

Facism: A Review of Its History and Its Present Cultural Reality in the Americas

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The Italians may have given us the word “fascismo,” but whether we use that word or the Spanish “falangismo” or the German “National Socialism” (Naziism) we are talking about a form of social organization which has a complex history. Indeed, many persons wrongly believe that fascism as a political system first achieved state power in Italy in the 1920s. However, *fascism in modern times first achieved independent (sovereign) power in the Americas*—in the Argentina of Juan Manuel de Rosas (1830s) and in the Confederate States of America (1860-1865).

The position developed here is that there is an extremely close relationship existing between fascism and colonialism (or conquest) and that it is in conquered regions and especially overseas colonies that fascism as a cultural system is most often nurtured historically. Fascism is commonly thought of as a dictatorship of the “right” and more precisely as a totalitarian autocracy in which the wealthy classes and commercial corporations are protected in their property by the state and exercise an influential and privileged position. As an historically evolving ideology and culture, fascism contains many elements borrowed from other systems. None of its characteristics are unique *per se*; it is rather the combination and use of these characteristics which comprises the distinctive character of fascism.

Certain key elements must be present before a system can be called fascist. Key characteristics include: (1) authoritarian government; (2) a one-party or one-ideology system; (3) wealthy-class dominance; (4) militarism and a military tradition where warfare is exalted; (5) a close interlock between powerful commercial interests and the state, with generous profits for the former; (6) an object of hate (an “anti” ideology) used to galvanize the masses such as anti-Communist or Socialist, anti-black, anti-Indian, anti-labor unions, anti-Jewish, anti-Protestant, and anti-Catholic; (7) an exalted sense of “mission,” “destiny,” and “superiority,” such as super-race ideas, “manifest destiny,” and crusading

zeal; and (8) the mobilization of the masses in such a manner as to control their thinking and to use mass-support to crush “enemies” where the masses are “persuaded” to act against their own class interests. In addition to the key elements, there are certain secondary characteristics which are usually present to one degree or another.

These secondary characteristics include: (1) religious bigotry, racism, and conformity-uniformity; (2) a distrust of outsiders and “foreign” ideas, i.e., a cultivated hyper-nationalism; (3) imperialism and colonialism; (4) the use of secret organizations and right-wing terrorist groups to silence opposition or to control the “enemy”; (5) brutal assassinations and terror, to immobilize the “enemy” and the “neutral”; (6) systematic spying on citizens and thought-control; (7) control of media; (8) “ghettoization” or imprisonment or even elimination of “undesirables”; (9) the use of an established church or state-dictator cults to create loyalty; and (10) the use of pageantry, ceremonies, and other evocative tools to control the masses.

It should be understood that we are not always talking about “one-man” dictatorships. More often than not the dictator-leader, although appearing to the public as a decisive individual possessing total power, is financed by, and must share power with, a less well-known grouping of wealthy people such as military officers and clerics. In the Confederate States of America or in modern South Africa, the leader might be elected (selected is a better word) by a one-party society which allows no other ideological choice.

It should also be clear that not all authoritarian societies are fascist. To put it simply, traditional oligarchical or autocratic systems can allow for great ethnic diversity, religious tolerance, justice for peasants, and freedom of speech, depending upon the circumstances. It might be added, too, that in fascist states leaders normally lack any hereditary or traditional right to rule, which might be one explanation for the tactics often employed to guarantee the retention of power. But “newness” to power is not an absolute condition.

Fascism often arises when the wealthy classes or some other privileged group (including in some cases, the middle or working class) feels threatened with a loss of wealth or

position. The wealthy class typically supports a dictator or a military junta in order to crush the opposition. *On the other hand, fascism can also develop because of the fear of not being able to grab enough "loot" or wealth.* Such a condition emerges in the developmental stages of colonialism and under slavery systems when an avaricious colonial-settler population insists upon enslaving Indians or blacks in spite of the lack of any legal basis for doing so and the lack of any fear of attack or opposition.

These are elements usually present in more modern forms of fascism: preventing the loss of wealth and privilege, and enhancing opportunities for acquiring new wealth—usually at the expense of lands to be conquered, workers to be exploited, slaves to be seized, or property to be confiscated. The prospect of gaining more wealth helps, of course, to enlist the support of avaricious sectors of the lower-class.

The Origins of Fascism

Fascism is not merely political in the narrow sense. It is more correctly cultural phenomena, crossing into virtually all spheres of behavior. It may be well said that a fascist movement and a fascist state arise only in a culture which already has fascist tendencies. The tendencies or elements seem to arise in different times and places but gradually come to be part of the cultural baggage of a great many peoples.

Fascism, or at the very least its key elements, originates in colonies or in outlying areas being raided or conquered. In fact, many such situations, and especially where settler-populations are involved, are almost inherently fascistic due to the very nature of conquest and exploitation. *When fascism occurs in the metropolis (the center of the empire) it is essentially the bringing into that center of the politics and values of the colony or the periphery. In short, the colonial system conquers the metropolis.*

It is probably out of conquest and colonialism that rigid systems of social stratification first arise. This happens because the original natives (the conquered) are reduced in status or because slaves and workers are introduced from conquered areas, or both. Such a situation appears to have

developed in ancient Egypt as well as in other early empires. Systems of control must be developed to prevent the lower classes and slaves from rebelling or acting as free persons.

In this context concepts of cultural superiority, messianic destiny, and religious bigotry seemed to arise quite early in the Middle Eastern area. The oppression of the Hebrews as slaves during the "captivity" period and the alleged plan to virtually exterminate them would seem to mark such a development. Once the Hebrews escaped, however, they invaded Canaan as a "chosen people" and proceeded to inflict an analagous system upon the Canaanites. The attempt to suppress the worship of Baal and other Canaanite deities would seem to mark an especially serious turning point in human history since it indicates the appearance of religious exclusiveness and bigotry, a characteristic not generally common to earlier empires.

The theocratic Hebrew state, with a close interlock between the priesthood and the government (in fact, with the denial of any government but the priesthood during certain periods), creates the basis for the more modern ideologically-exclusive state. *Intolerance and bigotry become virtues, signs of piety as it were, in a society geared to the ideal of total and massive obedience to a "divine" law.*

Quite clearly, when "law" is "god-made" rather than man-made, one enters into a seriously circumscribed political-ideological game. Christianity and Islam, at a later date, tend to inherit this orientation and "the one true faith" idea with an elaborate set of "sacred" rules (the Bible, the Koran) contributes to the rise of the monolithic ideological cult. Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Marxist-Leninism are all similar cultural manifestations featuring the "true believer" with "true doctrine" written down in some book. The frequent intolerance and inflexibility characteristic of the Judaeo-Christian-Islamic-Marxist-Leninist tradition is a potent factor also in the rise of fascism. It should be noted, however, that the sacred books of the Jews, Christians, Muslims, and Marxists all possess enough ambiguity to provide for multiple interpretations, once literacy is widespread. Also, some of the "rules" therein may limit certain kinds of arbitrary abuse of human beings, while other "rules" foster oppression.

It is worth noting that all of the early “messianic” religions used mobs to destroy their enemies (it was a mob that condemned Yoshua-Jesus to be crucified). Christian and Islamic mobs have been used for almost 1500 years, off and on, to destroy rival temples, libraries, schools, sects, et cetera, and to liquidate or intimidate “enemies.” *The use of the religious mob as a political-religious tool must be considered to be a key “invention” in the rise of proto-fascism.*

“Mob” means more than just the masses throwing rocks or burning; it also means “frenzied” armies of true believers as in the Islamic conquests and Christian “crusades.” Mobs can be armed with “serious” weapons and can be induced to die and kill for “God” or ideology (even though some of the leaders of such armies may be more interested in profit than in death).

Between 400 C.E. and 1700 C.E. proto-fascism comes very close to being fascism, *per se*, as a part of the creation of Christian and Islamic societies allowing for little or no dissent from orthodoxy. Fascism largely waxes and wanes according to the fervor of the “faithful” and perhaps it is best merely to say that, in general, a fascist spirit is often offset by kingly or governmental desires to create stable, rational states with widespread trade and consequently some tolerance of religious minorities, e.g., Islamic fervor subsides in favor of allowing Jews and Christians to exist so long as the latter pay taxes and keep out of sight.

The Roman State also had a role in the evolution of fascism or proto-fascism, especially after the fall of the republic. The military rulers who often dominated Rome from Julius Caesar onward had frequent recourse to the use of mobs, private armies, terrorism, spying, assassination, circuses for the masses, and slave labor. (Christians and Jews both became “enemies” during the late days of the empire.) This tendency continued with the Byzantine State, of course. Reference is also made to “state cults,” dictator worship, and the like.

With the Roman and other empires of that era, we really see the politics of the colony “coming home” to the metropolis with a vengeance so that Rome acquired the characteristics of a colony itself—so did Athens and

Constantinople. The metropolis came to be filled with non-citizens, many as slaves, who became a foreign and colonized mass threatening stability. The non-citizens, of course, had to be controlled by force and other comparable means. External “enemies” were also created by means of imperialism. For example, Carthaginians, Germans, Gauls, Turks, and others, and the constant threat posed by them, helped to justify the development of a warfare-state with internal controls becoming more rigid as time passed.

After the triumph of Christianity in Europe it was religious bigotry and war-lord desires to crush the peasantry which created quasi-fascist conditions in many areas, especially during the 1500s and 1600s. John Calvin’s theocracy in Geneva, the Catholic “reconquest” state in Spain, and many Lutheran areas in Germany, to mention but a few, serve as examples of fascist or nearly fascist situations.

Spain presents an interesting example, because it was a case where Jewish, Protestant, and Moorish “threats” were used to justify rampant militarism, terrorism, thought-control, ideological conformity, and the destruction of traditions of popular participation (as in Aragon). The expulsion of the Jews, and later of the Moors, the Inquisition, the expropriation of Jewish and Moorish property, aggressive military adventurism, and the wars against Granada, Morocco, and the Native Americans all remind us very much of a colonialist-fascist society.

Mobs were certainly used against the Jews in Spain and spying was widespread to discover “relapsed” converts or Protestants. The Spanish masses, too, were allowed to participate to a degree in the “looting” of the Americas. The wealthy classes, mercantile as well as landlord, participated fully in the profit-taking of the “reconquest” and of the empire overseas. The Spain of Phillip II was a fascist state. Phillip II’s state was more violent and more genocidal than the falangist Spain of Francisco Franco (1935-1970s). Franco at least allowed Jews and Protestants to meet behind closed doors in buildings with no signs or symbols on them, even if communists, socialists, and anarchists were hunted down.

Fascism in the Americas

Whatever we may think about post-Ferdinand Spain, it is clear that the Spanish colonial areas overseas received a "heavy dose" of fascism and developed their own variations thereof. It is important to look briefly at a Spanish colony such as California or New Mexico to analyze the fascist characteristics present even in frontier areas of the empire.

Like most of the Christian and Islamic empires after about 400 C.E., the Spanish State was an "ideological empire" as well as a profit-seeking one. Thus, in California, New Mexico, and elsewhere, no ideological deviations were tolerated whatsoever. Indians might merely be lashed or imprisoned for non-Catholic practices but Spanish-speaking persons could be executed for heresy or "relapse" into Judaism or Islam. Unorthodox books were burned, although, in fact few people were literate enough to read them. We are focusing on an almost completely closed society, and a very bigoted one indeed.

The outlying Spanish colonies were all organized along military lines and all decisions originated at higher levels. The wealthier Spanish-speakers were rewarded with generous grants of Indian land and labor and everywhere the Spaniards and their mixed-racial descendents clearly comprehended the social and economic benefits to be derived from the exploitation of the Indian (and African) masses. The rule came to be clearly developed and remains true today in much of the Americas: to be Indian is to be exploitable; to be a *civilizado* (mestizo, ladino, white) person is to be able to do the exploiting.

At the bottom of society in California and New Mexico were the ninety to ninety-five percent of the population: the Native People. They were denied virtually all civil, political, human, and religious rights and were regarded legally as children. Tens of thousands died in the so-called "missions," especially in California, while many others perished in warfare or from disease and loss of resources. All had to work for the Spaniards, either in the "missions," as *peones*, or as tributaries obliged to pay taxes to a feudal overseer.

Nothing is lacking for making this fascist system: bigotry, crusading zeal, racial superiority ideas, spying, terror, protection of the wealthy classes, autocracy, an “enemy” (the Indian, and especially the “untamed” or “unconverted” Indian)—all these characteristics were present, along with the spectacle provided by Catholic ceremonialism and profit-taking by the wealthy classes. We can even say that mobs were present, since the *gente de razon* (the “civilized”) always conspired to keep the Indian under control (and, of course, colonial mobs actually rebelled against Spanish imperial reforms in both Mexico and Peru).

Apologists for the Spanish Empire may write lengthy books about the “rule of law” which attempted to view the Indian as a “human being” with certain basic rights, but this “rule of law” failed to operate in the overseas areas of the empire. Still further, even if Indians could not in theory be enslaved (except in “just” wars) or totally deprived of usufructary land rights they still could hardly ever be other than a brainwashed proletarian in a fascist culture. And they certainly were going to stay near the bottom, law or no law.

It is, of course, significant to point out that the Native People’s worst enemies usually were the Spanish colonial settlers in the post-conquest periods. For example, colonial settlers caused the Indian University of Tlatelolco to be suppressed out of fear that a capable Native Mexican intelligentsia would survive the conquest and challenge European privilege. In general, *the attitude of settlers in colonial regions tends always to be more fascist, racist, and exploitive than are attitudes in the metropolis*. Although, in the case of Spain, it should be pointed out that Indian slaves were sent to Spain to join the blacks and Moors already in that country, but there is no indication that a “University of Tlatelolco” for such persons would have been tolerated in the metropolis either. But, of course, we must remember that southern Spain itself was a colony which was only conquered in 1492.

In spite of the rhetoric of the wars of independence, the fascist tradition of Spanish colonialism has often triumphed in much of Latin America. However, before discussing the post-independence era, let us look at the British colonies to see where fascist characteristics also appear.

There are areas where fascism emerged in the Anglo-Saxon empire, always in connection with settler-colonialism. The first is in Ireland (and especially Ulster and “the Pale”). The second is in Puritan New England. The third is in Virginia, South Carolina, and the slave colonies of Barbados, Jamaica, and elsewhere. Three patterns emerge—all are comparable in that conquered or “enemy” populations such as Irish, Indians, and Africans are to be controlled, removed, reduced to cheap labor, or enslaved.

In Ireland every effort is made to suppress the native Irish religion, language, and social structure. Large areas are cleared of Irish inhabitants and loyal settlers are introduced. The settlers, in turn, become partisans against the Irish, helping the empire to retain control. A fascist system develops in which “mobs” of the Orangemen (“Scotch-Irish”) are used to help suppress the “wild” Irish. Religious bigotry, inter-ethnic hate, the popish “enemy,” authoritarian government, and so on, all help to give a fascistic character to the Irish conquest. And it is significant to note that the Orange elements, when they migrated to Pennsylvania, Virginia, Tennessee, and Kentucky took their fascist tendencies with them, willing to treat the Native Americans as they had the Irish.

In Massachusetts the Puritans were carriers of John Calvin’s religious bigotry and theocratic-capitalist politics. The structure of government was nominally republican but actually was a one-party, one-ideology oligarchy. Dissent was not tolerated. Quakers, Baptists, Unitarians, Catholics, and others were banned. Native Americans and blacks were enslaved, while the Indian “enemy” and the French served to justify the use of military mobs. The Puritan oligarchy became wealthier as the years went by while the Indian and black people were caused to lose property steadily or were precluded from gaining any.

Fascist tendencies, nonetheless, declined in New England after 1700 or so probably because the internal “enemy” (the non-whites) were reduced in numbers and the external “enemies” were no longer an immediate threat. Many other factors mitigated against fascism also: a high literacy rate, soil conditions favoring small farmers, and others which are beyond the scope of this presentation.

In the slave colonies from Maryland southwards to Barbados truly fascist systems evolved which are especially significant because they continued to thrive for many decades; the continental ones evolved eventually into the Confederate States of America. It is to be understood that many white readers will balk at picturing the society of Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, William Byrd, George Washington, and Robert E. Lee as being fascist. The romantic pictures we have of gentility, cultivated minds, elite liberalism, beautiful homes, and fine manners often do not allow us to see the slave cabins, the whips, the armed patrols, the lynchings and tortures, and the other mechanisms of terror and exploitation. Nor are we usually able to see the extreme avariciousness of the planter aristocracy and their constant seizure of Indian lands and black bodies.

Let us bear in mind that fascism, although a brutal system, often erects splendid palaces, monuments, and public works. And certainly the ruling fascists, whether capitalists, landed aristocracy, generals, or political leaders, can exhibit, at the proper time, cultivated tastes in wine and music, in art, and luxurious living.

We must not imagine fascists to always look like wild-eyed brutes with sharpened teeth! Since fascism is always interlocked with wealthy class interests, we must expect to find the wealthy class culture of leisure very much present in any fascist society. The brutality of fascism is almost always directed at the "enemy," not at the ruling classes. One's impressions of a fascist or quasi-fascist society can easily vary according to whether one contacts it at the upper levels or at the slave camp-prison camp levels, whether one visits wealthy friends or is forced to dwell in proletarian slums, whether one flies on jet planes or travels on second-class buses.

We see what we want to see when visiting places in South Africa or Latin America today, and we see what we want to see when romanticizing about the South of Jefferson and Lee. The reality is that the economic system of Virginia and the rest of the South was based on: (1) the naked seizure of Native land and resources, (2) constant aggression against Indians, (3) cheap labor (Indian, Scots, Irish, black), (4) the awarding of land to those whites wealthy enough to import slaves or servants, i.e., land was awarded on the basis of the

number of laborers brought in, and (5) a government absolutely controlled by and dedicated to the interests of the wealthy landed class and their merchant partners.

From about 1607 until the 1690s Virginia can be characterized as an authoritarian-wealthy class dominated society engaged in constant imperialism. It was not yet a fascist colony although the establishment of the Episcopal church as the only legal religion and the gradual appearance of Indian and black slavery need to be noted, along with the development of a racist-avaricious mob mentality on the part of middle-economic level white settlers. This latter tendency is clearly to be seen in the 1676-1677 "rebellion" of many white settlers led by Nathaniel Bacon.

The Bacon Rebellion was a fascist or quasi-fascist uprising. Basically it arose from the fact that although the royal government had allowed steady encroachment on Indian lands, especially on the part of individual planters; much territory, virtually all of Panunkey Neck and everything above the "fall line" of the rivers, was still in Native hands. Many Indian groups had achieved a certain "equilibrium," hunting for white planters or trading furs. The royal governor was allegedly involved in the fur trade and was accused of being "sympathetic" to the Indians.

In 1676 Andaste (Susquehana) and Doeg Indians from Maryland were driven into Virginia by the Iroquois and Maryland militia. A few whites were killed in northern Virginia; this was used by Bacon and his followers as an excuse for organizing a rebel army which attacked, in every case, peaceful tributary Native villages located along the Appomattox, Roanoke, James, and Panunkey rivers. Many hundreds were slaughtered and over a hundred Natives were enslaved.

In brief, a colonial settler mob cleared much land of Indian occupancy, acquired new slaves, and broke Native power in the tidewater region and beyond, all in illegal acts against peaceful Indians. Bacon was subsequently hung, but not for his killing of Indians.

This mob-like attack upon the Indians for economic purposes must be seen as the predecessor of many similar

actions later carried out by white settlers from Pennsylvania to the Deep South and in the West. These locally-organized mobs (militia units, irregular or regular) of white males are seemingly an immediate predecessor to the Ku Klux Klan of later years.

In the 1690s Virginia began to solidify the system of perpetual slavery for blacks and Indians. Thereafter, the system was strengthened by various statutes which permanently subjugated the slaves and also restricted the rights of free persons of color—Indian, African, or mixed. For example, colored persons were not allowed to bear arms or to testify against whites or hold any offices. During the 1700s, the system of slavery developed fully, Virginia presented this picture: a society in which almost half the population (or more in certain counties) was totally deprived of the most basic of human rights; a society utilizing terror and armed force to prevent escape or insurrection; a society wholly dominated by the wealthy planters and merchants; an aggressive society, seeking new lands beyond the Blue Ridge and even towards the Ohio River as well as southwards to Tennessee and west to Kentucky; an oligarchical political system; one legal church, the Episcopal; and the use of the poorer whites as overseers; patrolers, and militia men.

South Carolina after 1670 presents a similar picture, except that it was much more militaristic and vicious, carrying out constant raids upon various Indian tribes and Spanish Florida. Many thousands of Native slaves were kept in South Carolina or sold to New England or Barbados. The white settlers had to be constantly alert to control a very large slave population as well as to wage war periodically, especially towards Florida where Spanish-speaking Christian Indians could be captured.

During the Revolutionary era (1770s to 1790s) the condition of slaves and free colored people improved, especially in Virginia. The rhetoric of anti-colonialism perhaps served to make slavery seem incongruous. But by 1800 a reaction had set in, and between that date and 1860 an extremely rigid and fascist system gradually entrenched itself once more.

Free people of color were especially a target for abuse. Law after law restricted the rights of such people, including a

requirement that all free coloreds had to register in each county and had to re-register immediately if they traveled to a new county. Additionally, they could not have meetings, could not preach, could not teach, could not send children to school in the north, could not drive a carriage, and, of course, could not testify against a white, hold any offices, or vote.

In county after county white settlers attempted to force the removal of free colored people and the abolishment of any Indian reservations. This latter was accomplished in all but one case.

A completely fascist culture appeared in Virginia in the 1800s, especially from the 1830s to 1860. The slaves and free-non-whites were the “enemies” and after the 1830s the “abolitionists” joined their ranks, becoming that era’s equivalent of the “communist agitator” of our own century. Virginia had a one-ideology society and abolitionist or pro-black literature was outlawed and destroyed. Lynchings, armed patrols, spying, and distrust of outsiders were all part of the culture. All of this terror existed, of course, to allow the plantation owners and other whites to profit economically from slave labor.

The balance of the South was similar, except that armed aggression against Indians continued in many areas during the 1830s and 1840s and into the 1850s in Texas. In the latter area Mexicans were also a target for white mobs and terrorists.

White historians, by making reference to “Jacksonian democracy” and such similar terms, often give us a basic misconception about the politics of the South before 1869. However, no “democracy” can exist where Native People are being driven away or denied citizenship and where virtually half of the balance of the population is not even free to obtain wages for their labor, let alone vote. Illiteracy and poll taxes further limited the franchise and both parties, the Whig and the Democratic, were in agreement on the basic issues of slavery, status of free coloreds, and “removal” of Indians. Whites who were dissenters, as was the case with many Quakers and Mennonites, left the South during the period. It may be that the Whig party favored the white elite while the

Democratic Party favored the less wealthy white farmers, but neither party could challenge the issues fundamental to fascism, i.e., imperialism against Indians and Mexicans, slavery, the total denial of rights to free people of color, and the total denial of free speech on any of these issues.

What has been called “Jeffersonian” and “Jacksonian” democracy is, in many regions, nothing but “Frontier Fascism.” The North, having abolished slavery and having absorbed many democratically-oriented immigrant groups, came to serve as a threat to the slavocratic system. Therefore, in the 1860s, the South attempted to establish an independent fascist state, one dedicated not only to the maintenance of tyranny but also to its expansion into Mexican and Spanish territory, as well as to the far Southwest and Oklahoma.

The Confederate States of America was the first independent fascist society in North America. It was a state founded in militarism and one taking great pride in its “macho” culture of dueling and the cultivation of warlike skills. Moreover, it was a society where non-whites were to be forever excluded from basic human rights by means of sheer terror. What fascist character is lacking? Certainly it was a one-ideology state where the interests of the wealthy classes were protected above all else.

After the Confederate States of America fell, the ex-rebels attempted to maintain fascism during “confederate reconstruction” (1865-1869). Thereafter, for a pitifully brief period of time (1869-1877) the U.S. Government sought to democratize the South politically *but not economically*. Northern capitalists could not bring themselves to seize the property of rebels for division among the ex-slaves, nor could they adopt the policy of colonizing blacks in the West.

Understandably, a racist-fascist system does not disappear overnight. Fascism is a form of culture and the culture survived the Union’s conquest. Thus, during the 1870s, and especially from 1877 through the 1920s, one sees the concerted efforts of many whites to restore fascist rule and then to maintain it against all challenges by non-whites. The Ku Klux Klan and similar white terrorist groups were the “storm troopers” and “brown shirts” of the era, but they

were aided and even at times exceeded by the wealthy classes, planters as well as businessmen. The bi-racial reformist Populist Party posed a threat for a time but in typical fascist style it was neutralized and destroyed. The Republican Party never really took hold, because of its irreconcilable make-up of Northern capitalists and poor black southerners. Therefore, a one-party South came into being by the 1880s and by 1900 non-white representation and participation had all but ended. Jim Crow fascism triumphed and the methods utilized—terror, lynching, intimidation—are well-known.

It should also be noted that in the process of achieving a fascist victory the white wealthy classes succeeded in using the anti-black fear as an effective tool for persuading lower-class whites to support oligarchical rule. Typically, again, we see the effective fascist method of using hate and fear (anti-communist, anti-Jew) to get the masses to go against their own fundamental economic interests. What was happening, after the Civil War, was that corporate industrial capitalism and allied interests such as large cattle-ranchers, land-developers, and Southern planters were moving rapidly to control the wealth of the United States. The fascist tradition in the South proved to be a “natural” for achieving this objective, because it could be used to keep the lower-classes, white and colored, so divided that labor unions and reform parties could be prevented from developing.

It should also be noted that “Frontier Fascism” was widespread in areas such as California (where eighty percent of the Indian population was liquidated between 1850 and 1880 and where Indians and coloreds were prohibited from voting or testifying against whites until after the Civil War), and Colorado (where mobs were used to kill Indians—as at Sand Creek), Arizona (where an anti-Apache hate campaign led to the Camp Grant Massacre and where anti-Indian and Mexican laws were rapidly adopted), Oklahoma, and elsewhere. This “Frontier Fascism,” often carried by settlers of Southern origin, helped to facilitate the establishment of corporation-dominated political systems in many states, as well as to lend cultural support to anti-foreign campaigns (anti-Chinese, anti-Japanese) and to the use of armed militia to break labor unions.

From the 1850s onward, and especially after 1870, the Native American survivors in the West were brought under the control of a completely totalitarian government agency, the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Each reservation became a fascist or quasi-fascist state in miniature, with the “agent” or “superintendent” having absolute authority over everything from the length of hair of adult males to the assignment of lands, to the issuing of passes to leave the reservation. *The significance of the creation of such a totalitarian agency should not be underestimated*, because it was sustained with a cultural predisposition for autocracy and totalitarianism.

The BIA reservation officials were backed up by white mobs ready to attack any rebellious Indians or to seize any “vacant” land. The invasion of the Black Hills in the 1870s and the invasion of Oklahoma in the 1880s and 1890s by hundreds of thousands of land-hungry “Sooners” should illustrate the magnitude of the threat posed by white settlers. The U.S. Army was, of course, used as the principal instrument of coercion but most Indians feared the settlers far more than they feared the regular army, because the settlers, like locusts, could not be stopped. Behind the ghettoization of the Native People was corporate capitalism and large land developers such as railroad companies which wanted lands and resources to be opened for economic exploitation.

On a national scale, then, the collusion between the wealthy classes and the federal government, vis-a-vis Indians, can be seen as a species of fascism since the government was closely interlocked with the wealthy as it took from the “enemy,” i.e., Indians. Of course, the white lower-class were allowed to share in the dividing up of Native resources.

The opening up of Oklahoma is a classic study in the triumph of fascism, with Southern fascism and Frontier fascism mixing together to create a unique situation; a few examples will provide insight. Between the 1890s and the 1920s white settlers and corporate interests sought to seize the resources of Oklahoma for themselves. White mobs and terrorists such as the KKK used guns to drive blacks away from their homesteads, forced Indians to sell or lease oil-rich allotments, destroyed the colored section of Tulsa in 1921 (even using bombs dropped from airplanes), and intimidated all non-whites. Laws were passed in several towns prohibiting

colored people from staying while the State of Oklahoma established a Jim Crow segregated system which clearly violated federal law. The federal government (even under Republican presidents) did not intervene. Marriages between Indians and Indians who were part-African were outlawed along with all Indian-black and white-black marriages; and an extreme color-graded racist system was established.

During the 1920s the KKK virtually ran Oklahoma politically and crosses were burned frequently in rural areas to frighten colored people into selling their land or giving up their oil leases. Non-whites who were too successful were physically attacked and a great exodus began, with many Indians and coloreds fleeing to Kansas, California, and other states. Oklahoma, after 1907, was a one-party, one-religion (Bible Belt Protestant), racist state where terror and law were both used to maintain white supremacy over coloreds and Indians and where wealthy whites soon came to control most of the oil and almost all of the good agricultural land.

The spirit of fascism, so widespread in the U.S. by the 1890s, probably played a significant part in the war against the first Filipino republic, 1898-1902. "The spirit of the people," it was said, demanded an overseas empire—but it should be noted that congressional debates of the time made constant reference to the Filipinos being like Indians and, in a real sense, the war was "just another" Indian war—falling between the Sioux massacre of 1890 and the Ute-Paiute war of 1915.

With the election of Woodrow Wilson as president, fascism was triumphant in the South and in Oklahoma, and fascist tendencies could be found in many areas of U.S. life outside of that region. Wilson, a racist Virginian, brought fascism into the federal government in so far as blacks were concerned and maintained the fascist orientation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The treatment of black soldiers during World War I and the failure of the federal government to stem the post-war riots against colored people all illustrated that "Wilsonian democracy" was "democracy" for only the white majority.

During the period of the 1920s to 1940s fascism continued

to dominate the South. Virginia can serve to illustrate this state of affairs, because it was during this period that the most severe racial segregation laws were adopted since the Civil War. Virginia was a one-party, one-ideology state in which non-whites were systematically intimidated. In 1924 a South African-style racial registration system was initiated, with a colored person being defined as any person with any trace of African ancestry, except that an Indian could have up to 1/32 African descent and still be an Indian so long as he remained on one of the state's two reservations. A system of virtual apartheid was established, although residential segregation, especially in rural areas, could not be enforced because of the need for cheap labor. However, "social apartheid" usually made "spatial apartheid" unnecessary.

That this system was maintained by terror in Virginia can be easily documented. When the anthropologist Frank Speck visited the Indians of Caroline and King and Queen counties in the 1920s he found that they were afraid that the whites would kill them if they organized a tribal association. With Speck's help this fear was partly overcome, but it is significant, nonetheless, as an illustration of psychological oppression. Many Virginia Indians are still, to this day, very reluctant to confront white authority.

As recently as the 1960s one local sheriff threatened to arrest any Indian males whose driver's licenses read "Indian" instead of "colored." This phenomenon was probably closely connected with a long campaign waged by a Virginia state official, from the 1920s, to force all Indians to be categorized as coloreds. This official apparently made it his life's major passion to protect white racial purity by "proving" that all Virginia Indians were really "mulattoes." However, a person of 1/16 Indian blood or less could marry a white during part of the period. Fascism remained triumphant throughout the balance of the South until the mid-1960s, even though the Depression years of the 1930s and the World War II period brought about some contrary trends nationally and even regionally.

Fascism in Latin America

Fascist tendencies in Latin America are briefly reviewed below, illustrating their close relationship to racism and

colonialism. The initial fascist regime was that of J.M. de Rosas, in Argentina. Rosas represented the wealthy cattle ranchers and the allied meat and hide processing industry. His major programs were (1) to crush the independent Indian nations, thus opening up new lands for cattle-grazing, (2) to crush the "unitarians" who desired to create a central government, thereby weakening the "feudal" domains controlled by the wealthy landowners, and (3) to oust all "foreign" cultural influences.

Rosas was a very clever demagogue who, by posing as a gaucho, was able to use the poorer classes (mostly part-Indian and part-African) to spy on and terrorize the "savage unitarian" enemies. In particular, secret societies, largely derived from the slaughter-house workers, were used to assassinate, torture, and intimidate thousands of opponents. A complete one-party dictatorship was ruthlessly maintained with absolute thought control, public ceremonies, a cult of the dictator, and extreme support of Catholicism and cultural orthodoxy. Most of the intellectuals of Argentina were killed or driven into exile.

In essence, Rosas maintained the policies of Spanish colonialism, oppressing the Native People and supporting the Catholic Church. Fascist methods were utilized to crush the urban bourgeois liberalism which had developed in Buenos Aires as a part of the struggles against Spain. The "mob" was persuaded to support the interests of the rural wealthy classes. The Rosas style of reaction was to be duplicated in many other countries, such as Paraguay, Colombia, and Mexico, and later in the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and throughout Latin America.

Since most Latin American countries were and are typified by a very large Indian or red-black lower-class and a very small white or part-white ruling elite, the situation is always ripe for fascism. In fact, the general state of affairs is always fascist in so far as the non-white masses are concerned. *Nonetheless, so long as the Indians or Afroamericans are illiterate and passive, the ruling classes do not have to resort to open fascism. It is only when the exploitative system is threatened that fascism or near-fascism surfaces as an open tool to neutralize the danger (as in modern Chile and Brazil).*

The history of much of Latin America since the 1820s is, then, a consistent story, a predictable one. *The wealthy classes, inheritors of Spanish or Portuguese values*, are absolutely dedicated to maintaining a perpetual advantage over the brown and black masses. They are under no illusions about “democracy.” They want fine homes, fine cars, leisure time, house servants, and a life free of material denial. They see the lower-classes as posing a constant, eternal threat to their wealth and position. Thus the task of *any* government is to maintain the status quo of rigid social stratification. If the latter is threatened the wealthy classes will support any regime, no matter how brutal, which will protect their standard of living. We have, then, what might be called “permanent fascism” in most of Latin America.

Thus, as in the U.S. South before 1965, we can visualize an *essentially fascist culture which has two stages of existence*. (1) When the exploited internal “enemy” is quiescent open terror need not be used and a superficially rational form of oligarchical government prevails. (2) When the masses become restive or when “agitators” (civil rights, communist, and socialist) appear to be making progress then the fascist culture produces an active and openly oppressive stage. The veneer of “constitutional” government is cast aside in favor of military dictatorship, terrorism, executions, and imprisonment.

Wherever fascism appears, we must remember, it will tend to assume these two stages: a virulent, violent stage while the “enemies” are being crushed and a more quiescent stage while the status quo of conquest is being maintained. Thus the Franco regime in Spain was somewhat different in the 1950s-1970s from what it had been in the 1930s-1940s. Once the enemy is largely killed or imprisoned then one can use only enough force or terror to keep all potential dissidents intimidated and passive.

The Present Situation

Fascism is, of course, very much alive throughout the Americas. It is the ruling ideology in many Latin American countries (Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, and Guatemala) and it is a more latent force in many others. In the United

States the fascist cultural tradition still persists, although it often assumes disguised forms. In general, fascism was set back by the civil rights and anti-Vietnam war movements; however, the Nixon-Agnew administration took a number of steps for reviving it as a weapon against the students, blacks, and other “dissidents.” Spiro Agnew’s speeches often appealed (especially) to “redneck” groups and openly attacked intellectuals. In general, though, the Nixon strategy was to use the CIA, the FBI, and other police-security agencies as the tools for destroying the threat posed by internal “enemies.” Illegal spying, assassinations, and payoffs were used to destroy or neutralize many “left” groups as well as the Black Panther Party, the Raza Unida Party, and the American Indian Movement.

The internal situation of the United States has to be understood within the context of the post-1948 (“Cold War”) revolution, under the pretext of meeting the “menace” of the Soviet Union (and China, until recently), has accelerated the creation of centralized state apparatus in place of a federal union. This new super-government is immensely powerful and has, as a major component, a huge military—“intelligence”—police power sector. This is not fascist *per se* but it may well be that powerful governmental police agencies with infiltrators and agitators can well do what “mobs” used to do for authoritarian governments. This happened to a degree in the 1960s and early 1970s and is perhaps a great danger for the future. (In other words, mobs may no longer be needed for terrorism if you have enough hired “goons.”)

Since 1948, also, the tide has generally turned against basic economic reforms, in that the wealthy classes (largely through military-related programs including energy) have greatly increased their share of ownership of the country’s wealth. The wealthy classes have also achieved virtually complete control over all forms of media, including so-called “non-commercial” television, so that “left” ideas are all but excluded. Simultaneously, both political parties have become strikingly similar and offer no more choice than did the Southern Whigs and Southern Democrats in 1854. The Congress, not surprisingly, caters to the wealthy classes and accepts, by and large, “Dixiecrat”- Republican economic theory modified only by enough welfare-state practice to prevent mass discontent.

The Civil Rights struggle (1955-ca. 1968) and the Vietnam War era demonstrated large residues of fascism, racism, and militaristic-patriotism in the U.S. population. The white South, in particular, developed mass movements to resist democratization and also tended to support the military effort in Southeast Asia. These tendencies do not disappear overnight. The attitude toward Iran and Iranians during the "Hostage Crisis" coupled with the fact that President Jimmy Carter's popularity seemed to rise when he threatened military action, suggests that residues of "hate" and militarism are strong.

Armed white fascist groups, such as those which arose to oppose the unionization of farmworkers, have now become very much bolder. The American Nazi Party, the Ku Klux Klan, and various secret groups (allegedly with immense arsenals) have recently increased their influence and one KKK leader in 1980 won the nomination of the Democratic Party in a conservative southern California district. The "hate" of such groups seems now to be focused upon Mexican and other immigrants as well as upon such traditional targets as blacks, Jews, and Indians.

It is clear that there is a substantial number of persons in government agencies (especially those of a police-power character) who are quite willing to use fascist tactics to achieve whatever ends they deem "desirable." Nixon had many such persons around him and one, at least, received fantastic press coverage for writing a book justifying such a way of behaving.

Fascist cultural tendencies are very much alive in the United States, while at the same time a virtually one-party, one-ideology political system (with a centralized, powerful government) has emerged. Such a situation is difficult to categorize, since much of the "constitutional" system still survives, if one has the financial wherewithal to utilize it.

It remains to be seen if the wealthy classes, large corporations, and government agencies (who, at present, share power) will choose to allow the present constitutional system to survive. The test will come when overseas events

threaten their economic profits and political power, or if the "left" is ever able to develop an opposition movement within the United States. Until either event occurs it seems likely that the veneer of democracy and the reality of plutocracy will be allowed to persist but with increasing contradictions as economic conditions deteriorate.

Fascism, like racism, colonialism, and imperialism, is much more than politics. It is a set of mutually-supportive values which go to make up a culture. Cultures do not change radically from one day to the next, although they may appear to do so under certain conditions (such as after a decisive military or political defeat). A sufficient breathing spell usually will allow the old cultural values to surface once more, perhaps ironically to be even encouraged by the former enemy who now finds such behavior useful.

Tragically, fascist tendencies are deeply imbedded in many of the cultures of the world. We must be alert to these tendencies in our own part of the Earth and not try to naively regard fascism as a now-departed localized European disease which can safely be relegated to the history books. Fascism has dominated much of American soil for four or five centuries and it is a reality for the nineteen-eighties as well.

Critique

Totalitarianism, whether from the left or from the right, in modern society has posed a serious threat to free men and women. In a provocative study Jack D. Forbes has focused on the cultural and historical implication of the major anti-democratic doctrine of fascism. He has accurately stated the conditions of fascism: society and government are organized along totalitarian lines, intensely racist, nationalist, militarist, terrorist, and imperialist. In fact, fascism has traditionally been considered to develop in nations that are materially wealthy and more "advanced." On the one hand, communism has been associated with poor and "underdeveloped" societies; on the other hand, fascism has