-making process, the public perception one would have gotten from reading the news articles would present Hitler and the Nazi's a real threat worthy of note. I do agree it was lacking, but not that they "failed to alert the public" as Klein states.³¹⁰ They were inadequate but did not fail in their mission to provide unbiased news coverage.

Media can however not be the sole reason as to why Fascism failed, there are many other factors in play. Media played its part in cultivating public resentment for Fascism, but a lot of the blame also has to be put on the fascists themselves. I believe Diamond's conclusion as to why the Bund failed goes a long way in explaining why Fascism in general failed:

The Bund movement began with a lie; it also ended with a lie. Nazi propaganda argued that America's diverse roots would prove its nemesis. Since they believed racial weaknesses were tantamount to death, they claimed that the United States could never sustain itself in war despite its enormous material assets. This aspect of the Hitlerian world view eventually proved fatal to the Third Reich.³¹¹

³⁰⁷ Remak, "Friends of the New Germany': The Bund and German-American Relations," 41.

³⁰⁸ Diamond, *The Nazi Movement in the United States*, 336–37.

³⁰⁹ Klein, "When the News Doesn't Fit," 144.

³¹⁰ Klein, 144.

³¹¹ Diamond, *The Nazi Movement in the United States*, 353.

I do however also agree with Diggins when he states that “From their experience with Italian Fascism most American learned nothing and forgot nothing.”³¹² Diggins view is that Fascism is a state of mind, and that by saying that Fascism was Europe’s problem, it is easy to be overlook the Fascism in your own midst and in yourself.³¹³ I do however not agree with his statement that America admired Mussolini, from a media perspective. Had NYT and TIME fearmongered they would have lost credibility with the public about their reliability. Neither TIME nor NYT were positive to Fascism and Nazism, they reported on what they received of information by their reporters. I do however acknowledge and agree that their coverage was lackluster and incompetent at times when it came to the portrayal of Europe, but I do not think they were as lacking in coverage of American Fascism.

Lastly, I believe Kenneth Heineman’s article on media bias on the Dies Committee needs mentioning.³¹⁴ He essentially argues that all news media portrayed the Dies Committee in a positive light and if anyone went against their narrative they would be scrutinized. He explains how the poor who had little access to critical media would take what the news reported on face value. He critiques how the media decided to print testimony from the hearings but left out contradictory evidence. He also claims that this biased relationship was a threat to American democracy as it undermined the public’s right to fair, accurate and truthful information.³¹⁵

Seeing as the Dies Committee is arguably the reason for the downfall of the Silver Legion and the Bund, the media coverage of the Committee was vital. It is completely fair what Heineman states, NYT portrayed what they wrote as the whole truth, and that is the perception a reader would get. While I do agree that this resulted in the public being misinformed, this matters little to the question at hand, public perception. We have already covered how the Dies Committee was covered, and neither TIME nor NYT wrote favorably about the Bund or Legion. They framed them as immoral racists fascists, which in fairness they were. While they might have not covered them accurately, the message came across and that is what the public heard.

Interest in the affairs in Europe although high were not seen as the most important by most Americans. Polling shows that when it came to interest in Germany’s actions in Europe, only

³¹² Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*, 495.

³¹³ Diggins, 495.

³¹⁴ Heineman, “Media Bias in Coverage of the Dies Committee on Un-American Activities, 1938–1940.”

³¹⁵ Heineman, 52.

35% of those polled deemed the affairs of Nazi Germany as the most important topic covered by the media.³¹⁶ We Also see that in 1939 most Americans did not trust news coming out of Germany, clearly being distrustful of Nazism as only 1% fully trusted the news coming from there. This is unlike what we see when it comes to news from France and England where over half of those polled had some confidence.³¹⁷ If a poll from 1942 is any indication, people were also generally trusting of how the government handled the news.³¹⁸ It should be noted that this was polled after America entered the war but can be an indication as to public sentiment before the war as well. It is however intended as a point of note, not as evidence.

It is difficult to measure the impact the media had on public perception as people often got their news from multiple sources, and TIME and NYT only made-up part of the market, in relatively small New York. Radio was yet another form of media that has not been covered here, and the commonness of radio is not a factor in this analysis, neither is any other newspaper. The image one would get from NYT and TIME's coverage of each group and individual is quite clear, TIME and NYT portrayed Fascism in America reasonably accurately when it came to the threat they posed. They reported on their disgusting practices and hateful utterances to the extent they knew about them. Especially TIME were clear in their disgust of many groups, mocking them clearly in their coverage. Both emphasized their weakness and failures, in essence saying the groups held no real threat to America as a whole, but rather to smaller communities. They did not fearmonger, by only lightly covering the Bund rally in Madison Square Garden for example. While the rally was immense and has been widely cited as the one example of Nazism in America, the rally saw huge protests, which NYT covered, there were no real and genuine threat. If anything, non-fascists groups such the America first committee and Lindbergh posed a way greater threat to the safety of America. The longer America stayed neutral, the more likely it could be that Fascism could succeed. Had the way ended in Europe before American intervention, assuming that the USSR could not win on its own, could have validated Fascism in the eyes of Americans. This is however luckily in the realm of alternate history.

³¹⁶ George Horace Gallup, *The Gallup Poll; Public Opinion, 1935-1971* (New York: Random House, 1972), 131

³¹⁷ Gallup, 182.

³¹⁸ Gallup, 356.

Conclusion

In this paper I have completely ignored the injustices done by the media in informing the public about the true facts. I did this because it would simply be too much of a grand topic and would have fundamentally changed the meaning of this thesis. The media was heavily biased against both Communists and Fascists, and those who dared go against this bias were silenced. I am a supporter of press freedom and the rights of people to make up their own mind on political and social topics. However, for this essay I have shelved my own critical opinions of NYT and TIMES biases in the pursuit of understanding the information received by the public. This is a paper about public perception of Fascism through news, not media authenticity or bias. There are many great works that cover media bias during the innerwar period, some of them mentioned here and this paper does in no way attempt to discredit or argue against them.

To sum up, in chapter 1 I covered the historical context leading up to the interwar period. In it we saw that a lot of American radical right ideology and history is filled with religious extremism and racism. Nationalism as we see it in Europe was not seen in the 20th century in America. We have seen how media portrayed communism and Fascism in a similar light, being strictly opposed to both. The political campaigns during the first world war villainizing Germany questioning the loyalty of German Americans have already been covered. Through this we saw that the American public already saw German-Americans as potentially disloyal. The perception of Germany itself has also been covered, with a focus on world war 1 circumstances. Most American would remember how Germany sunk merchant shipping and the Lusitania, as well as asking Mexico to attack America. Circumstances like this would come again in the dawn of world war two, with the sinking of American ships.

In the second chapter I looked at how TIME and NYT covered the rise of Fascism in Europe, as well as how it reacted to Fascism in the United States through the scope of coverage of five groups and individuals. Through this we see that they presented American fascists as groups of hate and the individuals as a naive man whose wishes would ruin America. They portrayed them all accurately to history, following them all the way to their dissolution and after. News coverage has already been credited by historians for the downfall of the Black legion, and from my own analysis I believe the same goes for every other group as well. No one wished to be associated with the worst of society, so when the media dragged their name through the dirt, no one wants to lay down and join them. Muddying ones name and

reputation through association might have been fear enough for many not to join such groups. We saw that a group such as the AFC, one not built solely on hate, were able to achieve results.

The radical right went from a religious nativism to a nationalistic one, ending up distancing themselves from everyone else and creating disunity. A potential catholic fascist might read about the Black or Silver Legion and be put off by their severe anti-Catholic presentation in media. If this potential man was not German, the Bund would also be off limits. As a result, there were a limited number of outlets Fascism could spread. Their attempt at creating their own media failed each time, even the might Coughlin would eventually fall. The framing as fascists as revolutionary would also have dissuaded many from seeking to join any group. State lines also certainly played a factor, a group such as the Black Legion were limited mostly the Midwest and the Silver Legion to the west, while the Bund was in the east. All of these factors and more came together, making few want to be a revolutionary, and those few who wanted to might not have found any major group to join.

In short, NYT and TIME did their part in dissuading the public from turning fascist by constantly discrediting American fascists and focusing on their many failures. They framed them as a small threat, focusing on their persecution by the Dies Committee in many instances. The little chance American Fascism had to take place quickly waned by such negative coverage. The coverage might not have made any difference had it been done in any other country, but due to the other circumstances leading to American resilience against Fascism, it was enough. By pointing out disunity and comparing them to other hated groups such as the Klan, NYT and TIME contributed to turning the people away from fascist groups.

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