

A Brief History of Fascism in the United States

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"We could become the first country to go fascist through free elections." — William Shirer, [The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich](#)

Generally, we avoid using the word "fascism" in polite company, and until recently, a person pointing out parallels between Nazi Germany and the current United States would invite elevated eyelids along with the outworn charge of sounding like a "[conspiracy theorist](#)". The current electoral cycle seems to be changing that, so I will trust that now is the right time to convey some ideas I've been marinating regarding fascism in my US Homeland. The ruling plutocrats are clearly ferrying the ship of State along that current, so if fascism is destined to be a part of our lives, perhaps we should quit pretending we can't see the ugly elephant in the room and somehow respond to it.

In discussing fascism as it exists in the United States, an accurate definition is in order. If we can see past lurid images of swastikas, jackboots, and death camps, we might realize that some elements of fascism, such as presumed racial superiority, have existed in the US since its inception and are more pervasive than we have so far acknowledged.

While the historical racism responsible for the US slave trade, the [ongoing genocide](#) of American aborigines, and the rise of the Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazism all reflect symptoms included in the fascist impulse, I am using the term "fascism" in its post-World War 2 context, which involves the rise of the Corporation as amoral tyrant.

While Benito Mussolini is often credited with defining fascism as the merger of corporate and state power, there is no evidence I can find that he actually said it. In the 1932 edition of *Enciclopedia Italiana* Mussolini did write that "Fascism reaffirms the State as the true reality of the individual," which may be the heart of the matter, for it raises the ethical question: Are we, as human beings, subordinate to any "State"? It seems to me our traditional American value favoring individualism argues against it.

When he was leaving office, President Dwight D. Eisenhower addressed the influence of powerful corporations in his [1961 farewell speech](#), during which he warned of what he called the "military-industrial complex" although he didn't call it fascism:

"In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.



a fascis (image by

Shawn Hamilton)

We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together.”

I’m glad Eisenhower said something although I note that he waited until he was leaving office to say it.

The *Oxford Unabridged English Dictionary* defines fascism as “a system of government characterized by rigid one-party dictatorship, forcible suppression of the opposition, the retention of private ownership of the means of production under centralized governmental control, belligerent nationalism and racism, glorification of war.”

The root of the word is the Latin “fascis”, meaning a bundle or packet.

The symbol’s history is murky.

It was perhaps first used by Etruscans—and later by ancient Romans—to symbolize power and authority. In a fascis, individual sticks combine into a stronger unit, an idea similar to “E Pluribus, Unum”, a US national motto, which means “Out of Many, One”. In that context we may understand why fasces appear on each side of the rostrum in the US House of Representatives:



The Italian word “fascismo” stems from the same root and refers to “a political group, an organization, a club”. In 1919 Mussolini instituted the Fascisti at Milan, intending to suppress “radical” groups” by which he meant socialists. Interestingly, Mussolini’s father had been a socialist—he named his son after Benito Juarez, the leftist Mexican president. Benito Mussolini even wrote for socialist journals while he lived in Switzerland, but he apparently was kicked out of the party for supporting involvement in WWI, and he soon transmogrified into a committed Fascisti.

Hatred of “Communists” or “Socialists” appears to be a primary religious tenet of modern fascism although other groups can be included and interchanged in the category of despised others as we saw in Nazi Germany—homosexuals, dark-skinned people, immigrants, pacifists, radicals, Slavs, Jews, and gypsies as well as conscientious journalists, academics, and citizens of any background who opposed (or threatened) the absolute power of the State. People could qualify on one or several points, each making them targets of the Order.

The Nazis called themselves *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, or National Socialist German Workers’ Party, a billing that exploited the popular socialist ideology to gain initial public acceptance rather than offering a sincere socialist platform. The Nazis were just one of many variations of the fascist mentality, with its racist assumptions, that has manifested throughout history.



German-American Bund Summer Camp, Long Island New York,
1938 (image by Holocaust History Museum)

In 1933 when Hitler became chancellor, Deputy Fuhrer Rudolph Hess granted Heinz Spanknobel, who had entered the United States as a Christian minister, approval to create an American Nazi organization called the “Friends of New Germany”. By 1936 this group had become known as the “German-American Bund”, a US group devoted to advocating for Nazi Germany and Hitler.

The German-American Bund, which conducted a summer youth camp on Long Island, New York for its members, reached its zenith in 1939 with about 25 thousand members. Nearly 22 thousand of them gathered at Madison Square Garden, ostensibly to celebrate the birthday of George Washington, who Bund leaders considered “America’s first fascist”. Several thousand Bund members were also members of Hitler’s paramilitary “Sturmabteilung” (SA), the so-called “Brownshirts”. At the start of World War 2, many Bund members were placed in internment camps, and some were deported at the end of the war, but many remained in the US.



German-American Bund parade; New York City; East 86th St.; Oct. 30, 1939 (image by Wikimedia)

When Hitler assumed power in 1933, the Fuhrer hired a prominent New York City public relations firm, Carl Byoir & Associates, to improve his US image. The firm’s clients included the American Tobacco Company, Proctor and Gamble, General Motors, and many others. One of the firm’s associates was Edward Bernays–Sigmund Freud’s son-in-law who public relations (PR) flaks today generally consider the “father” of PR and spin.

Most people have never heard of him or his books, *Crystallizing Public Opinion* (1923) and [*Propaganda*](#) (1928), yet *Life* magazine named Bernays one of the most influential people of the 20th century. As a relative of the famous German psychoanalyst, Bernays had developed insight into the dynamics of the “Unconscious” and subliminal motivation, and he quickly and deftly exploited that knowledge to fleece the Americans by persuading them to buy junk they didn’t need, to adopt habits like smoking (and later a campaign persuading them to stop), and, politically, by coaxing them to accept policies harmful to their own interests.

He called it “engineering consent” and deemed it crucial to democracy (it was certainly important to the Third Reich). Some just call it “propaganda”, and it was pitched as the way to control populations when direct force is “ill-advised”. American advertising, largely based on Bernays’ persuasive techniques, embodies racist and elitist assumptions along with a paternalistic, yet unsympathetic, view that people are too dumb to manage their own affairs and must be guided. Using similar techniques whether selling the public hamburgers or wars, this self-appointed class of ubermensch presumed to “guide” the People using devious and deceptive means derived from the new “science” of Psychology, relieving them of money and liberties in the process.

Bernays had engineered a political propaganda campaign in the early 1950s on behalf of the United Fruit Company to destroy the popular president of Guatemala, Jacobo Arbenz Guzman, by traducing the reformer as a godless Communist and paving the way for US supported coups d’e’tat. The term “banana republic” originated in reference to United Fruit’s control of corrupt governments in Guatemala and other Central American countries

where the company extracted profits. The company's brutal policies and inhumane treatment of workers resulted in cheaper bananas for US consumers and poverty for the country's peasants. Arbentz, for trying to lessen the disparity between the extremely wealthy elite and the poor in Guatemala—on whose backs the elite's wealth was founded—was deposed in a 1954 CIA-arranged coup. This episode revealed to many that multinational corporations, with greed and treachery in their hearts and military power behind them, can make life hell for anyone opposing the Order.

Daniel Kurtz-Phelan, in his 2008 *New York Times* [book review](#) of Peter Chapman's *Bananas, How the United Fruit Company Shaped the World*, describes the company as "more powerful than many nation states ... a law unto itself." He said:

United Fruit defined the modern multinational corporation at its most effective — and, as it turned out, its most pernicious. At home, it cultivated clubby ties with those in power and helped pioneer the modern arts of public relations and marketing. After a midcentury makeover by the 'father of public relations,' Edward Bernays, the company started pushing a cartoon character named [Senorita Chiquita Banana](#) [based on Carmen Miranda]. Abroad, it coddled dictators while using a mix of paternalism and violence to control its workers.

As for repressive regimes, Chapman writes in *Bananas*, United Fruit was their best friend—, with coups d'état among its specialties. Kurtz-Phelan noted that "United Fruit had possibly launched more exercises in 'regime change' on the banana's behalf than had ever been carried out in the name of oil," and he pointed out that the company's successor, Chiquita Brands International, has admitted to paying nearly \$2 million to right-wing death squads in Colombia." Edward Bernays' persuasive techniques were key to manufacturing the consent necessary to make the US public ignore reports of atrocities and support government policy conducive to profit-making.

German Propaganda: Joseph Goebbels



Joseph Goebbels (image
by Holocaust History
Museum)

Germany's propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels, admired Bernays and followed his work despite Bernays being a Jew; the techniques were too useful to ignore. It was from Bernays that Goebbels learned the propaganda techniques he used to market fascist ideology to the German public.

An undercurrent of US fascism had come to the astute attention of Major General Smedley Butler, a decorated United States marine who in 1935 wrote a book called [War is a Racket](#). He testified before a congressional committee that a group of powerful industrialists, who had tried to recruit him, were planning to form a fascist veterans' group that intended to assassinate Franklin Roosevelt and overthrow the government in a coup. While news media at the time belittled Butler and called the affair a hoax, the congressional committee determined that Butler's allegations were credible although no-one was prosecuted. A similar scenario played out successfully nearly thirty years later when President John Kennedy was ambushed and killed under highly suspicious circumstances. There were many reasons for his assassination, but his threatening to dismantle the CIA, home base for so

many Nazis, may have been a primary reason.



President John Kennedy and Allen Dulles ca. 1962
(image by Holocaust History Museum)

A key figure in the Kennedy assassination and cover-up was Allen Welsh Dulles (1893-1969). An icon of US Intelligence, Dulles mingled with Nazi elites, embraced fascism, lived in neutral Switzerland during the war, and knew for far too long what was happening to Jews and other unfortunates in Germany while doing nothing to stop it. After the war Dulles worked tirelessly to cut deals for his Nazi connections, especially those on trial for war crimes at Nuremberg, and he actively facilitated the transfer of Nazi technology (and ideology) to the United States after World War 2. By most definitions, Dulles was a traitor. Instead, he is remembered as an elder statesman and diplomat.



Reinhardt Gehlen (image by
Holocaust History Museum)

In 1947 Congress instituted the National Security Act, which allowed the creation of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Dulles established the CIA essentially changing the name of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and subsuming into the former OSS operation *the entire* Nazi spy apparatus of Reinhardt Gehlen, Germany's General of Foreign Armies East. Through Gehlen, Dulles inherited an expansive, ready-made spy network already poised against the Soviet Union, ushering in the National Security State we don't understand or love today.

The modern CIA then, is a direct outgrowth of Nazi intelligence-modeled after Gehlen's Nazi spy network, and staffed with many Nazi agents. Consider that Dulles was appointed to the Warren Commission to "investigate" (or squelch) the inquiry into the death of President John Kennedy in 1963. This may have been what accused Oswald killer, Jack Ruby, meant when he said "Nazis" were involved in the assassination. Allen Dulles, however, didn't have any problem with Gehlen's past. "He's on our side," Dulles once said chuckling, "and that's all that matters."

In October 2015, *Democracy Now* host Amy Goodman interviewed David Talbot, whose book, *The Devil's Chessboard: Allen Dulles, the CIA, and the Rise of America's Secret Government*, sheds much needed light on the secretive Allen Dulles. Goodman had asked Talbot about Nazis:

DAVID TALBOT: "The Nazis, well, they have a very tight relationship, many Nazi businessmen, with the Dulles brothers. And when Allen Dulles was in Switzerland, supposedly working for our side, the OSS, during the war, he was actually using that to meet with a lot of Nazis and to cut separate deals with them. He did indeed finally cut a separate peace deal with the Nazi forces in Italy against FDR's wishes. FDR had a policy of unconditional surrender. Don't-AMY GOODMAN: "This was Operation Paperclip?"

DAVID TALBOT: "This was Operation Sunrise, was this deal that he made. And then he set up these rat-lines, so-called, where Nazis, leading Nazi war

criminals, escaped after the war through the Alps in Switzerland, down into Italy and then overseas to Latin America and even in the United States. One of the key Nazis he saved was Reinhard Gehlen, Hitler's former chief of intelligence, who he installed, Dulles, as head of West German intelligence after the war, a man who should have stood trial at Nuremberg."

Considering that the CIA was getting its information about Russia from the very Nazis who the Russians had defeated during the war-US intelligence assessments of Russia are likely to have been highly biased and perilously skewed in that post-war period of rising tensions during the Cold War. The US had been naively accepting Nazis' characterizations of the Russians as demons-the Russians, our former allies who should have been thanked rather than blamed. They won WW2 after all, at huge cost. Was it really wise to form opinions of Russia and its leaders from "intelligence" delivered by its former enemy?

I suggest this absurd arrangement helps explain much of the incomprehensible and fascistic postwar US policy, official and clandestine, that we've glimpsed with horror over the last 65 years-the Communist witch hunts of the 1950s; covert mind control experimentation (MK-ULTRA); the 1960s political assassinations of both Kennedy brothers, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and Black Panthers Hampton and Clark; the mechanized slaughter of the Vietnam War (the Vietnamese called it the "American War"); the overthrow and murder of democratically elected foreign leaders such as Diem and Allende in the 1970s; the rise of the Corporation as tyrant, and the false flag operations we've heard of and those we haven't. These events had in common the goal of reducing liberty and increasing control in order to institute the "New World Order" that George H.W. Bush arrogantly bragged would succeed in a speech he delivered on [September 11th 1991](#).



Richard Nixon and Prescott Bush
(Bush's lackey Nixon got himself
a hat like his boss!) (image by
Holocaust History Museum)



Be this Guy! (image by Holocaust History Museum)

The United States' decades long irrational hatred and fear of "Communism" and "Communists" can largely be explained as a predictable side-effect of the large-scale importation of Russia-hating, unrepentant Nazis after the war-hundreds of them and their families through Operation Paperclip, which Dulles ran. An influx of these Nazis into positions of high rank and influence in the US national security state, as intentional as it was illegal, allowed known Nazi sympathizers-like Prescott Bush, patriarch of two US presidents-to join forces with the financial architects of Nazism. It explains much regarding pathological postwar US policy and numerous inexplicable events, including assassinations, coups, false flag attacks, and illegal wars.

In a subsequent segment, I will offer more information regarding some famous Nazis and Nazi admirers including Hitler's second-in-command, Martin Bormann, car maker Henry Ford, aviator Charles Lindbergh, animator Walt Disney, Prescott Bush, and NASA director Wehner Von Braun among others.

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