Conference of Young Nigerian Democrats

DEMOCRACY DIGEST

Compilation of E-Books on Democracy

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1941: Fascism

Archives consist of articles that originally appeared in Collier's Year Book (for events of 1997 and earlier) or as monthly updates in Encarta Yearbook (for events of 1998 and later). Because they were published shortly after events occurred, they reflect the information available at that time. Cross references refer to Archive articles of the same year.

1941: Fascism

Under the term Fascism, as it is being used at present, we understand not only the movement started by Benito Mussolini in Italy immediately after the First World War, but also Nazism or National Socialism as it is practiced under Adolf Hitler in Germany and a number of similar movements, all of which are united in their complete rejection of all the fundamental beliefs underlying democracy as it had developed through the American and the French Revolutions. Fascism regards itself as the categorical rejection of the spirit of 1776 and of 1789, of faith in the rights and dignity of the individual, in the equality of all men irrespective of creed or class, birth or race, in the fraternity of all peoples and in the desirability of a peaceful world order. Fascism demands the complete subordination of the individual to the nation-state or to the racial community, and it believes in the exclusive rights of this nation-state or racial community at the expense of all other states or races. Fascism glorifies authority, discipline, obedience, and fosters the spirit of aggression and national expansion. Since the rise of National Socialism, the German variant of Fascism, to power in Germany, and then, backed by the German military might, to hegemony in continental Europe, Fascism has become a world-wide movement, and Fascist parties and organizations have shown strength in practically all countries.
Fascist Cooperation.

An outstanding fact of the last few years has been the united cooperation of all Fascist governments and movements under the leadership of Nazi Germany, and their joining hands with the military government of Japan in a world-wide attempt at the destruction of democracy and the imposition of the Fascist way of life on all the peoples of the earth. According to an identical pattern of conquest, the foremost Fascist powers have attacked one democratic country after the other by surprise. Their successes have been due to the fact that the democracies did not understand the nature of Fascism and the world-wide character of its aspirations, and instead of uniting together in a common defense, waited in isolation until their turn came. Even in 1941 some nations still waited, in so-called 'neutrality,' until a surprise attack in violation of international decency, and despite solemn pacts of friendship and non-aggression, woke them up. Thus in June 1941 the Soviet Union found itself suddenly faced by a treacherous invasion by the German armed forces, in spite of the startling pact of friendship and non-aggression concluded by Germany with Soviet Russia in August 1939. On Sunday, December 7, the United States was subjected to a sudden and devastating surprise attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii by Japan with whom she was conducting at the time negotiations for a peaceful settlement of matters in dispute. Thus a new situation was created in the world-wide struggle between Fascism and those who would not accept Fascist world domination. The United States, the British Commonwealth of Nations, the Soviet Union, China and some of the smaller European democracies found themselves united in a common fight for freedom against Fascist aggression, a war involving all the six continents and all the seven seas of this earth.

What Fascism had foreseen, had arrived: the supreme crisis in human history when the future of free men everywhere was to be decided. The question was whether the democracies would be
ready and willing to rise to the occasion and to unite their economic resources and their armed forces unreservedly for the common purpose of defeating Fascism everywhere. For that purpose not only an aggressive military strategy on land, sea and air, would be needed, but also a spiritually aggressive spirit which would oppose the ideas of Fascism with a renewed faith in the principles of democracy and a renewed vigor and will to fight for them.

Democratic Cooperation.

The fact that at the end of 1941 a council of the twenty-six nations opposing Fascism met in Washington, under the chairmanship of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill of Great Britain, aroused great hopes for such a world-wide cooperation. Washington became as it were the capital of all the peoples who were resisting Fascism, much as Berlin is the capital of all those who hope for a Fascist-dominated world. Thus a democratic and anti-Fascist 'international' was coming into being by the end of 1941, while a Fascist 'International' had been in existence for several years. The latter renewed its alliances at a meeting in Berlin on Nov. 25, 1941. The same date in 1936 had seen the signing of the first anti-Comintern Pact between Germany and Japan, directed against Soviet Russia. Now five years later thirteen nations of Europe and Asia came together in Berlin to sign a prolongation of that Pact for five more years. The leader of the Fascist 'world international,' the German Reichsführer Hitler, had hoped that by this time the war would have been victoriously over, with the hoped-for speedy conquest of the Soviet Union, and that the long-promised 'New Order' for all Europe and Asia could be proclaimed. Instead of that, the two great Fascist powers of Europe and Asia, Germany and Japan met there with their satellites — governments entirely dominated by them — to reaffirm their objectives. Those who renewed their adherence to the Anti-Red Pact were the
original signatories, Germany and Japan; with the later signers, Italy, Hungary, Spain, and the puppet government of Manchukuo. Those who signed for the first time were Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Rumania, Slovakia, and the puppet government of Nanking. (*See also* NEW WORLD ORDER.)

Fascism and Religion.

Turning from the worldwide aspect of Fascism, to the development in the single countries, it should be noted that Fascism did not develop any new traits in Nazi Germany during the last year. The most interesting fact is that the hostility to Christianity, which is inherent in National Socialism, was expressed more and more openly during the last year, with the growing triumph of National Socialism and with the mounting expectations of an approaching National Socialist world-order (*see* GERMANY). The religion of charity and universal brotherhood, of the Prince of Peace and universal love, is, of course, fundamentally incompatible with all the principles of Fascism and of National Socialism. It is therefore understandable that Chancellor Hitler's claim of conducting a crusade on behalf of Christianity against godless Communism, when he crossed the borders of the Soviet Union in the early morning hours of Sunday, June 22, 1941, did not find any echo in Christian centers. The head of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope Pius XII, who broadcast a sermon on the following Sunday, June 29, refused absolutely to endorse Chancellor Hitler's claim of a Christian crusade against Communism by refraining pointedly from any statement which could be interpreted in that way. A relentless struggle against National Socialist domination was also conducted by the churches and religious bodies of many countries occupied by the National Socialists' military machine. In Norway the Protestant bishops and ministers steadfastly and sometimes violently rejected any compromise with National Socialism. The
resistance of the Catholic and Protestant Clergy in the Netherlands and in Belgium was no less outspoken. The Greek Orthodox Church in Yugoslavia went even beyond it: the Patriarch of the Church, the bishops and the priests put themselves at the head of the fight against National Socialist oppression, even after the Germans had succeeded in defeating the Yugoslav army. In the same way the Patriarch and head of the Russian Greek Orthodox rallied with the whole church unhesitatingly and unreservedly to the full support of the Soviet government in its struggle against National Socialism. The official stand of the Catholic Church in America was made clear in a statement by the Catholic bishops of the United States, issued on November 17 by the administrative board of the National Catholic Welfare Conference. Their pronouncement began with the words: 'Christianity faces today its most serious crisis since the Church came out of the catacombs,' thus rejecting absolutely the belief then still accepted in America, by many that the present war was nothing but a 'foreign war' or a 'war between two imperialisms.' The statement further recalled that 'Pope Pius XI with prophetic vision had declared that the machinations of Nazism, from the beginning, had no other aims than a war of extermination,' and that he had branded the 'Nazis as the nullifiers and destroyers of the Christian West.'

The violent Fascist negation of democracy, of Christianity and of western civilization, finds its expression also in the anti-Semitism which is propagated by the National Socialists and Fascists and which is used by them as an entering wedge in their efforts to destroy the democracies. Wherever Fascists are in control or where Fascist propaganda is active, anti-Semitic propaganda is one of its main instruments. Naturally all those who try to undermine resistance to Fascist aggression, or to divert the attention of the democratic peoples from the threatened Fascist aggression by their preaching of 'neutrality' or 'it cannot happen here.' make good use of anti-Semitism. On Nov. 14 the German propaganda minister, Paul Goebbels, published an article in
the leading German weekly, *Das Reich*, in which he accused the Jews of being the enemies of Germany and demanded their complete destruction. The fate of extermination not only threatened the Jews, but all whom Fascism regarded or declared as its enemies all over the world. The important Italian newspaper, *Regime Fascista*, declared in its issue of Oct. 21, 'war against the enemies of Fascism has now assumed a clear totalitarian character. We therefore demand to know with the greatest possible accuracy who are our enemies, both at home and abroad.... The hour to settle all accounts is at present. The Jews have always been hostile and opposed to our progress. They have attempted to strangle us in the luminous moment of our revolutionary affirmation on a world plane. They must inexorably pay.'

**Fascism in Italy.**

While the triumphal tone of German Fascism changed somewhat towards the end of 1941, with the mounting reversals in Russia and in North Africa, and with the sudden realization of the essential unity of the American people and their understanding of the true issues involved in this war, the mother nation of Fascism, Italy, had throughout the year witnessed a fast eclipse of the prestige of Fascism. After eighteen years of preparation it was revealed to all that Fascism had brought about a régime of military inefficiency and incompetence, in the very field which Fascism regarded as its very own. The loss of Italy's African empire, the defeats of Italy's armies in Greece and Libya, the inability of the Italian navy and air force to assert themselves in the Mediterranean against the numerically much inferior forces of Britain, and finally the state of inferiority and vassalage in which Italian Fascism found itself in its relations with Nazi Germany: all that did as much to reveal the weakness of Fascism as did the successful resistance of the British in 1940 and of the Russians in 1941 against the German war machine which was
superior in men and material. It did not help that in January 1941 some of the leading Fascist cabinet members enlisted in the Italian army and were sent to the front line in Albania. According to official reports from Rome, among the members enlisted were the Foreign Minister Count Ciano, the Minister of Popular Culture Alessandro Pavolini, the Minister of State Roberto Farinacci, the Minister of Education Giuseppe Bottai, and the Minister of Corporations Renato Ricci. Though their departure to the front was announced with great emphasis to bolster up the dwindling Fascist morale, nothing was heard of their deeds on the front, nor did their arrival help the Italian army to start its counter-offensive against the Greek troops in Albania. Frequent shakeups in the high Fascist administration and in the Fascist high command of the Italian army, navy, and air-force, did not improve the situation.

Nor did it help that Signor Mussolini preached undying hatred for the enemies of Fascism. It was noteworthy that the official newspaper of the Catholic Action groups of Italian University students was confiscated because it published an article by a priest named Pignedoli who addressed the Italian soldiers in the following way: 'Hatred is one of the most base feelings, and dishonors any uniform. Your Christian faith tells you that your enemy does not cease to be your brother, who is performing, as you do, a duty toward his fatherland. And he would — as you would — be a traitor if he did not make the greatest possible effort to defend his country. Respect him, therefore, and do not utter words of hatred. Hatred is the brother of impotence. It is never a factor of true victory, even though it may produce gestures of superficial and incomplete heroism.' Needless to say, that these words, reflecting the Christian attitude, brought punishment to the paper, while the Fascist attitude was expressed in a speech by Roberto Farinacci on Oct. 12 which was published by the Regime Fascista on October 14, in which he placed emphasis on the need of a world-wide triumph of the Fascist idea and asked the Fascist comrades to employ
strong-arm methods against all their enemies. The degree of hatred expressed even in the moderate Fascist newspapers may be seen in the fact that the most respectable Italian newspaper, the Corriere della Sera, spoke on Oct. 23 of the 'boorish falsity of Cordell Hull' and referred to Mr. Roosevelt as 'that vulgar blackguard in the White House.'

Spanish Fascism.

Fascism in France, Spain, Rumania and other small European countries showed the same traits as in Italy. Spanish Fascism was full of the desire to revive the glories which had made the sixteenth century the great century of Spanish history, the claim to world domination based upon the common civilization of Hispanidad and of the Spanish Catholic Church. This imperial dream of the Spanish Fascist organization, the Falange, embraced especially the whole of Latin America and the Philippine Islands, which were regarded with Cuba and Puerto Rico as the most important outposts of this coveted new Spanish Empire.

Japan and Fascism.

It is interesting to note how closely Japanese Fascism resembles the European brand, not only in its aspirations, but even in the words used to express them. Japan's racial idea of a chosen race destined to govern the world is very similar to the ideas of National Socialism. On Feb. 11, on the 2,601st anniversary of the founding of the Japanese Empire, the home minister Baron Kiichiro Hiranuma addressed the school teachers on the meaning of the day: 'Dynasties in foreign countries were created by man. Foreign kings, emperors and presidents are all created by men, while Japan has a sacred throne inherited from the imperial ancestors. Japan's imperial rule is therefore an extension of heaven. The dynasties created by men may collapse, but the heaven-
created throne is beyond men's powers.' Toshio Shiratori, the adviser of the Japanese foreign office and a former ambassador to Rome, expressed the Nazi idea when he alluded to 'plutocrat Jews and democrats' as Japan's enemies. On June 15, 1941, he wrote: 'The greatest reason for Japan's participation in the triple alliance lies in the fact that the three signatory powers ... have the same position, the same interests and entertain the same political views. China is not Japan's real enemy in the present incident. In reality Japan is fighting Britain and America. The first thing we now are required to do is to carry out our southward advance. When Europe and Asia are placed under the New Order, America will be unable to maintain her capitalism.'

On Nov. 25 before a mass meeting of the Imperial Rule Assistants Association, the official totalitarian Japanese organization, the president of the Planning Board, Lieut. Gen. Teiichi Suzuki, stressed the necessity of creating a 'New Order.' The decadent Anglo-Saxon order said he, 'is about to be replaced by a 'New Order.' Should the European War develop into a world conflict, responsibility will rest with Roosevelt and Churchill. We have full confidence in the strength of our country to fight against them.' Thus towards the end of 1941 it became more and more clear, that Fascist forces everywhere, in Asia as well as in Europe, with their friends in the western hemisphere, were all bent upon one aim. The issue was joined beyond any doubt on Dec. 10, when Germany declared war upon the United States, and the alignments in this worldwide attempt at the creation of the Fascist 'New Order' were clearly revealed. See also articles on COMMUNISM; GERMANY; ITALY; JAPAN; WORLD WAR II.