

REVIEW AND COMMENT

On the Right We Have—

FORERUNNERS OF AMERICAN FASCISM, by Raymond Gram Swing. Julian Messner, Inc. \$1.75.

AMERICAN MESSIAHS, by The Unofficial Observer. Simon and Schuster. \$2.

TIME was when timorous souls comforted themselves with the thought that fascism was an affliction peculiar to "foreign" and "backward" and "undemocratic" countries and that the American people, inoculated with the principles of Jefferson and Lincoln, were immune to its ravages. But the past two years have witnessed the Americanization of fascism and the emergence of an indigenous weed.

It is still too early to speak of a fascist movement in this country. But it is not too early to speak of potential fascist movements, of a number of neat little fascist eggs that may soon be hatching under the fertile warmth of the Wall Street bird of prey and shown, in these volumes, in the nest.

Of *American Messiahs* not much need be said. It is mostly cocktail and fizz, a glorified column of Washington chatter: truths, half-truths, rumors and debonair distortions, shaken well with a few bright gags and sold as a book of "inside stuff." With anonymity for a shield, the author evidently found that the book could be written more quickly and easily by trusting to memory for much of his data rather than by bothering with libraries and newspaper morgues. The chapter on Father Coughlin, for example, if offered as an article to any magazine of standing, would be rejected for its factual inaccuracies alone. The author is pro-New Deal—though he admits that the N.R.A. was dictated by the Chamber of Commerce—lists the duPonts (Morgan's closest industrial allies) with Rockefeller and Ford in the anti-Morgan camp, thinks Communists are beneath contempt and Socialists little better, and believes that "Lenin's organization of the Communist State in Russia was based on direct borrowings from Roman (Catholic) methods of rule."

Forerunners of American Fascism is of a different stamp. It is a book of the new fear that is beginning to take hold of the sensitive middle-class mind. The work of one of the best of the liberal journalists, it is written with luminous honesty and deep concern over the fate that he believes awaits this country. But it is a book that for all its fine sincerity and occasional flashes of insight, offers no real light on the character of fascism, its future in this country or the methods by which it can be fought. *Fore-*

runners of American Fascism is a good example of that remarkable obtuseness that seems to short-circuit the thinking of even the best middle-class minds so long as they remain swathed in the fog of middle-class subjectivism and empiricism and shy away from the clear light of scientific Marxism.

Swing's forerunners of fascism are Father Coughlin, Huey Long, William Randolph Hearst, Senator Bilbo of Mississippi and Dr. Townsend—the latter two, he points out, not properly fascist in character, but significant of a trend. Perhaps one should add a forerunner of the forerunners, President Roosevelt, whom Swing subjects to caustic comment in the opening chapter. "As Dr. Brue-ning prepared the way for government by decree in Germany," he writes, "the President himself has built some of the foundations of a fascist structure in America."

But even on this question Swing is not entirely clear. Roosevelt to him is not the servant of the big banks and trusts who consciously set out to restore capitalist profits, but a man who "is proving weaker than the forces of finance capitalism." Though he points to the trend toward compulsory arbitration as one of the signs that "the President is edging toward the standard fascist solution of the labor question," he sees hope for labor in the Wagner Bill, in which the threat of compulsory arbitration certainly looms large.

Swing was perhaps the first of the liberal writers to understand the fascist implications in Father Coughlin and his chapter on the radio priest contains a number of penetrating things. All the more amazing, therefore, is the hopeless muddle of his chapters on Huey Long and Hearst. He is full of all sorts of

misgivings about Long and characterizes him as a menace to democracy, yet his desire to be "fair" in the abstract, plus what appears to be only a superficial acquaintance with the Kingfish's actual career, leads him to find so many good points that he ends by writing what amounts to an apology for him. Long, according to Swing, "has shifted the weight of taxation from the poor, who were crippled under it, to the shoulders that can bear it." The facts are the reverse; he has cut down the assessments on big property owners and reduced by 50 percent the tax on cotton gins owned by wealthy planters, while he has saddled the poor with a tobacco tax, a gasoline tax and other assessments. (See Sender Garlin's pamphlet, *The Real Huey P. Long*.)

"Huey has fought the public-utility companies during his whole political career"—but only a few pages later Swing quotes the testimony of Julius Long, Huey's brother, before a Senate investigating committee that "Huey's first unsuccessful candidacy for the governorship in 1924 was financed principally by the Southwestern Gas and Electric Company and allied interests."

"He (Long) is free of the virus of racial prejudice." But it was Long who, after abolishing the \$1 poll tax, issued a leaflet denouncing as "an underhand and secret lie" the story circulated by his opponents "that this amendment for free poll taxes will let the Negro vote in our elections."

This is a sad chapter—sad because it shows how liberal confusion can lead a man who is an opponent of fascism into an objective defense of one of the most dangerous fascist demagogues we have had. But even sadder is the one on Hearst. The name of Der Fuehrer of San Simeon has become such a byword for everything reactionary and fascist in American life that one would think that

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even a liberal couldn't go wrong. But Swing accomplishes the incredible. His portrait of Hearst is positively elegiac. The pre-war Hearst according to Swing, was a sincere progressive, "a champion of union labor, an enemy of corruption in politics, a passionate foe of big business." Forgotten is the man who incited the war against Spain, who called for the invasion of Mexico, who crusaded against "the yellow peril," who employed scab labor in his California mines, who went from one racketeering venture in journalism and politics to another. Forgotten, above all, is the only consistent thing in Hearst's entire career—his demagoguery.

As for the post-war and particularly the present-day Hearst, Swing finds him thoroughly reactionary. But he sees this millionaire to the manor born not as the representative of the most reactionary section of finance-capital, but as the spokesman of what Swing regards as the fascist-minded lower middle class. And he practically absolves Hearst of his crimes ("It may be that Hearst is blamed for too much. After all, he is not a creator, he expresses"), viewing him as the passive sounding board for the most vulgar and reactionary sentiments of the lower middle class.

All of which confusion and self-stultification flows from a wrong conception of the nature of fascism. Swing views fascism as "a reorganization of society," when it is the imposition of a new political technique, combining terror, demagoguery and abolition of parliamentarianism and democratic rights, upon the old economic and social order. He thinks that fascism "swallows up the social conflict," when this is only what it pretends to do, while actually it develops all social conflicts to an unprecedented degree. And above all, he makes the mistake so often made by liberal and Socialist writers of viewing fascism as the rule of the lower middle class. "Hill-billies have been the underdogs of the South," he writes; "now through Huey Long they are supreme in Louisiana." And "the Hit-

ler regime . . . was their [the lower middle class] first real experience of power in the long history of Germany."

Swing's basic error is that he confuses those classes (the farmers and city petty-bourgeoisie) that are the chief dupes of fascism and form its mass base with the classes (the big capitalists and landowners) whose interests it represents and whose economic and political power it seeks to maintain.

Failing to understand the forces that produce fascism, it is inevitable that Swing should be unable to see the forces that can prevent and destroy it. The lower middle class he regards as a single reactionary whole, while he has no faith in the militant labor movement, viewing it, in fact, as a generator of fascism ("Our one safety against fascism may lie in the absence of any formidable Communist movement"). He therefore comes to the conclusion that fascism is inevitable. And he puts his faith in the possibility of postponing fascism for a while on two alternatives: a business recovery or "to make democracy work"—that very democracy which, as he himself has pointed out, has worked in the opposite direction.

Despite Swing's gloomy prophecy, there is abundant evidence to indicate that fascism can be prevented. But not by seeking refuge from the devil behind the skirts of his mother. To look for salvation to bourgeois democracy is to grasp at a rope that may become a halter. We need not theorize in the abstract: Germany and Austria have shown us how not to fight fascism, France has shown us how it can be defeated. The speech of Dimitroff and the decisions of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International have summarized these lessons and pointed the way. The united front and the people's front—in our country a broad workers' and farmers' Labor Party—is the road to victory over the false messiahs of fascism. The middle class is not lost; it is still to be won.

A. B. MAGIL.

Emptying the Melting Pot

STRANGE PASSAGE, by Theodore Irwin.
Harrison Smith & Robert Haas. \$2.

WHEN the American Empire was being built, railroads flung across the continent, mines dug, forests stripped, agents were sent throughout impoverished Europe to pack steamers and trains with immigrant laborers. Immigrant transient hotels sprang up along the waterfronts of Boston, Hoboken, Baltimore. Immigrant trains sped to the frontiers of the West and Middle West. The ideological superstructure was in conformity with the economic life of the era. Rhetoricians prated about the melting pot. In their new homeland, raw immigrants, knowing nothing of the English tongue, would become naturalized at the behest of local politicians at a cost of about twenty-five

cents. Then came a series of economic crises. At last the Westward-ho! rush came to a halt. Labor had become a "surplus commodity." Instead of the "melting pot," the expression "undesirable alien" came into vogue and finally Congress passed a quota immigration law under the euphemism of "selective immigration."

The legal approach to ruthless deportation was made by gradual steps. Behind the legal sophistries, like a sinister force, was the cry of "labor unrest." The process was to be reversed. Immigrant trains began to roll eastward, now filled with "undesirable aliens," "criminal syndicalists," "labor agitators."

Nothing illustrates so well the fallacy that legal concepts and institutions dictate and control the social institutions than the op-

eration of the laws in the deportation of aliens. Within the shell of Jeffersonian democracy, legal evasions were crystallized to justify autocratic despotism. After the assassination of President McKinley, a law was enacted barring from entry and making deportable, anarchists and other persons who advocate political assassination or violent overthrow of government. This apparently salutary measure for the preservation of the state was to be in practice extended to persons who had nothing in common with assassins or anarchists. Later, during an agitation, led largely by the Hearst papers, there was unearthed an alleged "international white-slave plot." The obvious inference was intended that all white slavers and prostitutes were aliens. The result was that length of residence of an alien in the United States was no longer a protection against deportation. The door to blackmail was open; terror entered the hearts of unnaturalized workers. From year to year, by congressional enactment and court interpretation, the deportation net was spread. During the World War a new precedent was set which even removed the security that naturalization had given to the foreign-born citizen. On the theory that he had "defrauded" the government and the courts, a foreign-born naturalized citizen who had engaged in "seditious" activity, could have his citizenship annulled, long after he had become naturalized, on the ground that at the time he had sworn to uphold the Constitution and foreswore allegiance to the country of his birth, he had "mental reservations" which only his subsequent "seditious" activity had disclosed.

The legal sophistries by which the protections of the Bill of Rights and the Constitution have been taken away from the foreign born, may, to a mere lay logician, seem disingenuous. Briefly, they are to this effect: the United States, in the exercise of its political sovereignty, has the right to deport any alien for whatever reason it may deem fit; the legal process of deportation is not deemed a criminal, but a civil procedure, therefore the constitutional safeguards of right of trial by jury, to bail, against double jeopardy, refusal to testify against oneself and all other provisions, do not apply; the deportation proceeding is an exercise of the administrative function only and the courts will not interfere with the decision of the Immigration Inspector or the Secretary of Labor, unless the deportee can prove "gross abuse" and even where this is clear, the courts rule that if there is "some evidence" to support the government's decision, the courts will not interfere.

It is apparent that the deportation proceeding thus becomes a most effective weapon in dealing with "labor unrest." Aliens can be picked up, without a warrant and deported expeditiously, without great expense or legal flurry.

Behind the dry legal theorizing lies a veritable continent of human suffering. Piti-