FOR CHRIST AND COUNTRY: THE CHRISTIAN FRONT IN NEW YORK CITY, 1938-1951

Volume I

by

Gene Fein

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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Abstract

FOR CHRIST AND COUNTRY: THE CHRISTIAN FRONT IN NEW YORK CITY, 1938-1951

by

Gene Fein

Adviser: Professor Richard Gid Powers

This dissertation is a study of the Christian Front, an organization of Catholic laity and clergy founded by Reverend Charles Coughlin, which played an important role crystallizing Catholic views on New Deal policies. The Christian Front became part of the fascist minded anticommunist movement of the late 1930s and early 1940s within the context of American Catholic anticommunism. Communism became the scapegoat for what was wrong in the United States. In an effort to fulfill their own quest to become "better" Americans, many of the immigrant and first-generation Fronters went on an all-out assault against the perceived greatest enemy of Americanism and Christianity: communism.

This thesis will focus on the New York branch of the Christian Front. In 1940, the New York unit became the focus of a conspiracy trial in which the Justice Department charged members of the Front with plotting to overthrow the government of the United States.

The Christian Front in New York offers a good case study of grassroots extremism and how extremism is useful in partisan politics. It helps us understand the complex connections between state and societal relations, local ethnic conflict, foreign policy, and international conflict on a grassroots level. By the end of 1939 the Christian

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Front's rhetoric and actions were imbedded in the American isolationist-interventionist debate. Through its anti-New Deal rhetoric of "act, buy, vote, and think Christian" the Christian Front helped push the isolationist position beyond the political mainstream. Their anti-Semitic views during the neutrality period allowed interventionists to label the entire isolationist movement as pro-Nazi fascists. The subsequent smear campaign perpetrated by both sides as a result of the Front's political activities was the Front's most significant impact on American history.

This thesis is based on a variety of archival sources never before used to study the Christian Front, its local leadership, and membership. Most importantly is the Organization-Christian Front file, a collection in the Fiorello LaGuardia papers which includes details and minutes of nearly three hundred New York City Christian Front meetings. Other archival sources examined included the court records of the 1940 federal trial, the *Brooklyn Tablet* subject files located in the Diocese of Brooklyn Archives, contemporary press accounts, and exposés of the American fascist movement of the thirties. These sources allowed me to explore the personal motivations of the most extreme members of the Front with a goal of understanding of how extremism functioned in the case of the New York branch of the Christian Front as a combination of a national ideological program and local personal ethnic resentments.

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Acknowledgments

"For Christ and Country" is the culmination of a long journey. I first "met" Father Charles Coughlin by reading Alan Brinkley's *Voices of Protest* more than ten years ago in Dr. Mark Naison's "History of Social Movements" course at the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Fordham University – the final course for my master's degree. For our research paper, students had to choose a social movement that was not discussed in Dr. Naison's course. I chose the American fascist movement during the years immediately preceding World War II. It was at that time I became familiar with the Christian Front.

Several years later, when I decided to pursue a doctorate at the City University of New York Graduate Center, my first course in the program was studying the history of the FBI with Dr. Richard Gid Powers. My fascination with American fascists and their virulent anti-Semitism remained. As a Jew in New York I wanted to know more about what made these people tick. Dr. Powers gave me the opportunity to put together an annotated bibliography concerning the federal government's investigations of these groups.

This dissertation was sparked by what I learned from Professors Powers and Naison. I could not be happier that both sat on my dissertation committee, with Dr. Powers acting as my dissertation director and adviser.

I offer my immense gratitude and thanks to my dissertation director, Professor Richard Gid Powers. His support throughout the entire, long process made this dissertation possible. He has supported my work from day one, helping me navigate the

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maze and overcome (what seemed to be insurmountable) obstacles. Without Dr. Powers and his support this work would not have been possible or completed.

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best biography of Coughlin, *Father Coughlin: The Tumultuous Life of the Priest of the Little Flower*, honored me with his advice and supplied me with access to Father Coughlin's FBI file. I also want to thank Sarah Siverd, promising young undergraduate student and future historian, who volunteered to help me and allowed me to teach her archival research as I was learning it myself. It was a pleasure working with Sarah.

My knowledge of running computer-based statistical programs is somewhat limited. Considering how much I rely on statistical analysis this could have been problematic. Thankfully, my former colleague and very good friend at Fordham University, Jessica Ciandella Collins, loves to run statistics using the SPSS program and ran all of my findings through that program. I am forever indebted to her.

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Many people told me that I was crazy for attempting to write a dissertation, work as a full-time administrator at Fordham University, and teach at Fordham College of Liberal Studies all at the same time. I am not denying their assessment of my mental state; however, they did not realize that I was working in an atmosphere that encouraged and facilitated my scholarly pursuits. That type of atmosphere is created at the top, by Reverend Joseph McShane, S.J., President of Fordham University. On a daily basis, Dr. Peter Stace and Stephen Bordas were the two people most responsible for creating an atmosphere in which I could juggle my daily work and pursue my research and writing. Thank you.

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Throughout all of the hours in the archives and libraries, the thousands of pages of reading, and what seems to be the never-ending writing, my friends and family are always there for me. They are my true inspiration. They are the ones who take the brunt of my frustration with understanding and without judgment. They comfort me.

Anna Ponterosso was my original inspiration to teach American history at Fordham College of Liberal Studies. My love of teaching became my reason to pursue a Ph.D. So in many respects, this is all her fault.

I thank my brother Marc and my sister-in-law Julie for understanding when I could not visit you and Duncan, whether it was in Los Angeles or Connecticut.

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Introduction

"Some prejudices are spawned by ignorance: either mistaken notions which are self-manufactured, or mistaken notions which are inherited from others. Other prejudices are spawned by malice: either manufactured hatred, or inherited hatred ... In both cases, prejudice consists of intellectual blindness and emotional bias."

- Reverend Edward Lodge Curran, 1946[1]

Ethnicity does not exist in a political vacuum. And politics does not exist in an ethnic vacuum. This is a study of the Christian Front, an organization of Catholic laity and clergy founded by the Reverend Charles Coughlin, which was part of the fascist minded anticommunist movement of the late 1930s and early 1940s. The Christian Front existed in one form or another as early as 1936 and its remnants attempted revivals as late as 1951. The New York City units operated in earnest between 1938 and 1942.

The Christian Front played an important role crystallizing Catholic views on domestic and foreign policy during the neutrality period. Their views ultimately veered into anti-Semitism which allowed interventionists to label the entire isolationist movement as pro-Nazi, anti-Semitic fascists.

This thesis will focus on the New York branch of this organization that became the target of a sensational conspiracy trial in 1940 in which the Justice Department charged members of the Front with plotting to overthrow the government of the United States. What motivated the members of New York's Christian Front? To what extent were they motivated by a national agenda or by the local ethnic tensions between Catholics, Protestants, and Jews in New York City during the Great Depression?

The answers to these questions lie in a complex web of state and societal relations, local ethnic conflict, foreign policy, and international conflict. The local leadership and membership of the Christian Front in New York must be studied to

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understand how the web was woven. It will also be necessary to study Father Coughlin's national movement to determine the relative importance of the intellectual rationale supplied by Coughlin and his publications versus personal grievances such as anti-Semitism and alienation from mainstream politics of the New Deal in extremist organizations such as the Christian Front.

The Christian Front in New York helps us further understand these matters on a grassroots, rank-and-file level and helps us see the connections between such local matters as urban ethnic conflict, anticommunism and anti-Semitism with events and movements on the national and international level. Their diatribes echoed across the street corners of New York's five boroughs; in many of the city's ethnic neighborhoods, including the South Bronx, Harlem, Ozone Park, and Flatbush.

* * *

Between 1926 and 1942 the "silver tongued" and "golden voiced" radio priest Father Charles Coughlin became one of America's "most persuasive media orators" with his radio program "The Golden Hour of the Shrine of the Little Flower." Broadcasting from his specially equipped office at the octagon-shaped Shrine of the Little Flower, replete with the 150 foot Crucifixion Tower, Coughlin attracted elderly pensioners, small-town merchants, and disillusioned urban middle class Catholics to his ranks. He warned his listeners about those who did not have America's best interest at hand, from the KKK to the internationalist financiers. Coughlin was the first of America's media-created personalities [Appendix I].[2]

Donald Warren explains that Father Coughlin's emergence as a national media celebrity defined a turning point in American public life and popular culture. The priest

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was the first to obliterate the distinction between politics, religion and entertainment; although a better definition might be obliterating the distinction amongst the *electronic* mass media, politics, and religion. Coughlin was at the dawn of an age where radio (and later television) created media stars with a political following which rivaled public policy makers holding elected office.[3]

It was from these radio broadcasts, and later Coughlin's newspaper, *Social Justice*, that the grassroots expression of his rhetoric, or Coughlinism, emerged on the streets of New York. Coughlinism has traditionally been viewed in New York as an ethnic matter. It was in part. It became ingrained in the daily lives of his most ardent followers, who were eventually referred to as Coughlinites.

Coughlin found his greatest support when he connected larger international issues, specifically the Spanish Civil War, to local Irish-Catholic communities. For these communities, Spain became the litmus test for the as of yet undeclared war against communism in the United States. J. David Valaik's discussed the Catholic-Jewish rift in terms of the Spanish Civil War in "In the Days Before Ecumenism: American Catholics, Anti-Semitism and the Spanish Civil War" (*Journal of Church and State*, 1971) that Jewish support of the Loyalists — therefore lack of sympathy for the Catholic cause in Spain — and Catholic support of Franco created an unavoidable atmosphere of mutual antagonism. Seymour Lipset and Earl Raab's *Politics of Unreason* (1978) greatly expanded on this notion of localized ethnic conflict and international conflict.

However, the Christian Front in New York was more than an expression of Irish-Jewish conflict. Somehow, what was thought of as a local ethnic matter became a question of national security. Historians first discussed Father Coughlin and the

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Christian Front in terms of pre-World War II national foreign policy and they concentrated on the relationship between FDR, Coughlin and Catholics on a national scale. Charles Tull's *Father Coughlin and the New Deal* (1965), George Flynn's *American Catholics & the Roosevelt Presidency* (1968) and *Roosevelt and Romanism* (1976), Sheldon Marcus's *Father Coughlin* (1973), and Alan Brinkley's *Voices of Protest* (1982), explain Coughlinism as isolationism and anticommunism which manifested directly from Roosevelt's stance on neutrality.[4]

This explanation of Coughlinism falling within the spectrum of neutrality and the Roosevelt administration's foreign policy has been applied to examinations of anticommunist, pro-fascist movements. It became one of the most noted expressions: the "Brown Scare."

Leo Ribuffo's study of William Dudley Pelley, Gerald Winrod, and Gerald L.K. Smith in his examination of 1930s Christian right-wing extremism, *The Old Christian Right*, shows how the attack on these right-wing demagogues turned into something he calls the "Brown Scare." The "Brown Scare" was left wing equivalent of the Red Scare stirred up by the right, and it used the fear of fascism as a subversive force poised to take-over America in the days leading up to World War II to discredit the left's right-wing opponents.. Ribuffo explains that the "Brown Scare" was the impetus for the politicization of the FBI that ultimately ensnared grassroots movements into the larger arena of national policy. The primary reason for the FBI's investigations of right-wing organizations like the Christian Front was to examine individuals and groups opposed to Roosevelt's foreign policy.

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Richard Gid Powers agrees with Ribuffo's assessment, and views the "Brown Scare" as the result of a political tug-of-war between the isolationists and interventionists. To discredit isolationists, Roosevelt and his interventionist supporters highlighted any possible association with Nazi sympathizers and isolationist proponents. This culminated with the Mass Sedition trial.

Francis MacDonnell concludes, in *Insidious Foes*, that the existence of an exaggerated spy fear was crafted by the media and was easily defeated by the FBI because it was not a major threat. We know in hindsight that the threat of the Fifth Column was not as great as believed in 1938-1942, but it was an unavoidable concern and Hoover was going to take all possible precautions to avoid public hysteria.

* * *

Catholic anticommunism is traced back to mid-nineteenth century encyclicals: Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors* (1864), Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (1891), and Pius IX's *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931). All of these popes declared that secularism, Marxism, and socialism were intrinsically opposed to Catholicism.[5] David O'Brien explained it this way: communism was the Catholicism's greatest enemy; it was the ultimate rejection of God, the Church, and civilization by man.[6]

Therefore, American Catholics were there at the beginning of American anticommunism. They fueled the movement and leaders. The American Roman Catholic church was the backbone of American anticommunism. In fact, Catholics throughout the world were anticommunists before there was a Russian Revolution in 1917; before there was communism. They suffered persecution firsthand under communist regimes. The

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Catholic Church competed with communist (and socialist) ideology for the loyalty of the working class.[7]

The ideas of the Christian Front's anticommunism become obvious in this context. It was found in their Catholicism and disaffection and disillusionment with the *status quo*. Communism became the scapegoat for what was wrong in the United States. In an effort to fulfill their own quest to become "better" Americans, they went on an all-out assault against the perceived greatest enemy of Americanism and Christianity: communism.

Anti-Semitism became indelibly associated with American Catholic anticommunism. Richard Gid Powers' *Not Without Honor* explains this connection on a global, leadership level. Other recent examinations of grassroots anticommunist movements that discuss as the complex nature of localized movements have focused on Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, two other regions that were hotbeds of Christian Front activity rooted in ethnic conflict and the Catholic Church, can be found in Judith Larrabee Holmes' 1996 dissertation and in a 1995 article by Philip Jenkins, respectively.

Catholic anti-Semitism ran deeper than anticommunism. There were certain assumptions made about Jews that were embedded in Catholic teachings which bolstered anti-Semitic thought: Jews were Christ killers and responsible for the crucifixion and Christianity was superior to Judaism. At the same time the Catholic Church was paradoxically portraying itself as the most valiant defender of persecuted Jews.[8]

John McGreevy contends in *Parish Boundaries* (1996) that American Catholics frequently defined their surroundings in religious terms. Nevertheless, historians of modern America frequently place religion and faith at bottom of a list of variables, after

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class, gender, and ethnicity. McGreevy's study of Chicago and Philadelphia concentrates on Catholic racial attitudes that form parish boundaries. These boundaries, in turn, served to foster Catholic communities in the urban north; hence the reason for more segregated neighborhoods. However, 1930s Catholic anti-Semitism was not necessarily caused by neighborhood change, although Jews in heavily Catholic neighborhoods were victims of hostility. Therefore, it must have been caused by something else, which McGreevy asserts is tenets of faith. Catholic bishops hesitated to attack the Christian Front because of the small percentage of Catholics involved, and the bishops claimed that little could be done. Local priests were as absent from interfaith committees as they were prominent at CF rallies. He concludes that this Catholic anti-Semitism subsequently provoked a broad reconsideration of the Catholic position on "racial" issues and racism, and was then attacked amongst Catholic liberals in the context of anti-Semitism.

Egal Feldman states in *Catholics and Jews in Twentieth Century America* (2001) that Jewish and Catholic interests converged in the 1920s: both immigrant populations faced a rising tide of racism, anti-Catholicism, anti-Semitism, and immigration restriction. Beginning in the 1930s this cooperation ended. An obvious factor for this rift was Spain and Catholics' perception of problems caused by "International Judaism." On the surface, Catholic anti-Semitism was caused by the perceived immense amount of harm Jewish influence had over the stage, film, radio, and especially daily press, which influenced anti-Franco American policies towards Spain. Although this is similar to Valaik's conclusions, Feldman goes beyond political influence as the cause of Catholic anti-Semitism. He states that Catholic anti-Semitism was rooted in the theological foundations of Christianity in general and Catholicism in particular, such as, Jews could

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save themselves via conversion, which blossomed in grassroots American Catholic anti-Semitism. He then concludes that members of the Catholic hierarchy took Father Coughlin's speeches seriously, and priests and bishops reinforced Coughlin's anti-Semitic messages to the Irish and German working class.

* * *

Ostensibly, individuals who joined New York's anticommunist, American Catholic Christian Front were directly inspired by Father Coughlin's national pronouncement on May 23, 1938 calling for a "Million League." This was the priest's call to preserve America and the "Christian social order upon which it was founded."[9] The New York Front was incorporated in August 1938, and became national news on January 14, 1940, when the Federal Bureau of Investigation arrested eighteen members of the New York Front, charging them with conspiring to overthrow the government of the United States (*United States of America v. John Prout, Jr., et al.*). The trial received national notoriety and made the New York Christian Front, justly or unjustly, the symbol of American Catholic pro-fascist anticommunism.

Justly or not, if the government and the anti-fascist movement insisted on a relationship between Coughlin's ideas and the activities of the New York Christian Front defendants, that accusation fell on fertile soil. Anti-Semitism ran deeply through the New York City Irish Catholic community during the 1930s. This was vividly expressed in the pages of the leading Catholic newspaper of the period, the *Brooklyn Tablet*, edited by Patrick Scanlan, which was the official organ of the Brooklyn Roman Catholic diocese.

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This thesis is based on a variety of archival sources never before used to study the Christian Front, particularly the Organization-Christian Front file, a collection in the Fiorello LaGuardia papers which includes details and minutes of nearly three hundred Christian Front meetings in New York City. Other archival sources examined in detail include the court records of the federal trial, the *Brooklyn Tablet* Christian Front, Coughlin, and Curran subject files located in the Diocese of Brooklyn Archives, contemporary press accounts, and exposés of the American fascist movement of the thirties. These sources allowed me to explore the personal motivations of the most extreme members of the Front, including the defendants in the conspiracy trial. That in turn will help us understand the dynamics of Irish Catholic anti-Semitism in New York during the Great Depression. My goal is an understanding of how extremism actually functioned in the case of the New York branch of the Christian Front, hypothetically as a combination of a national ideological program and local personal ethnic resentments.

* * *

What was the Christian Front? Was it a movement? Was it a definitive organization? Studies of right-wing extremism of the 1930s have made the term somewhat amorphous. Edward McCarthy was the first historian to address these questions with an in-depth study. In his 1965 Columbia University Master's thesis, *The Christian Front Movement in New York City, 1938-1940*, McCarthy defined the term three ways: the actual organization led by John Cassidy; a larger coalition of nearly all the anti-Semites in New York City; and all supporters of Father Coughlin — the "Coughlinites."[10]

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Without question, the Christian Front was an organization with branches throughout New York's five boroughs. The units were loosely tied together, but the deficiency of a defined hierarchical structure had more to do with the individuals involved and dearth of funds than for the lack of trying.

Was it a movement? If we use the political science definition that a movement is, in a broad sense, involving a coming together of a people united in pursuit of a tangible or intangible political goal; or defined as a social movement, representing an effort by a large numbers of people acting collectively to solve a common problem, then the answer becomes more complex.[11] Christian Fronters certainly stated that they were coming together in pursuit of a tangible goal: to maintain a Christian America. However, so were other groups; some more extreme than others, some more racist or nativist than others. All of these groups were part of, or an expression of, the larger anticommunist or Christian right or extremist movements, discussed by many historians, from Seymour Lipset and Earl Raab to Leo Ribuffo to Alan Brinkley to Richard Gid Powers.

I am not comfortable with defining the Christian Front as a movement. The populism of Coughlinism was the movement. The Christian Front was the grassroots expression of the movement. Their efforts were ineffectual in meeting their goals — not that success makes a movement — but their ideology was not of their making. They were followers; believers; all necessary elements for a movement, but not a movement in itself.

Was the Christian Front a larger collection of all anti-Semites and Coughlinites within New York City, as described by McCarthy? The answer is no. Certainly, many anti-Semites were attracted to the Christian Front. There were also many who were not,

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especially if they were believers in the more traditional Protestant Fundamentalist nativism that did not want to be connected to an organization perceived as being Catholic (which opens up a whole new set of questions that are addressed in the "Think Christian chapter"). It is safe to say that all Fronters were Coughlinites. However, not all Coughlinites were members of the Christian Front. If every believer or listener of Coughlin joined the Christian Front, which was the CF's hope, then the organization would have been stronger and would have attracted many more followers.

These more, all-encompassing, definitions of the Christian Front as a movement come from the Front's opposition. Most contemporary reports and historians subsequently studying the period have observed the Front from the perspective of the opposition and the backlash to the movement. Most of the contemporary exposés by opposition groups documenting the history of the Christian Front have been taken at face value by historians. But we, of course, have to understand that these groups too have their own agenda.[12] My goal in this study is different. I hope to successfully look at the Front on their terms whenever possible; profiling the Front and the neighborhoods in which they were active, who they were; and what they said and did, based on their words, in addition to the words of their opposition, by drawing upon the previously unused archives and documents.

Edward McCarthy's groundbreaking study of the Christian Front should be applauded. Being the first to research anything is always the most difficult task. That being said, McCarthy's analysis, in retrospect, is limited. McCarthy's sources detailing Front activity, such as the locations of street rallies, were the *Brooklyn Tablet* and *New York Times*. The information concerning the federal trial is derived strictly from *New*

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York Times reports. He did not have the tools to critically analyze the CF membership or their supporters, nor determine who they were. Nor was he able to examine the CF on their terms or in their own words, other than from *Tablet* reports.

No original research has been conducted on the Christian Front since Ronald Bayor's seminal work on ethnic conflict, *Neighbors in Conflict*, originally published in 1978 (his second edition was published in 1987). Bayor provides us with the most detailed description of Christian Front activity in New York City. He concludes that the Irish-Jewish conflict was a result of the Irish's perception that Jews were a serious economic and political threat. In the eyes of the Irish, Jews competed with them for jobs. Furthermore, the Irish felt that their political power was waning at the expense of increasing Jewish political influence — and much of that influence was communist in nature. The Christian Front became the ultimate Irish Catholic response to the perceived Jewish communist control and influence in New York City. The CF was a product of and a response to the many points of ethnic friction between Irish and Jews. In other words, the Front viewed all problems as being of Jewish origin. This led to many Irish-Jewish confrontations in areas with large concentrations of Irish and Jews, such as Washington Heights, the South Bronx, the Fordham section of the Bronx, and Flatbush, Brooklyn.

However, for Bayor anti-Semitism tends to be ubiquitous. He states that the Christian Front also grew partly as the result of the "general anti-Semitic climate of the period."[13] He assumes the ties between Irish and Front anticommunism to anti-Semitism was caused only by the Irish perception that they were being pushed out by Jews. But he does not examine the actual Front membership and supporters in detail. For example, did

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the Fronters live in these ethnically mixed areas? Nor does he address the possibility that certain Catholic theological and philosophical views could cause Front anti-Semitism.

Part of the limitations of Bayor's study was his use of McCarthy, or the same sources as McCarthy. The only unpublished documentation used to examine the Front was the American Jewish Committee's file, which was used by both historians. Their conclusions were based on the various anti-Front articles and pamphlets written between 1938 and 1940, and the American Jewish Committee's file on the Front. Therefore, the Front is defined by the opposition in their studies.

Understanding Bayor's sources is important because many subsequent discussions of the Christian Front rely specifically on Bayor's work, or a source derived from Bayor. For example, Alan Brinkley's *Voices of Protest* (1982), Thomas Kessner's *Fiorello H. LaGuardia and the Making of Modern New York* (1989), John McGreevy's *Parish Boundaries* (1996), Chris McNickle's and Robert Snyder's respective essays in *The New York Irish* (1996) all cite Bayor as their source for their Christian Front references.

* * *

As 1938 turned into 1939, the Christian Front's public chastising and violence against Jews in New York became more prevalent and noticed more by the opposition. James Wechsler of *The Nation* reported that thirty open air CF meetings were held in Manhattan in one week in July 1939, with crowds as large as 2,000.[14] Rally cries of: "Buy Christian!," "Stop the Jews!," "The Jews should be thrown into the ocean," "The best solution then is the East River with the rest of the sewage," "We have finished them [the Reds] in Spain and now we are going to start in Mexico," "Down with international Jewry and Bankers," "We have been cold to friendly nations like Germany and Italy,"

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and "Petition to keep us out of War" were heard on the streets of New York City. Jews were called "yellow bellied rats" and "kike whoremongers." Above the streets where Christian Front rallies were taking place police patrolled the rooftops of buildings to avoid violence.[15]

In many ways, the battle between isolationists and interventionists during the late 1930s was over control of language — was the Christian Front a pathetic collection of losers, or was it the tip of an enormous pro-fascist iceberg? Those on opposing sides labeled and smeared the other as anti-American. At its conclusion, the Left won this debate. During the debate paranoia was unbridled; people were afraid — on both sides of the Christian Front question.

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Notes

[1] Edward Lodge Curran, *We Catholics*, (Brooklyn, NY: International Catholic Truth Society, 1946) 14.

[2] Donald Warren, *Radio Priest: Charles Coughlin, the Father of Hate Radio*, (New York: The Free Press, 1996) 1-3.

[3] *Ibid.* 6-7.

[4] Catholic isolationism was pervasive, beyond the spectrum of Coughlinism. It affected more principled and mainstream members of the Catholic hierarchy working to better inter-religious toleration. For example, J. Elliot Ross, a Paulist priest and college chaplain, was one of the first Roman Catholics to become involved in a nationwide effort to promote religious tolerance between Catholics, Protestants and Jews during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Ross was involved early with the National Conference for Jews and Christians, as part of "Public Catholicism" (David O'Brien's phrase from *Public Catholicism*, 2nd ed. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996) which permeated in every dimension of society, cultural and political. In the 1930s, even Ross began to refuse speaking engagements from Jews and anti-Hitler rallies/boycotts in the midst of the isolationist debates. Patrick J. Hayes, "J. Elliot Ross and the National Conference of Christians and Jews: A Catholic Contribution to Tolerance in America," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 37(3-4) (2000): 321-332.

[5] Richard Gid Powers, *Not Without Honor*, (New York: The Free Press, 1995) 51.

[6] David O'Brien, *American Catholics and Social Reform: The New Deal Years* (New York: Oxford UP, 1968) 81-82.

[7] Richard Gid Powers, "American Catholics and Catholic Americans: The Rise and Fall of Catholic Anticommunism," *US Catholic Historian* (Vol. 22, No. 4, Fall 2004):17-18; Powers, *Not Without Honor*, 51.

[8] Till van Rahden, "Beyond Ambivalence: Variations of Catholic Anti-Semitism in Turn-of-the-Century Baltimore [1890-1924]," *American Jewish History* 82(1-4) (1994): 7-42.

[9] *Social Justice*, May 23, 1938.

[10] Edward C. McCarthy, "The Christian Front Movement in New York City, 1938-1940," Master's Essay, Columbia University, 1965, 74.

[11] Mark N. Hagopian, *Regimes, Movements, and Ideologies* 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, Inc.) 4, 198.

[12] Leo P. Ribuffo, *The Old Christian Right* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1983) 178-179.

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[13] Ronald H. Bayor, *Neighbors in Conflict*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1987) 100.

[14] James Wechsler, "The Coughlin Terror," *The Nation* July 22, 1939: 92.

[15] Marshal Berger, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, August 15, 1939; Murray Garrson to Fiorello LaGuardia, "Confidential Report on Outdoor Anti-Semitic Meetings Submitted by the Anti-Defamation League," August 12, 1939, J.M. Martinez, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, July 21, 1939; Christian Front file, FLP, Roll 18. George Gottlieb, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, August 16, 1939; J.M. Burdow, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, September 26, 1939, Christian Front file, FLP, Roll 19. Wechsler 92-93.

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Chapter 1 The Call for a Christian Front: 1938

"For Christ and Country, I open this meeting in the name of the Christian Front! The leader of the Christian Front is Jesus Christ"

- The beginning of a typical Christian Front street meeting in New York City

This is the story of the rise and fall of the Christian Front, the most militant and extreme group in the history of Catholic anticommunism. Its ultimate goal was a return to a Christian America. Its enemy was communism, seen as the antithesis of Christian Americanism.

Whether in the South Bronx, Hell's Kitchen, or Ozone Park, Christian Front Americanism was tied to a sense that America was a Christian country, founded by and for Christians. At its meetings, the Pledge of Allegiance usually followed declarations that the Front stood for "For Christ and Country," although sometimes the Pledge was recited at the end of meetings rather than at the beginning. One by one, designated speakers would then walk to the front of the crowd, outside on street corners, inside, behind a lectern at a meeting hall. Their speeches were most often vicious diatribes against communists, Franklin Roosevelt, internationalist Jews, New York City Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, or whomever they held responsible for corrupting Christian America.

"For Christ and Country" represented the indelible bond between anticommunism, Americanism, and Christian unity in Christian Front rhetoric. This most important theme permeated the Christian Front and was built on a framework of rampant paranoia that a communist revolution in America was immanent. That revolution spelled the absolute end and destruction of everything Fronters held dear: Christianity and their version of the American ideal. "For Christ and Country" served as proof in the minds of Christian Front members that they were becoming better twentieth century Americans

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because they were protecting an America that was inherently Christian. They were the modern-day Defenders of the Faith.

* * *

The 1930s were marked by extreme partisan politics. By the late 1930s, the liberalism of the New Deal was under constant attack. The conspicuous failure of the Roosevelt administration to solve the Great Depression — seventeen percent of the labor force was unemployed in 1939 — infuriated those opposing the administration. The outbreak of war in Europe complicated the political atmosphere when it sparked the interventionist versus isolationist debate. The foreign policy rivals became more rancorous toward one another as America's involvement in the war became more of a possibility. Specters of fascism and communism haunted the controversy. Each side charged that America would fall victim to one of these hated "isms" if its enemy's position was adopted. Interventionists feared that domestic fascists were already on the march; isolationists anticipated a communist revolution if American armed forces were shipped-off to fight in Europe, leaving the United States defenseless.[1]

Both the far Right and their New Deal Left opponents created fear by deception and by smear campaigns to discredit each other. Each side called the other un-American as America was swept up in both a Red Scare and a Brown Scare towards the end of the decade.

Liberal and Left organizations of the 1930s redirected their energies to focus on the extreme right. Organizations such as the Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League or the Friends of Democracy (founded in 1937 by Reverend L.M. Birkhead to combat George Winrod in Kansas City) collected information on nearly eight hundred right-wing non-

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interventionist groups. The Friends of Democracy opened an office in New York in 1939, the year of the Christian Front's greatest strength in the city, and quickly became a thorn in the side of the Fronters. Birkhead's list of right-wing organizations was so expansive that it made the far right look much more potent than it truly was – since the individual organizations were so tiny and impotent – but that did not matter. Perception, as is often the case in history, became reality in political battles.[2]

The anxiety created concerning subversion was heightened after Nazi Germany invaded Poland. President Roosevelt mobilized the Federal Bureau of Investigation to investigate pro-Nazi groups. Leo Ribuffo called this the most significant event touching off the Brown Scare. It gave the Left the political legitimacy to defeat organized isolationist elements, who allowed themselves to become undone by their slide into bigotry. Left intellectuals used the extreme right's prejudices to justify their suppression of the right by claiming that the Right's propaganda would do irrevocable harm to the country.[3]

Conversely, the non-interventionist Right accused the Left of a smear campaign they claimed was actually controlled by communist elements for the express purpose of eliminating the true protectors of Americanism. The greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world that he did not exist, they claimed — in essence the Right claimed the Left was tricking Americans into believing that communism was not a threat in the United States. And when the only defense was removed, the satanic communists would strike.

* * *

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That was the world in which the Christian Front operated. The Fronters world view was shaped by the Great Depression, as were the views of all Americans in the 1930s. For Fronters, the problems with the economy, unemployment, and European refugees were embodied in the failings of the New Deal. Again, that was not very different from most who opposed New Deal policies. However, the Christian Front branched into extremism with their explanation for the failures. The New Deal, the Roosevelt administration, and local levels of government's lack of success in dealing with problems were caused by communists and internationalist infiltration. The only way to solve the problems of the country was a return to a Christian America. The only way to achieve a return to a Christian America was through Christian unity: to defend Christian Americans' cultural inheritance and the extermination of communism, atheism, and all other un-American "isms". That ideology gave the impetus to men like Daniel Kurtz to stand on the street corner of Liberty Avenue and Cross Bay Boulevard in Queens, New York, to say it was the duty of all Christian Americans to join the Christian Front, so that they could combat the subversive communist movement, promote patriotism, Americanism, and the opposition to internationalism. In late September 1939 he held a wooden cross above his head not far from the beach in Far Rockaway, and proclaimed, "This cross of Christianity will bring this Country back to its Christian owners and this is the cross of happiness."[4]

By promoting their brand of Americanism, Christian Fronters were redefining the traditional meaning of American nativism from American-born Protestantism to a nativism that included Catholic immigrants. It was a Christian, meaning, Catholic and Protestant, Americanism. Fronters were appealing to audiences in neighborhoods with a

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substantial percentage of Catholic immigrants from Ireland, Italy, and Poland, in addition to Protestant and Catholic Germans. Jews in these mixed neighborhoods were the foils, even though there was the occasional invitation to join the fight against communism. The allure of the Christian Front for these immigrants, who were defined by traditional American nativists as outsiders, was that they too were true Americans simply by being anticommunist Christians.

The use of American historical symbolism was commonplace in the Christian Front's definition of Christian Americanism. America, "our Christian nation," was "discovered, founded, and organized under the auspices of Christianity." Fronter Michael Flanagan declared, "America was founded on Christianity and it must be restored to it in the near future … communists were trying to destroy our great American flag." There was Herman Schmidt's warning that communists were "attempting to replace the American flag with the Hammer and Sickle." Martin Ryan stressed the need for all Christians to unite to restore "Christian America to the Christians again, as it was 160 years ago." Otherwise, as William Massey cautioned, the "blood shed by our forefathers to build this great nation," would have been in vain.[5]

By claiming that American legal institutions, notably the Constitution and Supreme Court, were fundamental elements of Christian Americanism, the Front gave their movement an air of legitimacy. Fronters claimed the Supreme Court had declared the United States a Christian country. They claimed any attempt to limit the Front's free speech and right to public assembly constituted "un-Americanism," and were attacks on both Americanism and Christianity. The Front defended "Our Constitutional rights to band together as Christians because our Constitution states that this is a Christian nation

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… our forefathers had the keen sense to foresee something like this and that is why they inserted in the Constitution the right of assemblage and the right of free speech."[6]

Much of the Christian Front's rhetoric and ideology was not unique to them. The ideas they promoted and the activities in which they engaged were often inspired by non-Catholic sources. Ironically, these similarities in *modus operandi* came from groups that were diametrically opposed to Catholicism. The CF's (and Coughlin's for that matter) affinity for populism were reminiscent of the Klu Klux Klan. Fronters admitted that they learned some agitation techniques, such as street preaching and the sale of newspapers on subways, from the communists themselves. *New Masses* was hawked on subways well before *Social Justice* was ever sold on the trains.[7]

* * *

Father Edward Lodge Curran was one of the two most important and ardent supporters of the Christian Front in New York City; the other being *Brooklyn Tablet* editor Patrick Scanlan. After his death in 1974, Father Curran was described as "an outspoken crusader for God and Country." During his lifetime, Curran was known for his harsh criticism of communism. His hatred for the Soviet Union ran so deep that during the early days of World War II, Curran called for the impeachment of Franklin Roosevelt for "casting aside the Atlantic Charter as a gesture to the Soviet Union … the greatest deceitful act in the history of our country." The respect Curran garnered as a well-known and well educated priest in Brooklyn, and as president of the International Catholic Truth Society (ICTS), gave the Christian Front an air of legitimacy, especially amongst the CF's opposition.[8]

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Hints about Father Curran's ideas on the nature of government can be found in his work as a graduate student at Fordham University. His dissertation, an analysis of Reverend Robert Person, S.J.'s 1594 political discourse concerning the succession of the English crown, revealed that it was the right of the commonwealth to establish limitations on the admission to a seat in government or to depose a monarch who lied. He writes in his dissertation that he agreed with Person's conclusion that it was wrong to advance any prince faulty in religion; the commonwealth is within its right to reject any prince "who may militate against the prime purpose of all governments, the protection of religion and the protection of the one true Church." Therefore, it should not be surprising that Curran favored a Christian Front that was determined to purge godless communists who had usurped the American government, and that he was an unforgiving critic of Roosevelt, a man Curran considered a liar and coddler of communists.[9]

Father Curran's outspoken condemnation of communism began in 1932, the year he became president of the ICTS. Curran's position as president gave him a public platform to censure Soviet Russia at a time that the debate over recognition of the USSR was raging in the United States. During the next few years, Curran was prodigious in writing pamphlets, all published by the ICTS, describing the dangers communism posed to the world. He first focused on Mexico, which had been a sore spot for American Catholics since the anti-Catholic and anticlerical Mexican Revolution in 1911. In 1934 and 1935, Curran published three pamphlets concerning the role of the Catholic Church as the savior in Mexico, in its battle against communism.[10]

American Catholics viewed the 1911 Mexican Revolution as providing evidence that non-Catholics were sympathetic to revolutionary socialism because the radicals

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specifically attacked the Catholic Church — a religious institution hated by non-Catholics. American Catholics appealed in vain to Protestants and Jews to help the besieged Catholic Church in Mexico. However, fresh in the memory of American Protestants and Jews were the abuses they suffered under the yoke of the Church in Mexico and other Catholic countries. Neither the Protestants nor the Jews wanted to antagonize the revolutionary authorities in Mexico, thereby causing trouble for their co-religionists south of the border. The Mexican Revolution was thus burned into the collective memory of American Catholics.[11]

At the time Curran wrote during the 1936-1939 Spanish Civil War, many American Catholics saw history repeating itself: Protestants and Jews were not aiding the Catholic Church as it was being destroyed by the Spanish Loyalists. But this time the hypocrisy was even greater in the minds of Catholics because Jews were asking for help in Germany at the same time that they refused to assist Spanish Catholics. The issue for some Catholics went well beyond one of fairness: it became fodder for conspiracy theories. These theories were imbedded in the rhetoric of Father Coughlin and Father Curran. It was what initially attracted some Catholics to their grassroots movement, which then became the Christian Front.

The threat of communism was ubiquitous for Curran. His 1935 defense of German Jews against the Nazi regime and his prayers that the "good sense of the German people and the strength of the Catholic Church will counteract the policies of the Nazis" had an ulterior motive. Their anti-Semitism was not to be tolerated anywhere, and the reason was because such racial prejudice clouded the real threat to the world — communism.[12]

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The following year, Curran's pamphlet *Christ is God* argued for the superiority of Christianity. In the pamphlet, Curran made subtle connections between biblical Jews and modern-day communists. Staying true to pre-Vatican II doctrine, Curran held Jews responsible for the crucifixion, for stoning Jesus after Christ claimed to be God, and stated that Jews made a concerted effort to contradict Christ's resurrection. The biblical Jews' denial of Christ as God was made equivalent to the communists' plan to poison the minds of school children against the Bible and the existence of Jesus Christ.[13]

Two years before Curran's friend Father Coughlin called for the formation of a Christian Front, Curran outlined the proper defense against the Communist Front in Russia, Mexico, France, the fight brewing in Spain, and the possibility of one arising in the United States: a Catholic Front. There was no indication that Curran's Front was supposed to be an actual organization. Rather it was more of a spiritual connection between all Catholics, and an invitation to Protestants and even Jews, to "unite in a solid phalanx of Americanism against which the taunts and the threats and the attempts of our communistic enemies may be in vain."[14]

In the 1936 pamphlet of the same name, Curran expressed disappointment that Spain alone was fighting communism. Quoting General Emilio Mola's words of support for Franco, Curran declared "I affirm this stand with General Franco." These same words were later used by Father Coughlin as inspiration for the Christian Front.[15]

Father Curran announced that a Catholic Front must arise to defend the United States and denounce "the treasonable oaths taken by modern students in some of our High Schools and Colleges." There was no compromise or disagreement in the Catholic Front when fighting communism because Catholicism and communism "are unalterably

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opposed." Communism only plans for this world; Catholicism deals with the preparation for the next world; it engages in spiritual welfare. The supernatural order of the Catholic Front stood with Jesus Christ; communism had no supernatural order. Therefore the Catholic Front was open only for "good" Catholics, meaning those who participated in all rituals, not those who were lukewarm or insincere. The Catholic Front was identified with Catholic traditions and American ideals, and believed that the best kind of government was the one with the least interference in daily lives; it was the Front that supported the United States Constitution, and stood with those fighting communism in Mexico, France, and Spain.[16]

In a prelude to the rhetoric adopted by Coughlin and the Christian Front, Curran explained in his pamphlet that the Catholic Front was supposed to be based on allegiance of all American Catholics to the United States Constitution. He attacked the American press for glorifying Spanish communists. The Catholic Front was to stand united in the defense and preservation of the Constitution by resisting the communist-inspired corrosion of education in America's schools. This was to counter the Popular Front's attempts to destroy the Constitution. Concerning the labor question, no member of the Catholic Front was to support any labor union that wished to scrap the Constitution, i.e. communist-led unions. Communists were only interested in using workers for their own means to gain power; the Catholic Front was interested in actually helping laborers better their lot in life. The Catholic Front repudiated the doctrine that employer and employee were diametrically opposed in a natural state of "inevitable enmity." In conclusion, communists were described as cowards who feared the history and vitality of the Catholic

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Church. Their only response was to blaspheme the Church. Those who knew the Church's true history would only love and admire a united Catholic Front.[17]

The notion of a united Catholic Front to battle communism regained momentum in 1938. John Scanlan (no relation to Patrick Scanlan), who became very active in the Christian Front, wrote a letter to the *Brooklyn Tablet* in January describing his theories on the communist nature of the CIO and the proper Catholic reaction. Catholics could not ignore the plight of workers and join the exploiting capitalists, nor could they be idle and "hand America to the Reds on a silver platter." If Catholics did either, then they were not true Americans or Catholics. The only answer was the formation of a progressive "UNITED CATHOLIC FRONT" and "Let us take every Red dominated progressive organization OUT OF THE RED!" That could be accomplished if Catholic leaders and workers put aside their petty quarrels in an effort to "offset a Communist 'Popular Front.'" By doing so, Catholics would fulfill the Labor Encyclicals of Popes Leo XIII and Pius XI.[18]

In April, Father Curran wrote an article in Coughlin's main organ, *Social Justice*, promoting a unified organization to defeat communism. Curran used the term "Christian Front," rather than "Catholic Front" to include all Protestants and Catholics.[19] One month later, Curran spoke in north Queens stressing the importance of united Catholic action to combat communism and carry on a campaign of social justice, emphasizing that the only voice for labor was Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical.[20]

* * *

Father Charles Edward Coughlin began as a supporter of President Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal. In 1934 Father Coughlin formed the National Union for

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Social Justice to press for economic changes, and he publicly criticized Roosevelt for the first time. Coughlin warned that Roosevelt's monopoly of power resembled a dictatorship and urged Congress to launch a recovery program to supplant the New Deal. Coughlin's proposed recovery program advocated government ownership and control of banks to guarantee employment at reasonable wages, favored trade unions (but opposed strikes and lockouts), and called for the unlimited coinage of silver — which the President opposed. In an attempt to discredit Coughlin, FDR ordered Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr. to make public the names of individuals with large silver holdings. The list included individuals close to Coughlin.[21]

This incident chilled the relationship between Coughlin and Roosevelt, but did not result in a clean break. Coughlin did not want potentially to lose the support of German and Irish Catholics who supported both men. Between 1933 and 1935 the White House received 202 letters expressing support for both men.[22] Coughlin remained uneasy about creating an irreparable schism with Roosevelt until early 1936. The radio priest was concerned about maintaining his radio audience and feared that a split with the president might result in a loss of listeners. Coughlin's belief that the New Deal was failing America was heightened after he received letters from his supporters expressing disappointment with the administration and the New Deal because it failed to meet their needs for recovery. Ultimately Father Coughlin chose the role of New Deal antagonist.[23]

Coughlin's populist appeal and dissent was a cause of concern for New Dealers.[24] As Coughlin's anti-New Deal intensity increased, so did the administration's concern about his effect on Catholics. New Dealers were worried that Catholics were being

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driven away from the administration.[25] He helped Congress defeat Roosevelt's 1935 proposal that the United States join the World Court. His campaign against the World Court resulted in a flood of telegrams landing on Capitol Hill from loyal listeners urging Congressmen to vote against the President.[26] Greatly disturbed, Roosevelt dispatched Frank Murphy (at the time the governor of the Philippines and Coughlin's close friend) to Detroit in an effort to improve relations with Coughlin. The diplomatic mission failed. In a September 1935 letter to Frank Murphy, Coughlin charged that Roosevelt broke virtually all of his promises and that his administration smacked of socialism and communism. Murphy then arranged a meeting between Coughlin and FDR, but it did not repair the damaged relationship. The radio priest described Roosevelt as a "socialist of the radical type."[27]

Nineteen thirty-six marked the year that Father Coughlin and his National Union entered partisan politics. In March he started his own weekly newspaper, *Social Justice*. On June 19 he endorsed the Union Party's presidential candidate, Congressman William Lemke of North Dakota. In an ill-advised gamble, Coughlin promised that if the ticket did not receive at least nine million votes in the November election he would end his radio broadcasts. Coughlin left the air on November 7 after the Union Party received less than 900,000 votes.[28]

Coughlin's absence from the airwaves did not last long. He returned to the radio on January 24, 1937 and continued to attack the New Deal. One of his earliest victims was a former friend, now Governor Frank Murphy of Michigan whom he attacked for not using state troops to end the General Motors strike. However, Coughlin's popularity waned and his listening audience fell from its 1935 zenith. In an odd paradox, most

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Coughlin supporters also supported Roosevelt, in spite of (or without knowledge of) Coughlin's attitude toward FDR. Coughlin's attacks on capitalism, banks, Jewish financiers, and the government's unsatisfactory handling of the depression were probably contributing factors for his listeners' continued support. [29] Obviously, for most in 1937, support for Coughlin did not translate into abandoning the administration. Although the concerns of New Dealers were somewhat unfounded, they were determined to battle Coughlin and his backers.

Coughlin's divisive attacks against the administration were attempts to revive his political influence after his failed backing of the National Union Party in 1936. At the beginning of 1938 Coughlin again resumed his broadcasting career after another short absence. His "Together We Stand" broadcast on January 9 was a plea for Americans to work together and he warned against class struggle. However, Coughlin lost WOR in New York as an affiliate for his broadcasts. This began to convince Coughlin that Jews controlled the media and were responsible for his difficulty in obtaining radio outlets. The *Brooklyn Tablet* called WOR's dropping of Coughlin as "unfair and prejudicial."[30]

Responding to Pope Pius XI's call for Catholic Action to spread Catholic social principles as a response to social problems, Father Coughlin concluded that he was in a unique position to organize the nation's Catholics as a counterforce against those attempting to corrupt America. Just as Edward Lodge Curran had concluded two years earlier, Coughlin determined that an organized Catholic front was the best solution for the greatest social problem facing America in 1938— the threat of communism.[31]

On May 23, 1938 Coughlin announced the creation of the Million League. The League was an umbrella for smaller Social Justice Platoons of twenty-five members each.

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The duty of each platoon member was to contact another twenty-five individuals to create another platoon. And so on, to continue the spread of platoons. The units were loosely organized with no direct organizational connections to each other. As Coughlin said, the platoons were "directly affiliated with me." At first, people were surprised at the military connotations of "platoon," but the reason for the military terminology soon became evident. Coughlin announced in the June 27, 1938 edition of *Social Justice* that there were forces within America intent on destroying American liberty. Led by clever and scheming minds, these forces were "engineering the mechanism of a juggernaut of hatred, slavery and death." The only salvation for America must be a Christian Front — an obvious play on the communist "Popular Front." Coughlin warned Americans that all foreign "isms" were prepared to "plung[e] its dagger into YOU." The blade of the dagger was communism. The only way to dull the blade was if every Christian man and woman in the United States, regardless of age or creed, stood "shoulder to shoulder." On November 6, 1938, he proclaimed "It is necessary for us to solidify and strengthen a virile, closely woven Christian Front."[32]

Coughlin continued to promote the idea of a Christian Front from that point forward, emphasizing that the enemies of Americanism could only be met by a Christian Front counterforce. The printed voice of the counterforce became *Social Justice*. Most *Social Justice* vendors in New York eventually joined the Christian Front in 1938 and 1939. Coughlin sent a letter to the Christian Front leadership in New York thanking the organization for increasing the sales of *Social Justice*. There was a least one occasion when Coughlin spoke to a group of *Social Justice* vendors at Donovan's Hall on 59th Street in Manhattan via telephone, appealing to them to increase its circulation.[33]

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* * *

In August 1938 Edward Lodge Curran and Patrick Scanlan echoed Father Coughlin's call for a Christian front. A Christian front seemed to be a natural fit in the home borough of both Curran and Scanlan: Brooklyn. With the support of Curran, Brooklyn was quickly emerging as a leading area of anticommunism in New York.[34]

Earlier that summer, Russell Dunn became one of the "36 men from Brooklyn" who spoke out against communism on the street corners of Brooklyn. Dunn had ties with the ultra-patriotic, anti-Semitic American Nationalist Party. The militant young Catholics, including John Cassidy, a former Fordham University student and 1931 graduate of St. John's Law School, joined Dunn on their favorite corner in Flatbush. Cassidy was already a disciple of Father Coughlin. In 1936, he was president of the 5th Congressional District unit for the National Union for Social Justice. It was on the corner of Flatbush Avenue and Albemarle Road, that members of the Christian American Citizens' Committee Against Communism became the core group that formed the Flatbush Anti-Communist Committee and the Flatbush Unit of the Common Cause League.[35]

Members of organizations such as the Flatbush Common Cause League and the Flatbush Anti-Communist Committee read like a who's who of eventual Christian Front leadership. John Scanlan, William Ryan, Edward Norris, joined John Cassidy to speak on Brooklyn street corners during the summer and autumn of 1938. Curran's International Catholic Truth Society began holding street meetings in Brooklyn that fall. Both John Cassidy and Floyd Caridi (an important CF organizer) were featured speakers at ICTS meetings.[36]

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At the same time that Brooklyn was the hotbed for communism in New York City, Harry Thorne was thrown out of the Musician's Union. Thorne charged that he was dismissed by communists. This claim soon blossomed into the idea that the entire union was run by Jews who discriminated against Christians. Harry and his brother Joseph (also a member of the American Federation of Musicians) first complained to the *Brooklyn Tablet* in March. Then they devised a plan to get Harry his job back.[37]

Both led middle-class lives in Irish and German Queens neighborhoods; Harry in Sunnyside and Joseph in Elmhurst, where between one-quarter to one-third of the population was foreign born.[38] Losing his job could potentially mean losing his home. According to eyewitness accounts, the Thorne brothers and their fellow union member and neighbor, Marcel Honore (an admirer of Canadian fascist leader Adrian Arcand, lived in Elmhurst as well), decided to create an organization during the summer of 1938 to seize control of Local 802, the American Federation of Musicians. If they were able to control the Local by wresting it away from "Jewish control," then they assumed Harry Thorne would get his job back. Charging that Christians were being excluded from better paying jobs and executive positions in the union (Harry had lost the election for the presidency of the Local), the Thornes and Honore attracted several devoutly Catholic dissenters. They were especially upset about the WPA employment provision for refugee musicians from Nazi Germany. Many of these refugees were Jews, creating the perception they were taking away employment from Christian musicians, and this was not totally untrue. To further enflame the situation, many Catholic musicians were upset at the union's policy of performing free concerts sponsored by the Musician's Committee

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for Spanish Democracy. These benefit concerts aided the anti-clerical Spanish Loyalists.[39]

At first the group had difficulty raising money to distribute literature. John A. Trevor, head of the super-patriot, Washington-based American Coalition, learned of the Thornes' fight against communism and decided to pay for some of their printing bills. Trevor was also involved with Allan Zoll's American Patriots, another extremist nationalist group, who later became integrally involved in New York's Coughlinite movement. Alexander Cloyd Gill,[40] who wrote articles for various fanatical nationalist groups, contributed his skills to the Thornes.[41]

Communist control of the Musician's Union had been a concern of anticommunist elements in New York's Catholic Church since the beginning of 1938. Father Curran and Reverend John E. Burke, C.S.P. of St. Paul's the Apostle Church in Manhattan were concerned about communist influence within the union. Both wrote letters to the *Brooklyn Tablet* in January warning about the dangers of a communist-controlled union. The Paulist Press was publishing various anticommunist pamphlets and a monthly newspaper, *Wisdom*.[42]

Father Burke's contemporary at St. Paul's in 1938 was Father James Gillis, the well-known syndicated columnist, radio personality, and editor of the Paulist monthly, *The Catholic World*. Gillis' worldview was one that pitted the forces of evil against the righteousness of God as a duality contained within every person and worldly institution. Gillis believed that the United States represented the active presence of God's spirit in the world. His strong convictions were also the basis for critiquing the world's

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manifestations of evil wherever he saw them, in leaders, institutions, or ideologies. Interventionist politics and communism fit his mold for evil.[43]

Much like Father Coughlin, Father Gillis enjoyed a honeymoon period with Franklin Roosevelt before becoming one of the president's most staunch critics. In 1935 Gillis' fear and distrust of Roosevelt's growing power in government led him to harshly criticize the New Deal and the president. His disaffection grew during the presidential election year of 1936.[44]

Gillis' bailiwick was non-intervention. His isolationism was generated by his readings and life experience during World War I. He often referred to George Washington's call to avoid all foreign entanglements in his efforts to act as a defender of America; a self-appointed role he relished.[45] It was also identical rhetoric used by the likes of Father Coughlin and the Christian Front, minus the vicious undertones.

Although there was no indication that Father Gillis was ever involved in the Christian Front, his presence at St. Paul's in 1938 and 1939 certainly helped facilitate an atmosphere in which Father Burke felt comfortable enough to hold meetings in St. Paul's rectory to discuss anticommunism.

Walter Ogden, Father Burke's private secretary, prevailed upon his superior to allow these anticommunist meetings. Ogden, himself an anti-Semite, was involved with the Thornes and Honore's group. He presented an idea of a united militant "Christian Front" to the Paulist Fathers. The Paulists accepted Ogden's idea and agreed that the rectory could be used for their hall meetings and the Paulist Fathers would allow them to use their post office box. They also agreed that the Paulist Press would print the group's material.[46]

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In early July, a man named Spagnola asked one of the young Catholic firebrands that he had brought to the Albemarle Road demonstrations to join him at a meeting of anticommunists in St. Paul the Apostle Church. The group referred to themselves as "the Christian Front." On July 14, 1938 a group of approximately fifty men gathered in the rectory to hear lectures about communism and communist domination in unions. Representing the anticommunist groups from Brooklyn was Spagnola and his friend, John Cassidy. The meeting quickly degenerated into anti-Semitic tirades, much to the chagrin of Father Burke.[47]

In July, Coughlin began reprinting the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, definitively stating that Jews financed the Bolshevik Revolution as part of their all encompassing plan for world domination. Spain was seen as the next country to fall in the progression toward Jewish ascendancy and it became the main theme at the next large gathering at St. Paul's. The August 4, 1938 meeting was more anti-Semitic than the one in July. John Scanlan was joined by Mike Corrigan both representing the Brooklyn contingent. They complained about the showing of the film *Blockade*, which they had been picketing because they considered it to be communist propaganda. Corrigan told the group there had been "young Jewish girls" collecting funds for Spain outside of the theater.[48]

A week later, on August 11, 1938, the constitution for New York City's Christian Front was formerly adopted. The board of directors included the Thorne brothers, Walter Ogden (named as secretary), and Marcel Honore, who held the position of Christian Front president.[49]

Membership grew quickly, ranging from business men to unemployed followers. Propaganda, boycott, employment, and clothing groups were formed. A speaker's

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bureau, trade bureau, and mutual aid committee were all established. Membership cards were printed beginning in September 1938 which members would receive as soon as they paid their one dollar fee and submitted a picture. Some of the tougher members provided muscle as protection for the speakers and distributors of literature. If situations got out of hand, a bail bond fund was arranged to release any speaker or activist who was arrested.[50]

Their officially stated mandate was to organize Christians to battle communism. The group immediately identified itself with a pro-Franco Catholic Order. Units soon formed in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. It quickly became a membership organization and a coordinating agency for the *Social Justice* distributors' groups. Members from other ultra-nationalist, pro-fascist, and pro-Nazi groups associated themselves with the Christian Front almost immediately. Groups included Crusaders for Americanism, the German-American Bund, the German-American Business League, the American Nationalist Party, Citizens Protective League, and Allan Zoll's American Patriots.[51] Of the 271 known Christian Front speakers in New York City, 27 of them were members of other groups including the Christian Mobilizers, American Nationalist Party, German-American Bund, Protestant War Veterans, and Crusaders for Americanism.

The influx of Bundists, including Bund leader George Van Nosdall, and other fascists at the St. Paul's meetings intensified the already anti-Semitic underpinnings of the Christian Front.[52] One of the featured speakers at the September 16 meeting, Charles Hahn (or Hohn), introduced himself as a member of the US Immigration Board and claimed to be a secret service agent. Hahn's anti-Semitic diatribe was a precursor to the ferociousness that would be heard on New York street corners for the next year:

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> "Thousands of Jews pouring into the US from every direction. About 100 a day come into New York City openly. That's nothing to what really comes in under cover. I am a tough man. I'll tell you that there is only one thing to do and that is to kill all the Jews … I'll put the fear of God in the heart of every Jew in America if they don't kill me first. I'm not afraid to die …I'll sacrifice my life in the fight against the Jew."[53]

The success in attracting more members pushed Fronters to more public action. In the autumn, anti-Jewish stickers were handed out. Joseph Bono, a 35-year-old musician, received six months in the workhouse after pleading guilty to a charge of pasting an anti-Semitic caricature of the Statue of Liberty to a pillar in the 59th Street subway station, down the block from St. Paul's the Apostle. Bono received the stickers the night before his arrest at a St. Paul's Christian Front meeting.[54]

Public incidents, such as the Bono arrest, began to create negative publicity for the Christian Front. The Paulist Fathers realized the negative situation and, for the first time, asked that the meetings be moved to Donovan's Hall, which was located one block away from the church. Marcel Honore and Walter Ogden took advantage of this request to solidify their positions as leaders of the CF. The Thorne brothers were trying to wrest control of the organization away from Honore and Ogden, hoping that with the help of Gill and Trevor, they would be able to concentrate on gaining control of their union. However, most of the membership was brought in by the Paulist Fathers and did not know the Thornes' role in the CF's founding. Honore and Ogden wanted the movement to expand beyond the issue of communists infiltrating unions. As a result, the two arranged for the Coughlinites and Catholics to be absent from the Thornes' Donovan's Hall meeting. The brothers were stuck with no attendees and with paying the rental bill. They were effectively cut out of the group.[55]

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The Christian Front attracted the attention of Father Curran and the ICTS after Marcel Honore announced that the CF was going to join the protest against WMCA after the radio station removed Father Coughlin from the air in November 1938. The ICTS joined the Front, along with several other groups, in picketing the radio station. By 1939, the International Catholic Truth Society was sponsoring Christian Front meetings.[56]

More and more Brooklyn anticommunists were being introduced to the Christian Front by their fellow demonstrators and they came to the St. Paul's rectory. Francis Malone was brought to St. Paul's by Mike Corrigan and given an application. Malone met Marcel Honore and attended meetings at St. Paul's from 1938 until March 1939. Eventually, Malone became the leader of the Park Slope Sports Club and was arrested by the FBI for his Front activities.[57] William Bushnell, who joined Malone as a federal prisoner in 1940, first attended a CF meeting at St. Paul's in March 1939.[58] John Cassidy rose through the ranks and was appointed leader of the Christian Front Brooklyn Unit in March 1939 by Honore. Cassidy began to aggressively pursue leadership of the CF and by the time he made a trip to Royal Oak in August 1939, he represented himself as the National Director of the Christian Front.[59]

Walter Ogden announced a "Buy Christian" campaign at a meeting attended by White Russian fascists in December. Ogden also issued a disclaimer that the Christian Front must not be affiliated with any illegal group. Nevertheless, he stated that people were creatures of free will, in essence giving tacit approval for the involvement of individuals with less than a reputable character to be associated with the CF. Therefore, Fronters could engage in whatever activity they chose. In the audience that night were Joseph Hartery and *Wisdom* employee John Geis. Both would speak at dozens of CF

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street rallies and both would eventually make themselves familiar to the New York City Police Department.[60]

The Christian Front continued to meet at St. Paul's until March 1939. Continuing reports of anti-Semitic activity, such as the February 1939 arrest of H.P. Miller, the doorman at most of the St. Paul's meetings, for pasting a "Buy Christian" sticker on a Jewish owned newsstand, led to complaints by Jewish groups. Father Burke was present at most of the meetings until the protests were brought to his attention.[61] The Chancery Office of the New York Archdiocese finally became involved and ordered the Paulist Fathers to withdraw their support from the Front.[62] The Paulists maintained that they withdrew only when the meetings became anti-Semitic. It was quite evident that the Christian Front meetings in the rectory were riddled with anti-Semitism from the outset.

The American Jewish Committee estimated that by the beginning of 1939 the membership of the Christian Front in the New York area was more than 38,500.[63] There is no way to confirm this number, although it is probably exaggerated. On thing is for certain, 1939 marked the beginning of the active period for the Father Charles Coughlin-inspired Christian Front in New York City.

* * *

New York City Police Department officers, detectives, and police stenographers attended, observed and issued reports about 368 Christian Front events between April 15, 1939 and October 9, 1940. Two hundred and seventy-two of these events took place before January 14, 1940 — the day eighteen the CF members were arrested by the FBI. Many of these reports were sent to the Commanding Officer of the Alien Investigation Bureau. The reports were filed among the "Organization" papers kept by Fiorello

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LaGuardia. The Christian Front file in only one of many of the "Organization" files located in the Fiorello LaGuardia papers in the New York City Municipal Archives containing extensive police reports and meeting minutes from most groups deemed subversive by the mayor's administration. These reports are integral to my thesis. I used these reports to determine speaker identities, topics, and locations of CF street meetings, members-only meetings, pickets, and literature distribution.

New York City Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia formed special detachments of the NYPD to investigate subversive groups, including the Christian Front, beginning in 1939. The reports generated by these units are the sources of all the police reports used in my research. Members of these "sabotage squads" used assumed names and fake identification cards to gain entry into the CF, and other similar organizations. The squads totaled 180 men, all of whom spoke at least one foreign language. Neither the public, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Office of Naval Intelligence, nor Army intelligence knew of the squads' existence. Only one police unit worked closely with the FBI, although it is not known which one. It was probably not the unit investigating the Christian Front because the archival material indicates that both the NYPD and FBI were fishing for information from each other after the Fronters' arrests. The unit was disbanded after World War II, but its members remained silent. The existence of the "sabotage squads" was not publicly acknowledged until 1947.[64]

The existence of these squads and the hundreds of reports they filed not only is an indication of LaGuardia's fears of a Fifth Column in his beloved city, but it also dispels the notion that the mayor did not act in response to the tense atmosphere in the city created by groups such as the Christian Front. According to Thomas Kessner's *Fiorello*

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H. LaGuardia and the Making of Modern New York, LaGuardia's perceived lack of action puzzled Jewish New Yorkers because of the mayor's public anti-Nazi stance and promotion of New York as a city of people of all races, creed, and colors living in perfect harmony. The reality was LaGuardia could not publicly admit his actions because it would put the NYPD's investigations, and quite possibly its officers, in harm's way.

The New York City Police Department recorded 1,152 different speeches at Christian Front events between 1939 and 1940, covering, what I determine to be, 2,305 topics. Many speeches covered more than one topic. I divided these topics into seven general categories: anticommunism, Christian unity, United States neutrality, anti-government, the economy and employment, direct support for Father Coughlin, and internal administration of the Christian Front. In some cases, police department representatives recorded speeches verbatim. In other cases, only single sentences indicated a general theme, such as "anticommunism" or "Americanism."

The numbers presented in my analysis are not meant to be an exact science, but rather to determine what was important to Christian Front speakers. If the officer present did not mark down a remark, then obviously I could not count it in my statistics. For that reason, numbers that show direct support for Father Coughlin may seem low. It is likely that *Social Justice* was sold at most of these meetings (an indicator I used to count for direct support), but unless the officer present recorded the magazine being sold, I did not count that event in my statistics. Likewise, internal administration of the CF was only discussed in members-only meetings, which were less likely to be attended by a representative of the NYPD. Therefore, that particular topic rates low statistically in 1939. After the arrests of the Fronters in January 1940, the internal administration of the

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organization dominated meetings and the police department had greater penetration into the organization, raising the percentage.

The Christian Front was concerned with large, worldwide problems and their effect on their version of a Christian America. For this reason Christian unity was by far the favorite topic of Christian Front speakers. It was discussed 595 times (25.81%). Anticommunism was the next most important topic, discussed 405 times (17.57%). Therefore, it is not surprising that the more parochial problems of the economy and employment were the least dealt with topic, representing only 4.16% of all speech topics, discussed only 96 times. Within the economy/unemployment category, the same thesis holds true. The problems of refugees and immigration — larger scale problems — dominated the category. Forty-one of the 96 speeches in this category focused on refugees (42.71%) [Table 1].

I further sub-categorized each of the seven major categories. For example, Christian Front anticommunism rhetoric was divided into general anticommunism, anti-internationalism, chimerical anti-Semitic anticommunism, communism as the cause of international atrocities, the direct threat of communism to the United States, and communist activities within New York City. Each one of these sub-categories is dealt with in detail in the following chapters.

Taking the topics and percentages as a whole from 1939-1940 is useful, but does not tell the entire story. I found it is much more useful to understand the psychology of the Christian Fronters by dividing my statistics into two periods: from April 1939 through January 12, 1940, the last report filed before the Fronters were arrested for conspiring to overthrow the federal government, and from the first report filed after the arrests, January

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19, 1940 through October 9, 1940, which was the final police report. The arrests by the FBI were a watershed event in the New York City Christian Front movement. The pro-active involvement of the government dramatically changed the tenor of their meetings, which the CF considered as tangible evidence of the battle between the federal government and their movement.

Eight hundred forty-five different speeches were delivered before the arrests, covering 1,503 topics. Christian unity (discussed 441 times, 29.34% of all topics) and anticommunism (304, 20.23%) were again the most popular topics, but their numbers were much closer than the overall statistics. Both topics dominated Christian Front speeches throughout 1939. Neutrality (227, 15.10%) and all anti-government (199, 13.24%) topics were important, especially after the outbreak of hostilities in Europe. Direct support for Father Coughlin (125, 8.32%) and the internal administration of the Christian Front (133, 8.85%) were low for the reasons explained. The economy and unemployment followed the same pattern as the combined statistics (74, 4.92%) [Table 2].

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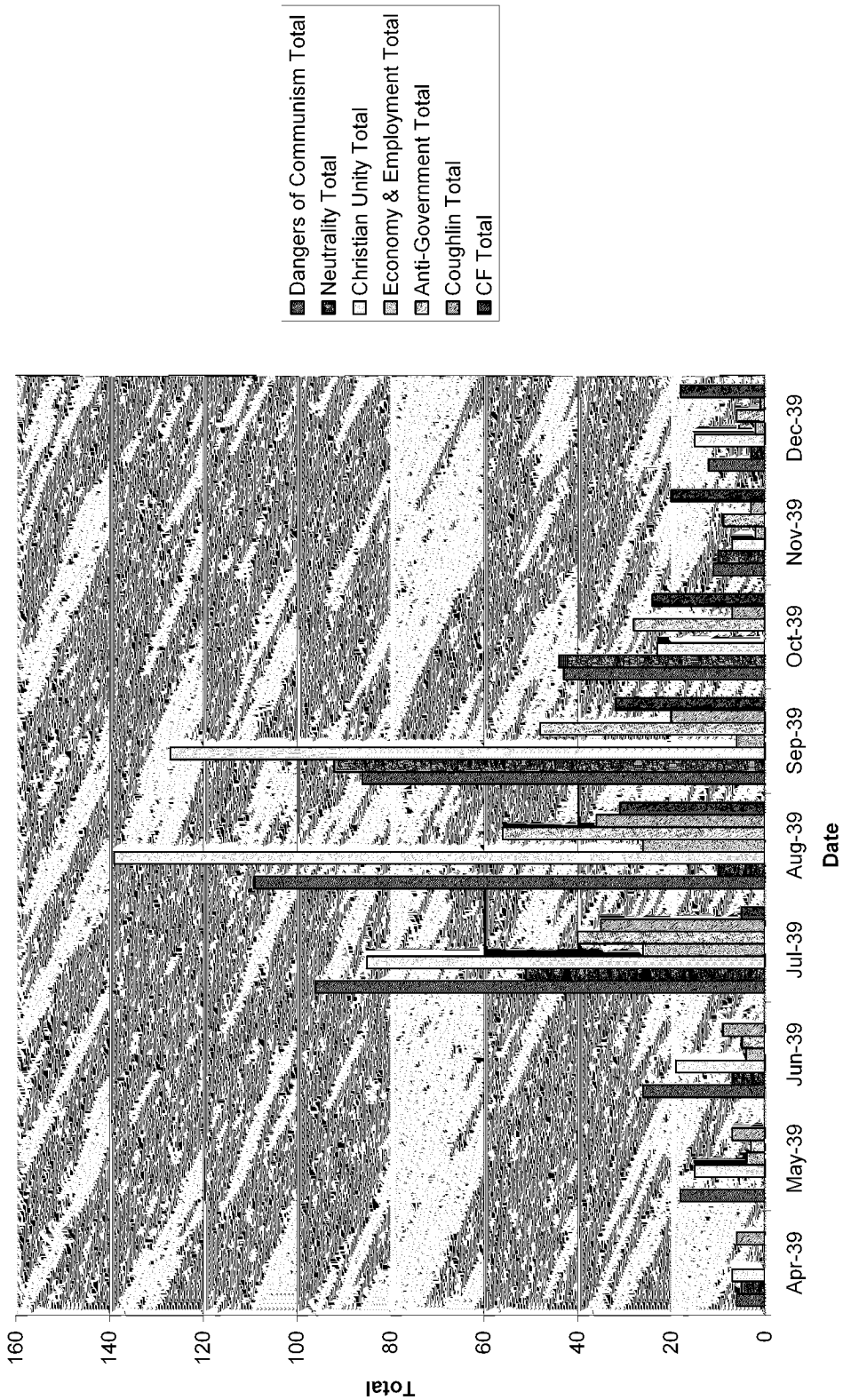
Chart 1: Comparison of All Speech Topics by Date for 1939



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After the arrests of eighteen alleged conspirators, most of whom were members of the Christian Front, the types of speeches given changed. Most of the speeches recorded then were from meetings held in halls. Fronters removed themselves from the streets, fearing government interference with their ability to hold rallies. Three hundred seven speeches were recorded after the arrests, covering 802 topics. Internal administration of the CF, which included speeches about the arrests and subsequent trial, became the most important topic at Front gatherings (240, 29.93%). Christian unity remained high on the list (154, 19.20%) and anti-government rhetoric increased in importance (142, 17.71%) as the Front viewed the arrests by federal agents as proof-positive that the government was corrupt and seeking to destroy Christianity in America. As war raged in Europe and the prospect of United States involvement increased, neutrality (119, 14.84%) surpassed anticommunism (101, 12.59%) in importance. Father Coughlin (24, 2.99%) and the economy (22, 2.74%) became virtual non-issues [Table 3].

* * *

Who joined the Christian Front? Ronald Bayor is generally correct in his assessment that the Front was an ethnic organization. Irish Catholics constituted a large percentage of its membership. The speakers' names were predominately Irish, with several German and Italian surnames. Both male and female speakers, who represented the Front's leadership, ranged from white collar professionals to high school students to unemployed thugs. A 1945 sociological study by Duane Robinson and Sylvia Rhode, which was used by Edward McCarthy in his study of the Front, indicates that the Christian Front was generally middle-class in nature. The study shows that middle income Catholics were more likely be anti-Semitic. McCarthy infers that it was from that

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segment of society that the CF recruited members. Among low-income Protestants, anti-Semitism was most prevalent. The study concluded that Protestants of lower-class and education fell back on racial pride for their anti-Semitism, which may account for the attraction of traditional Protestant nativists, such as the American Nationalist Party or Crusaders for Americanism, to the Christian Front. Robinson and Rhode concluded that better educated and higher income Catholics were upwardly mobile and competing with Jews for jobs and business, therefore they were susceptible to anti-Semitism.[65]

Bayor points out that lower and lower-middle class workers feared competition and the loss of their blue-collar jobs to Jews. That served as the impetus for joining the Christian Front.[66] Both Bayor and the 1945 study reach similar conclusions: the reason for joining the Christian Front was an ethnic challenge for jobs. However, the Christian Front speeches do not necessarily indicate that unemployment was an important topic. If those fearful of their jobs were the CF's audience, and the Front did not address their concerns, it may be one explanation for the organization's failure.

Two hundred seventy-one different Fronters' names were recorded by police. These were people who either gave speeches or attended Front meetings in an organizing capacity. Of them, more than fifty percent attended only one meeting. Most of the speakers did not return. Of the remaining 122 individuals who attended multiple meetings, only 22.88% attended more than five meetings; half of them attended ten or more meetings. This means that there were only a small percentage of hardcore Fronters [Table 4]. If Bayor and McCarthy are correct, then those who were initially attracted to the CF did not stay because the Front did not appeal to their concerns.

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It is useful to analyze where Christian Front meetings took place in order to help determine the nature of its membership. Most of the Front's speakers lived in close proximity to the street rallies they attended, usually in the same neighborhood. The New York City neighborhoods that most often witnessed Christian Front speeches were the South Bronx, Fordham-University Heights-Belmont, and Throgs Neck in the Bronx, Hell's Kitchen (including Columbus Circle rallies), Washington Heights-Inwood and Harlem in Manhattan, and Hollis-Queens Village, Ozone Park-Richmond Hill, and Far Rockaway in Queens.[67]

Taken in aggregate, the neighborhoods that witnessed Christian Front rallies were 26.79% foreign-born and experience moderate population growth over the previous ten years. The most populous nationality was Irish, followed very closely by Italians and Germans. Jews, the target of much of the Front's hatred, constituted the forth most numerous ethnicity in neighborhoods with Front activity. Poles and Austrians were also prevalent in these neighborhoods [Table 5].

The Bronx and Manhattan neighborhoods that saw CF rallies were 23%-33% foreign-born, usually a mixture of Irish, Italian, German, Polish, and Jewish immigrants. The ratios of nationalities where CF activity took place were different in different places. The majority in Harlem neighborhoods was Irish; Washington Heights was both Irish and German, and Fordham was heavily Italian. The South Bronx was almost evenly divided between Irish, German and Jewish and was the location of more Christian Front anticommunism street meetings than any other neighborhood.

The Queens neighborhoods were only 12%-18% immigrant, although the ethnicities were predominantly the same as the Bronx and Manhattan neighborhoods. Far

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Rockaway was the only neighborhood where Jewish foreign-born heads of households outnumbered other immigrants (slightly more than Irish residents), albeit the total number was very low. According to police reports it was in this neighborhood that the Christian Front met some of its greatest resistance.

The neighborhoods in which the Front operated were mostly lower middle-class or middle-class. There were some notable exceptions, such as the South Bronx. Nevertheless, it seems that ethnicity and the foreign-born population were the most important factors for attracting people to the Christian Front. Based on their speeches recorded by the police it becomes apparent that the rhetoric of Christian unity was aimed at making foreign-born Americans (a substantial percentage of the CF's audience based on the locations of their meetings) think they were now better Americans. It gave them the opportunity to help "return" America to its Christian roots, thereby improving their acceptance into the American polity by traditional nativists.

* * *

After the Christian Front left the confines of St. Paul's rectory, crowds numbering between 100 and 400 gathered on street corners in the Bronx, Manhattan, Queens and Brooklyn to hear, and occasionally heckle, Christian Front speakers. During the summer months of 1939, when the weather was better suited for outdoor meetings, police reported crowds of as many as 500 to 900. Fronters usually gathered in the evenings, around 6:00 PM or 7:00 PM, and remained on the street for several hours. They selected locations for their street meetings where they could attract large crowds. Columbus Circle (only one block away from St. Paul's Church), Times Square, and Herald Square in Manhattan and Westchester Square in the Bronx were favorite spots for rallies. Other street corners,

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especially in the outer boroughs, were selected near subway or elevated train stations, locations that were easy to get to and that provided crowds returning home from work.[68] Street meetings were occasionally marked with violence, but most arrests were for heckling or for disorderly conduct and abusive language. More often than not, police officers simply removed the hecklers from the crowd.[69]

* * *

Father Coughlin and the Christian Front created a large backlash and fueled the opposition. Anti-Coughlin Catholics feared that the Christian Front's violence and rabid anti-Semitism would cause a popular backlash against Catholics. Some Catholics felt it was a pity that Coughlin was inviting a schism among Christians with his criticism of England and France, the lone European defenders against Hitlerism in 1939. Others, such as President of Liberty Hall, H. G. Dalton, openly stated that Catholics were ashamed of Coughlin and petitioned the Archbishop of Detroit to silence the priest. The Fordham University debate society argued over the whether or not Father Coughlin should be allowed on the radio.[70]

Commonweal, Catholic Action, Catholic Digest, Catholic Worker, Christian Social Action all voiced their displeasure with Coughlin and his followers. *The Christian Front*, a monthly magazine published by laymen which had the unfortunate circumstance of having the same name as that of the Coughlinites, were "considerably embarrassed" by the confusion between their organization and the Coughlin-inspired Front. Their editors were so concerned about the confusion they wrote a disclaimer in the June 1939 issue of the magazine specifically disassociating themselves from Coughlin's Front.[71]

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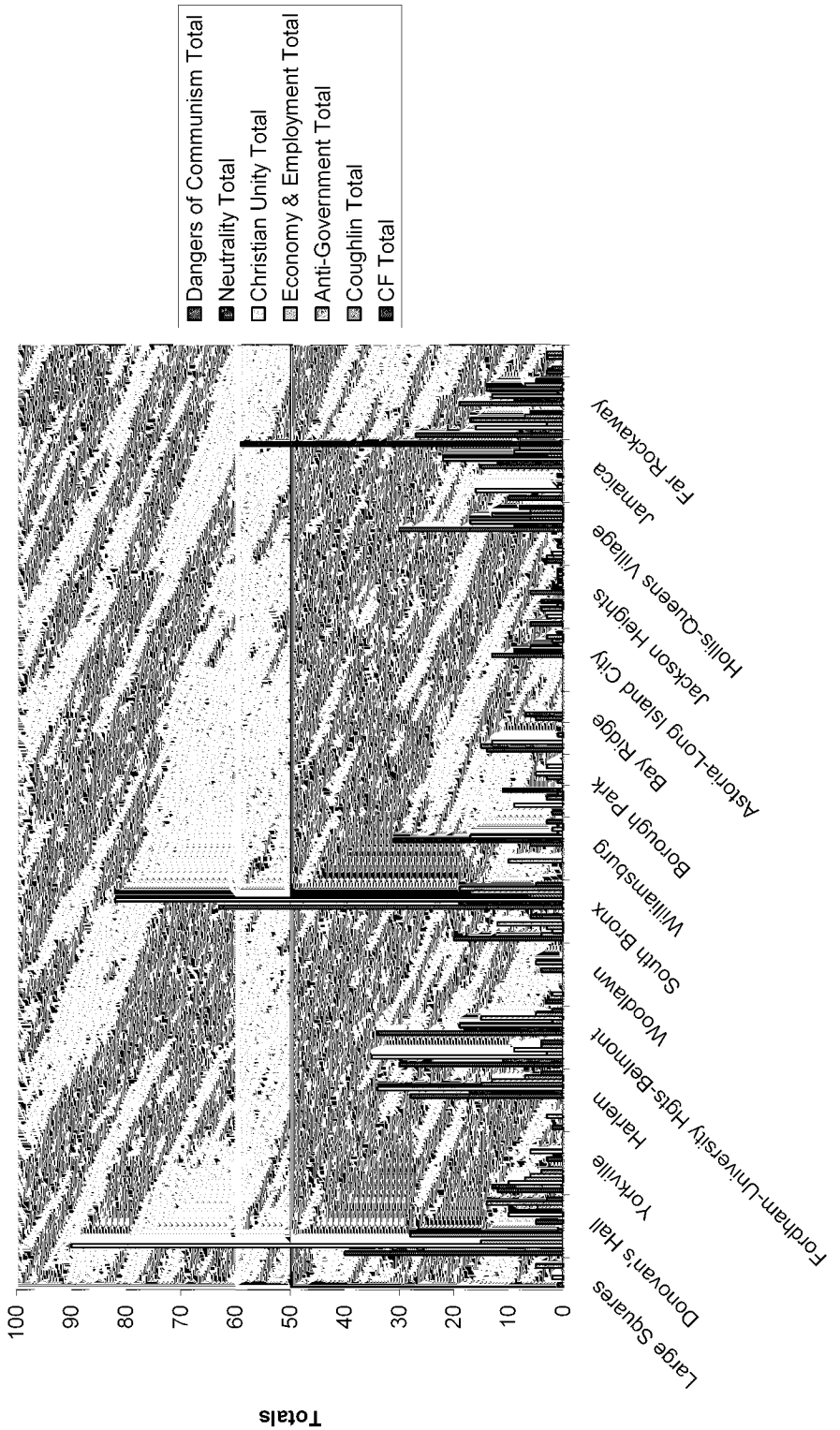
Chart 2: Comparison of All Speech Topics by Location for 1939



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In 1939 a small, but influential, group of Catholic intellectuals who rejected the notion that Coughlin's anti-Semitism represented Christian values, formed the Committee of Catholics for Human Rights and began to publish *The Voice of Human Rights*. Members included Monsignor John A. Ryan of Catholic University and Reverend Charles Miltner of the University of Notre Dame.[72]

Patrick Scanlan reacted brusquely after receiving a solicitation letter for the *Voice*, sent by Fordham University philosophy professor Dr. Emmanuel Chapman, the executive secretary and editor of the *Voice*.[73] "They call this Christian democracy?" Scanlan scribbled on the newspaper, referring to it as outright "slander."[74] Christian Fronters denounced the *Voice for Human Rights* as being anti-Catholic.[75]

Soon the opposition to the Front became stronger than the organization it was fighting. Their campaigns and protests were well-organized. Attack pamphlets that, frequently over-estimated the strength and activities of the CF were printed by numerous organizations.

Left leaning publications all blasted Coughlin and the Christian Front, accusing them of violence and associations with Nazis. As the CF became more visible in 1939, so did the articles condemning them. John Spivak wrote several articles for *New Masses* at the end of 1939. A year later Spivak wrote an exposé on Father Coughlin, *Shrine of the Silver Dollar*. The Institute for Propaganda Analysis published *The Fine Art of Propaganda: A Study of Father Coughlin's Speeches*. Alson Jesse Smith's *The Christian Front: Coughlin's Storm Troopers* provided readers with a history of Front violence and influence in New York. In an effort to promote his socialist beliefs, communist Norman Thomas got into the act and wrote "What's Behind the 'Christian Front'." Leonard

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Finder wrote his version of the Front's history for *The National Jewish Monthly* in October.

The Nation became one of the most prolific detractors of Coughlin and the Christian Front. In addition to James Wechsler (whose work will be discussed at some length in this study), George Britt added to the exposure of the Christian Front as a violent anti-Semitic group with his article, "Poison in the Melting-Pot." Britt's April 1939 article recounted the previous year's rampant anti-Jewish violence in New York City, which included several stabbings of Jews. He wrote that the anti-Semitism in New York had become a widespread instrument of demagoguery. He further painted New York's Irish with a wide brush, stating thanks to Coughlin, they had become pawns and instruments of Nazi propaganda.[76]

One of the best known and most widely-read condemnations of Coughlin and the Christian Front was John Roy Carlson's *Under Cover*, published in 1943. Carlson wrote *Under Cover* as an expose to alert Americans of the "defeatist and dissensionist propaganda" that was continuing to be produced while America was at war. His goal was to prove that American fascists were translating foreign symbols and ideas into an American nativist form, allowing fascism to permeate the mainstream. He linked the Christian Front with other fascist and Nazi organizations preparing for a wave of terrorism.[77]

Under Cover sold over a million copies. Carlson's presumptions of guilt were made on slim associations. Leo Ribuffo notes that the book's failures outweigh its virtues. The air of accuracy and authority was unwarranted in many specific examples, especially with respect to quotations from secret rendezvous of members of fascist

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organizations. Nonetheless, it was Carlson's attempt to tie all of the isolationist and pro-fascist organizations into one mass conspiracy to establish a pro-fascist government in the U.S. that became the basis for Mass Sedition trial of 1944. It, much like the trial of the Christian Fronters in 1940 that will be discussed in this thesis, was a trial based more on ideology than on actions of individuals.[78]

Ironically, the organized opposition to the Front created unity amongst several Protestant church groups and Jewish leaders. Inter-faith groups were organized to combat the CF's street meetings. Rabbi Stephen Wise joined with church groups to battle anti-Semitism. One group in the Bronx proclaimed that those fostering anti-Semitism were followers of Hitler. The Brooklyn Church and Mission Federation, representing virtually every Protestant congregation in the borough, warned that the Christian Front was guilty of "inciting violence, inexcusable hypocrisy, and arrayed class against class" and it was the duty of Protestants to counteract the destructive actions of the CF. The Fronters' actions were irreligious and un-Christian; their incitement of violence and "evil propaganda" eliminated the moral right for the group to call to itself Christian — it was inexcusable hypocrisy. The Front was an affront to all true American Christians.[79]

Reverend L.M. Birkhead, the national director of Friends of Democracy, urged Mayor LaGuardia to have a conference of religious, social and civic leaders at City Hall to combat "anti-democratic organizations" and "educate racial hatred out of existence." Birkhead identified at least fifty "militant and uncontrollable" organizations, some of whom he claimed had private armies that promised "bloodshed in the streets of New

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York" to meet their "subversive ends." The Christian Front was included in his list. He also accused Coughlin of importing Nazi propaganda.[80]

The opposition claimed to fear that the Christian Front had opened the door for Nazi subversion in America. The opposition emphasized the association between the Christian Front and Nazi Germany to illustrate the hypocrisy of the Front's "Americanism," calling it "an un-American variation of Hitlerism. For the good of democracy it must be exposed and rejected."

An American League for Peace and Democracy leaflet asked:

> Why was Coughlin given a tremendous ovation at the Madison Square Garden German-American Bund rally?
> Why was *Social Justice* sold openly at that meeting and "all other meetings of Hitler's agents in America?"
> Why does Coughlin spread race hatred?
> Why did *Social Justice* publish Goebbels's propaganda?
> Why does Brooklyn Coughlinite leader Russell Dunn speak at Bund meetings?[81]

Reverend W.C. Kernan, the rector of the Trinity Episcopal Church in Bayonne, New Jersey made his weekly program WEVD a platform for scathing criticism of Coughlin and Coughlin's anti-Semitism, calling it nothing more than racial hatred and propaganda for the fascist front, and said that Coughlinism opened the door to fascism in America.[82]

The pastor of the Grace Methodist Church in Manhattan accused Father Coughlin and the Christian Front of using the same tactics as the National Socialists in Germany and charged that they were misusing Christ's words for their own gain. The CF was no different than the German-American Bund. He further charged that the CF was bringing together all like-minded groups.[83] The Women's Christian Temperance Union attacked Christian Front as the successor to the "discredited German-American Bund … [which] is

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corrupting youth, undermining the American spirit and paving the way for some form of Hitlerism."[84] The New York State Federation of Labor passed a resolution condemning all anti-Semitic agitation as "un-Christian, anti-democratic, and anti-labor" after a debate on Coughlin's activities and his "poisonous propaganda" at their union's convention.[85]

The American Jewish Alliance was one of several groups to refer to the Christian Front as the "Coughlin Terror." Their petition to Mayor LaGuardia, in hopes that it would "eradicate the menace from our midst" included accusations that Jews were attacked by the Christian Front while police looked the other way, and Coughlinites were inciting riots and spreading panic, fear, and violence on the streets and in the subways.[86]

"Coughlinism threatens the life and livelihood of every Jew in America. The Coughlinites are aiming to capture the streets of New York and then spread their terror across the country. We must stop them HERE and stop them NOW!" was how one of their petitions began, this one aiming for 100,000 signatures to keep Coughlin off the radio.[87]

Petitions from the American Jewish Alliance, and other members of the opposition, were not effective in removing Father Coughlin from the airwaves. His removal was the result of pressure from the federal government. Radio stations had reason to worry about the content of their programs because the fledgling Federal Communication Commission refused to define its "public interest, convenience, or necessity" clause when issuing licenses. This meant that the FCC operated retroactively and so licensees had to operate with caution in selecting programs. Since the FCC licensing procedure was based on the notion that radio stations served the public interest; radio stations did not want any programs so controversial they could endanger their

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licenses. Station managers chose programming that tended to support the cultural and political views of the majority. This system protected both licensees and the FCC. The FCC claimed that it was not censoring the airwaves and licensees were confident that their radio stations would be re-licensed.[88]

This agreement facilitated a close relationship between the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) and the FCC. It became the role of the NAB to discipline and censor radio stations. Reacting to Coughlin, the NAB declared that radio should not be used to create religious division, but should "administer broadly to the varied religious needs of the community." In 1940, the NAB Code Compliance Committee reported that Coughlin was banished from the airwaves as a "voluntary adherence to the NAB Code by the stations themselves." The Committee was satisfied with the silencing of Coughlin, a longtime thorn in the side of both the Roosevelt administration and the FCC. The FCC was relieved that the NAB acted, so they would no longer have to engage themselves in Coughlin's anti-Semitic and anti-Roosevelt rampages.[89]

The Christian Front's reaction to the opposition's attacks was met with equal indignation. The *Catholic Worker*, *Commonweal*, and the *Voice* were denounced. Front rallies urged audiences not to purchase publications that were undermining their Christian movement.[90]

Father Coughlin seemed to welcome this criticism of himself, especially when it was from communists. In the May 9, 1938 issue of *Social Justice*, he reprinted an article that appeared in the *Daily Worker* by Ben Davis. Davis wrote a scathing critique of Coughlin and *Social Justice*. He stated that Coughlin alone transformed "social justice" into a derogatory term by associating it with Hitler, Mussolini and Franco and called the

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priest brazenly fascist and anti-Semitic "Fuehrer Coughlin." Davis also praised the "happy period of silence" after Coughlin left the airwaves in 1936. *Social Justice*'s editors thought this article exposed the communists' true feelings to a wider audience of the American people and dared the Senate to investigate the Detroit priest.[91]

One of Coughlin's favorite targets was the Friends of Democracy (FOD). He attacked the Friends of Democracy in the pages of *Social Justice*, stating that they had enlisted Leftist and Communist speakers to conduct a nationwide campaign to smear "Father Coughlin and all other upholders of true Americanism." Roosevelt, Joseph Stalin, Bernard Baruch and Sol Bloom were to be "extolled and immortalized … Christianity will be condemned" by the FOD in its campaign.[92] The FOD was viewed as nothing more than a partisan lobbying group. There is a handwritten note on back of a Friends of Democracy newspaper, "Certainly some sugar daddy has money to squander."[93]

The Christian Front's activities in New York City during the summer of 1939 caught the attention of anti-fascist New York Congressman Samuel Dickstein. Dickstein publicly questioned why the Christian Front had not been investigated because it was openly calling for the overthrow of democracy. He said that New York was overrun with Fronters and that these subversives must be stopped in order to prevent blood in the streets and acts of sabotage. The Congressman demanded that the Christian Front be exposed as a fascist front to prevent the spread of European-type totalitarianism in America. He equated the Christian Front's tactics with the Gestapo and alleged that it was financially supported by leaders directly in Nazi employ, and was propped up by German propaganda.[94]

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* * *

The subject of Chapter 8, "United States of America v. John Prout, Jr., et al.," was an indirect result of Dickstein's concerns. The FBI began to investigate the Christian Front in the middle of 1939 culminating with the arrest of eighteen individuals on January 14, 1940. Those who stood trial in *United States of America v. John Prout, Jr., et al.* between January and June 1940 were accused of conspiring to overthrow the United States government in a bizarre plot to establish a right-wing dictatorship and eliminate the Jews.[95]

Only one week before the arrests, Father Charles Coughlin had directly addressed President Roosevelt in his weekly radio broadcast. Coughlin warned that if democracy was not protected by a "virtuous pulpit, informed by an honest, fearless press, and schooled in institutions which, in the name of tolerance, do not ostracize divinity in the curriculum," it would become tyranny.[96] In the minds of Christian Fronters that was exactly what happened. A corrupt government was supported by the corrupt press, who took advantage of every opportunity to smear Coughlin, the Christian Front, and Christian America. The Front's opposition saw the same exact thing — only it was Coughlin and the Front corrupting America. And both sides smeared away. The Christian Fronters smeared the good name of the opposition every chance they got.

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Table 1
Analysis of Topics of Christian Front Speeches, 1939-1940

Topic	Totals	Percentage of Topic	Percentage of Total Topics Discussed
Dangers of Communism	**405**		**17.57%**
General anti-Communism	251	61.98%	10.89%
Anti-internationalism	20	4.94%	0.87%
Spanish Civil War and other international atrocities	60	14.81%	2.60%
Chimerical anti-Semitic anti-Communism	45	11.11%	1.95%
Communist actions and threats within NYC	49	12.10%	2.13%
Direct communist threat to US and the CF army	89	21.98%	3.86%
Neutrality	**346**		**15.01%**
General Neutrality	185	53.47%	8.03%
Embargo	12	3.47%	0.52%
Anti-FDR foreign policy	55	15.90%	2.39%
Direct protest against Congressmen who support FDR	20	5.78%	0.87%
Urging to write to Senators and Congressmen	42	12.14%	1.82%
Anti-England	32	9.25%	1.39%
Christian Unity	**595**		**25.81%**
Act, buy, vote, think Christian	407	68.40%	17.66%
Promoting other like-minded groups	59	9.92%	2.56%
Religious-based anti-Semitism	74	12.44%	3.21%
Economically based anti-Semitism	55	9.24%	2.39%
Economy & Employment	**96**		**4.16%**
Local employment	9	9.38%	0.39%
National economy & unemployment	30	31.25%	1.30%
Labor unions	16	16.67%	0.69%
Refugee & immigration problem	41	42.71%	1.78%
Anti-Government	**341**		**14.79%**
Anti-FDR & the New Deal	56	16.42%	2.43%
Anti-state government	10	2.93%	0.43%
Anti-LaGuardia	84	24.63%	3.64%
Americanism, nativism, and anti-all other "isms"	156	45.75%	6.77%
Government conspiracy leads to CF arrests.	35	10.26%	1.52%
Coughlin			
Support of Coughlin, Curran, free speech & *Social Justice*	**149**	100.00%	**6.46%**
Christian Front	**373**		**16.18%**
CF internal administration	142	38.07%	6.16%
CF recruiting and self-promotion	105	28.15%	4.56%
CF not associated with other Christian organizations	15	4.02%	0.65%
CF Trial	111	29.76%	4.82%
Total number of topics discussed	***2305***		

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Table 2
Analysis of Topics of Christian Front Speeches, 1939-Jan. 12, 1940

Topic	1939 Totals	Percentage of Topic	Percentage of Total Topics Discussed
Dangers of Communism	**304**		**20.23%**
General anti-Communism	200	65.79%	13.31%
Anti-internationalism	15	4.93%	1.00%
Spanish Civil War and other international atrocities	55	18.09%	3.66%
Chimerical anti-Semitic anti-Communism	34	11.18%	2.26%
Communist actions and threats within NYC	39	12.83%	2.59%
Direct communist threat to US and the CF army	70	23.03%	4.66%
Neutrality	**227**		**15.10%**
General Neutrality	130	57.27%	8.65%
Embargo	11	4.85%	0.73%
Anti-FDR foreign policy	37	16.30%	2.46%
Direct protest against Congressmen who support FDR	16	7.05%	1.06%
Urging to write to Senators and Congressmen	33	14.54%	2.20%
Christian Unity	**441**		**29.34%**
Act, buy, vote, think Christian	318	72.11%	21.16%
Promoting other like-minded groups	50	11.34%	3.33%
Religious-based anti-Semitism	38	8.62%	2.53%
Economically based anti-Semitism	35	7.94%	2.33%
Economy & Employment	**74**		**4.92%**
Local employment	9	12.16%	0.60%
National economy and unemployment	19	25.68%	1.26%
Labor unions	15	20.27%	1.00%
Refugee & immigration problem	31	41.89%	2.06%
Anti-Government	**199**		**13.24%**
Anti-FDR & New Deal	33	16.58%	2.20%
Anti-state government	6	3.02%	0.40%
Anti-LaGuardia	53	26.63%	3.53%
Americanism, nativism, and anti-all other "isms"	107	53.77%	7.12%
Coughlin			
Support of Coughlin, Curran, free speech & *Social Justice*	**125**		**8.32%**
Christian Front	**133**		**8.85%**
CF internal administration	59	44.36%	3.93%
CF recruiting and self-promotion	61	45.86%	4.06%
CF not associated with other Christian organizations	13	9.77%	0.86%
Total number of topics discussed	***1503***		***100.00%***

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Table 3
Analysis of Topics of Christian Front Speeches, Jan. 19 -Oct. 10, 1940

Topic	1940 Totals	Percentage of Topic	Percentage of Total Topics Discussed
Dangers of Communism	**101**		**12.59%**
General anti-Communism	51	50.50%	6.36%
Anti-internationalism	5	4.95%	0.62%
Spanish Civil War and other international atrocities	5	4.95%	0.62%
Chimerical anti-Semitic anti-Communism	11	10.89%	1.37%
Communist actions and threats within NYC	10	9.90%	1.25%
Direct communist threat to US and the CF army	19	18.81%	2.37%
Neutrality	**119**		**14.84%**
General Neutrality	55	46.22%	6.86%
Embargo	1	0.84%	0.12%
Anti-FDR foreign policy	18	15.13%	2.24%
Direct protest against Congressmen who support FDR	4	3.36%	0.50%
Urging to write to Senators and Congressmen	9	7.56%	1.12%
Anti-England	32	26.89%	3.99%
Christian Unity	**154**		**19.20%**
Act, buy, vote, think Christian	89	57.79%	11.10%
Promoting other like-minded groups	9	5.84%	1.12%
Religious-based anti-Semitism	36	23.38%	4.49%
Economically based anti-Semitism	20	12.99%	2.49%
Economy & Employment	**22**		**2.74%**
Local employment	0	0.00%	0.00%
National economy and unemployment	11	50.00%	1.37%
Labor unions	1	4.55%	0.12%
Refugee & immigration problem	10	45.45%	1.25%
Anti-Government	**142**		**17.71%**
Anti-FDR and New Deal	23	16.20%	2.87%
Anti-state government	4	2.82%	0.50%
Anti-LaGuardia	31	21.83%	3.87%
Americanism, nativism, and anti-all other "isms"	49	34.51%	6.11%
Government conspiracy leads to CF arrests.	35	24.65%	4.36%
Coughlin	**24**		**2.99%**
Support of Coughlin, Curran, free speech & *Social Justice*	24	100.00%	2.99%
Christian Front	**240**		**29.93%**
CF internal administration	83	34.58%	10.35%
CF recruiting and self-promotion	44	18.33%	5.49%
CF not associated with other Christian organizations	2	0.83%	0.25%
CF Trial	111	46.25%	13.84%
Total number of topics discussed	***802***		***100.00%***

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Table 4
Christian Front Speakers

Total names from Police Reports	
	271
Total number members of another group	
	27
Percentage of dual membership	
	9.96%
Single meetings	
	145
Percentage: Single meetings	
	53.51%
Multiple meetings	
	122
Percentage: Multiple meetings	
	45.02%
5-9 meetings	
	31
Percentage: 5-9 meetings	
	11.44%
10 or more meetings	
	31
Percentage: 10 or more meetings	
	11.44%

50% of the multiple meetings were less than 5 meetings.

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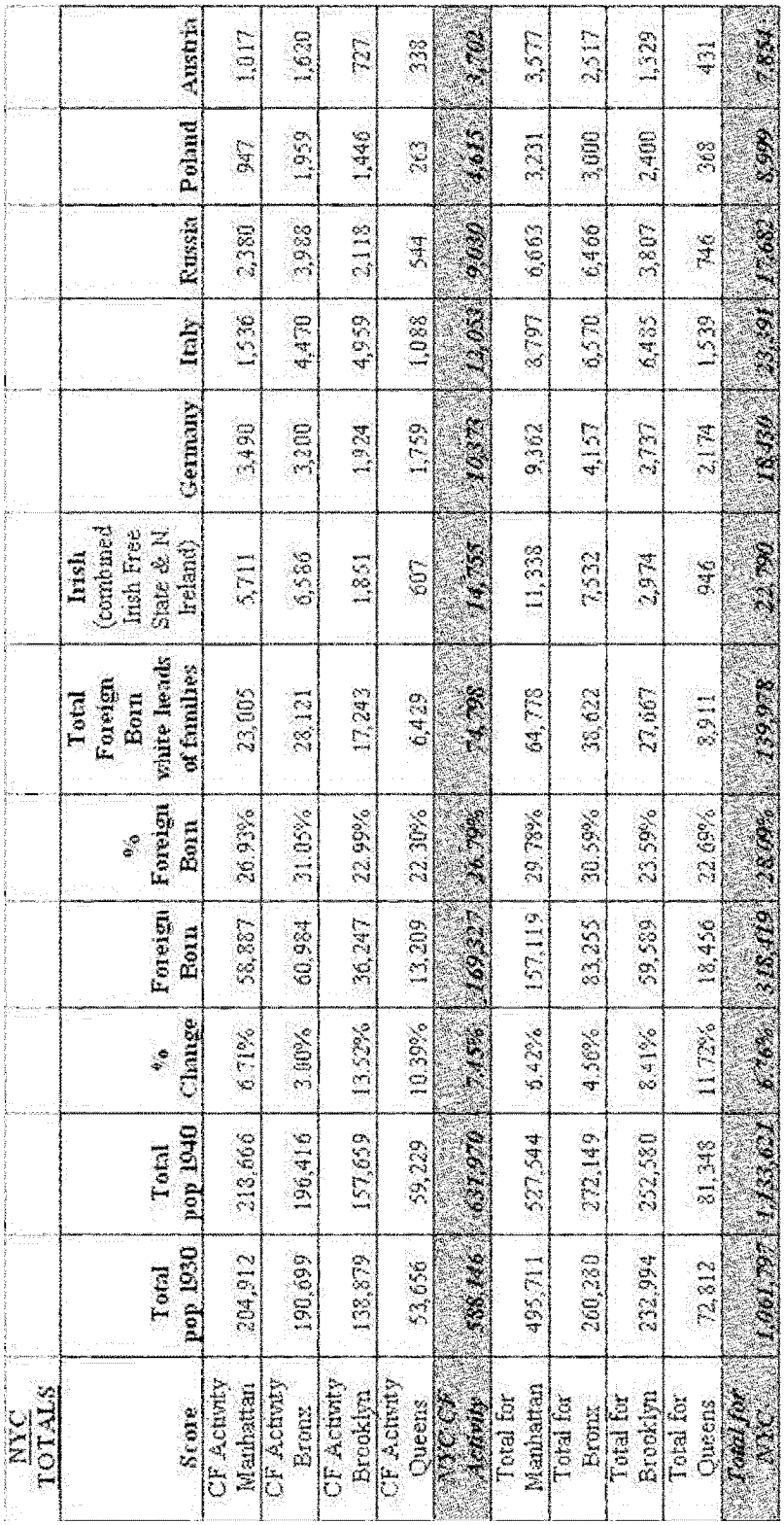
Table 5
Census Data for areas of Christian Front Activity, New York City Totals



NYC TOTALS														
Score	Total pop 1930	Total pop 1940	% Change	Foreign Born	% Foreign Born	Total Foreign Born white heads of families	Irish (combined Irish Free State & N. Ireland)	Germany	Italy	Russia	Poland	Austria
CF Activity Manhattan	204,912	218,666	6.71%	58,887	26.93%	23,005	5,711	3,490	1,536	2,380	947	1,017
CF Activity Bronx	190,699	196,416	3.00%	60,984	31.05%	28,121	6,586	3,200	4,470	3,988	1,959	1,630
CF Activity Brooklyn	138,879	157,659	13.52%	36,247	22.99%	17,243	1,851	1,924	4,959	2,118	1,446	727
CF Activity Queens	53,656	59,229	10.39%	13,209	22.30%	6,429	607	1,759	1,088	544	263	338
NYC CF Activity	***588,146***	***631,970***	***7.45%***	***169,327***	***26.79%***	***74,798***	***14,755***	***10,373***	***12,053***	***9,030***	***4,615***	***3,702***
Total for Manhattan	495,711	527,544	6.42%	157,119	29.78%	64,778	11,338	9,362	8,797	6,663	3,231	3,577
Total for Bronx	260,280	272,149	4.56%	83,255	30.59%	38,622	7,532	4,157	6,570	6,466	3,000	2,517
Total for Brooklyn	232,994	252,580	8.41%	59,589	23.59%	27,667	2,974	2,737	6,485	3,807	2,400	1,329
Total for Queens	72,812	81,348	11.72%	18,456	22.68%	8,911	946	2,174	1,539	746	368	431
Total for NYC	***1,061,797***	***1,133,621***	***6.76%***	***318,419***	***28.09%***	***139,978***	***22,790***	***18,430***	***23,391***	***17,682***	***8,999***	***7,854***

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Notes

[1] Ribuffo 178-85.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] Police Report, Sept. 23, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, Oct. 5, 1939, OCF.

[5] Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, July 11, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, July 21, 1939; Det. William A. Justy to Commanding Officer, Bureau of Criminal Alien Investigation, Aug. 4, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 15, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation, Aug. 16, 1939; Report of Meeting, Lt. Handwerg, 30 Pct. & Ptl. Owsianik, Alien Squad, August 22, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 23, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, Oct. 21, 1939, OCF.

[6] Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Alien Squad, Aug. 30, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 6, 1939; Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, Sept. 7, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 15, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 23, 1939, OCF.

[7] McCarthy 128-29.

[8] *The Tablet*, Feb. 21, 1974, Edward Lodge Curran file, TSC-DBA.

[9] Edward Lodge Curran, "A Conference About the Next Succession to the Crown of England," diss., Fordham University, 1928, 1-10.

[10] The three pamphlets written by Curran in 1934-1935 were: *Catholic Mexico* (Brooklyn, NY: International Catholic Truth Society, 1934), *Rebel Mexico* (Brooklyn, NY: International Catholic Truth Society, 1935), and *Some Pages of Mexican History* (Brooklyn, NY: International Catholic Truth Society, 1935).

[11] Powers, *Not Without Honor*, 51.

[12] Edward Lodge Curran, *The Blood Myth, Story of Nazi Germany* (Brooklyn, NY: International Catholic Truth Society, 1935).

[13] Edward Lodge Curran, *Christ is God* (Brooklyn, NY: International Catholic Truth Society, 1936) 4, 10, 15.

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[14] Edward Lodge Curran, *The Catholic Front* (Brooklyn, NY: International Catholic Truth Society, 1936), 15.

[15] *Ibid.* 1-2.

[16] *Ibid.* 3-6, 8-10.

[17] *Ibid.* 1-2, 7-8, 11, 13-15.

[18] Scanlan's theory concerning the CIO's domination by communists was that the Reds lent financial support and physical aid to workers on strike. They would do everything to take a leading role in unions. Therefore, after strikes were settled, communists were in a position to gain control of unions. His activities in the Christian Front were extensive. He was listed as Chairman of the Flatbush Anti-Communist Committee at an Erasmus High School rally on March 1, 1939. He emerged as chairman of CF meetings, and was recorded as attending 25 meetings in 1940 alone. *Brooklyn Tablet*, Jan. 28, 1938; March 11, 1939; McCarthy 38.

[19] *Social Justice,* April 4, 1938: 14.

[20] *Brooklyn Tablet*, May 7, 1938.

[21] Included were Coughlin's secretary, Amy Collins, who owned 500,000 ounces of silver and Maureen Thomas, wife of Coughlin's friend Edward Thomas, a Detroit insurance salesmen, who owned 100,000 ounces. Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest* (New York: Vintage Books, 1982), 124-25; Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab, *The Politics of Unreason,* 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978) 168-69; Sheldon Marcus, *Father Coughlin* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1973) 68.

[22] James P. Shenton, "The Coughlin Movement and the New Deal," *Political Science Quarterly* Vol. LXXIII, No. 3 (1958): 358, 360.

[23] Brinkley 126, 178; Shenton 362, 368-69.

[24] An example was the warning of Congressman John McCormack of Massachusetts to FDR that Coughlin's supporters were sullen and bitter, and prepared to listen to anti-New Deal arguments, after a Coughlinite candidate earned 40,000 votes in the September 1936 senatorial primary. Shenton 352*n*1.

[25] When Msgr. John Ryan of Catholic University stated Coughlin was going against the spirit of Pope Pius XI he received 78 letters denouncing him, mostly from Irish and Germans, with the theme that the letter writers were betrayed by the New Deal and Coughlin was their only spokesman. Shenton 365-67.

[26] Lipset and Raab 169; Shenton 360, 372.

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[27] Sydney Fine, *Frank Murphy: The New Deal Years* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979) 222.

[28] Lipset and Raab 169.

[29] Brinkley 266; Lipset and Raab 170, 184-85.

[30] *Brooklyn Tablet*, Jan. 15, 1938; Jan. 22, 1938. Marcus 154.

[31] Bayor, 97; Brinkley 254-55.

[32] Marcus 68; *Social Justice*, May 23, 1938: 8, June 27, 1938: 23; July 11, 1938: 23; "What Is the Christian Front?" *Propaganda Analysis,* vol. III, no. 5 (January 20, 1940): 1-2, GJP; Harold C. Urey, et al., letter to Frank Murphy, January 18, 1940; Thomas E. Stone, letter to Robert Jackson, January 19, 1940; O. John Rogge, letter to Harold Kennedy, January 20, 1940; Harold Kennedy, letter to O. John Rogge, January 22, 1940; O. John Rogge, letter to Thomas E. Stone, January 23, 1940, box 8, USAJP-AF.

[33] Father Charles E. Coughlin Report, Mar. 17, 1942, 9-10, FBI file (Detroit) 100-4716; Father Charles E. Coughlin Report, July 18, 1942, 10-11, FBI file (New York) 100-22759, CCFBI; *New York Times*, August 21, 1939.

[34] McCarthy 8.

[35] Bayor 97; *New York Times*, Jan. 16, 1940; *Social Justice*, July 31, 1939; John F. Cassidy, box 614, vol. VII: 3382, 3384; 3387-90, 3392, 3395-96, 3405; 3413; John Graf, box 615, vol. VI: 3164, USAJP-CCF.

[36] *Brooklyn Tablet*, Aug. 13, 1938; Christian Front September 1939, Christian Front file, AJCL.

[37] *Brooklyn Tablet*, March 19, 1938; "Subject — The Christian Front; Origin, etc.," Christian Front file, AJCL.

[38] Harry Thorne lived at 43rd Avenue and 48th Street in Sunnyside. Joseph Thorne lived at 41-19 Gleane Street in Elmhurst.

[39] McCarthy 12-13; "Subject — The Christian Front; Origin, etc.;" Christian Front, September 1939, Christian Front file, AJCL.

[40] On April 21, 1943, as a major in the US Army, Gill visited Rev. L.M. Birkhead to supply information on one of his former colleagues, Joseph Kamp of the Constitutional Education League. Five days later, Gill was found dead at his desk of an apparent heart attack. Newspapers reported that the body was discovered by Joseph Kamp, who was

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visiting Gill. John Roy Carlson [Avedis Deounian]. *Under Cover: My Four Years in the Nazi Underground* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1943) 506-507.

[41] Carlson 48, 130; "Subject — The Christian Front; Origin, etc.," Christian Front file, AJCL.

[42] John Geis, a very active member of the Christian Front in 1939-1940, claimed to be employed by *Wisdom* in July 1939. *Ibid.*; *Brooklyn Tablet*, January 15, 1938; Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, July 12, 1939, OCF; McCarthy 11-13.

[43] Richard Gibble, C.S.C., "The Other Radio Priest: James Gillis's Opposition to Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Foreign Policy," *Journal of Church and State* (2002 44[3]): 504-505.

[44] *Ibid.* 506.

[45] *Ibid.* 504, 509.

[46] McCarthy, 11-12; "Minutes - Christian Front meetings;" "Subject — The Christian Front; Origin, etc.;" Christian Front, September 1939, Christian Front file, AJCL.

[47] *Ibid.* John F. Cassidy, box 614, vol. VII: 3395-96, USAJP-CCF.

[48] "Minutes - Christian Front meetings," Christian Front file, AJCL.

[49] Other original CF directors included Frederick Bohrman of 519 West 123rd Street, John Cronin from the German Yorkville section of Manhattan (175 East 93rd Street), and John Davies of 3692 Broadway. Certificate of Incorporation of Christian Front, box 6, USAJP-AF.

[50] "Subject — The Christian Front; Origin, etc.," Christian Front file, AJCL.

[51] Father Charles E. Coughlin Report, Mar. 17, 1942, pp. 3, 12, FBI file (Detroit) 100-4716, CCFBI; "Subject — The Christian Front; Origin, etc.," Christian Front file, AJCL.

[52] "Christian Front, September 1939," Christian Front file, AJCL.

[53] "Minutes - Christian Front meetings," Christian Front file, AJCL.

[54] *New York Times*, Oct. 30, 1938; "Subject — The Christian Front; Origin, etc.;" Christian Front Report, Christian Front file, AJCL.

[55] "Subject — The Christian Front; Origin, etc.," Christian Front file, AJCL.

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[56] Christian Front, September 1939, Christian Front file, AJCL. Father Charles E. Coughlin Report, Mar. 17, 1942, 3, FBI file (Detroit) 100-4716, CCFBI; Police Report, May 26, 1939, OCF.

[57] Statement of Francis Malone, January 14, 1940, box 10, USAJP-AF.

[58] Statement of William Bushnell, , January 14, 1940, box 10, USAJP-AF

[59] Father Charles E. Coughlin Report, Mar. 17, 1942, 3, FBI file (Detroit) 100-4716, CCFBI; Marcel Honore, letter to John Cassidy, March 1939, box 7, USAJP-AF.

[60] "Christian Front, September 1939," Christian Front file, AJCL.

[61] "Christian Front Report," Christian Front file, AJCL.

[62] Father Charles E. Coughlin Report, Mar. 17, 1942, 3, FBI file (Detroit) 100-4716, CCFBI.

[63] "Subject — The Christian Front; Origin, etc.," Christian Front file, AJCL.

[64] *New York Times*, May 15, 1947.

[65] The study he refers to is Duane Robinson and Sylvia Rhode, "A Public Opinion Study of Anti-Semitism in New York City," *American Sociological Review*, X (August 1945), 511-15. McCarthy, pp. 96-97.

[66] Bayor 98-99.

[67] Addresses of meetings were listed on police reports. I used the *"Geographia" Atlas of Greater New York* (New York: C.S. Hammond & Co., 1937) to plot the meetings and determine neighborhoods. Neighborhood names are those used in the late 1930s, hence the use of "Hell's Kitchen."
To determine populations and ethnic demographics of neighborhoods, I used the census tracts as outlined in United States, Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census Tract Data on Population and Housing, New York City: 1940* (New York: Welfare Council Committee on 1940 Census Tract Tabulations for New York City, September 1942). If a street meeting took place at an intersection between two or more census tracts, I counted all bordering tracts to determine ethnicity of the neighborhood. I relied on Ronald Bayor's *Neighbors in Conflict* to consider those listed in the census as "Russian" as assuming they were Jewish, see p. 214*n*8.

[68] Some of the favorite train stations were the Crosby Avenue at Burhre Avenue and the 138th Street stops at Brook Avenue and Cypress Avenue IRT stops in the Bronx; the Church Avenue stop at the intersection of Church Avenue and Nostrand Avenue, the

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Flatbush Avenue and Germania Place IRT stops and 86th Street and Fourth Avenue BMT stop in Brooklyn; and the Lefferts Boulevard and Liberty Avenue El train stop in Queens.

[69] Bayor 100.
Police removed hecklers at street meetings of May 13, 19, June 1, 22, July 3, a drunken heckler on August 22, September 26 and 28, 1939. See police reports in OCF.
For a list of speakers arrested see Nathan Frankel and Byrnes MacDonald to Fiorello LaGuardia, Final Report: Activities of Anti-Semitic Groups Within New York City, November 6, 1939, Christian Front file, FLP, microfilm roll 19.

[70] *Brooklyn Tablet*, Sept. 23, 1939; Reginald O'Donlin, "Death to Popery," *Christian Social Action,* October 1939: 133-36; Rally for America to Keep America American, Charles Coughlin file, TSC-DBA; *The Ram*, November 3, 1939: 7, Fordham University Archives.

[71] "Don't Quote Me," *The Christian Front*, June 1939: 84.

[72] Egal Feldman, *Catholics and Jews in Twentieth Century America* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 2001) 61.

[73] Solicitation Letter from Emmanuel Chapman, Charles Coughlin file, TSC-DBA.

[74] Patrick Scanlan handwritten notes on *The Voice for Human Rights,* Charles Coughlin file, TSC-DBA.

[75] Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, Aug. 4, 1939, OCF.

[76] George Britt, "Poison in the Melting-Pot," *The Nation*, Apr. 11, 1939: 374-376.

[77] Carlson 91-107.

[78] Ribuffo 189-91.

[79] *New York Times*, May 23, 1938, Oct. 23, 1939, Nov. 16, 1939, Dec. 6, 1939; Statement of Executive Committee of Federal Council of Churches, January 26, 1940, Christian Front file, AJCL.

[80] *New York Times*, July 24, 1939, July 31, 1939.

[81] American League for Peace and Democracy flyer, Charles Coughlin file, TSC-DBA.

[82] Rev. W.C. Kernan radio address, "Fascism Through Coughlinism," March 2, 1939, Charles Coughlin file, TSC-DBA.

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[83] *New York Times*, Oct. 9, 1939.

[84] *New York Times*, Sept. 29, 1939.

[85] *New York Times*, Aug. 18, 1939.

[86] "Petition to the Mayor against the Coughlin Terror," Charles Coughlin file, TSC-DBA.

[87] American Jewish Alliance Memorandum, Charles Coughlin file, TSC-DBA.

[88] Douglas Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2000) 101.

[89] *Ibid.* 263-64.

[90] *Brooklyn Tablet,* July 8, 1939; Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, July 12, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, July 14, 1939, OCF.

[91] *Social Justice,* May 9, 1938: 14.

[92] *Social Justice*, July 3, 1939: 5.

[93] Charles Coughlin file, TSC-DBA.

[94] *Appendix to the Congressional Record,* Aug. 2, 1939: 4042-45; *New York Times*, Sept. 30, 1939.

[95] Bayor 102; Charge of Jury, box 610, 5764, USAJP-CCF.

[96] Father Charles Coughlin broadcast, January 7, 1940 (no radio station listed), "Father Coughlin's Anti-Semitism," *Memorandum on Father Coughlin and Social Justice*, American Jewish Committee (1940), AJCL.

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Chapter 2 Roosevelt is Ruin: April 1939 – December 1939

"No one hopes more than I do that Franklin Roosevelt will succeed. No one will help him more than I. I again say: 'It is either Roosevelt or Ruin!'."
- Reverend Charles E. Coughlin, March 11, 1934[1]

Economic desperation was an important factor in the Christian Front's anti-New Deal rhetoric. Like nearly all Americans, Fronters suffered economic hardship during the Great Depression. Initially, they thought President Roosevelt was going to be their savior, but after the first New Deal programs failed to revive the economy, many Americans searched for new answers and tried to identify the cause of their misery. And so many supporters of Roosevelt turned on the president, among them the Christian Front following their ideological leader Father Charles Coughlin, who laid the blame for their misery squarely on the doorstep of the White House. Until the European war emerged as the overriding issue of concern at the end 1939, it was economics that drove the Christian Front's efforts to mobilize New York City communities.

"Roosevelt or Ruin!" was Father Charles Coughlin's mantra during 1934, ever since his November 27, 1933 radio broadcast when he first challenged the American people "despite all opposition to the contrary … [to] remain steadfast behind the one man who can save this civilization of ours." He believed that man to be President Franklin Delano Roosevelt — a thought that would become unthinkable by 1936 and would even seem apocryphal at Christian Front street meetings or in the pages of *Social Justice* by 1938 and 1939.[2]

Coughlin's constant changes in the details of his monetary theories between 1933 and 1936 reshaped "Roosevelt or Ruin" into rhetoric that equated Roosevelt *to* ruin — ruin for the economy, ruin for financial systems, and ultimately, ruin for his vision of a

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Christian America. According to Alan Brinkley, it was hard for anyone to keep track of Coughlin's economic plans, as he moved seamlessly from theories stressing gold revaluation to re-monetization of silver to the nationalization of the banking-and-currency system. In fact, Coughlin's contemporaries seldom mentioned his shifting positions on economic programs, no doubt because they were unsure of where he positioned himself at any given moment. However, the radio priest's shifting emphasis never meant he repudiated any of his earlier proposals. His audience and ideological followers were untroubled by these changes because his programs were somewhat cumulative, and were always based on the same underlying assumptions: 1) money was artificially scarce; and, 2) bankers and financiers were the chief obstacles to constructive change. Coughlin's popularity was based on these unchanging principles.[3]

In a lecture entitled "Money Control," part of a series of broadcasts during the autumn and winter of 1933, Coughlin laid the blame for not re-monitarizing silver at the feet of the House of Morgan and its control of what he called the "Tory" press (an obvious reference to the Loyalists during the American Revolution, whom patriots considered allies of tyranny). He charged that the "advanced" (i.e. European) nations had allowed the Morgans, the Rothschilds, the Kuhn-Loebs, and other private banking institutions to control the world's money. The goal of these houses of finance was to make sure that gold alone would be the world's currency because they controlled the world's gold supply. America thus far had escaped this, but only by a "hair's breadth" and was now on the verge of handing the economy to them. The only way to avoid this usurpation of the economy was for these private banking institutions to be dissolved.[4] The following year, Coughlin argued that all his theories were part of the same program;

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they were all "rungs" in "the ladder which leads to the plane of prosperity." On that "plane of prosperity" the control of the monetary system would be wrested from "your Mellons and your Morgans; your Baruchs and your Bailies!" and the currency would be inflated. If that occurred, a reinvigorated economy would emerge. The resulting economy would be more efficient in the production of wealth and more just in its distribution.[5]

In January 1934 Father Coughlin challenged Roosevelt to climb the ladder to a reinvigorated economy. Coughlin's choice between "Roosevelt or Ruin" now meant that unless Roosevelt accomplished "the expelling of the money-changers from the Temple" and the restoration of a sound currency with an adequate supply to benefit all people, not just the chosen few (the small number of aforementioned international bankers), economic ruin would inevitably follow. He claimed his interest in monetary reform and American financial independence was derived from Christian principles — not from men: "Money is a medium of exchange — not one of control; that human rights must be protected in preference to so called financial rights." At the conclusion of his lecture, Coughlin warned his audience that, "Mr. Roosevelt is harassed by hundreds of powerful enemies. May God guide him and guard and spare him to see through the lurking dangers by which the wolves in sheep's clothing hope to allure him and his devoted followers to '*Ruin*'."[6]

In the minds of Father Coughlin and his Christian Front followers, it was Roosevelt who turned out to be the wolf. In 1936, as Coughlin was making a complete break from the Roosevelt administration, he claimed he wrote *Money! Questions and Answers* "for the ordinary American citizen ... the author is in nowise identified with that

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band of political economists who have proven to be nothing more than mouthpieces for the private coiners of money," and he now squarely placed the blame for a failing economy on New Deal theorists.[7] God had failed to guide the President through the lurking dangers, resulting in crimes committed by "that arch-thief, liar, bandit, thug, degenerate, swindler, arsonist, robber, maniac, drunk, vagrant, fence, stooge, footpad, gangster, that hoodlum of the mass, the New Deal." Worst of all, these crimes could not be prosecuted because the perpetrator, the New Deal, owned the courts.[8]

Nine days before Coughlin announced the formation of the Christian Front, one Coughlin supporter, a reader of the *Brooklyn Tablet*, remained somewhat optimistic that America's "smart people" (in this case referring to noted journalist Dorothy Thompson's praising Hitler's credit policy) were finally catching-up with Coughlin's "forward ideas" concerning money.[9] The "smart people" the *Tablet* reader may have been referring to were Fronters, who still viewed the radio priest's monetary theories from 1933 and 1934 as the solution for the country's economic woes in 1938. At the CF's height of activity in New York Fronters added new targets as the cause for the country's economic despair.

Christian Front attacks on the New Deal and Franklin Roosevelt peaked in August 1939.[10] These general attacks took place mainly in the ethnically mixed Bronx neighborhoods of the East Bronx-Throgs Neck and the South Bronx, where foreign born heads of households accounted for 23%-34% of the population, mostly of Irish, German, Italian, Russian-Jewish, Polish, and Austrian extraction. CF speaker Michael Flanagan attempted to relate his attacks on Roosevelt to the situation in Ireland when speaking in the heavily Irish Upper West Side on August 9, 1939.

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Chart 3: Anti-New Deal Topics by Date, 1939

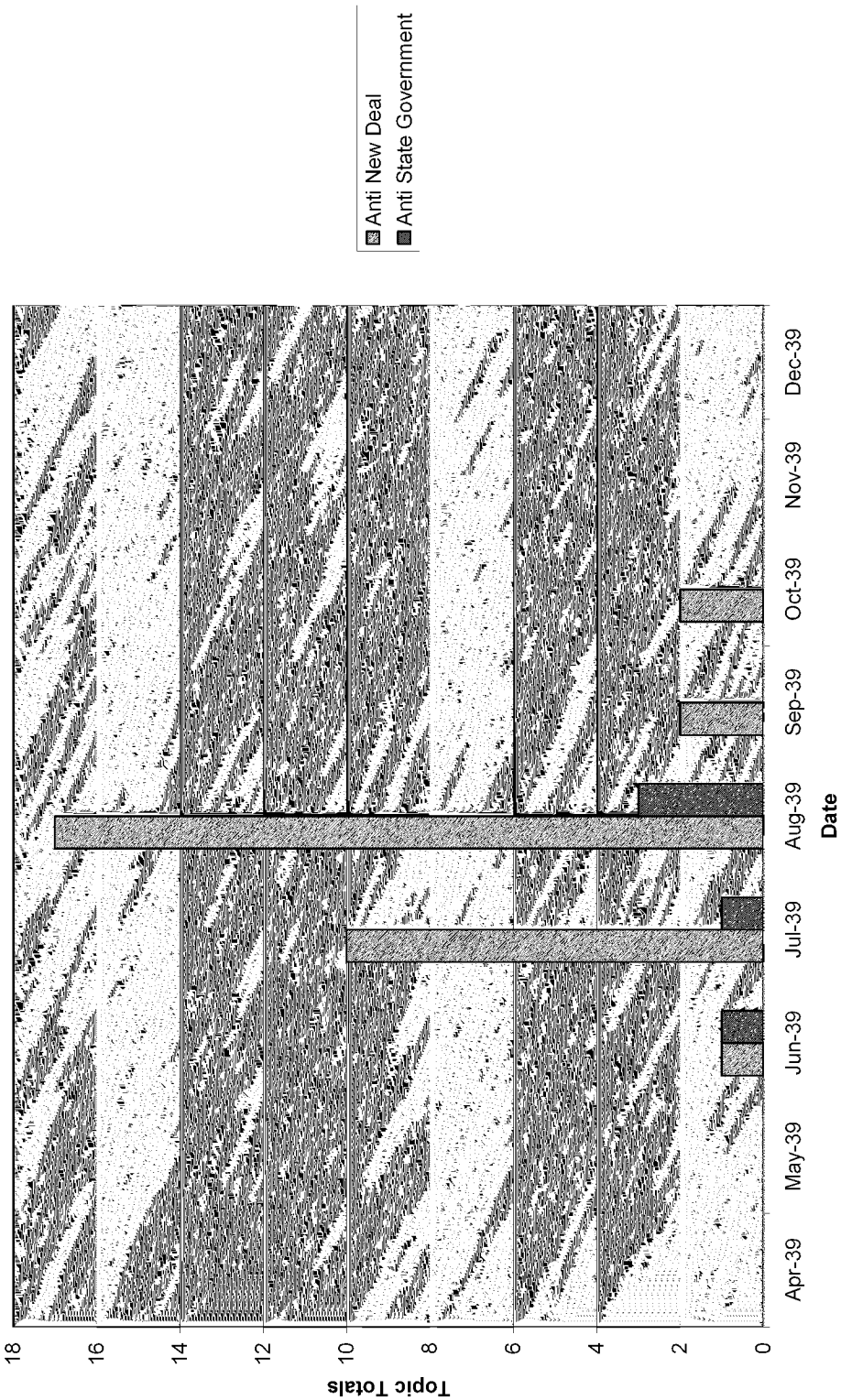

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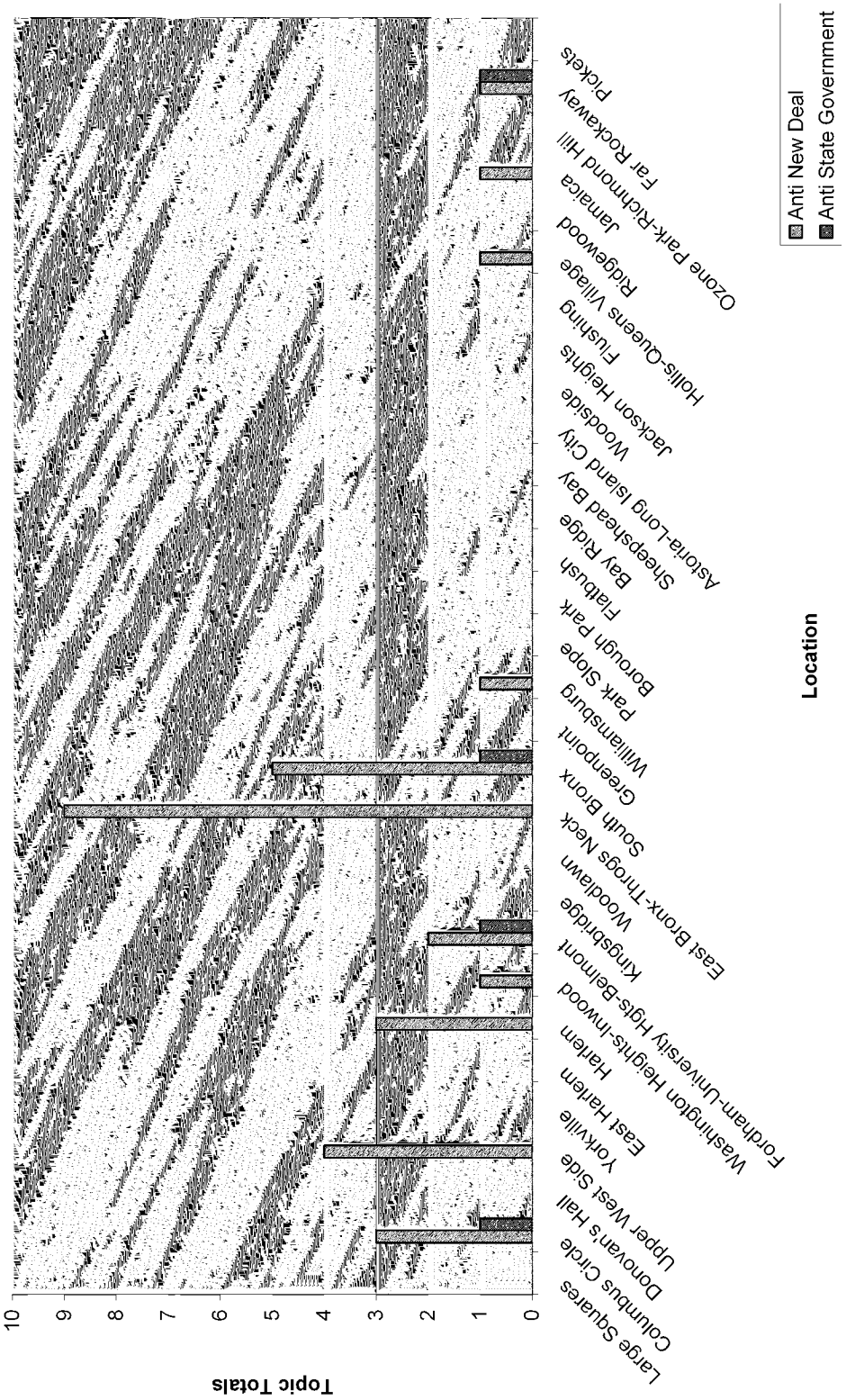
Chart 4: Anti-New Deal Topics by Location, 1939



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He stated that a good Irishman is the best in the world, but a bad Irishman is as bad as President Roosevelt. Flanagan was most likely referring to the "good" Irishmen who were involved with the Irish Republican Army. The IRA, after issuing an ultimatum on January 16, 1939 calling for the removal of all British troops from Irish soil, launched a series of bomb attacks in England. "Bad" Irishmen were those complicit in surrendering their independence to the British, much as Roosevelt was now complicit in surrendering the United States economy to "the chosen few." At the same rally, William Moran warned a crowd of two hundred about the power the Roosevelt family had over the radio and press, charging that the mass media was not to be trusted and that only the Christian Front and Father Coughlin were the sources of truth. More often than not, these attacks included amorphous accusations that local, state and federal governments were controlled by Communists or "the minority."[11]

Father Charles Coughlin's monetary theories were echoed by the Christian Front on New York City's street corners and federal court houses. The group's scapegoats for the Great Depression were the usual Coughlinite suspects: international bankers and the federal government, especially the President and his fellow New Dealers. Coughlin had charged in "Roosevelt or Ruin and the Gold Law" (January 21, 1934) that "Our Constitution proclaims that Congress and Congress alone has the right 'to coin money and regulate the value thereof.' … And the will of the American people is that Congress shall retain that right by keeping the control of gold and by regulating its value from time to time when necessary — not abdicating this right into the hands of an appointed secretary over whom they have little control."[12] Five and a half years later, George Gunning, Chairman of the Christian Front street meeting on the corner of 133rd Street and

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Amsterdam Avenue in Manhattan, proclaimed that he (and the CF, for that matter) embodied that will of the American people and reiterated Coughlin's principles. Coughlin's predictions and warnings had reached the street corners of New York City. Gunning spoke against the country's monetary system and the purchase of gold. According to him, this gold was being stored to be used as a basis for loans to foreign governments through the Stabilization Fund, which was a violation of the Constitution. It was time for the right of coinage to be returned to Congress, where it belonged.[13]

Stanley Smith, a self-confessed anti-Semite and President of the American Nationalist Party, who spoke before at least five CF street rallies between May and July 1939, blamed the Federal Reserve System for the start of the Depression because it had removed large amounts of currency from circulation. This meant that the Depression was man-made, and if Americans "buckled-down" it could be conquered. His plan was to help small businesses and farmers, who were the backbone of the country and represented 78% of the population. He claimed that only a very few large corporations had shown a loss in earnings in 1938 and 1939, and they had the cash, brains, and engineering power always to be able to show a profit. The United States had over 58% of the world's natural resources, so it should be self-sufficient. If used properly, resources would bring back the good times of 1922-1928. Reduce taxes and you would increase the buying power of the working class. The source of Smith's ideas was, not surprisingly, Father Charles Coughlin, whom he praised for the excellent information he had provided the public and for his monetary policy.[14]

Several defendants in the *United States of America vs. John Prout, Jr., et al.* during their testimony cited Coughlin's theories as the source of their explanations for the

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economic failings of the country. *Money! Questions and Answers* was discussed at members-only CF meeting at Prospect Hall, the headquarters of the Front's Brooklyn unit. The cause of the transformation of the Federal Reserve into a private institution, controlled by international Jewish financiers (the Rothschilds, Kuhn-Loebs, and Rockefellers) was the policies of Roosevelt and the New Deal.[15] FBI Special Agent Vernon Criss and FBI informant Denis Healy both testified for the prosecution alleging that the Christian Front's plan to redistribute gold and wealth and end the Great Depression, to take place after their successful overthrow of the United States government, was to wrestle away the Federal Reserve from the twelve Jewish banks that controlled it and cancel all internal government debts by redistributing gold.[16]

An exchange between the President's son, Elliott, and Coughlin's spokesman, Reverend Edward Lodge Curran, encapsulated the Christian Front's attacks on the administration throughout 1939. Elliott Roosevelt's July 15 broadcast on the Mutual Broadcasting System called Coughlin an "anti-Semitic compounder of stories" who was only interested in his silver re-monetization plan. Citing Coughlin's purchase of 500,000 ounces of the precious metal[17] in the broadcast, the younger Roosevelt attempted to disgrace Coughlin by implying that the priest's monetary plans were self-serving — strictly for his own profit, and were not an economic rescue mission. Roosevelt further assailed the Shrine of the Little Flower as a clearinghouse for Nazi propaganda and charged that, in turn, the Nazis consistently quoted Coughlin's anti-Semitic statements. Elliott suggested that "censorship may not be too high a price to pay to silence the priest's anti-Semitic rants."[18]

The response from Coughlin's camp focused on Roosevelt's censorship remarks,

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which had fueled conspiracy theories that the government's goal was to silence the Radio Priest because he was the only one speaking the truth. Roosevelt was accused of using "grade-school logic" to equate the priest's anti-communism with anti-Semitism, thus hoping to deflect a common criticism of Coughlin (and the Christian Front, for that matter). The Front's tirades against the Roosevelts and New Dealers asked who better than Elliott Roosevelt would know about communists, considering his family was friends with so many fellow travelers. Father Coughlin subsequently rejected an invitation to respond to Roosevelt, in favor of responding through Father Curran.[19]

Edward Lodge Curran responded to Elliott Roosevelt a week later, claiming that these otherwise "false and fictitious assaults" only merited a response because they were voiced by the President's son. Curran's broadcast and resulting pamphlet, *A Reply to Elliott Roosevelt*, published by Coughlin's publisher, was an unqualified defense of Coughlin, focusing on the accusation of anti-Semitism and censorship, and praising the radio priest as the only person in the public eye speaking the truth. Coughlin was called the "Most outstanding crusader in the cause for social justice in the United States for the past twelve years …" Calling Coughlin the true defender of common, Christian Americans, Curran maintained that:

> … his voice was the only voice raised in the cause of social justice; the only voice translating the message of the Encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII and Pope Pius XI into the language of the common people; the only voice calling for a living annual wage; the only voice calling for increase of production, justice of distribution and plenteous consumption of wealth of America; the only voice denouncing, even as Pope Pius XI denounced, the tyranny of the money changers in the temple and the slavery which the international dictators of credit have imposed upon a once free and a once happy family … His message of social justice was based upon and inflamed by the principles of Christ and the Christian civilization which Christ gave the world.[20]

Curran portrayed Coughlin as a believer in racial and religious tolerance. After

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all, millions of common people (Catholics, Protestants, *and* Jews) depended on Coughlin's voice and knowledge of economic facts, as opposed to the administration's, as inspiration to lead them to the promised land of peace and plenty. According to Curran's *Reply*, millions were in agreement with Coughlin's "fight to break money monopoly that brought these United States to its knees in an economic depression and that would bury these United States of America to a totalitarian grave."[21] By following the New Deal, rather than Coughlin's theories, the country was on the precipice of ruin. The government's efforts to find work and aid the unemployed (who were in that situation through no fault of their own) were denounced as "starvation wages." Relief for the poor should have been "a transitory inn on the way to home." However, the New Deal was creating a situation where the common people were becoming irreparably beholden to the federal government, which was promoting, according to the Coughlinites, a Communistic system.[22]

Nothing embodied Roosevelt's communistic tendencies more, according to Curran, than Elliott's demand that Coughlin's "anti-Semitic oratory" be censored. The Brooklyn priest stated that the call for "censorship" was strange for a New Dealer, who was supposed to be a liberal — after all, censorship is the "bugaboo of all liberals."[23] Curran attempted to turn the table on Roosevelt, claiming it was Elliott who had placed himself outside the mainstream by calling for censorship. Censoring Coughlin was part of a grand plan of the New Dealers to silence the opposition because the truth was that the "New Deal dynasty, not satisfied with having attempted a purge of Senators, is now trying to purge all citizens who dare criticize the New Deal experimentations."[24] Coughlin, it was claimed, was on the air because the common people wanted him there

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— because elected officials had betrayed the interests of the people by an "iniquitous financial system which has robbed Congress … of the right to create and control the medium of the distribution of wealth."[25] Coughlin was not part of a family dynasty, not a whip of patronage, and, therefore, could speak the truth about the administration. That was the real reason, according to the *Reply*, why the New Dealers wanted to silence the radio priest.[26]

For Curran, Coughlin, and their ideological followers, the "Communistic" strategy of smearing those whom they were attacking was employed only to destroy reputations. And this strategy was required only if the accuser, in this case the President's son, had no proof for the slanderous accusation. Curran was referring to labeling every anticommunist as an anti-Semite. Curran continued with his broadcast, claiming Elliott offered no proof for his charge against Coughlin's anti-Semitism, "just a rehash of what is being said by the Leftist leader of this country who thinks no charge too low or too unworthy if it succeeds in smearing the object of its attack."[27] He challenged Elliott Roosevelt to find proof of anti-Semitism, but he said this was an impossible task because there was no evidence. Curran's retort to the anti-Semitic accusation included the same rhetoric that was being purveyed by Coughlin himself, which was then filtered down to the Christian Front on the streets of New York. Curran rhetorically asked the Roosevelt family where were their voices when "Red Loyalist troops butchered Catholic men, women and children by tens of thousands?"; when "Stalin liquidated the Ukraine?"; when "Mexico persecuted Catholics?"[28] In an attempt to prove to Catholics that the administration was actually guilty of racism, he cited the Roosevelt family's support of Hugo Black's appointment to the Supreme Court, since Black had been an acknowledged

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member of the anti-Catholic Ku Klux Klan.[29]

Anti-Coughlin factions viewed Curran's defense of Coughlin as a disservice to Catholicism. "No one but a self-deceiving Coughlinite fanatic believes that Coughlin is a good Democrat and free of prejudice," wrote *The Jewish Examiner*. Coughlinism was described as the opposite of Americanism and as an enemy of Catholicism — the same type of rhetoric promoted by the Coughlinites themselves.[30]

The criticisms heaped upon FDR and the New Deal by the likes of Coughlin and Curran were reinforced by the braggadocio of Front members on their street corner soapboxes. They referred specifically to Father Curran's attack on Elliot Roosevelt during their street rallies the following week. The Front picked-up on Curran's theme that President Roosevelt was attempting to create a dictatorship, and whipped up fears that FDR wanted to disband Congress. Topics that were pertinent at the moment were also raised, ranging from employment questions, to refugees and immigration, to neutrality and the embargo. Everything that was wrong with the nation was blamed on the New Dealers and their co-conspirators.[31]

* * *

Coughlinites offered the country scapegoats for the economic misery caused by the Roosevelt recession between the end of 1937 and the summer of 1938. At a time when nationwide employment in manufacturing fell 23%, national income plunged by 13%, and relief rolls in New York City began to rise (after a downward trend, 1935-1937), some in the New York Irish communities began to focus their bitterness towards Jews. Increased federal spending in 1938 and 1939 prevented the recession from getting worse, but the economic situation was not getting better — unemployment still hovered

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at approximately ten million. The New Deal's credibility was severely damaged, and Coughlin and his followers had the answer.[32]

Two days before announcing the formation of the Million League, Father Coughlin spoke before a crowd of four thousand at LaSalle Field in Lansingburg, New York on May 21, 1938. He now described the New Deal as "un-intentionally Communistic." The president's policies of relief, the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), and the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) were all part of a program to "destroy confidence" in American democracy. These policies might now fool people, but eventually the policies would ruin them.[33] Less than a year later, Coughlin alleged that the Depression was deliberately created to generate panic which would lead to a communist revolution. The Depression has "robbed you of your banks savings account, then your jobs and, in many cases, your homes — and nobody in all America shot a banker! … We continue without jobs, 12 million of us; 22 million subsist on dole rations — and we do not revolt! … How much will we stand?"[34] The Christian Front repeated Coughlin's charges. A complex web of communist infiltration into government programs, perpetrated either by the New Dealers themselves, or "the certain minority" they were beholden to (i.e. Jews and their international financier allies), was the explanation for all economic and employment problems good Christians suffered.

Throughout the months of July and August 1939 the economy, unemployment (both local and national) and the refugee/immigrant problem were all major themes of CF speakers, especially at Columbus Circle, Harlem, the Upper West Side, the Hollis-Queens Village area, and the South Bronx. All of these areas, including Columbus

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Circle, a common meeting ground for various protest groups on the periphery of Manhattan's Hell's Kitchen, reflected neighborhoods that contained the necessary ingredients for ethnic tensions during the Great Depression. Those ingredients included Jewish occupational successes sustained during the latter years of the Depression causing some difficulties in inter-group relations along with a belief that anti-Catholic job discrimination that was being ignored by the press and community leaders. That was in contrast to the perception that any outdoor speaker who assailed Jews was denounced by publications like *The Voice for Human Rights*. While Jewish success did adversely affect their relationship with Italians, these accomplishments posed a more serious problem with older established groups: Germans and Irish, who were watching their hard-earned gains destroyed by the economic chaos caused by the Depression.[35]

Nevertheless, there was tension between Jews and Italians that was exploited by the Christian Front. Emblematic of these tensions was the situation in the men's clothing industry. An increasing number of Italians were employed in the Jewish-dominated business. By 1938, Italians represented the single largest group of workers, while executives and foremen of the factories were predominately Jewish. Ronald Bayor concluded that in the occupational areas in which Italians were dependent on Jews there was an undercurrent of resentment based on envy because Italians viewed themselves in lower status positions. Additionally, resentment may have also developed because of the large number of unemployed Italian youth during the economic collapse, versus a lesser number of Jewish unemployed youth.[36] This may account for a remark by a member of the ILGWU at one of the first Christian Front meetings at St. Paul's. On July 14, 1938, a

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man identifying himself as Sicilian complained, "… what about my union [Garment Workers]? 65% of the union is Sicilian and we don't hold one office."[37]

Some Italians viewed themselves as trapped between Jewish and Anglo-Saxon employers who had ethnically biased hiring practices. In a February 14, 1939 letter to the *Brooklyn Tablet*, Salvatore Marturano of Brooklyn complained that "An Italian of ability cannot obtain a position in Anglo-Saxon controlled Wall St. for reasons that are purely racial. It is a funny thing, now we are in a wedge between Jewish employers and Anglo-Saxons. The former in reprisal for persecutions in totalitarian states and the latter for their espousal of the Nordic superiority doctrine, which as everybody knows is highly fallacious."[38]

Italian anti-Semitic propaganda spread exponentially in Italian neighborhoods throughout the city in 1939. Italian radio programs and the pro-fascist Italian newspapers *Il Progresso*, *Il Corriere*, and *Il Grido Della Stirpe* were fueling Italian anti-Semitism by promoting a "pogrom spirit" among Italian-Americans across the country. The economically depressed Italian community found itself easy prey to demagogues, such as Coughlin, who explained all their woes as to the work of Jewish sweatshop owners who were exploiting them. Italian garment workers were also anxious because of rumors that their Jewish employers were going to replace them with even more recently arrived refugees.[39]

The Irish were concerned, irked, increasingly resentful, and put on the defensive about their occupational status when better-educated Jews were getting jobs at a time when jobs were scarce, especially in the traditionally Irish dominated fields of teaching,

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civil service and law. As the Irish were becoming downwardly mobile, the antagonism between them and Jews increased in ethnically mixed neighborhoods.[40]

* * *

Not surprisingly, on the blocks where Christian Front activity took place in Harlem, there were more than four times as many Irish families than Jewish families (2,003 to 447); German families outnumbered Jewish families (751 to 447); and Jews only slightly outnumbered Italian families (447 to 392). The situation was similar on the Upper West Side, where Irish families again outnumbered Jewish families at a four to one ratio (1,658 to 436); there were almost twice as many German families as Jewish families (752 to 436); and Jews slightly outnumbered Italians (436 to 374). The situation was the same in the area surrounding Columbus Circle. Only in Hollis-Queens Village, where foreign-born families accounted for a mere 12.38% of the population in areas of CF activity (census tracts 496, 498, and 566), were the numbers more equal, albeit rather small. Here, Germans were predominant in the neighborhood, with sixty-three families, followed by the Irish (29 families), Jews (22 families), and Italians (17 families).[41] The Front that operated in this area of Queens Village seems to be more based on ethnicity, rather than finding a scapegoat for economic despair. On the blocks where the Front held their rallies, the annual income was middle- and upper-middle class, ranging from $1,800 to $4,499 per year.[42]

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Chart 5: All Economic Topics by Date, 1939

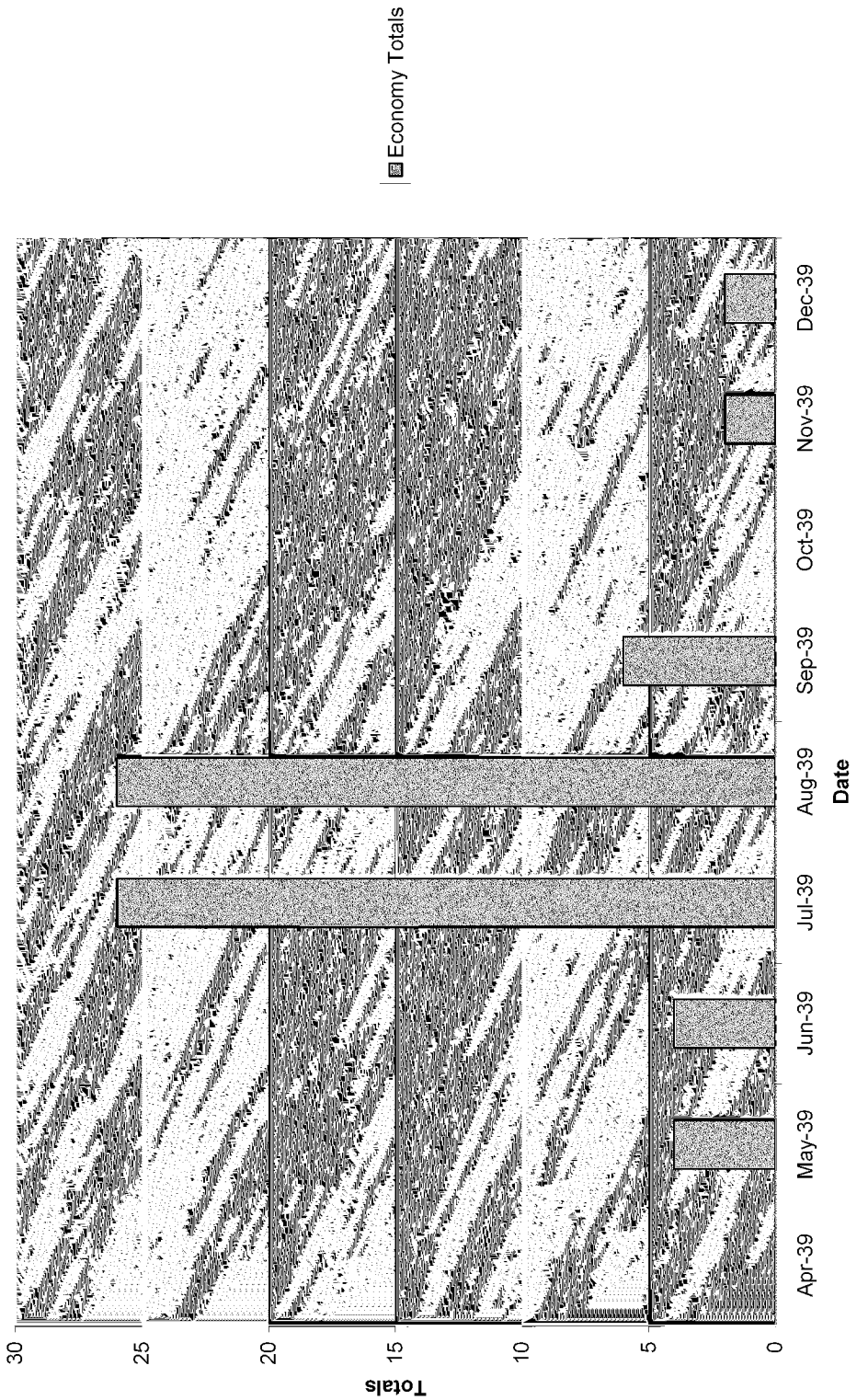

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Chart 6: All Economic Topics by Location, 1939

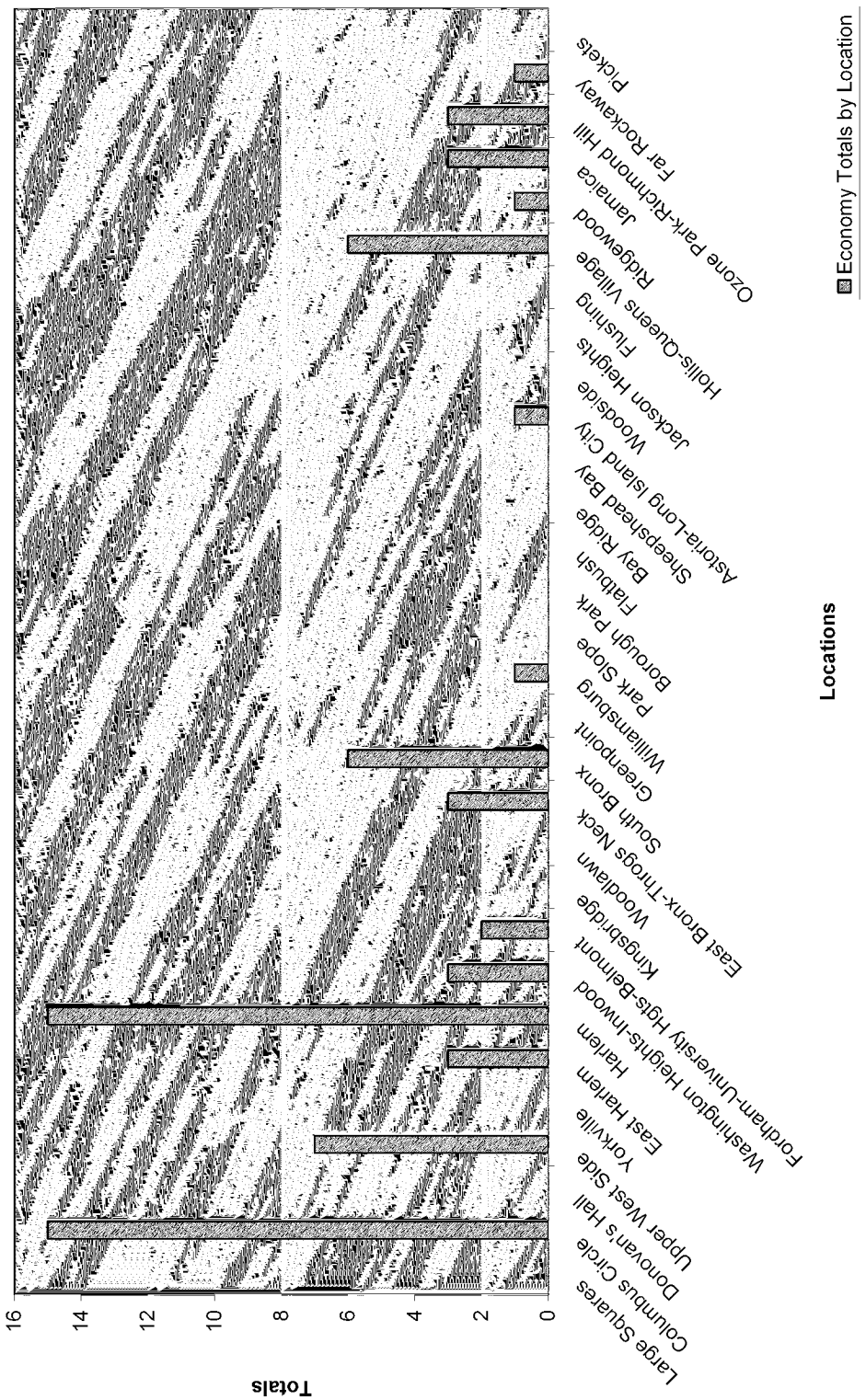

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Chart 7: Economic Topics Subcategories by Date, 1939

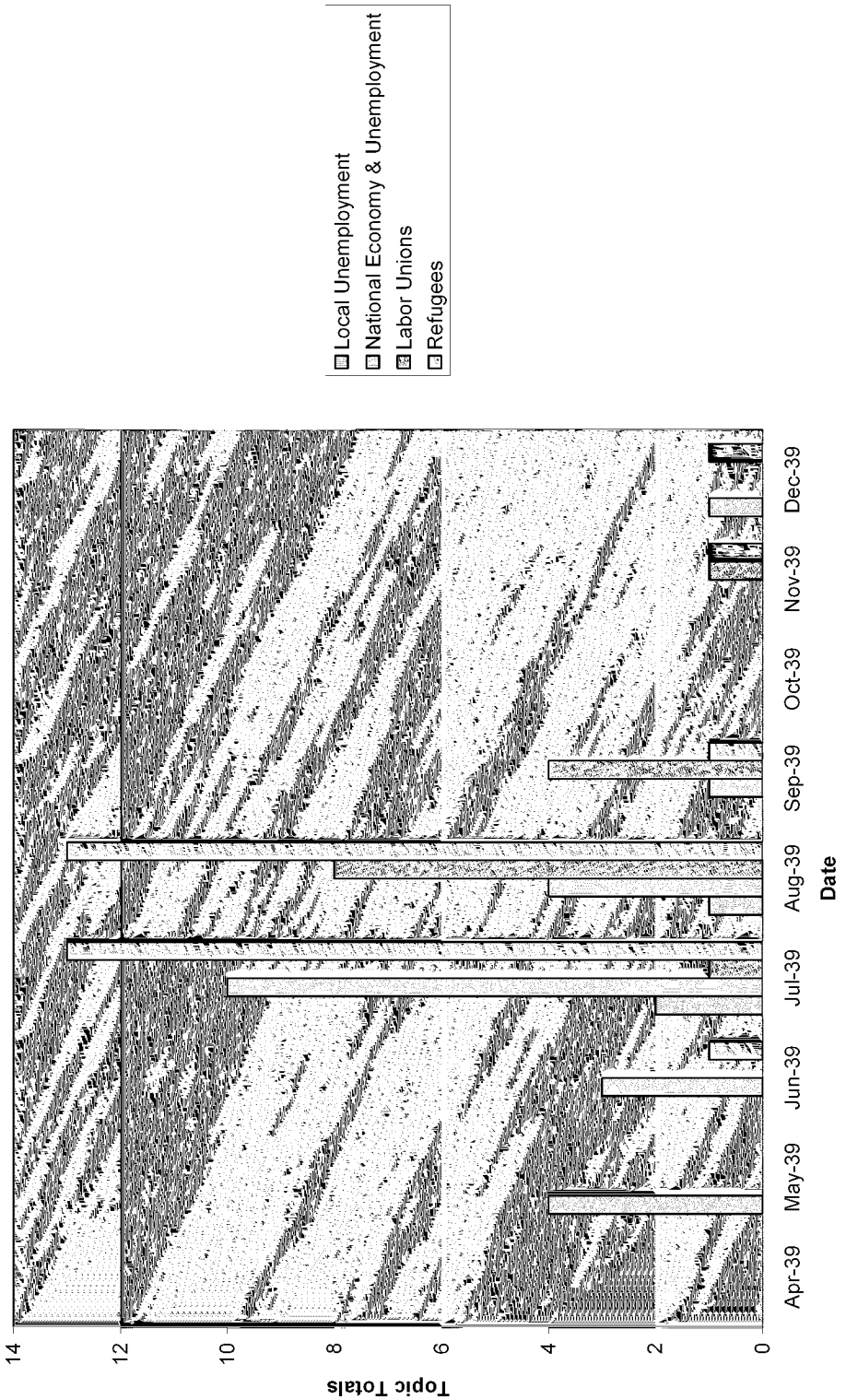

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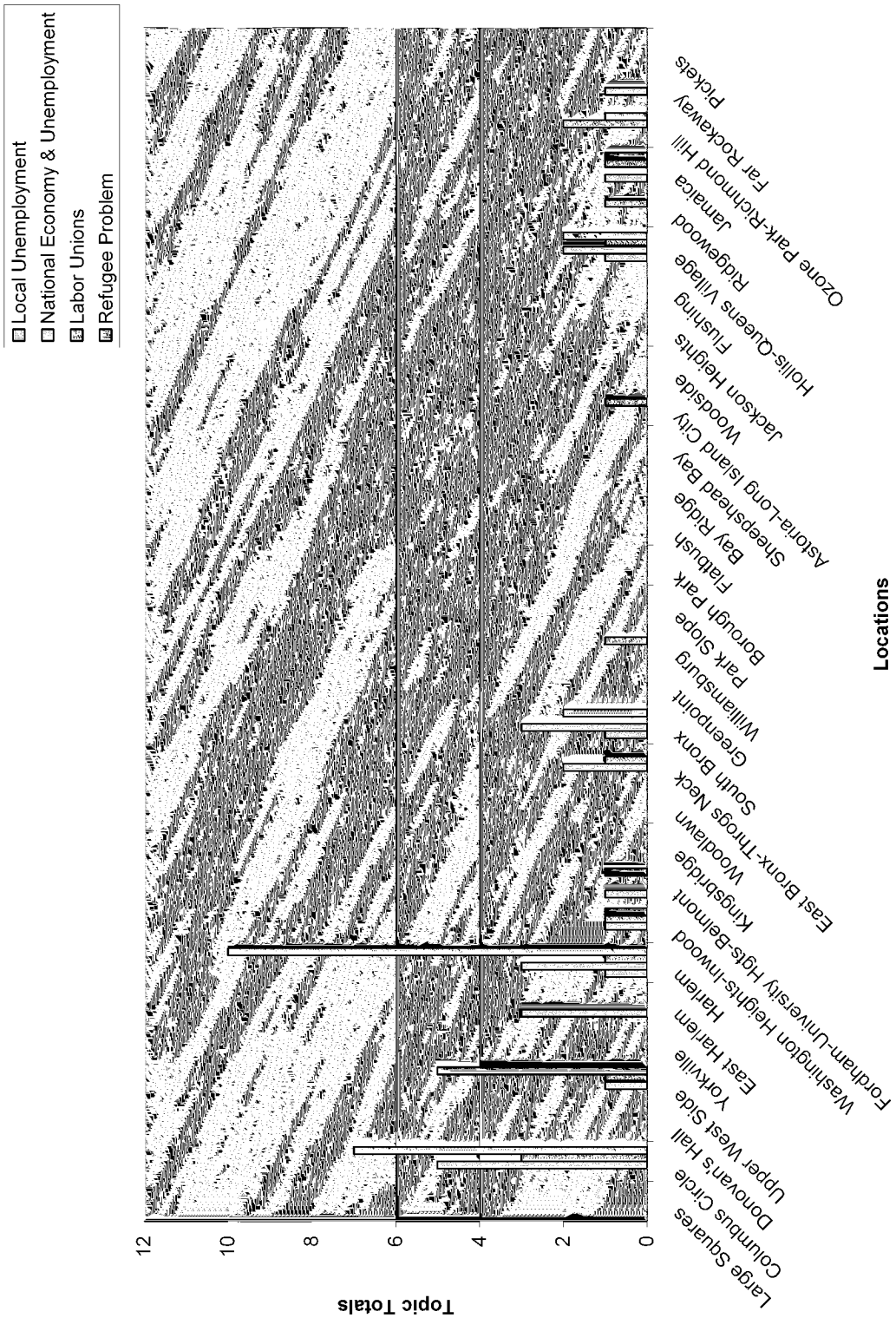
Chart 8: Economic Topics Subcategories by Location, 1939



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In the South Bronx, especially in census tract area 43, the Irish saw the newly arrived Jews in an equal or superior economic state, considering that most of those living in this working class neighborhood earned less than $1,800 per year. Jews living in this area represented a heavy concentration of white-collar (as opposed to unskilled) labor: 12.8% of the Jews in the labor force were employers and own-account workers and only 1.7% were on public emergency work, as compared to 7.5% of the Irish. 12.7% of Jews were seeking work versus 17.6% of the Irish.[43] And it was on these particular blocks that the Christian Front held street meetings in which they ranted about the employment situation both national and local.

The Christian Front blamed unemployment on the Jews, using Coughlin and Curran's explanations. The solution to the employment problem was usually to buy only from Christian shops and merchants, a matter to be discussed in the following chapters. One CF speaker suggested that the unemployed in the audience sell *Social Justice* to make a little money. He told them to write to Royal Oak and request a bundle of *Social Justice* copies, which they could pay for after selling.[44] To explain the failings of the New Deal's relief programs, the Christian Front and its supporters pointed to what they referred to as the New Deal's communistic-corrupted policies. Merwin K. Hart, President of the New York State Economic Council and a Front supporter, accused the government of avoiding investigations of the Workers Alliance (which had the Department of Welfare "by the throat") and the Emergency Relief Bureau in New York City because doing so would expose communist control of both.[45]

Individuals' problems with relief offices, specifically the Home Relief Bureau, were often blamed on communist infiltration. George Gunning, a Christian Front

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organizer and chairman of at least thirteen Front meetings in the summer of 1939 (and the man who had suggested selling *Social Justice* to relieve unemployment woes), recounted his demoralizing experience in failing to acquire home relief for himself and his family. Gunning claimed to have waited for hours before being interviewed and was told that his case would have to be investigated because he was not a member of the communist-infiltrated Workers Alliance. No investigator appeared in a reasonable time, so he went back to the Home Relief Bureau and threatened to expose them to the press. His medical exam was given by an "eagle-beaked" doctor who pronounced him fit for manual labor, even though he was "incapacitated because of a hernia and being blind, partly, in one eye." He told the Bureau representative that he had office experience, but was told he must do manual labor or be removed from the relief rolls.[46]

Gunning lived on the Upper West Side, at 69 West 108th Street, in a neighborhood that fit the profile Bayor predicted would have tensions based on ethnicity and employment status. It was predominantly Irish (39.8% of all foreign born heads-of-household). German (10.3%) and Jewish (8.2%) families followed in immigrant population. The block Gunning lived on was in fact the poorest in the entire neighborhood, with an average income of less than $1,800 per year. To the west was upper-middle and upper-class housing (just south of Columbia University), with average incomes of $3,000 to $9,999 per year, an area were most of the Jews lived. Even the blocks immediately surrounding Gunning's apartment building, although lower-middle class (annual incomes of $1,800 to $2,999) were still all higher incomes than his street. Therefore, it is not surprising that resentment and hostility, embodied in Front action and rhetoric, existed among those who lived there. Gunning was seeking a rationalization for

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his predicament, which he concluded was the result of a communist conspiracy, bolstered by Jewish complicity.[47]

Another Front speaker claimed he had been fired from his City Hall job for his CF activities. Civil Service jobs were supposedly reserved for "a certain minority," i.e. Jews.[48] The Front speaker known as "Panama Bill," speaking on the corner of LaSalle Street and Amsterdam Avenue in Harlem, called for more housing in the area, which was over 25% immigrant and whose heavily Irish and German population outnumbered Jews over four to one. Implying Jews received favoritism, he stated that only Williamsburg received housing improvements and that it was built for the purpose of housing communists because sixty communist organizations controlled real estate there. In Far Rockaway, Queens, a Front speaker complained that government programs that were supposedly designed to benefit everyone, such as the Federal Deposit Corporation and Home Loaners Owners Association, were actually only financially benefiting bankers.[49]

Harry Hopkins's Works Progress Administration was often attacked by the CF. Much like Gunning in his complaints against the Home Relief Bureau, Front speakers targeted the WPA when they did not get jobs. Not surprisingly, the explanation for not gaining employment, or for losing jobs gained through the WPA, was religion and conspiracy. This paranoia was not limited to Front speakers, and this may have made the CF message more credible for those attending street rallies. Michael Gunn, an organizer of the WPA Construction Workers wrote a letter to the *Brooklyn Tablet* of March 11, 1939, that called for the immediate withdrawal of WPA Form 605. This form requested that workers give full particulars for their entire income from all sources, inside or outside the WPA, in an obvious attempt to dissuade workers who might otherwise not

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need employment from gaining jobs in the WPA. Gunn claimed that the framers of the law "KNOW that the workers will purposely lie about their income. The deception will frustrate the intentions of the WPA administration." He continued to write that the administration could not be deceived, so an "army of snoopers and spies" with the titles of investigators and inspectors were investigating the private lives of American citizens. This would eventually lead to a "Soviet Slave State." After all, the Workers Alliance, which was under communist control and had the power to summon WPA superintendents in Brooklyn to meetings to listen to their representatives, could have stopped Form 605, but did not because the form brought America closer to a soviet state.[50]

The need for jobs and the perceived lack of action by the WPA made this New Deal program an easy target. "Panama Bill" referred to the "Christian plight" in a speech on 133rd Street and Amsterdam Avenue, when he railed about the abuse Christians were subject to when applying for home relief and the WPA and how WPA strikes were caused by the Workers Alliance.[51] George Boian, speaking at Columbus Circle, complained that when Christians went to the WPA, all they did was ask their name and address and tell them to come back the next day. "Christians then get jobs with shovels and the international commoratskys get office jobs — jobs with a white collar." Refugees, who somehow always seemed to get a job, worked in Bolshevik (that is Jewish) restaurants.[52] There were CF speeches about the WPA in the South Bronx and in the East Bronx-Throgs Neck section of the borough. The East Bronx-Throgs Neck neighborhoods where Christian Front activity took place were nearly one-quarter foreign-born, mostly Italians (35.6%). Irish and German families were also predominant in these neighborhoods; nearly double the Jewish population.[53]

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Crowds of between 150 and 300 listened to some of the more active CF speakers, like Thomas Finneran, Joseph Hubert, Joseph McWilliams, and Daniel Kurtz, attack the WPA. McWilliams, noted for eventually leading the Christian Mobilizers, and Kurtz, leader of the Queens CF Unit, both traveled the city as speakers. Interestingly, Finneran and Hubert both lived in low-income (less than $2,999 annual income) South Bronx neighborhoods where the Irish were a distinct minority, out-numbered by Italians, Germans, Poles and Austrians; and where Jews constituted the largest foreign-born populations — more than double the Irish population. Possibly feeling victimized themselves by their minority status in their own neighborhoods, they traveled to speak on blocks were they felt they would receive more support for their so-called Christian plight.[54]

* * *

On July 21, 1939, five speakers for the Christian Front stepped onto their soapboxes in Columbus Circle in front of between 250 and 500 people. Each one of these Fronters denounced the same threat facing America: unemployment, followed by the Communist Party. And the reason so many Americans were suffering from unemployment was that refugees were taking jobs away from Americans.[55] It was all part of the same great conspiracy. New Dealers, the communists, and Roosevelt himself had all somehow conspired to allow European refugees (especially Jews) to take the jobs rightfully belonging to Christian Americans (synonymous with "real" Americans), thereby pushing disgruntled unemployed Americans toward the radicalism of communism. This, in turn, would strengthen the power of the Communist Party in America, all of which would lead to the eventual (and in some minds inevitable)

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communist revolution in the United States.

The refugee problem was a major concern of many Americans in 1938 and 1939, although it was the ideologically extreme groups like the Christian Front who formulated communist conspiracy theories. Most Americans viewed the issue strictly in terms of the economy and employment. A survey conducted by the American Institute of Pubic Opinion (AIPO) on November 22, 1938 asked "Should we allow a larger number of Jewish exiles from Germany to come to the United States to live?" Of the 92% who responded with an opinion, an overwhelming 77% answered "No." The follow-up question of "Should our government contribute money to help Jewish and Catholic exiles from Germany settle in lands like Africa and South America?" a majority (57%) of the respondents once again answered "No."[56]

Between 1933, when the Nazis took power in Germany, and 1938, 30% of Germany's 500,000 persecuted Jews became refugees. In March 1938, after the *Anschluss,* the Nazis began expelling Austria's 190,000 Jews. President Roosevelt confronted the refugee crisis, hoping to open the door to Austrian refugees, whose quota status would be clouded because of the disappearance of their country. His solution was to combine the German and Austrian quotas to ensure their full use. And yet, by the fall of 1938, Roosevelt felt powerless to aid these new refugees. The National Origins Act of 1924 allowed only a few potential immigrants into the United States and American officials interpreted the immigration statutes very narrowly to prevent increasing unemployment. The result was that nearly three-quarters of the German quota went unfulfilled and only just over 27,000 German and Austrian refugees actually entered the United States the following year. Pro-immigrant Congressmen, such as Emanuel Cellar

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of Brooklyn, took umbrage with the lack of action on the part of the federal government. He complained in February 1938 that the State Department had a "heartbeat muffled in protocol."[57]

It was the 76th Congress (of which Cellar was a member) and not just the State Department whose heartbeat was muffled. During the 76th Congressional session, 526 private bills were introduced in the House and 137 in the Senate concerning immigration matters. Of these, 225 went to committee in the House; 84 in the Senate, including the Wagner-Rogers Bill, the Reynolds Bill, and the Dempsey Bill. Eventually, 63 became law (32 originated in the House; 31 in the Senate), all but a handful dealt with deportation of aliens.[58]

The problem of Catholic refugees from Germany was discussed at the National Catholic Welfare Conference in Washington, D.C. during the spring of 1938. The Bishop's Committee on Catholic Refugees from Germany reported that Catholic refugees from Germany were numerous and their suffering was acute. The *Brooklyn Tablet* estimated that there were 50,000 Catholic refugees from Germany and 20,000 from Austria, of whom 10%-25% were professionals, i.e. doctors, lawyers, and professors. The reasons given for the professionals' exodus were: their "non-Aryan" status; refusal to comply with unconditional oath of allegiance to Hitler; their Catholic activities; membership in Catholic organizations; refusal to send their children to Nazi schools; refusal to join Nazi party organizations. Additionally, the *Tablet* reported three hundred Catholic priests who were victims of persecution were forced to leave. Catholic refugees fled to more than a dozen European countries, where they received monetary aid from the Church. However, according to the Bishop's Committee, Catholic financial aid was

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being stretched very thin because of the aid sent to Catholics in Spain. Loans for immigration and settlement were made to refugees already in the United States, but this would allow only twenty individuals (all professionals) to emigrate from Germany between May and November 1938, from a pool of fifty-four who had affidavits filed on their behalf by United States citizens swearing that immigrants will not become public charges.[59]

It would seem logical that both American Jews and Catholics would be allies when it came to the question of refugees. Both groups were being persecuted in Nazi Germany. Both groups had large numbers of refugees who desired to enter the United States. In New York City, those who joined the Christian Front did not see the similarities of suffering of both groups. They saw themselves as being treated unfairly by a corrupt government that provided preferential treatment for Jews. The entrance of Jewish (and other "alien") refugees was perceived strictly in terms of undermining a Christian America. "Panama Bill" exclaimed that the real refugees were the Christians in this country because they were unemployed, not those who were fleeing Europe.[60] The irony was that both groups were barred from entering the country by the same restrictive immigration policies.

In Harlem, where the refugee problem was a Christian Front topic more times than in any other neighborhood, "Panama Bill" warned that the United States was a dumping ground for refugees. Other Fronters, making the correlation between refugees and employment, spoke of "young refugees coming to United States when our own eighteen to twenty-one year old youngsters were sleeping on benches in parks" and of "refugee guards working" at the North Beach Airport.[61] Referring to the airport as an

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example of refugees taking work away from Americans would not have been lost on the crowd of five hundred people on the corner of Dyckman Street and Sherman Avenue. North Beach Airport, built on the site of the old Glenn L. Curtiss Flying School and Airport in northwestern Queens, was a $45 million WPA project, making it the first airport in the United States to be designed, funded, and built with the full participation of the federal government. Ironically, soon after it opened on December 2, 1939, it was renamed for one of the banes of the CF's existence — Fiorello LaGuardia.

The corner of 98th Street and Amsterdam Avenue was on a block almost identical to the one where George Gunning lived in terms of income and ethnic population. Irish families accounted for 31% of the foreign-born heads-of-household. It was the block with the lowest annual income, less than $1,800, surrounded by middle-class incomes of at least $3,000 per year. And it was on this corner that Thomas Maloney claimed shiploads of refugees were coming from South America "at the rate of 17,000 per week to deprive Americans of their jobs." It may not have been a coincidence that he pointed to South America as the source of the problematic refugees because Latin American families constituted a fairly large number of families in this area, comparatively speaking. They were virtually equal in number to Jews, and may have posed an economic threat to the Irish in the immediate community.[62]

In the South Bronx, where ethnic tensions were highest, refugees were portrayed simply as non-Christian job seekers. Christians were losing their jobs not because of the economic mayhem caused by the Great Depression, but rather because they were being replaced by refugees. John Cecil, president of the US Immigration Conference Board, spoke at several members-only Christian Front meetings. At one such meeting in July

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1939, held at the Front's South Bronx headquarters in the Tri-Boro Palace, Cecil requested that the four hundred in attendance take anti-immigration petitions to be signed by ten people. He told the crowd to request ten cents from each of signer to defray costs, "We have fought with dimes to stop this conquest by immigration. We have been fighting with dimes to keep the refugee job seekers out." These petitions were distributed at Christian Front meetings throughout the city. At a members-only meeting in the Hollis-Queens Village section of Queens the following month, it was announced that the anti-immigration petitions were to be sent to the US Immigration Board.[63]

The Christian Front charged that refugees were pawns being used by the government to drive Christians out of jobs, forcing them to go on Home Relief and thus beholden to the New Deal (even though previous accounts demonized all New Deal programs as "abusive" towards Christians). Refugees were referred to as "Super-Americans" because of their seeming innate ability to be cared for (if they were invalid) or being supplied immediately with jobs "the next day" after their arrival. As a further affront to Fronters, refugees were publicly "demanding their Constitutional rights and telling the American people how to run this country." The root of all this dissension, according to men like "Panama Bill" and Daniel Kurtz was, of course, President Roosevelt. He had caused the refugee problem in his effort to make the United States a haven for European refugees. Fronters turned for help to those they viewed as allies in Congress and attempted to rally support in the streets to stop all immigration and to pass immigration and deportation bills.[64]

The bill that probably caused the most controversy was the Wagner-Rogers Bill, introduced on February 9, 1939. The bi-partisan legislation to aid German Jewry was

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introduced by humanitarian-minded members of Congress, Senator Robert Wagner of New York and Representative Edith Nourse Rogers of Massachusetts, and was drawn up in response to Kristallnacht. The refugee bill would have permitted 20,000 refugee children (up to 14 years-old) from persecuted families in Germany to enter the United States between 1939 and 1940, contingent on adequate guarantees being made that the children would not become public charges. The admission of the German refugee children would have been outside the immigration quotas. To avoid labor opposition, the bill provided that the children would not be permitted to work and would join their parents as soon as safety elsewhere was assured. The American Friends Service Committee, which volunteered their services, offered to organize the children's movements and placement. Within twenty-four hours after the plan had become known, 4,000 American families had offered their homes to these children. Radio stations and newspapers were swamped with even more offers.[65]

Nativist and isolationist groups, including the Christian Front, vociferously opposed the Wagner-Rogers bill. By April, when the Congressional hearing started, opposition to the rescue bill was well organized. Typical of this perspective was Francis H. Kinnicutt, president of the Allied Patriotic Societies, who represented thirty isolationist organizations[66] united in opposition of Children's Rescue Bill. Kinnicutt stated, "[T]his is just part of a drive to go back to the condition when we were flooded with foreigners who tried to run the country on different lines from those laid down by the old stock...Strictly speaking, it is not a refugee bill at all, for by the nature of the case most of those admitted would be of the Jewish race." Pierrepoint Moffat, chief of the State Department's Division of European Affairs, wrote in his diary that Roosevelt's own

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cousin and wife of the United States commissioner of immigration James Hougheling, Laura Delano Houghteling, warned that "The trouble with the Wagner-Rogers bill was 20,000 charming children would all too soon grow into 20,000 ugly adults."[67]

Throughout July and August, the Christian Front urged crowds gathered in New York to write their senators not to pass the Wagner-Rogers Bill. Joe Hartery attempted to deflect accusations of prejudice by framing the CF's preaching as "race protection," not race-hatred. He was against the Wagner Bill because it provided homes for 20,000 refugee children, at a time when "hundreds of thousands of our own have to live in slums."[68]

The lobbying in Congress went well for the opposition. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt unsuccessfully appealed to her husband to support the bill. Those in Congress who supported the bill hoped that the President might make his influence felt. Democratic Congresswoman Caroline Love Goodwin O'Day of New York appealed to Roosevelt for a statement in favor of Wagner-Rogers. Roosevelt, refusing to become involved in a subject opposed by many Republicans and bitterly resented by the conservative southern Democrats; preferring to follow public opinion polls that showed most Americans opposed to more immigration, did not publicly support the measure. His secretary returned O'Day's letter, marked on the margin in his own handwriting the notation "File No action FDR." His preference was to allow the Wagner-Rogers Bill to be buried and die in committee that summer, after being tagged with a significant number of amendments.[69]

The Wagner-Rogers Bill's foremost opponent was strong ally of the Christian isolationist coalition, Senator Robert Rice Reynolds, Democrat from North Carolina. He

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was a man who was a "close friend of native fascists, including George Winrod … [and] held in 'high-esteem' by American Nazis" according to John Roy Carlson in *Under Cover*. Reynolds allegedly thought that foreign aliens were the cause of the Depression and of the "material ills" of the country. Carlson claimed that Reynolds wanted to organize a "The Circle of Seven," based on Coughlin's platoons, to hunt for aliens who sought to destroy "our American form of government."[70]

The Senate Committee on Immigration, of which Senator Reynolds was a member, desired a drastic Immigration Restriction Bill. The restrictive Quota Suspension Bill called for a five year suspension on all quota immigration and registration of all aliens in the United States, but it would have included the provisions found in the Wagner-Rogers Bill of admitting 10,000 German refugee children in the country each year for the next two years, if their care was guaranteed by American citizens. The refugee children, however, would be counted towards the German quota. Chair of the committee, Senator Richard Russell of Georgia explained the desire for such a measure, "There is an increasingly strong sentiment in the country to suspend immigration while unemployment is so high."[71]

Less than a week after the Senate Committee called for a restrictive immigration bill, Fronter Michael Evans read his audience a letter supposedly written to the Christian Front membership by Senator Reynolds. On the corner of Springfield Boulevard and Jamaica Avenue in Queens Village, Evans assured the crowd of one hundred fifty that Reynolds was "doing the utmost to protect the American people from losing their jobs and … trying to pass more stringent immigration and deportation laws; fingerprinting all aliens who are not permanent residents; deporting criminal aliens;

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slowing immigration for the next 10 years to give the younger generation an opportunity to get jobs and living as they should."[72] This area of Queens did not represent the ethnic diversity familiar to other hotbeds of CF activity like the South Bronx or Harlem. Reynolds, a noted nativist, lumped together all immigrants as the cause of America's economic chaos, and so his appeal was to the more classic nativist elements of the Front. It was probably more than just a coincidence that Fronter Evans decided to read his letter in this particular neighborhood.

* * *

"We've had enough of sob stuff — it's about time we considered the American people," responded Howard W. Smith of Virginia to Representatives Murdock of Utah and O'Connor of Montana, after the two complained that a provision in Smith's proposed bill that would allow for the deportation of aliens who were members of subversive groups, regardless of the amount of time they were members of these organizations, "violates Christian principles." And so went the debate in the House on July 29, 1939, on what would become the Alien Registration Act of 1940, better known as the Smith Act. The Smith Anti-Alien Bill (which would eventually have a tremendous impact on the pursuit of communists during the 1950s) was passed by House 273-48 the next day.[73] The Bill exploited fears of alien subversion, as had the failed Dempsey Bill earlier that year. Father Coughlin had favored Dempsey's proposal to deport aliens who advocated another form of government than that of the United States. The appeal of a xenophobic immigration bill that resisted a so-called immigrant subversion of Christian America was not lost on the Christian Front.[74] Well before the Smith Act got to the Senate in 1940, the Christian Front was campaigning for its passage. Within a week of the House's

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passage, George Gunning was urging crowds of two and three hundred in the Irish and German neighborhoods of Harlem and the Upper West Side to support the Smith Bill and to write to their senators to pass the bill, along with Reynolds' immigration bill.[75]

Economic desperation was far from the only force driving the Christian Front's anti-FDR and anti-New Deal protests. Once war began in Europe, the economy and employment, along with anything else not directly related to foreign policy, dramatically decreased as the topics of Christian Front agitation. Now, according to the Front, Roosevelt's foreign policies would become even more ruinous for the country.

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Notes

[1] Charles Coughlin, "The Ultimate Aim," March 11, 1934, *Eight Lectures on Labor, Capital and Justice* (Royal Oak, MI.: The Radio League of the Little Flower, 1934) 108.

[2] Coughlin ended his November 27, 1933 radio broadcast, in which he supported Roosevelt's proposed economic policies, by stating, "Ladies and gentleman, this is the day, despite all opposition to the contrary, that you remain steadfast behind the one man who can save this civilization of ours … it is either Roosevelt or Ruin."
An audio clip can be found on http://www.authentichistory.com/audio/1930s/history/19331127_Father_Charles_Coughlin_Supporting_FDR.html.

[3] Brinkley 113.

[4] Charles Coughlin, "Money Control," *The New Deal in Money* (Royal Oak, MI.: The Radio League of the Little Flower, 1933): 104-05, 109.

[5] The six rungs on the ladder to economic prosperity were:

1. Nationalization and revaluation of gold.
2. Restoration and nationalization of silver.
3. Establishment of a Government Bank of Control to issue both currency and credit.
4. Nationalization of all credit.
5. Legislation to extend credit for both production and consumption.
6. Total elimination of National Government Bonds. "If men must make money, let them make it out of industry, out of agriculture, out of professions." Referred to Liberty Bonds as "slave bonds," which "you and your children are expected to honor" for the privilege of destroying European civilization.

Coughlin, "The Ultimate Aim," 103, 114.

[6] Coughlin, "Roosevelt or Ruin and the Gold Law," January 21, 1934, *Eight Lectures on Labor, Capital and Justice* 34, 48.

[7] Charles Coughlin, *Money! Questions and Answers* (Royal Oak, MI.: The National Union for Social Justice, 1936) 7.

[8] *Social Justice*, March 27, 1939: 13. This quote was reported in "Report on Anti-Democratic Statements of Father Coughlin and Social Justice," *Memorandum on Father Coughlin and Social Justice*, American Jewish Committee (1940), AJCL.

[9] "Readers Forum: It Takes Time But Some Catch Up," *Brooklyn Tablet*, May 14, 1938: 8.

[10] By attacks, I am referring to speeches that do not specifically address a policy or

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program, but are unfocused diatribes against the administration. An example is William Moran's denunciation of FDR for not solving the financial or economic problems at 103rd Street and Columbus Avenue. Specific attacks on unemployment and economic policies are dealt with separately. Moran reference, *see* Police Report, Aug. 10, 1939, OCF.

[11] This meeting took place at 103rd Street and Columbus Avenue. According to the 1940 census, the neighborhood were Christian Front activity took place had a foreign born population of 13,488 (32.31% of the total population). 1,658 of the 5,698 foreign born heads-of-household were Irish (29.09%).
The IRA bombings lasted until May 1940.
"The minority" was coded language referring to Jews.
Police Report, Aug. 10, 1939, OCF.

[12] Coughlin, "Roosevelt or Ruin and the Gold Law," January 21, 1934, *Eight Lectures on Labor, Capital and Justice* 47.

[13] Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, July 12, 1939, OCF.

[14] Smith announced his plan on July 20, 1939 at Springfield Boulevard and Jamaica Avenue, Queens, before 300 people.
Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, July 21, 1939; Report of Meeting, Lt. Stauffer, 105th Pct., July 20, 1939, OCF.

[15] William Gerald Bishop, box 613, vol. VIII: 4413, 4425, 4503, 4658; Macklin Boettger, box 615, vol. VI: 2862; Alfred Quinlan, box 613, vol. VIII: 4144; Michael Vill, box 614, vol. VII: 3719-20, USAJP-CCF.

[16] Vernon Criss, box 611, vol. IV: 1726; Denis Healy, box 612, vol. I: 527-28; 533, USAJP-CCF.

[17] Elliott Roosevelt was not specific as to the date of Coughlin's silver purchase. He may have been referring to the President's 1934 order to Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr. to make public the names of individuals with large silver holdings. This list of names included Father Coughlin's secretary, Amy Collins, who owned 500,000 ounces of silver and Maureen Thomas, wife of Coughlin's friend Edward Thomas, a Detroit insurance salesmen, who owned 100,000 ounces. Marcus 68; Brinkley 125.

[18] *New York Times*, July 17, 1939.

[19] *New York Times*, July 17, 1939, July 19, 1939.

[20] Edward Lodge Curran, *A Reply to Elliott Roosevelt* (Royal Oak, MI: Charles E. Coughlin, 1939).

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[21] *Ibid.*

[22] *Ibid.*

[23] *Ibid.*

[24] *Ibid.*

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] *Ibid.*

[27] *Ibid.*

[28] *Ibid.*

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] *The Jewish Examiner*, July 28, 1939: 4; *The Pittsburgh Catholic*, July 27, 1939: 6, Edward Lodge Curran file, TSC-DBA.

[31] James McCluskey spoke about Father Curran's response to Elliott Roosevelt at the corner of Dyckman Street and Sherman Avenue in Manhattan on July 29, 1939. McCluskey wondered out-loud on whose behalf President Roosevelt was speaking, when he claimed that FDR stated "Congress has out-lived its usefulness." Det. Joseph Carrington to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, July 31, 1939, OCF.

[32] Bayor 13, 24; Michael Parrish, *Anxious Decades* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1992) 376-79.

[33] *Brooklyn Tablet*, May 28, 1938: 4.

[34] *Social Justice*, April 24, 1939: 4. This excerpt is also quoted in the "Report on Anti-Democratic Statements of Father Coughlin and Social Justice," *Memorandum on Father Coughlin and Social Justice*, American Jewish Committee (1940), AJCL.

[35] Bayor, p. 20-21; *Brooklyn Tablet*, Sept. 23, 1939: 8.

[36] Bayor 20-21.

[37] "Memorandum on the Christian Front," Christian Front file, AJCL.

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[38] *Brooklyn Tablet*, Feb. 25, 1939, p. 8.

[39] Mary Testa, "Anti-Semitism Amongst Italian-Americans," *Equality*, I (July 1939): 27-28.

[40] Bayor 26-29.

[41] Columbus Circle is located in census tract 145, where there were 193 Irish families, 60 Italian, 52 German, and 43 Jewish.
United States, Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census Tract Data on Population and Housing, New York City: 1940* (New York: Welfare Council Committee on 1940 Census Tract Tabulations for New York City, September 1942).

[42] *New York City Market Analysis* (New York: News Syndicate, Co., New York Times, Daily Mirror, & Hearst Consolidated Publications, 1943): Queens Village, Queens area 24.

[43] Bayor 159; *New York City Market Analysis*: North New York, Bronx area 1.

[44] Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, July 12, 1939, OCF.

[45] *New York Times*, May 16, 1939: 22; "What Is the Christian Front?": 2.

[46] Report of Meeting, Sgt. Roulston, 30 Pct., August 8, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 23, 1939, OCF.

[47] This neighborhood is census tract area 193, where 35.6% of the population was foreign born. Bayor briefly mentions the Upper West Side on p. 162. *New York City Market Analysis*: Columbia University, Manhattan area 16 and Manhattanville, Manhattan area 17.

[48] Joseph or John or Edward Nolan, Sangerbund Hall, 168-15 91st Ave., Queens, (December 11, 1939). Police Report, Dec. 12, 1939, OCF.

[49] Ironically, the ratio of Italians and Germans to Jews in Williamsburg, which was 20% immigrant, was approximately 3 to 1. *Census Tract Data on Population and Housing, New York City: 1940*.
Police Report, Aug. 15, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 26, 1939, OCF.

[50] *Brooklyn Tablet*, March 11, 1939: 9.

[51] Police Report, Aug. 16, 1939, OCF.

[52] Ptl. Francis L. Hillick to Commanding Officer, Third Division, Sept. 26, 1939, OCF.

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[53] Report of Meeting, Sgt. Delano, 42nd Pct., and Det. Gwozdo, Alien Squad, July 15, 1939; Det. William A. Justy to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, Aug. 9, 1939, OCF.

[54] Finneran lived on 1017 Trinity Avenue according to ten separate police reports filed by the NYPD in 1939. This address correlates to census tract area 135, where there were 1,058 foreign-born heads-of-household (28.4% of the population was foreign born). Of these households, 255 were Jewish, 148 German, 137 Polish, 107 Austrian, and 101 Irish. Hubert lived on 917 Tinton Avenue according to thirteen separate police reports filed by the NYPD in 1939 and January 1940. This address correlates to census tract area 77, where there were 1,032 foreign-born heads-of-household (33.6% of the population was foreign born). Of these households, 178 were Jewish, 133 Italian, 105 Polish, 88 Austrian, 79 German, and 77 Irish. *Census Tract Data on Population and Housing, New York City: 1940*; *New York City Market Analysis*: St. Mary's Park, Bronx area 2, and Morrisania, Bronx area 4.

[55] The five Christian Front speakers were Thomas Mahoney, Lawrence Gilpatrick, Paul Antonio, Margaret Maher (or Mayo), and Jerry White. Det. Louis P. Muscatiello to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, July 22, 1939; Report of Meeting, Lt. Beech, 18th Pct., July 21, 1939, OCF.

[56] Hadley Cantril, ed. *Public Opinion, 1935-1946* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1951) 385.

[57] Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (New York: Oxford UP, 1979) 166-67.

[58] Harvey C. Mansfield, Sr. "The Legislative Veto and the Deportation of Aliens," *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Spring 1941): 281-286.

[59] *Brooklyn Tablet*, May 7, 1938.

[60] Report of Meeting, Sgt. Roulston, 30 Pct., August 8, 1939, OCF.

[61] Police Report, July 26, 1939; Det. Joseph Carrington to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, July 31, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 15, 1939, OCF.

[62] Maloney lived in the South Bronx. The census tract referred to is area 185. Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, July 14, 1939, OCF; *New York City Market Analysis*: Columbia University, Manhattan area 16 and Manhattanville, Manhattan area 17.

[63] Police Report, June 21, 1939; Police Report, July 11, 1939, Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, Aug. 4, 1939, OCF.

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[64] John Cecil was referring to a rally at Union Square, probably in July 1939, with respect to refugees' public demand. Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation, July 28, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 16, 1939; Police Report, Nov. 22, 1939; Police Report, Dec. 5, 1939, OCF.

[65] Rafael Medoff, "Kristallnacht and the World's Response" *The Jewish Week*, November 9, 2003; William R. Perl, *The Holocaust Conspiracy: An International Policy of Genocide* (New York: Shapolsky Publishers, 1989): 19-21.

[66] These organizations included the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, the Society of Mayflower Descendants, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Lord's Day Alliance of the United States, and the Daughters of the Confederacy.

[67] Medoff; Perl 19-21.

[68] Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, July 11, 1939; Det. Louis P. Muscatiello to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, Aug. 15, 1939, OCF.

[69] *Ibid.*

[70] Carlson 228-230.

[71] Senator Reynolds preferred a suspension of quota immigration for ten years. *New York Times*, July 1, 1939.

[72] Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Information Bureau, July 7, 1939, OCF.

[73] *New York Times,* July 29, 1939; July 30, 1939.
The Smith Anti-Alien Bill had five classifications denominated as anarchistic and makes membership in any of them grounds for deportation or refusal of a visa:

1. Aliens who are anarchists
2. Aliens who advise or teach or are members of any group that advises or teaches opposition to all organized government.
3. Aliens who knowingly or willfully advocate, abet, advise, or teach the duty, necessity, desirability or propriety of violently overthrowing" the government.
4. Aliens, who write, publish or distribute literature advocating the overthrow of the government, or anarchism or sabotage.
5. Aliens who are members of groups that teaches the overthrow of the government, anarchism or sabotage.

In its 1940 version, the Smith Act instituted the fingerprinting of alien residents in the US, who were forbidden to "knowingly or willfully advocate, abet, advise, or teach the duty, necessity, desirability or propriety of violently overthrowing" the government. It was the Smith Act of June 28, 1940 that gave the Federal Bureau of Investigation the

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legal pretext for investigating and prosecuting members of the Communist Party. Richard Gid Powers, *Broken*, (New York: The Free Press, 2004) 176.

[74] The Dempsey Bill was passed in the House, but not in the Senate. "From the Tower; Deport Alien Critics," *Social Justice*, April 3, 1939: 5.

[75] Report of Meeting, Sgt. Roulston, 30 Pct., August 8, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 10, 1939, OCF.

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Chapter 3 No Foreign Entanglements and the Un-Neutrality Bill: November 1938 – December 1939

"President Roosevelt has destroyed cattle and plowed under wheat and cotton in his efforts to bring back prosperity, and now he is trying to involve this country in war and destroy human lives to bring back prosperity."

- Thomas J. Varley, September 13, 1939[1]

In 1939 the Christian Front's agitation spilled over from domestic to foreign policy. At the beginning of the year the Front's attention was still focused on the Civil War in Spain but by year's end, the isolationist-interventionist debate had moved on to the general war in Europe, and the Christian Front, though its rhetorical extremes, helped push the isolationist position outside the limits of political respectability. This unintended consequence of its political activities may, in fact, the Christian Front's most significant impact on American history.

When Christian Fronter Thomas Varley attacked Roosevelt's foreign policy before a crowd of two hundred gathered on the corner of Saratoga and Jefferson Avenues in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, the Agricultural Adjustment Act under which Secretary of Agriculture Henry Wallace had ordered farmers to plow under ten million acres of cotton, slaughter six million piglets and 200,000 sows, had been defunct for nearly three years after it had been ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. But this willful destruction still symbolized for many, among them the Christian Front, the moral obscenity of capitalism.[2] Varley, echoing the similar words of Senator Burton Wheeler, was reminding Americans of that destruction to charge that this time Roosevelt was not just going to destroy swine and cattle — he was going to plow under millions of American boys.

* * *

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In early 1939 American diplomats and European leaders still thought that diplomacy would manage to prevent war in Europe. Winston Churchill was convinced, however, that the one thing that might prevent war with Germany was the Nazi regime's fear that the United States might enter the fight. With this in mind, Roosevelt reported to the Senate Military Affairs Committee that if Hitler succeeded in dominating Europe (specifically the Rhine frontiers), then Nazi Germany would threaten the safety of the United States and the rest of the world, hoping that this would have some impact on Adolf Hitler's aggressive designs. These assumptions were behind FDR urgent request in February and March 1939 that a hostile Congress change the neutrality laws to permit aid to Britain. The situation became even more urgent on March 15, 1939, when German troops completed the destruction of Czechoslovakia.[3]

Continued German aggression throughout March pushed Roosevelt to work harder for Neutrality Act revisions to help check Europe's dictators. At press conferences on April 8 and April 11, the President reiterated the dangers to the United States of unchecked aggression in Europe. He urged the country to align itself clearly with Britain and France. Four days later, FDR sent Hitler and Mussolini public messages stating the concerns of the American people: that everywhere people were in fear of a new war. He warned the dictators against any further acts of aggression against independent nations and invited them to accept peace. If accepted, Roosevelt offered to arrange a conference on disarmament and trade, which would include the United States. The President knew full well they would not accept.[4]

Hitler's response before the Reichstag on April 28 shrewdly appealed to American non-interventionists. He denied any intention of starting a war, defended

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German military actions as simply righting past wrongs — actions which he said were indistinguishable from earlier American, British, and French acts of self-interest. American isolationists, who were eager to believe there would be no war (or that if there were, it would be a traditional European conflict not involving the United States), declared themselves satisfied with Hitler's speech.[5]

Roosevelt, on the other hand, knew the only effective answer to Hitler would be to support of Britain and France through revision of the Neutrality Act. He met quietly with wavering congressmen beginning in mid-April, stressing the likelihood of war and urging repeal of the arms embargo as the best way to keep the peace or, in the event of war, insure national survival. Representative Sol Bloom, the acting Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, tried to convince the administration that his committee and the House would act promptly on neutrality reform. Nevertheless, the President decided to press for repeal of the arms embargo. In a conference with House leaders on May 19, he explained that repeal of the arms embargo would prevent the outbreak of war, or at least reduce the likelihood of a dictators' victory. To support the President's position, Secretary of State Cordell Hull met personally with members of Bloom's Committee and issued a public letter on May 27 supporting Roosevelt's position.[6]

* * *

For Catholics, the debate over neutrality, whether it was conducted (somewhat) civilly in the halls of Washington or in a more uncouth manner on New York City's street corners, had begun three years earlier with the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War on July 17, 1936. On that day approximately half of the Spanish army launched a pre-emptive rebellion against Spain's President Manuel Azaña. The military's goal was a more

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conservative and authoritarian Spanish republic that could to put an end to the increasing anarchy in that country.[7]

The Spanish Civil War quickly became more than a struggle for power in Spain between the Republic (Loyalist) government and General Francisco Franco's Nationalists. From the beginning, world leaders feared that the fighting in Spain could ignite a European conflict. Agents of General Franco contacted Berlin and Rome on July 25-26. Paris aided the Loyalists, and Moscow, the only government that had been systematically intervening in Spanish affairs before the outbreak of the Civil War, was contacted for aid by José Giral's new government on July 20.[8]

The Spanish Civil War was the first battleground for American policymakers who had been debating neutrality even before the outbreak of fighting in Spain. Those in favor of neutrality, isolationism, and the arms embargo were pitted against others who wanted to intervene. Non-interventionists, seeking to avoid war in any circumstances, favored a neutrality bill that would embargo arms, prohibit loans and limit trade to all belligerents. Collective-security advocates and pacifists, who pursued peace through international cooperation, desired a neutrality bill that would include discretionary powers for the president; thereby allowing the president to decide when and against whom a neutrality law should be invoked. Theoretically, a war could then be prevented, or ended, by refusing aid to an aggressor. After much Congressional deliberation, a compromise between the two positions was reached on August 31, 1935. The Neutrality Act of 1935 placed a mandatory embargo of arms, ammunition, or implements of war to all belligerents, but also gave the president the ability to define what the implements of war were and to decide when the embargo should go into effect.[9]

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In the summer of 1936, four months after a second neutrality act was passed extending the mandatory arms embargo to any third country that joined an existing conflict, Roosevelt declared neutrality in Spanish Civil War and applied the arms embargo to both sides; even though the neutrality acts did not apply to civil wars. Congress closed this loophole in 1937, with the third neutrality act. Roosevelt warned, however, that the mandatory provisions of the first two neutrality acts permitting no distinction between aggressors and their victims might create a situation that would allow a conflict to reach America's shores.[10]

In early 1938 General Franco was on the verge of victory in Spain. Roosevelt came under increasing pressure from both sides of the American neutrality debate, as well as from Franco sympathizers and Spanish Republic defenders. Henry Stimson, Secretary of War, and Raymond Buell of the Foreign Policy Association pushed to end the embargo so that the United States could aid the Loyalists.[11] Roosevelt expressed his own position at a Catholic Associated Press press conference in April 1938. FDR felt that the neutrality law was so rigid that it could actually result in the opposite of neutrality. He revealed that Franco was receiving United States arms that were reshipped without Washington's knowledge; the Loyalists were getting arms from France's consignments. The result was neutrality in a sense contrary to the law's intent — both belligerents were being helped. Lifting the embargo would help Franco more because of his control of the seas. He concluded that those who favored lifting the embargo to assist the Loyalists were misguided.[12]

Thus the President agreed with the goals of the Catholic press insofar as he did not want to tamper with the arms embargo, but his motivation was very different — he

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was not acting to defeat the Loyalists, as the Catholic press had hoped. The embargo was more a matter of neutrality for Roosevelt and when neutrality no longer suited Roosevelt's foreign policy objectives, he would abandon it.[13]

In fact, the President was considering how to block a Fascist victory in Spain. When Loyalist armies halted Franco's spring offensive in 1938 and made successful attacks across the Ebro in September 1938, British and French leaders felt the conflict was in a stalemate and a mediated settlement was a reasonable goal. The following month, on October 31, FDR proposed to Assistant Secretary of State Adolf Berle that the Vatican ask Roosevelt to name a three man commission to govern Spain for a few months, or until he could arrange to bring back a Spanish government. After a conversation with Roosevelt on November 7, as he was attempting to get the Lima Conference to propose an armistice, Berle contacted the Holy See to determine "whether or not the Catholic Church would ask the President to try to compose the Spanish Civil War." The assistant secretary then advised the President that the Loyalists would accept an armistice proposal and that Franco might — but if he didn't, Franco's refusal would liberate political forces that would force peace within months. Additionally, a refusal would clear the way for the administration to change its position on the Spanish embargo. But Franco refused mediation.[14]

Other than trying to save Spain from starvation in the winter 1938-39, when the whole country was in dire straits,[15] Roosevelt's only other way to help the Republic would be to repeal the Spanish arms embargo. In November 1938, he considered such a recommendation to Congress when it reconvened in January. FDR's real hope was that he could end the embargo on his own under the provisions of the May 1, 1937 General

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Neutrality Law, which allowed Executive discretion in applying arms embargoes to civil wars. Some White House advisors felt that the President could act on his own by announcing the end of hostilities and withdrawing his embargo proclamation. After asking the State Department and the Attorney General for advice, Cordell Hull, Sumner Welles, and most State Department lawyers advised that this declaration would be legally without foundation; moreover the President would be making a declaration that was patently false.[16]

In his State of the Union address on January 4, 1939, Roosevelt warned of the growing threat to peace, the need for more weapons of defense, and the dangers to democracies from indifference to international lawlessness. Later that month, more victories by Franco renewed demands for aid to the Republic. Both Congress and the White House were bombarded with thousands of letters, telegrams, and petitions with millions of signatures from both Loyalist and Franco supporters. The Foreign Relations Committee suspended consideration of neutrality and Spanish embargo legislation. FDR did not see any way to compel congressional action and decided against pressing the Committee to reverse its decision. Compounding his troubles, his hold over Congress was becoming weaker. A combination of the Republicans' gains in the 1938 elections, strengthening their coalition with conservative Democrats, and the apparent unlikelihood that he would run again for the presidency in 1940 contributed to the President's declining influence in Congress. Roosevelt was afraid to pressure Congress at a time when his position was so weak because it could jeopardize any future chance to revise the general neutrality law. Furthermore, he believed that American arms would not reach the Loyalists; or if they did, they would get there too late to make a difference. Nor did

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Roosevelt respond to public pressure to repeal the embargo on his own. Dubiously legal, such an action would antagonize Congress and would not solve the problem of getting munitions to the Loyalists.[17]

Historian J. David Valaik argued that anything Roosevelt did would only have aggravated the rift among Americans who had very different opinions about the war and neutrality.[18] On the other hand, American Institute for Public Opinion (AIPO) polls conducted between January 1937 and February 1939 indicated that Americans sympathized heavily with the Spanish Loyalists. While in 1937 most Americans in 1937 did not actually have an opinion on the civil war, in 1938, their sympathies overwhelming were in favor of the Loyalists — even though most thought the Loyalists were going to lose. Ten thousand gathered at Madison Square Garden for a mass meeting organized by the Committee for Peace Through World Corporation, led by Rabbi Stephen Wise of the Free Synagogue in New York on April 4, 1938. At the rally, Wise denounced those who prayed for the success of Franco in Spain.[19]

And the group praying for Franco's victory was, of course, the American Catholic community. But even Catholic sympathy for the Rebels was not a unanimous, according to the AIPO in 1938: 58% supported Franco, 42% supported the Republican government. A Gallup poll also conducted in 1938 revealed even less support for Franco amongst Catholics: 40% favored the Rebels/Franco, 20% were for the Loyalists, and the rest did not have an opinion. One month before Franco's victory, those polled who said they were following the events in Spain (59% of those polled) were very evenly split on whether or not Congress should allow the Loyalists buy American arms.[20]

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Table 6: Spanish Civil War Polls

Who are your sympathies with in the Spanish Civil War?

Date	Rebels	Loyalists	Neither/No Opinion
Jan. 11, 1937[a]	12%	22%	66%
May 10, 1937[b]	19%	57%	24%
April 1937	11.7%	23.6%	64.7%
Feb. 8, 1938[c]	25%	75%	
Dec. 16. 1938	24%	76%	
By Religion:			
Catholics	58%	42%	
Protestants	17%	83%	
Feb. 2, 1939[d]	11%	32%	17%
Feb. 2, 1939[e]	12%	30%	17%

[a]The survey was further divided by geographical region. The Middle Atlantic States were 19% Rebel; 32% Loyalist; 49% Neither.
[b]The initial question asked was "Are your sympathies with either side in the present Spanish Civil War?" 21% responded "Yes." The above refers only to this 21%.
[c]This was a follow-up question to "Which side in the Spanish Civil War do you think will win in the end?" 54% Rebels; 46% Loyalists.
[d]This was a follow-up question to "Have you been following the events in the Spanish Civil War?" 60% answered "Yes." The above refers only to this 60%.
[e]There was a second survey conducted on this date, with nearly identical results, in which 59% answered "Yes" to the same question. The above refers only to this 59%. There was a second follow-up question in the second survey asked of the 59% who were following the events: "Should Congress permit the Spanish Loyalists to buy war materials in the United States?" 23% Yes; 29% No; 7% No Opinion.

Do you think the ban, as provided by the Neutrality Act, prohibiting our country from selling war materials directly to either side in the Spanish Civil War, should be removed?

Date	Yes	No
December16, 1938	24%	76%

Based on the 77% respondents with an opinion. 23% of respondents had no opinion.

Should Congress change the Neutrality Act to permit the shipment of arms to the Loyalists in Spain?

Date	Yes	No
January 7, 1939	21%	79%

Based on the 83% respondents with an opinion. 17% of respondents had no opinion.

Should Congress change the Neutrality Act to permit the shipment of foodstuffs to the Loyalists in Spain?

Date	Yes	No
January 7, 1939	48%	52%

Based on the 78% respondents with an opinion. 22% of respondents had no opinion.
Hadley Cantril, ed. *Public Opinion, 1935-1946* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1951), p. 807-808.

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President Roosevelt's limited ability to act on the Spanish embargo extended into general neutrality reform. Congress would not be receptive to any suggestions to repeal the arms embargo. At most, it might grant the president greater discretion in applying it. Congress was, in fact, unreceptive and launched hearings and debate that would last throughout 1939 without reaching any decision.[21]

* * *

Despite some discord in their ranks, American Catholics were disproportionately aroused by the debate over the United States' policy in the Spanish Civil War. While non-Catholics tended to regard the war as a battle between democracy and fascism, some, perhaps most, Catholics viewed the Republican side as essentially anti-Catholic. Much of the Catholic press believed that the real issue in Spain was the communist-controlled government's assault on the Catholic Church.[22] Coughlinites described the Spanish war as "a conflict between Christianity and Communism, between Christianity and Satanocracy."[23] The "so-called Loyalists" were fighting only to establish a soviet state in Spain. They were not a "People's Front," as the misguided and pro-Communist press would have unsuspecting Americans believe — they numbered fewer than fifty percent of Spaniards, and were nothing but "Left Republicans, Communists, Anarchists, Syndicalists and Socialists" who "hate religion … outrage nuns, murder bishops and priests, and burn inoffensive Church buildings." These Communists were "the enemies of religion."[24]

Roosevelt's political maneuvering did not go unnoticed by the Catholic hierarchy. Catholic isolationists like Monsignor Fulton Sheen who favored strict adherence to the Neutrality Act and the arms embargo believed America should not aid any forms of totalitarianism, neither Nazism nor communism. Sheen supported the retention of the

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arms embargo to avoid aiding either side in the conflict. The anticommunist Catholic press called for protests against the repeal of American neutrality because its repeal would only help the communist Loyalists, but it to be clear that its attack on the Spanish communists was not an endorsement of fascism, but rather a recognition that communism was fundamentally evil because it did not accept God.[25]

Father Charles Coughlin was certainly not going to be silent on the debate and began to focus specifically on the question of the arms embargo and Spain and on Roosevelt's foreign policy. For Coughlin, neutrality was essential if the Communists in Spain were to be defeated. For Roosevelt, on the other hand, neutrality desirable only as long as it promoted world peace. Roosevelt did not want to get into a public debate with Coughlin or his followers over Spain, but he was concerned with the sources of the growing opposition to his foreign policy, which he believed was linked to foreign interests and movements.[26]

Recognizing that Roosevelt was beginning to question the embargo and that his sympathies were distinctly anti-fascist, Coughlin urged his listeners to send letters to Congress demanding the retention of the embargo. Any easing of neutrality was still viewed as assistance to the Loyalists, in spite of their impending defeat. His audience obliged and Congress was flooded with letters. On January 21, 1939, Coughlin told his listeners that there were two hundred groups in Washington working to end the embargo question and abandon neutrality. Groups like the American League for Peace and Democracy were communist in nature, he warned, and were working to destroy American democracy. Coughlin made no distinction between his criticism of Roosevelt's

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foreign policy and the New Deal's domestic policies. The issue of Spain was an extension the "shamble of a New Deal in our own backyard."[27]

For the Christian Front, General Francisco Franco was showing how to prevent communist takeovers anywhere. John Cassidy, speaking in his role as the national leader of the Christian Front at a meeting of the Flatbush Anti-Communist Committee in Erasmus High School condemned an American Student Union meeting held at Brooklyn College on February 27, 1939. Cassidy stated that the purpose of the American Student Union meeting was to lift the embargo on Spain and aid the Loyalists. He continued by stating it was "high time for Christian taxpayers to protest this use of a school supported by taxpayers' funds" and it was their duty to ensure a Franco victory. He concluded by appealing to his audience to join the Christian Front.[28]

The symbolism of the Spanish Civil War was so important for the Coughlinites that after it ended with a Franco victory on March 28, 1939, the Christian Front held a victory celebration.[29] Father Coughlin publicly endorsed Franco's methods,[30] asserting that the only way to keep the communists from taking over the government was violence: the "Franco Way." Both Coughlin and Fronters invoked the stereotype of evil, godless communism by pointing to the carnage suffered by Catholics in Spain at the hands of the Loyalists with methods that, as Daniel Kurtz stated, "would shame the inquisition of Spain."[31]

The arrival in New York of the former Prime Minister of the Spanish Republic, Dr. Juan Negrín López, who entered New York on May 1, 1939, was a predictable provocation to the Front. Two days after his arrival, John Kelly, speaking before a relatively sizable crowd of 425 people at the headquarters of the CF's Bronx unit, the Tri-

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Boro Palace, called for a picket line on May 4 in front of the Plaza Hotel to "deport the alien Negrín."[32]

Premier Negrín, who served as Prime Minister in Republican Spain from May 17, 1937 until Franco's victory in March 1939, was perhaps the most controversial figure in Spanish Civil War. By the winter of 1938-39, this Socialist politician and foremost military leader of the Republic may have become the single most hated person in the Republican zone. According to historian Stanley G. Payne, he was despised "even more than Franco." Thousands of Republicans considered him a "mere Soviet lackey, a treacherous politician who made himself a slave to Moscow."[33]

Negrín's leadership role was perfect from the Soviet perspective because he was a scientist of impeccable professional reputation, without any formal ties to the Soviet Union or Communist Party. He could be presented as a moderate, European-style democrat, and he was mentioned in Soviet reports as the non-communist leader most willing to cooperate with the Communists.[34] After Franco's victories during the spring of 1938 led to increasing hardships among the war-weary population in the Republican zone, Negrín became indispensable to the Communists. According to Comintern reports, communists were grateful for this socialist's broad cooperation with them, although Moscow never considered him an agent or crypto-Communist. Comintern leader Palmiro Tagliotti wrote on May 21, 1939 that the Negrín government "was, without doubt the one that most closely collaborated with the leadership of the Communist Party, and accepted and put into practice the Party's proposals more fully and rapidly than any other." The perception in the Republican zone was that Negrín was implementing a Soviet style (rather than Spanish policy-based) government, and, with his foreign minister Julio

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Alvarez del Vayo, implementing a policy that prolonged the war. Critics accused the two of hoping for a change in the international situation like a general European war that could rescue the Republic.[35]

Negrín's government made for some very strange bedfellows. Despite Negrín's claims that the Loyalist government never received any aid from the Soviet government, he did admit buying munitions from them (along with buying munitions from wherever he could, including Germany[36]), he was not believed by either socialists allied with Republican Spain or pro-Franco adherents. As odd as it may seem, when it came to Negrín, the Loyalists' opinions were similar to the Christian Front's. Naturally, the CF's view of him was expressed in terms of communist conspiracy and subterfuge, coupled with the fact that the American radio and press, controlled by anti-Christian New Dealers and/or Jews, never admitted that Loyalist Spain was Communist or that Negrín had sold-out his country.[37] The Front's position on Negrín, except for its attack on the press, was really no different from that of supporters of the Republic — Negrín had sold-out his country to Soviet interests.

Sol Baron, a Socialist journalist in Spain during the Civil War, wrote a letter to the editor of the *New York Times* blasting both Negrín and del Vayo for not being the "socialists," they claimed to be. He said their sole purpose for being in the United States after the defeat of Republican Spain was "whitewashing Stalin's involvement" in the war.[38] Luis Araquistain, the former Spanish Republican ambassador to France and close associate of Francisco Largo Caballero, whom Negrín replaced as premier, wrote two articles in the *Times* on May 19 and May 21, respectively. Each article was a disparaging account, first of del Vayo (who was no socialist, as he had claimed, but a communist) and

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then of Negrín, blaming his alliance with the Soviet Union and the communists as the ultimate cause for the Republicans' defeat in the war. Del Vayo, who was claimed to have been an instrument of the Communists supposedly in contact with the Comintern since 1936, was one of the greatest reasons for the Republican loss; a man willing to sacrifice his own party and the Spanish proletariat, if necessary, to serve Soviet Russia. Araquistain cited as a cause for defeat del Vayo's appointment of thousands of "political commissars" to the Republican army, many of whom were communists and imported from Soviet Union, without consulting Largo Caballero. Negrín, who allegedly replaced Largo Caballero only when Caballero would not consent to be a "docile instrument of Moscow's policy in Spain," created an atmosphere in which communism in Spain became a "State within a state" under the control of a foreign country: the Soviet Union.[39]

At the Christian Front's victory celebration for Franco, attended by 350 people on May 19, at 138th Street and Willis Avenue in the South Bronx, Joe Hartery, after describing the destruction caused by Communists and harsh conditions in Spain for Christians during Civil War, announced a planned demonstration in front of Madison Square Garden to protest both Negrín and del Vayo. The former Loyalist leaders were scheduled to speak at a mass meeting of the Spanish Refugee Relief Campaign there on May 22.

Ten thousand attended the Garden meeting, organized by the Confederated Spanish Societies and the Medical Bureau and North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy to raise funds for Spanish refugees. Del Vayo told the crowd that Spain would eventually overthrow the fascists and asked for help for the refugees who

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did not dare return to their homeland. Outside the Garden, one hundred New York City police officers patrolled, prepared for protestors. In a typical Christian Front delusion of grandeur, Hartery hoped for a massive protest but in reality only fifty protestors holding placards calling for the deportation of the "Spanish Reds" showed up, thirteen of whom were arrested obstructing the sidewalks and refusing to move on. Inside the meeting Reverend Leocadio Lobo, an activist Catholic priest and author of 1937's *Primate and Priest* spoke to the crowd. The anti-Franco Lobo became an active member of the America Spanish Relief Fund after being forced to leave Spain, where he was a university professor and led St. Joseph's Church in Madrid. He told the audience that thousands of Catholic priests were in jail and under the sentence of death because they "refused to join Franco, the Italians and the totalitarian cause" — the antithesis of everything the CF proclaimed.[40]

* * *

GERMANY ATTACKS POLAND; CITIES BOMBED, PORTS BLOCKADED; DANZIG ACCEPTED INTO REICH were the *New York Times* headlines on September 1, 1939, marking the beginning of World War II. The following Monday at 2:00 PM, Labor Day, there was a cabinet meeting in the White House. Attorney General Frank Murphy emerged from that meeting at 4:30 PM, handing Solicitor General Robert Jackson a file for the Department of Justice's review containing proclamations by Murphy, Secretary of State Cordell Hull, and Acting Secretary of the Treasury John W. Hanes that constituted Roosevelt's neutrality proclamations: one under international law and one under the Neutrality Act.

From that moment until the bombing of Pearl Harbor two years later, Roosevelt found himself in the unenviable position of promoting a contradictory dual policy: a

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policy of peace; a preparation for war. Each step he took in favor of one was construed as an abandonment of the other. The country's desire to stay out of the war made it very difficult for him maneuver. Nevertheless, Roosevelt felt obliged to prevent the country from being caught unprepared even if it looked like he was getting the country ready for war, or, in the view of his critics, that he was warmongering.[41]

The majority of Americans did not believe that a European war could vitally affect the security of the United States or that an attack by any of the Axis powers on the country was possible. Roosevelt and Hull disagreed. Despite the official proclamation of neutrality in 1939, the President and Secretary of State felt that the aggressive nature of the Axis powers would ultimately lead to an attack on the United States. Therefore, their foreign policy was conducted to give all possible support to nations fighting to check Axis aggression, even though their policy was constrained by popular isolationism before America's entry into the war.[42]

But as the situation in Europe became more dire, more Americans came to believe that eventually the country *was* going to be drawn into war. From a low mark in April 1936, when 44% answered "Yes" to the question "Will America be drawn into a European War?," 76% of those polled answered affirmatively once fighting started in September 1939.[43]

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Table 7
American Institute for Public Opinion (AIPO) poll:
"Will America be drawn into a European War?"

		Yes	No	No Opinion
April	1936	44%	56%	
July	1938	46%	54%	
September	1938	68%	32%	11%
April	1939	58%	42%	
August	1939	60%	40%	
September	1939	76%	24%	

Michael Leigh, *Mobilizing Consent* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1976) p. 42.

On the other hand, this general belief was combined with a continued preference for non-intervention. With the European situation becoming critical and war approaching in the early months of 1939, the majority of Gallup poll respondents stood steadfast in their isolationist beliefs. In February, 66% felt that America should not help either the Allies or the Axis in the case of a conflict. In April, 95% with opinions about foreign policy opposed a declaration of war against Germany if there was a European conflict and 65% still opposed aid to England and France if this meant it would lead to American involvement (this percentage remained fairly steady even after the outbreak of war in August 1939). Before the fighting began, and even after shooting started in October, the majority opposed American military involvement in Europe, even if it appeared that England or France faced defeat. As Germany was overrunning Poland large segments of the population still believed American involvement should be avoided, even though most believed that the United States was nonetheless about to be drawn into the European conflict. But virtually no one was prepared to support a United States declaration of war and dispatch of troops to defend democracy abroad.[44]

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Table 8
American Institute for Public Opinion (AIPO) poll:
"Should America send its troops to Europe to fight Germany?"

		Yes	No	Don't Know
March	1939	17%	83%	
May	1939	16%	84%	
August	1939	8%	90%	2%
September	1939	6%	94%	

Michael Leigh, *Mobilizing Consent* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1976) p. 46.

Michael Leigh argues in *Mobilizing Consent* that by 1939 the public had abandoned one of the canons of isolationism: a refusal to make ethical distinctions between the parties to foreign wars. In that light, the sincerity of American isolationism fell between 1936 and 1939. Nevertheless, even though isolationism looked less viable, the public clung to hopes of noninvolvement.[45] And one of the most vocal groups clinging to isolationism was the Catholic hierarchy and press.

The Catholic press continued to praise neutrality after September 1, 1939. Once Roosevelt attempted to revise Neutrality Act after the Soviet Union and Germany divided Poland to permit the sale of military equipment to England and France under a cash-and-carry formula, the Catholic press releases came out in opposition to neutrality revision.[46]

Certainly, some of this antagonism was derived from Irish-Americans' hatred of England, but the real basis of Catholic isolationism was anticommunism combined with a general hatred of Europe. This was certainly at the heart of Coughlin's isolationism. The Coughlinites' attacks on anyone supporting an end to the arms embargo was so extreme that Catholic supporters of Roosevelt's new neutrality policy avoided engaging Catholic isolationists in public debate. When Father John Ryan of Catholic University declined to debate Father Edward Lodge Curran on the arms embargo, his office was flooded with hundreds of letters from Coughlin supporters accusing Ryan of war-mongering, of

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splitting the Catholic vote, of being a member of the Anglican Church, and acting as Roosevelt's puppet. The Coughlinites saw no difference between England and Germany, so that aiding either side would play into the hands of the communists. The vehement tone of the letters convinced Ryan that any public statement by bishops attacking Coughlin would result in thousands of Coughlin's followers quitting the church.[47]

Edward Lodge Curran, as he so often did, encapsulated the basic Coughlinite ideology, which was a blueprint for the Christian Front. Curran's 1939 pamphlet, *Anti-War Crusade: Keep the United States Out of War*, opens with the line "The greatest problem in the United States of America today is Peace. Make no mistake about it." He attacked Europe for not repaying its war debts, for its disregard for American interests, and its selfishness in making demands on America in time of war, but never repaying the United States in a time of peace. He intended this to appeal to Catholics, Protestants and Jews alike. "The fields of Europe are still incarnadined with the blood of fair American boys — like your own at home today," he wrote; "'Go back, go back!' they call to the boys whom foreign propagandists and war mongers and Leftists would draw once again into international carnage." History was reason enough to remain neutral and preserve democracy, which only could be done through peace. Curran wrote that Europe never really fought for democracy but for trade, balance of power, and totalitarian tyranny over colonies and weaker nationalities. He warned against the dictatorship that occurred the minute the United States entered the last war. This time, he warned, it would not be as easy to return to democracy afterwards. His final appeal was to the President and Congress to read the Constitution and not commit the country to a foreign war, to return to George Washington's policy of avoiding international entanglements. Still harboring a

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slight bit of faith in the administration, Curran called for Roosevelt to adhere to 1936 Democratic Platform and remain neutral. The only time to go to war was if the country was attacked, but not for "national honor." He concluded that it was the duty of American citizens to maintain peace and restore prosperity. Social justice and the preservation of democratic civil liberties was the fundamental duty of the President and Congress. Christian Fronters saw the administration as abandoning those duties and of taking the country down a path that violated American democracy.[48]

Echoing Coughlin's proposals in the pages of *Social Justice*, in *Anti-War Crusade* Curran called on the country to take profit out of war.[49] He suggested equating the manufacture of ammunition to narcotics. Ammunition should be subject to strict government control and never sold abroad. The only use for ammunition should be "our national defense and sport."[50] This later was the basis for the Christian Front support for a Christian Front army, and when Fronters were eventually put on trial, they used this reasoning as rationale for possessing large amounts of ammunition — they were a "Sports Club," whose role was changing into a defense of the nation.

* * *

As long as both Roosevelt and Coughlin agreed on the neutrality question, the President tolerated the radio priest because Coughlin's actions were not detrimental to the administration's foreign policy. But this did not last. FDR soon found himself in a conflict he had tried to avoid to preserve a measure of maneuverability on neutrality and foreign policy.

It should be no surprise that throughout the summer of 1939, Roosevelt's foreign policy and neutrality stance were some of the most widely discussed topics by Father

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Coughlin on the radio and in the pages of *Social Justice*, and by Christian Front street speakers. Neutrality as a topic accounted for 15.1% of all Christian Front speech topics (it was the third most popular topic, following Christian unity and communism): two hundred twenty-seven mentions in speeches. One hundred ninety-seven of these speeches took place between July and October 1939, as neutrality reform was being debated in Congress. When war loomed in July, the CF spoke in support of continuing neutrality fifty-one times. When war broke out in Europe in September, the CF spoke out in favor of neutrality: ninety-two times, followed by forty-four more times in October.

For some in the Christian Front, including members of its leadership, neutrality became *the* most important subject after the fighting began — even surpassing anticommunism and Christian unity for the time being. On October 1, 1939, twenty Fronters set-up a picket line in front of 485 Madison Avenue to protest the Catholic former New York governor Alfred Smith, who had become a prominent critic of the New Deal. On this day, however, Smith asked the country to support President Roosevelt's amending of the Neutrality Law. The Coughlin supporters positioned themselves on the sidewalk to condemn the former governor for his stand on the neutrality issue. Unfortunately for the protestors (and fortunately for Smith, a blunt critic of Coughlin and the Front), Smith never heard them because he was actually broadcasting from WABC's auxiliary studios at 799 Madison Avenue. The protesters were unaware he was not in the building.[51]

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Chart 9: All Neutrality Topics by Date, 1939

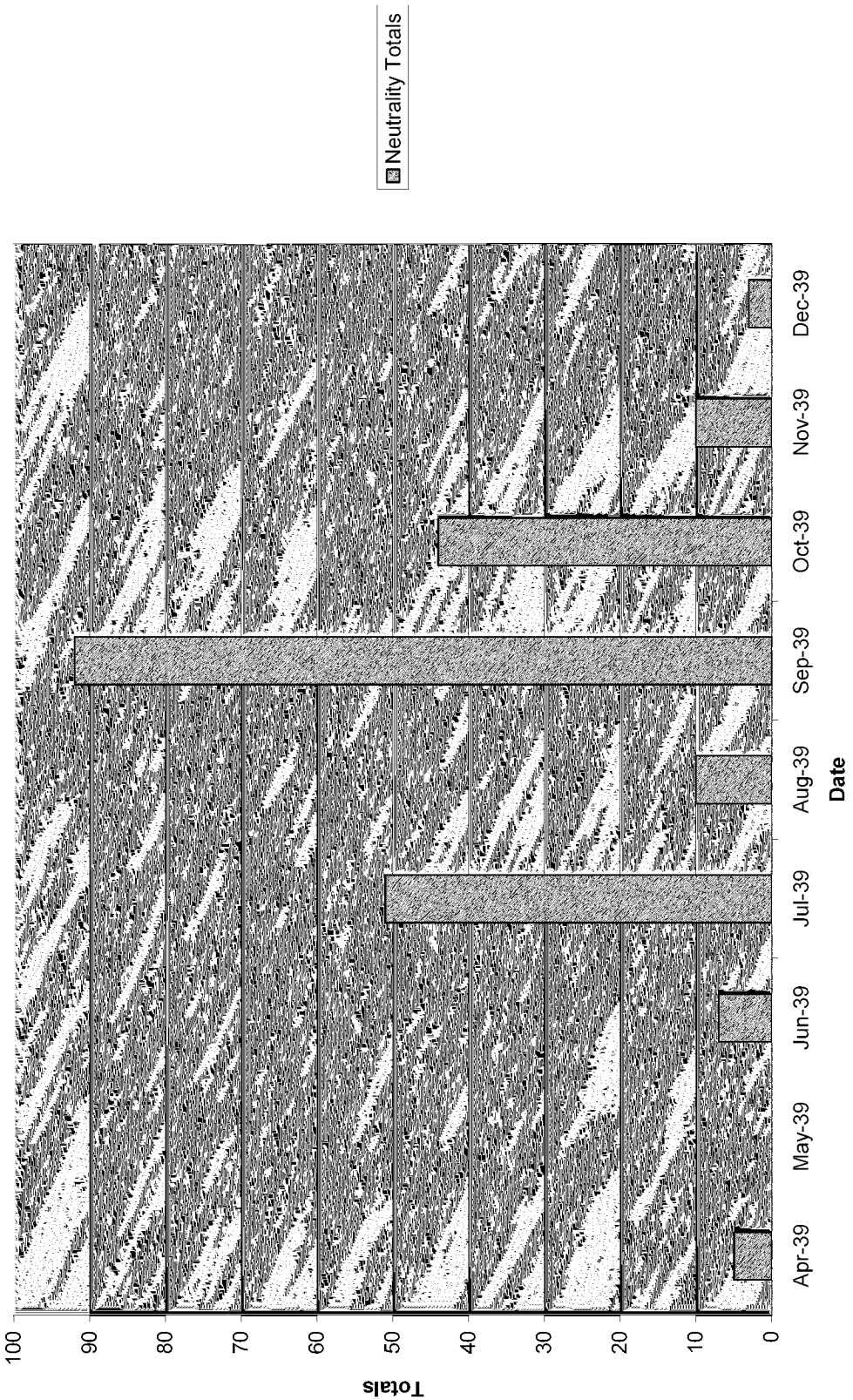

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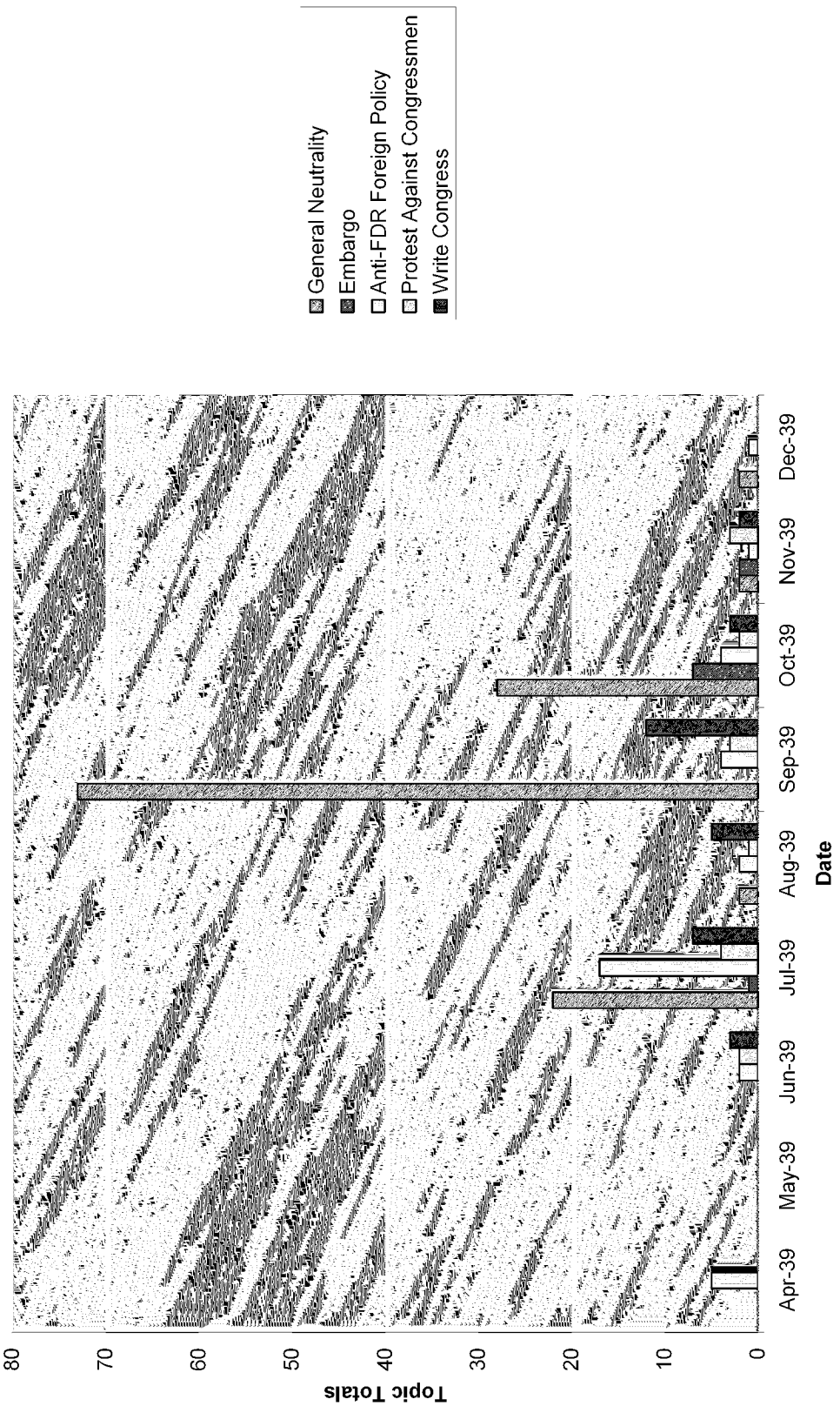
Chart 10: Neutrality Topics Subcategories by Date, 1939



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The next day, at a members-only meeting at Sangerbund Hall, the national secretary and treasurer for the Christian Front, Walter Ogden, called the Neutrality Bill "a dark cloud for the Christians," and predicted it was going to be passed by Congress. R. Caldwell Patton, the former president of the *Patriot Digest*,[52] suggested that the Front picket and protest at the Romanian Consulate because Christians in Romania were taken from prisons and killed and their bodies left in the streets without one voice or newspaper protesting these horrific actions. Ogden first questioned Patton's facts and then argued that the neutrality question was the Front's priority. Patton's picketing would have to be put off to the future.[53]

In December FDR was considering a ten million dollar loan to Finland, which was described by a Front speaker as a "Christian country in dire straits." While appreciative of the president's sympathy for Finland, this speaker still put neutrality ahead of Christian unity, stating "if the loan is made then the United States is no longer neutral and it would only be a matter of time before the United States was involved in a foreign war."[54]

Support for neutrality was closely tied to Christian Fronters' loathing for what they viewed as a corrupt and communist-infiltrated New Deal administration. Many times these speeches included personal attacks on Franklin Roosevelt.

In July, September, and October of 1939, neutrality overwhelmed all other anti-government topics in CF speeches. General anti-government speeches outnumbered neutrality only in August, which is also when specific, personal attacks on Roosevelt peaked (17 times). In neighborhoods where neutrality was most discussed, so also was the Roosevelt administration. In Harlem, Washington Heights, Fordham-Belmont-

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University Heights, the South Bronx, and Jamaica the correlation between neutrality and anti-government feelings was high, with neutrality leading anti-government sentiment. Of these neighborhoods, only in the South Bronx, headquarters of the Bronx CF movement, did specific, did personal attacks on Roosevelt also make a significant showing (five times). In the Queens neighborhoods of Hollis, Ozone Park, and Far Rockaway, the anti-government sentiment and neutrality correlation was high as well, though anti-government speeches were slightly more often heard than talks on neutrality. This may be in part because most of these speeches were given by the Daniel Kurtz-Raymond Dalton Queens faction of the Christian Front, both of whom were personally very much anti-LaGuardia specifically and anti-government generally. The only two areas where neutrality was a dominant topic of speeches, without much mention of general anti-government topics or specific personal attacks on the President were Columbus Circle (thirty times) and Williamsburg (thirty-one times).

Table 9
Neutrality and Anti-Government Speeches by Month & Neighborhood, 1939

Month (1939)	Neutrality	Anti-Government
July	51	40
August	10	56
September	92	48
October	44	28
Neighborhood		
Harlem	17	13
Washington Heights	11	9
Fordham/Belmont/University Heights	18	15
South Bronx	19	17
Jamaica	12	9
Hollis	9	13
Ozone Park	8	17
Far Rockaway	9	14

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Chart 11: Anti-Government - Neutrality Comparison by Date, 1939

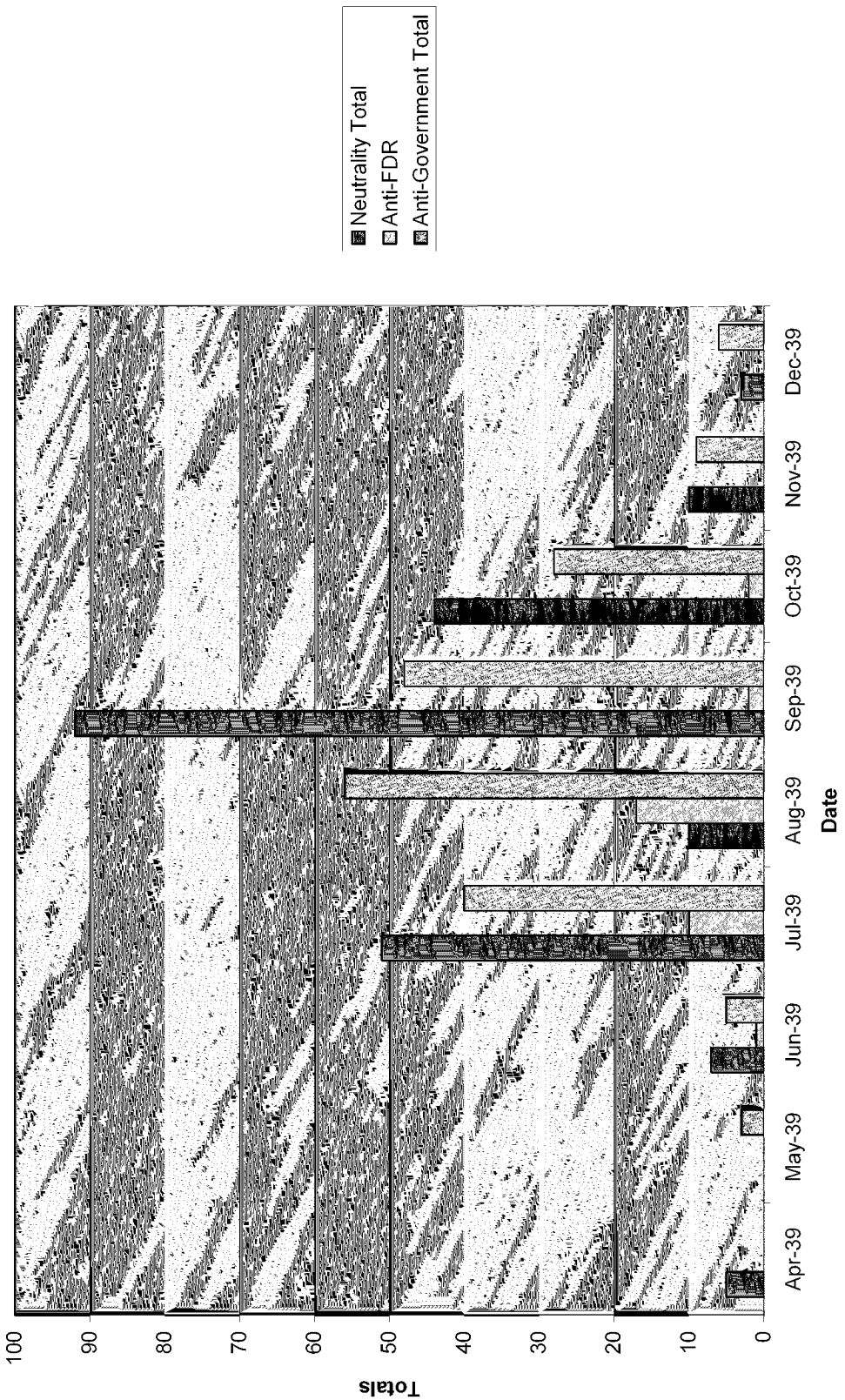

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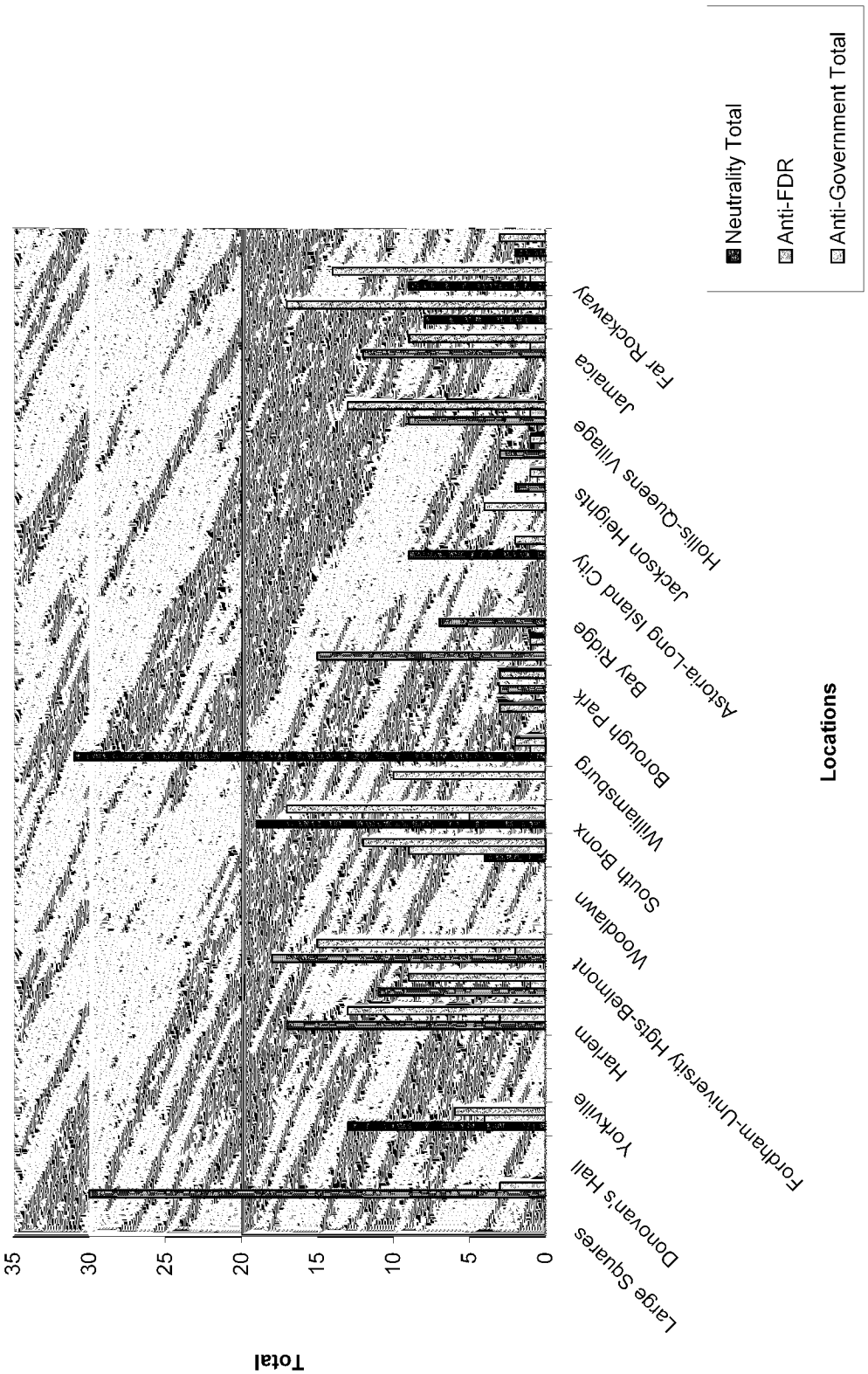
Chart 12: Anti-Government - Neutrality Comparison by Location, 1939



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In the eight neighborhoods where neutrality was most discussed throughout 1939 (more than ten times), the blocks where the CF held their rallies had foreign-born populations of at least twenty to thirty percent, the only exception being Jamaica, Queens. Significantly, the ethnicities that dominated the corners where CF street meetings took place were, more often than not, tied to either Axis countries (Germany or Italy) or were anti-British, i.e. the Irish. In Williamsburg, where neutrality was a topic thirty-one times, 19.05% heads of households were foreign-born, 1,731 were Italian, followed by 927 Germans and 502 Irish. The South Bronx, where neutrality was spoken of nineteen times and had a foreign born population of 33.62%, was predominately Irish (5,135 households) and had a strong German and Italian influence (2,326 and 1,941 households, respectively). The Fordham-Belmont-University Heights section of the Bronx, where most of the 27.49% foreign-born households were Italian (1,895), was witness to eighteen neutrality speeches. Two thousand and three Irish households and 751 German households accounted for the 27.04% of the foreign households on the blocks of Harlem, where the CF spoke of neutrality seventeen times. In Flatbush, Brooklyn, with a significant Jewish population (20.92% foreign born; 1,498 households were Russian/Jewish) the combination of Irish (647) and German (636) households nearly equaled those of Jewish families. The CF went to Flatbush fifteen times to promote neutrality. The pattern was the same in the heavily Irish (1,658 families) and German (752) Upper West Side (32.31% of the population was foreign born) and Washington Heights (32.52%; where there were 1,550 Irish and 1,367 German families); here the CF focused on neutrality thirteen and eleven times, respectively. In the one anomaly, Jamaica, where only 8.86% of the population was foreign born, the largest foreign born

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population was German (38 families). The CF spoke about neutrality twelve times in this section of Queens.

In many of these neighborhoods, Jews, Poles, and even some English were numerous, especially in the South Bronx, Fordham, Harlem, the Upper West Side and Washington Heights. This became a source antagonism and ethnic conflict within these neighborhoods.[55] Of course, the neutrality focus on Irish, Italian and German blocks does not mean that all of the families who lived in these neighborhoods were Nazi or Fascist sympathizers. What it does mean is that the Christian Front members, who often lived on those very blocks, were looking for neighborhoods where they thought they would receive the most support for their pro-neutrality cause, especially considering that CF speakers often encouraged crowds to write their congressmen and vote for only those who would support non-intervention. This was often expressed through the slogan "vote Christian," which will be discussed in chapter five.

The Christian Front's reasons for supporting neutrality fall into three categories: disgust at Americans being forced to die on foreign soil (as expressed by Curran's *Anti-War Crusade* and in the pages of *Social Justice*); opposition to Jewish-Communist-Internationalist influence in government; and a strong anti-British sentiment. All three were voiced by Coughlin and reflected on the streets.

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Chart 13: All Neutrality Topics by Location, 1939

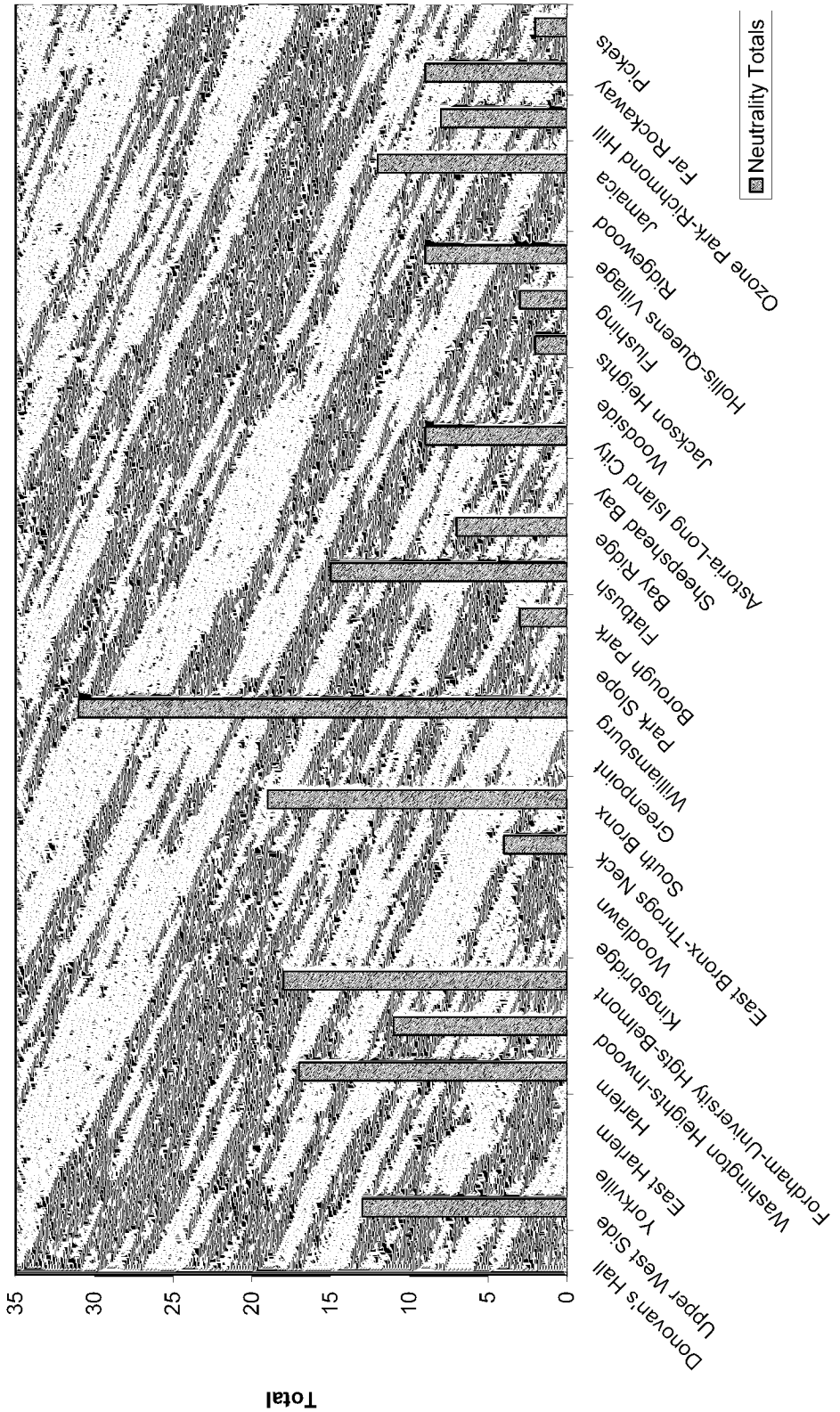

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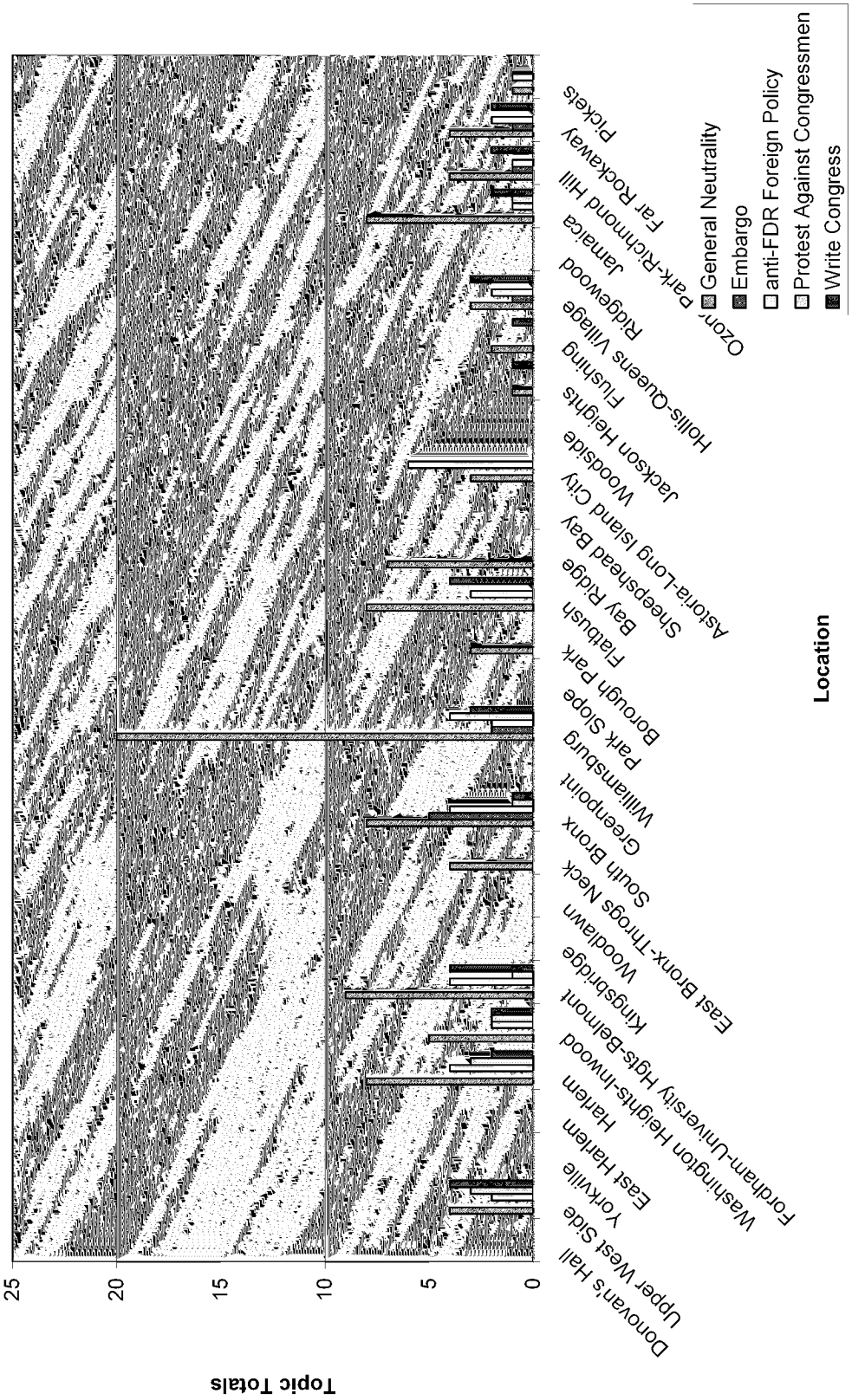
Chart 14: Neutrality Topics Subcategories by Location, 1939



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Coughlin was no stranger to isolationism. Since 1937, *Social Justice* took a vigorous isolationist stance against the foreign entanglements the Roosevelt administration seemed to be seeking. Especially throughout 1939, the pages of *Social Justice* dramatized opposition to foreign entanglements with photographs depicting the horrors of war, such as grotesque illustrations of wounded and dead American soldiers from the First World War. Captions asked parents if it was worth while to send their sons to die again in Europe and attributed their deaths to "international ghouls." As war in Europe became imminent in 1939, Coughlin used Washington's Birthday as the theme for his February 19 radio broadcast "Internationalism — Or No Foreign Entanglements." The text, reprinted on the front page of the *Brooklyn Tablet* the following week, accused America of allying itself with the "hidden empire of internationalism" whose plan was to entangle America in its foreign affairs. This would be accomplished, according to Coughlin, through "financial control, which was employed first to wreck capitalism, and second, to destroy democracy and nationalism." And, of course, this empire was run by international financiers.[56]

CF speakers repeated Coughlin's words and ideas, complete with the euphemisms of "that minority" or "internationalists" to mask the use of the word "Jews." Federal, state and municipal governments were overrun "with that minority and they are trying to involve us in a foreign war."[57] Fronters were equating patriotism with isolationism. Christian Front audiences at Sangerbund Hall were told that the American Legion supported neutrality and was against changes in the Neutrality Act, just like their organization.[58]

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In the middle of the summer, Daniel Kurtz read a letter allegedly signed by Max I. Feintage, the Chairman of the Committee for Jewish Resettlement, in Queens Village, a neighborhood where approximately one-third of the scattered foreign-born population was German. Appealing to the crowd's ethnic background, Kurtz's used a combination of Jewish stereotyping and biased slurs with a hope that those listening would demonstrate their American patriotism by protesting any changes to the neutrality laws. One of the probably spurious statements Kurtz quoted was "Spread the word that America must go to war with Germany; if the Nazis are not defeated, the expelled Jews will never gain the possessions taken away from them by the monster Hitler." Kurtz's response to this blamed the Jews, drawing on the old prejudice against Jewish materialism. "They [the Jews] want us to go to war because they as usual do not care for the unnecessary loss of human lives; they are interested solely, as always, in their material wealth. Why should the United States go to war with Germany, a country that has not harmed us? Why? That nation has not even murdered the Jews the way the Communists slaughtered those Christians in Russia and Spain."[59]

At a meeting at Mott Avenue and Grove Street in Far Rockaway, Queens on September 22, CF speaker Bird Bettinger claimed that he was a constant visitor to Veteran's Hospitals. This street meeting took place within three days of the *Social Justice* issue (September 25) which used the "international ghouls" caption to describe the death of an American soldier. Quite possibly invoking that illustration, Bettinger told the crowd that the United States had no business in European affairs. If war was declared on the United States, he said he would be the first to enlist. However, he warned youth "to be careful of the propaganda and not let it bring the US into a war. There would be

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no bonus or special privileges, as promised in the last war." The only privilege they would receive would be death in a foreign war.[60] On September 26, James Sard, speaking at Columbus Circle, begged the United States to stay out of war, and in perfect Coughlinite fashion, claimed that a certain minority in this country fomented revolution, while others who had money fomented depression. Using scare tactics similar to those in *Social Justice*, Sard recalled that there were five million United States soldiers in Europe the last war and another two million in training. If America was to become involved in this European war, many more of the crowd's sons would face death.[61] And the blood of those soldiers on the hands of the corrupt American government. Early in the summer, Fronters were frightening crowds with the prospect that the scrap iron the United States sold abroad would eventually be used to rearm foreign countries and used as weapons against American soldiers in war.[62]

Specific mentions of opposition to FDR's overall foreign policy reached a height of seventeen times in July 1939. During that month and until the Bloom anti-neutrality and mobilization bills were defeated, Fronters urged crowds to write their Senators and Congressmen to stop the legislation.[63]

The CF warned that any change to the Neutrality Bill would draw the United States into war. Some Fronters like William "Panama Bill" Haggerty publicly announced that he would refuse to fight in this war because "he could see nothing to fight about." Any delay in Neutrality Bill hearings would bring some relief by granting America "a respite from war." The Christian Front's public disagreement with FDR's neutrality policy attracted members of other like-minded Catholic organizations to their cause. For example, John O'Shea, who became a speaker for the Christian Front at the end of July

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discussing "events here and abroad relative to of the coming war," was also a member of the Paulist Fathers' Catholic Youth Movement.[64]

From the Fronters' perspective, ending neutrality would be viewed as an insult by the Axis powers. The nation was on the brink of war, according to the CF, and if the "Unneutrality Bill," as it was deridingly referred to, was passed then America would in fact be at war, a war blamed on Roosevelt by the Front, and not on the threat posed by Japan and Nazi Germany to democracy and world peace. Fronters like Daniel Kurtz charged that Roosevelt was not only controlled by that certain minority, but was actually Jewish. For example, on July 6, 1939, he stated that "It is imperative that the public awaken and realize the dangerous course President Roosevelt or 'Rosenfeld' is taking the country by passing the Neutrality Bill. There are only three countries Roosevelt would identify as aggressors: Japan, Italy and Germany, and that these nations have been 'insulted time and time again' by Roosevelt."[65]

Senate inaction on neutrality reform during July was seen as a Christian Front victory on the street and in the Brooklyn diocese press. Paul Antonio praised the "defeat of the Neutrality Bill" at Columbus Circle on July 25. Patrick Scanlan was prepared to claim victory in the neutrality battle as well by proclaiming "the movement to takes sides [in Europe] was lost." In his July 29, 1939 *Brooklyn Tablet* editorial, Scanlan, nearly adopting CF language, described Sol Bloom's "Unneutrality Bill" as an attempt to ally the United States unquestionably with Great Britain and France. The similarities between Scanlan's and Fronters' rhetoric is undeniable. The *Tablet*'s editor accused the administration of being "unneutral," with its every foreign policy move favoring Great Britain and France, thereby, by default, hostile to Germany, Italy and Japan. Scanlan

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contradicted himself by implying that Roosevelt had sympathy for communists because the administration's policies were also favorable to the Soviet Union, regardless of the fact that the Russians were allied with the Germans at the time. The motivations for Roosevelt's diplomacy were nothing more than "a fearful hoax attempted on the American people." Senate inaction had kept Americans out of war. Scanlan concluded, "Isolating the US from Europe, we are isolated from imperialism, which is the antithesis of democracy … We have been isolated from war and the 'assassins of democracy'."[66]

Nevertheless, this was hardly a final victory according to Kurtz. He charged that Roosevelt was antagonizing countries opposed to communism by breaking treaties with Japan, and he argued that FDR's continued call for a new Neutrality Bill was for the simple purpose of forcing the United States into war. Kurtz's was probably referring to Roosevelt's suspension of a long-standing trade agreement with Japan.

Just one week before Kurtz spoke on the corner of Dyckman Street and Sherman Avenue in Manhattan on July 24, 1939, the British were forced to accept the humiliating Craigie-Arita agreement that granted Japanese forces, which were harassing British subjects in China, the responsibility for law and order in the areas they occupied in China. The Craigie-Arita agreement was an important factor for Roosevelt's suspension of the trade agreement. From a myopic, grassroots CF perspective, this suspension was another example of FDR's war-mongering and bloodlust. Christian Fronters were incapable of understanding foreign policy in a global context, but of course this did not keep them from presenting themselves as qualified authorities in such matters.[67]

As the President and Congress began debating neutrality again in September and October 1939, Father Coughlin's radio broadcasts became more virulent, almost tinged

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with desperation. Coughlin supported soon-to-be ex-Congressman John J. O'Connor's campaign against revision of the Third Neutrality Act on the grounds that the President was trying to usurp congressional responsibilities. The radio priest argued that "cash-and-carry" would lead to United States involvement in war.[68] Coughlin also attacked Representative Sol Bloom's September 10, 1939, call to revise the Neutrality Act, claiming that Bloom's true purpose was to "perpetuate injustice and initiate totalitarianism in America" and that Christian-Americans should pressure officials to avoid the revision.[69]

Three days later President Roosevelt summoned Congress for an extra session to specifically discuss the revision of the Neutrality Act and the embargo. Bloom stated, "I believe Congress will lift the embargo and will support the President's stand. He has done wisely to wait as long as he has, and I think it is now up to Congress to do the job he wants it to do."[70] The Christian Front took to the street to protest. On the day Roosevelt summoned Congress, Thomas Varley went to Williamsburg to accuse the president of hypocrisy. FDR had told Americans over the radio that he was going to try to keep the United States out of war, but he had now put the country in jeopardy. The advantage Americans in 1939 had over the country in 1917 (invoking the disaster of the First World War) was that they had radio — they could be eyewitnesses to the hypocrisy.[71] The next day, in the Inwood section of Manhattan, Albert Gunnison and Andrew Daigle claimed that the Neutrality Act was fine as it stood and (repeating Coughlin) changing the act would bring United States into war, so Christian Americans should be wary of radio and press propaganda. The Neutrality Act's impending change to a "cash and carry" policy would aid only those nations with access to oceans and so

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involve the United States in the war. Once again, invoking the failures of the Great War, he pointed out that European nations were unable to pay their debts from the last war and he questioned where they would get the money to buy material for this one, concluding that the "cash and carry" plan would soon become a "cash and credit" plan. This would draw the United States into the war to protect our interests because of the large amount of money involved. The only way to avoid this, he said, using the words of Coughlin, was for Christian Americans to write their congressmen and tell them not insert the "cash and carry" plan into the Neutrality Act.[72]

Roosevelt's call for Congress to revise the neutrality act pushed Coughlin before the radio microphones on September 17. Coughlin's references to Bloom's speeches about the Neutrality Bill were described by the American Jewish Committee as a "good example of implicit anti-Semitism, referring to Congressman Sol Bloom and 'those he represents'." Coughlin described Bloom, the Bloom Bill, international bankers, money changers, and Wall Street profiteers all as "first cousins of the international profiteers living in every corner of the world" and referred to the European war as a "grudge war." His diatribe against the international bankers blamed them for the "carnival of corpses" for the "handful of usurers who gained their fortune … Uncle Shylock's sons fight their battles, rot in their trenches and pay their bills." As evidence of the internationalists' control over America, he said that cash-and-carry would start up the country's factories again, but only at the cost of sacrificing our Americanism and Christianity for the "blood profits" of the internationalists. Congress had to decide whether or not they will "keep us free or sell us into bondage to the international bankers, the international politicians, the international war-mongers, and the international plunder bunds whose spokesmen …

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unctuously will try to entice us into this maelstrom of murder to stop Hitler and will continue to create more Hitlers so long as they dominate the destinies of the world."[73]

When it was announced that the final neutrality legislation was to be written by Sol Bloom, Father Coughlin saw this as proof that Christian Americans had lost control of Congress. In his anti-Bloom Bill radio broadcast of October 1, he told his audience that the minority group now dominates Congress. The minority, which consists of international bankers, international politicians, war profiteers, and foreign propagandists, who want to involve America in the war by lifting the embargo, had out-pressured the majority. And this was not just the case in the United States. Following the logic of an international conspiracy, Coughlin claimed that the peaceful policies of Chamberlain were shelved for the war policies of Churchill and Eden because they were more concerned with crushing Germany than converting Germany away from fascism through diplomatic means. Adding more fuel to the conspiratorial fire, Coughlin charged that war politicians were possibly, though indirectly, working for the success of Communism (an utterly ridiculous notion when it comes to Churchill) rather than preserving the peace, and were pursuing this goal by "diabolical propaganda." In fact, this was what actually caused the European war.[74]

Just over a week later, on October 10, Fronter Daniel Kurtz, echoing Coughlin denounced the cash-and-carry change in the Neutrality Law.. Claiming that there were two sets of rules for Christians and "the minority" when it came to foreign policy, Kurtz stated that the Neutrality Act was in place for the Spanish Civil War, and the United States did not come to the aid of Christians in Spain. If that policy was good enough for Spain, then it should also be good enough during the current European crisis. He was

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willing to fight if the United States was invaded, but he refused to fight abroad for the "protection of investments and interests made by the international money changers or war mongers," who were the source of the change in neutrality laws.[75]

Father Coughlin defended and supported Hitler and Mussolini as peace-makers in the pages of *Social Justice* for at least a year before the European crisis became a shooting war. The American Jewish Committee was monitoring Coughlin's statements, culminating in an internal report, *Memorandum on Father Coughlin and Social Justice.* Coughlin's strategy, the report stated, was to instill a similar indifference between England and Germany's "imperialism" in his audience. Hitler's actions in the Sudetenland at the end of September 1938 were justified by Coughlin by calling the Czechs "cunning propagandists [who] bamboozled English, French and American public opinion by their glib talk of their devotion to 'democratic principles.'" Coughlin supported Hitler's actions in Czechoslovakia because in his mind, Hitler freed the Sudeten minority from the subjugation and terror of the Czechs; it was Hitler who came to the rescue. After all, Czechoslovakia was not the model democracy that it is held up to be. When it came to Italy and Mussolini, Coughlin stated that the regime had no pretense of being a democracy ruled by majority opinion, but rather was what Aristotle recommended — a mixed form of government combining the virtues of monarch, aristocracy, and democracy into a polity. Any opposition to Mussolini came mostly from Jews, as Jews were at the forefront of every subversive movement. Coughlin, the AJC reported, was an apologist for fascism, and he seemed to apologize for the treatment of Jews in fascist countries by saying in the pages of the March 27, 1939 issue of *Social Justice* that "Fascism is not anti-Jewish, but most Jews were anti-Fascist."[76]

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Coughlin went as far as to blame England and France (the "democracies") as the nations promoting war, not the Axis powers, "in the face of every gesture toward peace and accord on the part of the 'dictators,' democracies secretly are arming against the created scare."[77] Daniel Kurtz repeated Coughlin's ideas several months later at a Christian Front rally in the heavily Italian and German neighborhood of Astoria, Queens, by telling the crowd that the New Dealers were trying to involve America in another war only to satisfy Great Britain.[78] In the heavily Irish South Bronx, James Downey warned that British war propaganda designed to influence the public and Senators to repeal the arms embargo was very active in America. The ultimate result of the new Neutrality Act, would only aid the Allies, jeopardize neutrality, and America would "find ourselves … picking chestnuts out of the fire for the British Empire."[79]

Once war actually started, the Front accepted Coughlin's theory to support neutrality and allow England and France stop Hitler. Robert Mason waved what he claimed was an English newspaper clipping in Columbus Circle that claimed the Royal Air Force had no equal in the world. If that were the case, yelled Mason to a tiny crowd of fifty, and "as long as England has no equal, and has France and what is left of Poland to fight Germany and Russia, then the United States does not have to get involved … Very few people want war, so we should remain neutral." At the same rally, George Boian urged people not believe the rumors of Hitler sending submarines into the Atlantic, which caused some people to scream "Stop Hitler!" He defied the government to try to send him and the people in the crowd to Europe to fight by simply stating "we are not going to Europe to fight. We have to remain neutral."[80] Boian was undoubtedly

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referring to the sinking of the British ship, *Athenia*, by German U-Boats in the Atlantic, with the loss of British and American lives.

At a Front rally on 204th Street and Broadway, Andrew Daigle crystallized the Front's anti-British bias by claiming that *Athenia* sinking was not perpetrated by the Germans. Daigle stated that the Intelligence Department (it is not clear what Intelligence Department Daigle was referring to) was convinced that the sinking of the *Lusitania* was accomplished by the English government to bring the United States into the last war. The *Athenia* incident was no different, and he predicted it would be repeated within two months, but the next time it would be an American ship. The goal, of course, would be to bring America into the current European war by stirring up anti-German feelings in the United States. He advised the crowd to read the newspapers to see which nation would receive the blame, implying that if the Germans were blamed, that would prove that the British were the true perpetrators. Interestingly, *Social Justice* repeated the same accusations toward the British with respect to the *Athenia* incident, though not until the October 30 issue, nearly six weeks after Daigle's rally.[81] Christian Front rhetoric was not simply an echo of Coughlin: the transmission belt ran both ways.

Anti-British sentiment continued into the winter when the Christian Front picketed Alfred Duff Cooper, former First Lord of the British Admiralty, during his speech on "War and the United States" at the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences on December 13. Picketers accused Cooper of being a war propagandist and demanded America stay neutral. The picketing itself was organized at two Christian Front members-only meetings at Sangerbund Hall, on November 27 and December 11, 1939. Raymond Dalton, a leader of the CF Queens Unit, informed the Fronters in attendance

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that the Brooklyn Unit of the CF and other Christian organizations planned to picket the talk. Cooper had already been picketed by the Christian Front in Boston, where the protest was broken up by police. Fronters wanted to give Cooper the same treatment in Brooklyn he had gotten Boston. The CF's anti-British bias, while certainly apparent at the November meeting, was somewhat masked when Dalton accused Cooper of being a Jew, meaning Cooper's true motivation for his propaganda activities was that he was part of the internationalist conspiracy.[82]

Dalton's accusation sheds light on an additional reason for the CF's anti-British attitudes, beyond the tradition hatred by the Irish for all things British and the historic conflict between Protestants and Catholics. England was viewed by some Catholics as a traditional enemy of the Catholic Church, and the war in Europe was one to destroy Christianity. Several other factors played into this. Great Britain's war against fascism was viewed as an implicit promotion of communism. The CF also claimed that the war itself was caused by an internationalist conspiracy. *Social Justice* predicted England's demise because of the inroads communism had made there, which were bringing the country to the verge of revolution, particularly with respect to the lower classes, who were most often the victims of German bombings. Coughlin said England had been the leading enemy of the Church for the last four hundred years and France an enemy for the last 150 years. The Church was losing ground in England and that would continue as long as the liberal tradition of tolerating communism persisted. The same was true for the French, except that the Catholic population's stand "against the Freemasonic racket of the French governmental system" had saved the Church thus far.[83]

* * *

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Congress's first move toward abandoning isolationism came in November 1939 when it repealed the arms embargo provision of the Neutrality Act, which had been in place since 1935. By then only small portion of the public continued to view the world crisis as a clash of rival imperialisms equally undeserving of American support.[84] That small portion of the population, though, included Coughlin and the Christian Front.

Table 10
American Institute for Public Opinion (AIPO) poll:
"Do you favor repeal of the Arms Embargo?" (October 18, 1939)

	Yes	No	No Opinion
Favor repeal if this helps Germany	4%	91%	5%
Favor repeal if this helps England & France	58%	34%	8%

Michael Leigh, *Mobilizing Consent* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1976) p. 46.

Discussion of the embargo as a topic for CF street meetings reached its height in October 1939 just before its repeal. On his October 8th Sunday broadcast, Coughlin declared repeal would be a "blow to representative government" and would mean Congress had refused "to heed the demands of millions of Americans." Coughlin here was obviously misreading of contemporary public opinion. The radio priest asked listeners to write Congressmen to retain the embargo, and to "carry on this week even more vigorously than in the past two weeks." Coughlin's letter writing campaign was strongly promoted by the Christian Front. It was discussed at Front street meetings more frequently in September than any other month (surpassing July, when the neutrality debate was also at the forefront of politics), and speakers urged those in attendance to write Senators and Congressmen insisting on absolute neutrality.[85]

The CF's slogan, "Keep America out of European entanglements," and the Neutrality Bill were consistently the subjects the CF most wanted its crowds to write their

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senators and representatives about. Its letter campaigns proved, to the Front at least, that the Christian Front was the true supporter of American democracy. Andrew Daigle, speaking to people living in the twenty-third congressional district in the Bronx, told them that they did not pay enough attention to the actions of their congressmen and state legislators. He accused their assemblyman of being more concerned with bills to protect dogs being hit by automobiles than he was with helping people. Their congressman, Representative Charles A. Buckley, was cited for missing 71 of 79 Congressional sessions, showing how much "interest" he had for the people of his district. Daigle concluded by telling the crowd to write their representatives whenever they did something the people did not like. A month later, further frustrated with Buckley, Daigle returned to the district and told the crowd assembled that they might as well write some other congressman, because their representative was a "Wooden Indian."[86]

Once fighting began in Europe, led by Coughlin's September broadcasts, the CF intensified petitions and letter writing campaigns to keep the United States out of war and save the embargo. Front member Floyd Caridi distributed five petitions to each member attending the September 18 meeting at Sangerbund Hall. The petitions supported the status quo of the Neutrality Act and were addressed to New York congressmen. Front members were supposed to collect New Yorkers' signatures, and then the Front would spend these hundreds of signatures to Washington. Caridi also planned to send a Christian Front delegation to Washington on Friday, September 22, 1939 to distribute 50,000 circulars urging neutrality. The Fronters never made it to the capital or collected any signatures. Nor did members of other like-minded groups that were supposed join the enormous rally. The march on Washington was a dismal failure.[87]

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The Front, particularly in the German neighborhoods of Queens, responded to Coughlin's October call to urge crowds of fifty to three hundred to write their senators and congressmen to retain the arms embargo provision. On this broadcast, however, Coughlin issued a warning to Congress itself, "if you Representatives and Senators do not heed them, then representative government already has decayed and an oligarchical dictatorship already has appeared." He said lines were being drawn to determine who the Coughlinites thought they could trust in Congress as defenders of America, and who would be their enemies. He warned communists that if the Neutrality Act was changed and the Embargo Act lifted, Christians were "well prepared to meet them, when zero hour comes."[88]

Five days after the Senate approved Neutrality revisions on October 27 and the day before the House was scheduled to vote on the revision, Fronter Arnold McCullough, expressed the Front's loathing of Roosevelt on the streets of Williamsburg, Brooklyn. He specifically blamed the President and some members of Congress for the end of the embargo. The only explanation for the Senate's lifting of Embargo Act and its probable passing the House was White House pressure. "FDR says he wants to keep us out of war, but his un-neutral nature [pressured Congress] to defeat the Taft and Borah amendments to the Embargo Act. [Senator Robert] Wagner and [Senator James] Mead of New York assisted in the defeat of these amendments," explained McCullough. Hailing Coughlin's radio message, McCullough defiantly warned congressmen and senators that if the embargo was lifted, the fight will be greater because they would have ignored the "hundreds of thousands of letters received from their constituents." He told the crowd of seventy-five it was "up to us to remove them from Congress in the up-coming election."[89]

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The House voted to accept the House Foreign Affairs Committee report recommending repeal of the arms embargo on November 3. New York City representatives who voted in favor of the repeal included Sol Bloom, Emanuel Cellar, Thomas Cullen, John Delaney, Samuel Dickstein, Matthew Merritt, Donald O'Toole, and Andrew Somers. The "Yea" votes cast by Bloom, Cellar, and Dickstein made them targets for being voted out of office — according to the FBI, they also became targets for assassination by the Christian Front, but there was not enough evidence to make the alleged assassinations part of the indictment against the eighteen Fronters who went on trial in January 1940 for conspiring to overthrow the United States government. Special Agent Vernon Criss questioned defendant William Bishop about an alleged statement made to the effect that a dozen congressmen should be shot to show them that the Christian Front meant business. It was generally assumed that the congressmen in question were those who voted in favor of the arms embargo repeal. Bishop denied ever making such a statement. However, this did not keep Representative Cellar from publicly applauding the efforts of Attorney General Robert Jackson to launch an inquiry into the Front, noting that he was "number 2 on the list" of congressmen targeted for assassination because of his vote.[90]

Representatives Sol Bloom and Emanuel Cellar, both Jewish, were attacked by the Christian Front throughout the summer and fall of 1939 for their stance on neutrality revision. Demonstrations were held in front of Bloom's home on Riverside Drive, right after the Front's weekly Sunday pickets at radio station WMCA protesting the removal of Coughlin from the airwaves. The CF claimed that passage of Bloom's bill would plunge America into a second world war and would help bring communism to America. Bloom

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was personally denounced as the Front urged crowds to write their congressmen to vote against the Bloom Bill. The Front urged that Cellar should be voted out of office because of his "support [for] un-American bills." Early in the summer, the Front did have allies in Congress. In an early incarnation of McCarthyism, Montana Representative Joseph Thorkelson singled-out both Bloom and Cellar (along with several other Jewish congressmen) before the House on June 22 and called for an investigation of "Communistic activities that exist in every public place, colleges and Federal departments … the leaders in Congress are well known …" He claimed that all this was part of a growing communist threat in the country.[91]

Bloom and Cellar were not the only congressmen targeted by the CF. Thomas Cullen had his home and club picketed by the Brooklyn Unit of the Christian Front for his stand on the embargo issue — the pickets did not have any influence on him and he voted in favor of the arms embargo repeal. The picketing was led by John Cassidy, who later found himself on trial as one of the eighteen arrested by the FBI. At the members-only October 31 meeting at Sangerbund Hall, Cassidy suggested that the Queens Unit of the Front should conduct a similar protest at the home of Representative Eugene Keogh, just days before the House vote on the House Committee's report on the arms embargo. Keogh, whose ouster from Congress was called for at earlier CF street meetings, was undecided about the embargo issue. The next evening, seventy-five Fronters picketed the Democratic Club affiliated with Keogh at the corner of Bushwick and Putnam Avenues in Williamsburg. In attendance was Arnold McCullough, who chastised Congressman Keogh for being a "rubber stamp" for the administration who had voted for all the "un-American" and "un-Christian" bills proposed by the White House. Thomas Varley

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insisted that if representatives were servants of the people, then they should follow the will of the people instead of White House policy. Varley then urged the audience to visit Keogh and let him know how they felt about the embargo issue. He concluded by warning the congressman that if he voted to lift the embargo, he would have to explain "why" to them. On November 3, Keogh, possibly influenced by the protests outside of his club, was absent from the embargo vote. His vote was recorded as a "Yea" paired with Congressman Barry's "Nay" by the House Clerk for purposes of the Congressional Record.[92]

* * *

At the end of the embargo fiasco, the Front had begun to conclude that the underlying cause for all the problems America was facing, both the economic disasters and the impending end of neutrality, was one thing and one thing only: communism. Fronters were convinced it was time for Christians to organize to protect themselves against the communist menace and its allies in the city, state and federal governments. Roosevelt and the New Deal were nothing more than an elaborate attempt to govern America on the same communist ideals and principles as Soviet Russia. The CF told its crowds that FDR had filled government positions with "international agents and fellow travelers." John Cassidy took the president's so-called admiration of communists to a religious level, telling fellow Fronters that Roosevelt "is worshipping the Communists" and the administration was "cuddling" communists. Joe Hartery ranted in front of six hundred people on Fordham Road that Albany and Washington were under the control of a certain minority, who tried to dominate Christians in "every walk of life." And it was time for Christians to do something about it.[93]

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Notes

[1] Police Report, Sept. 14, 1939, OCF.

[2] Parrish 300-302.

[3] Dallek 182-183.

[4] *Ibid.* 184-185.

[5] *Ibid.* 186-187.

[6] *Ibid.* 187-188.

[7] George Q. Flynn, *Roosevelt and Romanism: Catholics and American Diplomacy, 1937-1945* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1976) 68; Stanley G. Payne, *The Spanish Civil War, the Soviet Union, and Communism* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2004) 103.

[8] Dallek 126-127; Payne 124-125. For a detailed explanation on the Soviet Union's military intervention in the Spanish Civil War, see Payne, chapters 7 and 8.

[9] Dallek 102-108.

[10] Parrish 451-452.

[11] J. David Valaik, "Catholics, Neutrality, and the Spanish Embargo, 1937-1939," *The Journal of American History* (June 1967): 75, 78.

[12] Franklin Roosevelt, Press Conference #452-A, Apr. 20, 1938, *Complete Presidential Press Conferences of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, vols. 11-12, 1938 (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972).

[13] Dallek 143, 158-160.

[14] *Ibid.* 177-178.

[15] Roosevelt appointed a Committee for Impartial Civilian Relief in Spain to work with the American Red Cross and the American Friends Service Committee to solve the food problem. He hoped to send wheat held by the Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation, the bulk of which would go to Republican Spain. Catholic leaders were opposed to raising funds "to keep Loyalists alive and fighting during the winter." Committee chairman George MacDonald was under great pressure from the Catholic opposition and

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raised only $50,000 of the estimated required $500,000 to meet the cost of wheat shipments. *Ibid.*

[16] *Ibid.*

[17] *Ibid.* 179-180.

[18] Valaik 73.

[19] Wise became a favorite target of Coughlinites and the *Brooklyn Tablet*, partially because of this rally. They felt that the denunciation was a personal attack on them, and used it as evidence for Wise's and Jewish sympathies for communists. *Brooklyn Tablet*, Feb. 3, 1940: 1; *New York Times*, Apr. 5, 1938: 11.

[20] Cantril 807-808; Lipset and Raab 177.

[21] Lipset and Raab 180-181.

[22] Powers, *Not Without Honor* 134.

[23] *An Answer to Father Coughlin's Critics, by Father Coughlin's Friends* (Royal Oak, MI.: The Radio League of the Little Flower, 1940): 110-111.

[24] Edward Lodge Curran, *Spain in Arms: With Notes on Communism* (Brooklyn, NY: International Catholic Truth, 1936): 2-3.

[25] "The Divided Front," *The Christian Front* October 1938: 115; Joseph Smith, "Communism," *The Christian Front* Oct. 1938: 124; "Spanish Embargo," *America* 59 (May 14, 1938): 132; "The Terrible Use of Fascist," *America* 59 (May 14, 1938): 133; "United Front," *The Christian Front* July-August 1938: 83; Valaik 75, 78.

[26] Franklin Roosevelt, "letter to Arthur B. Sherman," Apr. 6, 1938, *F.D.R.: His Personal Letters, 1928-1945*, ed. Elliot Roosevelt, vol. II (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1950): 774.

[27] *Ave Maria*, January 21, 1939: 87; *Ave Maria*, Mar. 25, 1939: 372; Arthur Capper, "No War, American!" *The Christian Front* May 1939: 67; Charles J. Cooke, "Don't Quote Me," *The Christian Front* Mar. 1939: 36; Robert Davis, "Franco, the Man," *Catholic Digest* 3 (May 1939): 85; Flynn 68-69; Michael Leigh, *Mobilizing Consent*, (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1976): 33-34; Valaik 81-82; "What Is the Christian Front?": 1-2; Julie K. Wood, "Identities In Conflict New York Irish-Catholics' Response to the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939," *New York Irish History* 7 (1992-93): 38.

[28] *Brooklyn Tablet*, Mar. 11, 1939: 12.

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[29] Police Report May 20, 1939, OFC.

[30] This did not mean other Catholic political leaders stopped assaulting both communists and fascists in the same breath. Al Smith, in a speech before the Society for the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick on March 17, 1939, asked why were 8,000 Communists protesting in front of the Italian Embassy because of Italy's actions in Spain, and were worried about Europe when there was plenty to worry about in the United States? He also referred to the Nazis as, "just plain stupid ... They are what we might call the original boneheads" and asserted they would never get a foothold in American politics because America wants no of these "hand wavers" (a reference to the Nazi salute and communist raised fist). Alfred E. Smith, address, The Society of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick in the City of New York 155th Anniversary Dinner, Hotel Astor, New York, March 17, 1939: 32-34.

[31] *Ave Maria*, Mar. 25, 1939: 372; Cooke 36; Davis 85; Valaik 81-82; "What Is the Christian Front?": 1-2. Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, Sept. 7, 1939, OFC.

[32] Police Report, May 4, 1939, OCF.

[33] Payne 221. For a detailed analysis of Negrín's leadership, see Payne, Chapter 10.

[34] There is no evidence that the Communists were grooming him for higher office before being named prime minister in 1937. The choice of Negrín by the Socialists and President Manuel Azaña created an ideal convergence of interests that was acceptable to the Communists. Payne 224-25.

[35] *Ibid.* 252-253, 258. Tagliotti is quoted in Payne 253. The original source for this quote is Palmiro Tagliotti, *Escritos Sobre la Guerra* 229.

[36] *New York Times*, May 2, 1939: 13.

[37] Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, Sept. 7, 1939, OCF.

[38] *New York Times*, May 16, 1939: 22.

[39] *New York Times,* May 19, 1939: 4; May 21, 1939: 31.

[40] *New York Times,* May 23, 1939: 11; Police Report May 20, 1939, OCF.

[41] Robert Jackson, *That Man: An Insider's Portrait of Franklin D. Roosevelt*. ed. John Q. Barrett (New York: Oxford UP, 2003) 77-81.

[42] Leigh 32.

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[43] *Ibid.* 42-43.

[44] *Ibid.* 42-43, 45-46.

[45] *Ibid.* 45-46.

[46] A lesser known, yet equally vocal "radio priest" against Roosevelt's foreign policy was Paulist Father Reverend James Gillis. Gibble 501-519.

[47] Flynn 68-71.

[48] Curran outlined five conditions in which war was acceptable:

1. Actual or imminent aggression of a foreign power.
2. Threat of aggression must be real and certain, not a pretext to declare war.
3. The aggression must be against the fundamental sovereign structure of the body politic of the United States.
4. War must be the last resort.
5. Must have a national plebiscite for moral justification.

Edward Lodge Curran, *Anti-War Crusade: Keep the United States Out of War* (Brooklyn, NY: International Catholic Truth Society, 1939).

[49] Marcus 197.

[50] *Ibid.*

[51] Det. George E. Monahan to Commanding Officer, Alien Squad, Oct. 2, 1939, OCF. Smith was on the executive board of the Committee of Catholics for Human Rights, a Catholic organization founded to specifically oppose Coughlin, his principles, and the Christian Front. Marcus 158.

[52] *The Patriot Digest*, a pro-fascist journal that attacked labor, Jews, and defended the principles and actions of the Nazis. One of the names on *The Patriot Digest* Committee of Honor was Christian Front associate, Allen Zoll.

[53] Patton was the president of the *Patriot Digest* in October 1938. Police Report, Oct. 3, 1939; Police Report, Dec. 12, 1939, OCF.

[54] *Ibid.*

[55] See Bayor 160-163 for these ethnic conflicts and their subsequent resolutions.

[56] *Brooklyn Tablet*, Feb. 25, 1939: 1, 6; Marcus 196-198.

[57] Report of Meeting, Lt. Touhey, 18th Pct. & Det. Schmidt, Alien Squad, Aug. 27, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 28, 1939, OCF.

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[58] Police Report, Sept. 19, 1939, OCF.

[59] Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Information Bureau, July 7, 1939, OCF.

[60] Police Report, Sept. 23, 1939, OCF.

[61] Ptl. Francis L. Hillick to Commanding Officer, Third Division, Sept. 26, 1939, OCF.

[62] Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, July 12, 1939, OCF.

[63] Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, June 30, 1939; Det. Louis P. Muscatiello to Commanding Officer Criminal Alien Squad, June 30, 1939; Police Report, July 11, 1939, OCF.

[64] Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, July 12, 1939; Det. George Ballenstadt to Commanding Officer, Alien Squad, July 21, 1939, OCF.

[65] Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Information Bureau, July 7, 1939; OCF.

[66] *Brooklyn Tablet,* July 29, 1939: 9. Police Report, July 26, 1939, OCF.

[67] Det. Joseph Carrington to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, July 31, 1939, OCF. For detail on the Craigie-Arita affair and Japanese-British diplomacy, Dallek 192-195.

[68] Flynn 69.

[69] "Father Coughlin's Anti-Semitism," *Memorandum on Father Coughlin and Social Justice*, American Jewish Committee (1940), AJCL.

[70] *New York Times*, Sept. 14, 1939: 1.

[71] This was the same meeting in which Varley accused the president of destroying cattle, used at the opening of this chapter. Police Report, Sept. 14, 1939, OCF.

[72] Police Report, Sept. 15, 1939, OCF.

[73] "Father Coughlin's Anti-Semitism."

[74] *Ibid.*

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[75] The 1939 cash-and-carry provision allowed belligerents to purchase arms on the same basis the earlier versions of the Neutrality Acts had established for non-military materials.
Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, Oct. 11, 1939, OCF.

[76]Leigh 42-43. "Report on Anti-Democratic Statements of Father Coughlin and Social Justice," *Memorandum on Father Coughlin and Social Justice*, American Jewish Committee (1940), AJCL 7, 11-13. The issues of *Social Justice* noted in the report are: Oct. 3, 1938; Oct. 17, 1938; Oct. 24, 1938; Dec. 19, 1938; Feb. 13, 1939; Mar. 27, 1939; May 23, 1939.

[77] *Social Justice,* Feb. 13, 1939: 10.

[78] Police Report, Aug. 31, 1939, OCF.

[79] Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, Oct. 21, 1939, OCF.

[80] Ptl. Francis L. Hillick to Commanding Officer, Third Division, Sept. 26, 1939, OCF.

[81] Marcus 199; Police Report, Sept. 15, 1939, OCF.

[82] *New York Times*, Dec. 14, 1939: 5; Police Report, Nov. 28, 1939; Police Report, Dec. 12, 1939, OCF.

[83] Marcus 199; Police Report, Sept. 14, 1939, OCF; *Social Justice*, Nov. 27, 1939: 10.

[84] Leigh 41, 44.

[85] *New York Times*, Oct 9, 1939: 9.

[86] Daigle's speech took place on the corner of 204th Street and Perry Avenue.
Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, July 19, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 18, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 15, 1939, OCF.

[87] American Jewish Committee Report, September 27, 1939, Joseph McWilliams file, AJC; Police Report, Sept. 6, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 14, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 19, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 23, 1939; Det. Edward F. Rogers to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, Oct. 2, 1939; Police Report, Nov. 2, 1939, OCF.

[88] Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, Oct. 5, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, Oct. 6, 1939; Police Report, Oct. 7, 1939, OCF.

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[89] McCullough was referring to Republican isolationist senators Robert Taft (Ohio) and William Edgar Borah (Idaho), who supported mandatory neutrality legislation and were successful in past attempts to block FDR from amending neutrality laws. Senators Robert Wagner and James Mead of New York were targets of CF letter writing campaigns in June and July 1939. Dallek 204; Det. Louis P. Muscatiello to Commanding Officer Criminal Alien Squad, June 28, 1939; Det. Louis P. Muscatiello to Commanding Officer Criminal Alien Squad, June 30, 1939; Police Report, July 11, 1939; Police Report, Nov. 2, 1939, OCF.

[90] *Brooklyn Tablet*, Jan. 20, 1940: 18; *Cong. Rec.—House,* Nov. 3, 1939: 1388-89; *Cong. Rec.—House,* Jan. 23, 1940: 568; Vernon Criss, box 611, vol. IV: 1725, USAJP-CCF.

[91] *New York Times*, June 29, 1939: 12; Police Report, June 19, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, June 30, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, July 11, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, July 14, 1939; Det. Joseph Carrington to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, July 31, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 15, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 14, 1939, OCF.

[92] *Cong. Rec.—House,* Nov. 3, 1939: 1389; Police Report, Sept. 14, 1939; Police Report, Oct. 31, 1939; Police Report, Nov. 2, 1939, OCF.

[93] Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, July 11, 1939; Report of Meeting, Lt. Stauffer, 105th Pct., July 20, 1939; Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, July 21, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 10, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 29, 1939; Police Report, Oct. 31, 1939, OCF.

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Chapter 4 The Threat to the Nation and the Defenders of the Faith: September 1938 – December 1939

"Communism is atheism and where there is Communism, Christianity goes out the door."
- Joseph Trebuh, August 8, 1939[1]

Christian Front anticommunists were, of course, responding to the same world situation as other anticommunists during the 1930s. The challenge was for anticommunists to oppose communism without seeming to support Hitler and without weakening the antifascist coalition. The Christian Front was organized when many American Catholics feared communism and its impact on the Catholic Church at home and abroad, and this outweighed any concern about the danger of fascism. It also placed supporters of the Front on the defensive, explaining that their version of anticommunism did not necessarily make them pro-fascist.[2] The Fronters ignored this, and their focus was squarely on protecting Christian America from destruction at the hands of communists. It was no real concern to them whether that made them look like fascists. In fact, some of them were.

On July 6, 1939, Daniel Kurtz took the speakers' stand, a step-ladder and a large American flag, on the corner of Springfield Boulevard and Jamaica Avenue in Queens Village and began to speak to a crowd of one hundred fifty people. Kurtz told his audience that a minority in Russia, which, not to keep them in suspense, he identified as mostly Jews, forced the majority of Russians to live under communist rule, "by a bloody revolution and the murderous slaughter of about 30,000,000 Christians, four times the number of soldiers lost in the World's War." According to Kurtz, this communist plot was actually hatched on the lower east side of Manhattan by a Jew, Jacob "Shifty" Schiff[3] of Kuhn-Loeb and Company, who was the financial support of a man named Bronstein.

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In Russia Bronstein changed his name to Leon Trotsky. The conspiracy was now coming full-circle: Trotsky, currently in Mexico, was organizing a military force for a world war that would involve the United States. Trotsky's plan was to smuggle his forces into the United States, where they would be joined by comrades already in this country to launch a communist revolution while American forces would be fighting in Europe.[4]

* * *

The Christian Front proclaimed itself the protector of a Christian America that existed only in its collective mind. Its weapon was an unsophisticated and crude anticommunism. This was at a time, Richard Gid Powers explains, that America needed a principled anticommunism to defend democracy against both communism and fascism. Some anticommunists fell short of this standard and so became vulnerable to the charge that they were at heart fascists, whose anticommunism was merely the most convenient and effective weapon against Jews and other political enemies. The CF's brand of anticommunism placed it among those who in trying to defend democracy, abandoned it, as the Fronters separated themselves from the mainstream of Americans in holding that communism was a far greater threat than fascism.

Monsignor Fulton Sheen, who was an outspoken supporter of the Christian Front in 1938, explained why communism outweighed the danger of fascism in America. Sheen's *Communism Answers Questions of a Communist,* published by the Paulist Press (probably in 1937), defined the differences between communism, fascism and Nazism: the latter two do not necessarily believe in confiscation of property or atheism. He blamed the press for the common impression that fascism and Nazism were more dangerous than communism. This was indictment the CF would repeat subsequently, and

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constantly: that the press fostered the belief that unless the world became communist it would become fascist, and if it became fascist, then everyone would become a victim of the Black Legion, one of the most violent fascist organizations operating in America during the 1930s.[5] Sheen, like the Fronters, did not feel that atrocities committed by fascists were as bad as those of the communists. Acknowledging that both ideologies were anti-American, he argued that "if suffer we must, then God grant that the Black Legion inflict the suffering, for their atrocities pale into insignificance, compared to what humanity has suffered at the hands of Communists" and "If I have spoken less about Fascist murders it is because they are insignificant when compared to Communist murders and terrors." Sheen was opting for the lesser of two evils. The root of all evil was communism for Sheen, the same as for the Front. "If the Communists are so interested in keeping Fascism out of America there is one sure way to do it, and that is to keep out Communism. And why? Because Fascism has always arisen as a reaction against Communism."[6]

Reverend Edward Lodge Curran was more to the point in his comparison of communist versus fascist dangers in America: there was no American Fascist Party in the United States, he said, but there was a Communist Party. Some would say that changed when Curran organized the Christian Front in New York City, a group many accused of actually being an American fascist party.[7]

Paradoxically, both Sheen and Curran, who eventually supported the Christian Front, initially denounced all fronts as covert agents for the destruction of Americanism. Sheen wrote, "[W]e Catholics and all Americans must decline the invitation to the 'United Front' and why? Simply because it is a front. A front is a camouflage and deceit

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to be removed when it has served its purpose." Curran warned against the Popular Front for similar reasons.[8]

Strictly from the standpoint of ideology and doctrine, the Christian Front's anticommunism did not differ greatly from other Catholic organizations founded in the mid-to-late thirties. In 1936, Monsignor Edward J. Higgins of the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Astoria, Queens, founded the Catholic War Veterans. The mission of the CWV was not much different from the stated goals of the Christian Front, and for good reason. Both were attempting resolve a core dilemma of American Catholic identity, which was how to fuse their American patriotism with their Catholic faith rooted in an established, hierarchical worldwide institution with ecclesiastical, theological, social, and political traditions. In both organizations, anticommunism was the bond that fused the organizations' patriotism and with their Americanism. Their members' American Catholic identity was emerging out of an intense fusion of nationalism and anticommunism, a fusion that became the underlying reason for virtually all of the activities of mainstream Catholic anticommunists, as well as extremists like the CF.[9]

The CWV developed a Five Point Program of Unity, with Americanism the most important aspect of the Points. The CWV promoted "unification of all echelons of the Catholic War Veterans in a constructive program 'for God, Country, and Home.'" The key to the Americanism program was the struggle against all forms of subversion. One reason for the similarities between the CWV's and the Front's programs was that Edward Lodge Curran helped Monsignor Higgins to write the Catholic War Veterans' constitution.

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Brooklyn Bishop Thomas Malloy, a fervent patriot and anticommunist, gladly welcomed the formation of the CWV and appeared at many of their events. His support for the Front was much more guarded. Representative Thomas Cullen, a future target of the Christian Front, hailed the formation of the CWV: "I am in accord with your resolutions and will file it in the *Congressional Record*." The CWV's anticommunist crusade appealed to the political establishment. That was not necessarily the case with the Christian Front.[10]

The framework of Christian Front anticommunism was built upon the ideas of Catholic clergy who became supporters and contributors to the Front's efforts. Much of the wild warnings about communism espoused by Fronters on the streets in 1938 and 1939 were found in tracts by these priests. A year before the CF's founding, Reverend Thomas J. Feeney, S.J., Monsignor Sheen and Father Curran, were all feverishly writing anticommunist pamphlets. In their writings, opposition to communism went beyond defense of religion: communism was "primarily anti-human" because it taught class-hate and class-struggle. Sheen based his anticommunism on Catholic humanism and held that the goal of that humanism, a world of peace and concord simply could not be reached beneath the yoke of communism.[11]

Father Feeney's *Communism Our Common Enemy* proclaimed communism the common enemy of every "true American — Catholic, Protestant, or Jew." He outlined the reasons why communism was the enemy of Catholicism, which were the same as those mentioned by virtually all anticommunist Catholics of the 1930s: communism in its atheistic content contradicts the universal experience of all mankind, pre-Christian and Christian; it destroys national morality; and it is based on a principle of disintegration

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(that is, class war), which would foist upon America a set of false revolutionary educational values.[12] Feeney also discussed the supposed plans of Trotsky and the communist press to foment revolution within America's borders. According to Feeney, Trotsky was under the protection of the American ambassador in Mexico and "[was] plotting to supplant [Stalin's Third International] with a Fourth International, is in complete control of a network of propaganda." For purposes of conquering the United States, the Communists had divided the country into 34 districts, one of which was New York. The Soviets would utilize "the most deadly weapon yet forged in the Red armories of Russia . . . the communist press." He claimed that between 1933 and 1936, two billion books were printed by the USSR's State Planning Commission in 105 different languages. He qualified the last figure with a caveat that put him out of the reach of rebuttal: "the statistics just given for the communist press and for education in the USSR are either true or false."[13]

Feeney's scare tactics were a warning to American Catholics, again in terms that were hard to contradict: "if these figures are true, then the anti-Christ and his minions are abroad in the land. If they are not true, then they can become true very rapidly, just as soon in fast as the USSR decides to increase her educational budget." After all, the children in Mexico were already being taught atheism, since there was no God in communist workers' schools. American children would suffer the same fate if Americans (specifically Catholics) were not more vigilant.[14]

Edward Lodge Curran's pamphlet in the same vein, *Facts About Communism,* was a detailed denunciation of the ideology, based on the writings of Lenin, Browder, Stalin and other communist leaders. Much of the material in this 208 page booklet,

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published by the International Catholic Truth Society, could be found in Curran's other pamphlets, but *Facts* went into it in much greater detail. His goal was to explain how two million communists were able to control 158 million non-communist Russians with propaganda and terror to warn that Americans must be alert to prevent communists from doing the same in the United States.[15]

Curran warned that the strength of communism was growing in the United States, focusing on the role of immigrants, among them the anti-American aliens welcomed by the Communists. He estimated that three hundred thousand communist workers, three thousand paid communist propagandists, and three hundred communist publications were active in the United States, leading to an increase in communist violence, such as the San Francisco longshoreman's strike and attacks on clergy in New York City. He told a story of two nuns having their veils thrown over their heads by communist women around 14th Street. The eyewitness to this assault had her own eyeglasses broken when she tried to help. A priest in Brooklyn was spat upon in Flatbush by communists. Similar stories of attacks on clergy by communists were staples of Christian Front speakers, the most dramatic evidence of the need of Christian unity against communists.[16]

In 1939, CF speakers were also rousing the crowds with stories of Jewish communists' attacks on Christians. The Anti-Defamation League reported to Mayor LaGuardia that Joseph McWilliams,[17] a Christian Front speaker and organizer of the Christian Mobilizers, told a crowd in the South Bronx that Jewish communists broke into a Catholic Church and beat-up the priests and nuns. Albert Gunnison, organizer of the Bronx Unit, closed a meeting with a story that he claimed would never appear in newspapers because it concerned the persecution of Christians. The story concerned two

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"Jew Communists" at a garment company who demanded the arrest of two Sisters of Charity for insulting them. The Sisters were then arrested and booked because police officers were afraid to arrest the communists because they knew the communists would produce several false witnesses "who will swear on the Bible" that they were present. Gunnison pleaded with the crowd that any Christians who saw communists commit such offenses should go to court as witnesses for the police, even though the courts were overrun with Jewish judges and nothing could be done.[18]

According to Curran, one of the best ways to counter Soviet propaganda in America was to educate Catholic American children about the dangers of communism. To this end, Curran wrote *Great Moments in Catholic History*, a book endorsed by Brooklyn Bishop Thomas E. Molloy, as supplementary reading for seventh and eight graders, though he held that high school and college students would find it useful as well. Molloy told his congregation that the book should be in every Catholic home. In the final chapter of the book, entitled "Catholicism vs. Communism," Curran told grade-schoolers that "Communism in Russia is the enemy of God" and "Churches have been destroyed. Priests and bishops have been murdered. All religious activities are prohibited. The Communist government of Russia encourages all people to join a society called the 'Union of Militant Atheists.'" He told of an American communist leader (probably Earl Browder) who wanted to "root out the notion of God" from Americans. Equating communism and paganism (which the Catholic Church had always opposed), Curran called for unity among all Protestants, Catholics, and Jews to fight this mortal adversary.[19]

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Just one month before Coughlin called for the formation of the Christian Front, Curran used the pages of *Social Justice* to describe his own version of a Christian Front to combat communism. Curran's essay presaged many to the characteristics that would form the Front's brand of anticommunism, combining subtle anti-Semitism, calls for Christian unity, and his own take on Catholic Americanism. He criticized Rabbi Stephen Wise (a constant thorn in the side of Coughlinites) for stating "To Fascism, we say 'No'." "To Communism, we say 'Maybe'." "To democracy, we say 'Yes'." Subtly planting a thought that all Jews were possible communist sympathizers even while masking his anti-Semitism, Curran stated that Wise was not qualified, does not represent, and does not speak for the Jewish population of New York City, or even his own synagogue. He did not react to Wise as an individual liturgical leader. The priest positioned himself as the expert on Americanism by claiming that "No Catholic, Protestant, or Jew wants fascism or communism, just democracy … everyone wants establishment of social justice and the preservation of American constitutional democracy."[20]

Curran hailed Christianity as civilization's great defender against all totalitarian regimes throughout history, beginning with the Church's defeat of the Roman Empire 1,900 years earlier. The Roman Empire, which was built by a slave population, was destroyed by the Catholic Church because the Church preached freedom and opposed slavery, thereby becoming the first institution to sound the call for social justice. In the end, Christianity conquered the totalitarianism of Rome and planted the seeds of democracy. To prove Christianity's role in the development of democracy, he cited Robert Cardinal Bellarmine's supposed influence on Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of

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Independence and called attention to the mention of God in the Founding Fathers' and early presidents' papers.[21]

Bringing his argument for a Christian Front full circle, Curran accused Earl Browder of luring Americans into collective slavery, linking communism with the totalitarianism of Christianity's first enemy Rome. The new Rome must now be defeated and Jews and Judaism must not be excluded from a Christian Front of social justice, subtly implying exclusion of Jews by specifically defining their inclusion. Curran was also making a theological statement, inferring that Jews should accept Christ. He stated that Judaism should unite with Christianity in a modern Christian Front to conquer modern totalitarianism. The implication was that if Jews did not join Christians, then the totalitarian communists would emerge victorious. If communists were victorious, then it would be the Jews' fault for not joining a Christian Front.[22]

* * *

Nothing ever infuriated conservative American Catholic leaders more than Earl Browder's invitation to Catholics to join his Democratic Front. The CP's creation of the Democratic Front was a strategy to take a junior and hidden role in the New Deal and labor movements by moving away from revolutionary and socialist rhetoric by posing as liberals. Though liberalism was distasteful to American communists, a liberal pose let the Communists, like the Catholics, to trumpet their Americanism, and so the CP now heaped praise on American heroes like Thomas Jefferson, and now called Communism "Twentieth Century Americanism." This strategy dictated that they seek a truce with their traditional enemies of Zionism and Catholicism to create a more broad-based appeal for the Party in America.[23]

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Just three days after Father Coughlin published his call for a unified Christian Front in the pages of *Social Justice*, New York City's Madison Square Garden hosted the Communist Party's Tenth Convention on May 26, 1938. According to Harvey Klehr, the convention symbolized Browder's newly formed Democratic Front. The 1,500 Party members in attendance radiated confidence. In a radio broadcast, William Z. Foster announced "Communism is twentieth century Americanism." Earl Browder stood in front of an enormous red, white, and blue map of America and declared the communists' commitment to the Democratic Front, their support of Franklin Roosevelt, and then he proposed reconciliation with Catholics by extending an invitation to them to join his front.

Browder was not the first communist leader to extend a hand to Catholics. The impetus for his change in heart came from abroad. In 1936, the French Communists, with the approval of the Comintern, offered a similar invitation to Catholics. *The Daily Worker* was now hailing "progressive" Catholic priests. Mike Quill, the communist leader of the Transport Workers Union in New York, described St. Patrick as the "People's saint" to his union within a year of Browder's 1937 trip to France. This gave Browder confidence to report, somewhat optimistically, that a growing number of Catholics were joining the CP, and so a union with the Church made sense in fight against fascism.[24]

Not surprisingly, such an idea left anticommunist Catholic leaders aghast. Reverend John Boland, chairman of the New York State Labor Relations Board, quickly rejected Browder's offer of cooperation between Communists and Catholics on the front page of the *Brooklyn Tablet*, calling it a Trojan Horse. Boland stated that there could

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never be cooperation between the two until the communists accepted Catholic economic philosophy, freedom of worship, right of private property, and the "right of free men to rule themselves." And that would never happen because "Communism is the antithesis of democracy."[25]

Edward Lodge Curran was certainly not going to let Browder's request go unanswered. Curran equated Earl Browder to Pontius Pilate in his published response, *The Hand of Pilate: A Reply to Earl Browder's Message to Catholics*. The Brooklyn priest aimed his scathing attack at the greatest fears of religious and semi-religious, patriotic American Catholics loss of both their American and Catholic identities. He warned that Catholic homes were about to be invaded by communists, who will "Tear the crucifix off the walls of your homes; Teach your children to become enemies of God; Make your children so much cannon fodder for foreign warfare; Take away every bit of your American freedom." As proof that the war had already begun, Curran pointed to those nebulous, improvable claims of communist attacks on Catholics, both verbal and physical: "Communism in the United States has *insulted the Pope, struck at nuns and spat upon Catholic women* along the sidewalks of New York." He then added the more documentable claims of Catholic suffering in Spain and the hands of the Loyalists.[26]

According to Curran, the communist invasion of America was to be led by Earl Browder, whom he called a modern incarnation of Pontius Pilate and the American representative of Stalin in the United States. Communists' attacks on Father Coughlin provided more evidence for Curran that communists only wanted to foment revolution and destroy religion. If Browder truly believed in social justice, as he claimed at the Tenth Convention, then he would praise Coughlin and not scorn him. Curran used his

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description of Browder as a modern Pilate to underscore the communists' declaration of war against God and religion and their effort to reconstruct America on the "slave basis of Soviet Russia," just as Pilate knew Jesus Christ was the Son of God and proceeded with the crucifixion. There was no gray area in Curran's conclusion: there were no common aims between communism and Catholicism. Only bad Catholics could become communists.[27]

* * *

Nor was there any gray area in Christian Front anticommunism: it advocated aggressive attacks on communists, but they did not see this as an offensive strategy. Fronters thought they were simply defending Christianity and Americanism. They were self-proclaimed defenders of the faith. From the beginning, the extremism of the Christian Front's rhetoric portrayed themselves as defending their anticommunism against a powerful enemy. From the inception of the Christian Front in 1938, anticommunism was simply seen as a defense of Christianity. Meetings were co-sponsored by the Christian Front, American Patriots, Inc., American Federation Against Communism, and the American Nationalist Party to promote "Christian America." One was at the Great Northern Hotel ballroom, which overflowed into Columbus Circle. Speakers attacked communism, Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, and CIO leader John L. Lewis. Speeches were tinged with anti-Semitism and cries of "throw the Jews out of America" were heard from the floor. Audiences cheered any mention of "Christian America" allies like Father Coughlin, General Franco, Queens Borough President George U. Harvey, Boake Carter, and Jersey City Mayor Frank Hague. And, naturally, the *Brooklyn Tablet* and *Social Justice* were sold after meetings.[28]

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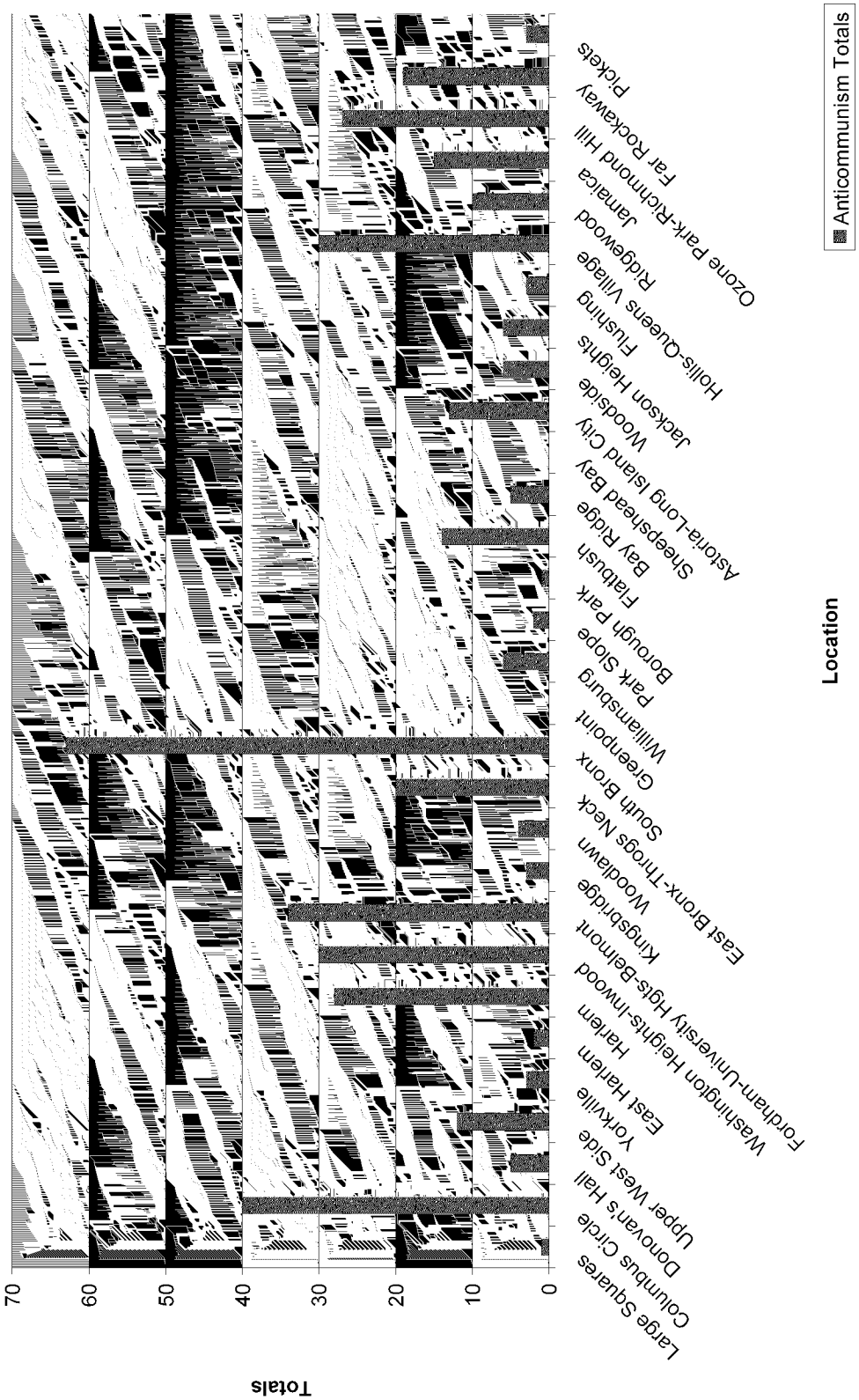
Chart 15: Anticommunism Topics by Location, 1939



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Undoubtedly, the communist meetings that seemed to be springing up everywhere, especially in the South Bronx where at least fifty communist meetings took place between 1938 and 1941, antagonized Catholics. They certainly gave the impression that communists were growing in power in New York City and must have created in anticommunists an intense sense of anxiety.[29] It should not be surprising, then, that the South Bronx accounted for the greatest number of anticommunist speeches by the Christian Front in 1939, sixty-three. Conversely, there was no love lost for the Christian Front at communist rallies. Any mention of the CF at a Madison Square Garden communist meeting was roundly booed.[30]

This anxiety over the general situation in New York did not mean the CF never made direct threats against communists or communist-sympathizers, and the more aggressive Fronters were no strangers to violence. In an early Christian Front meeting at St. Paul the Apostle Church on September 16, 1938, Mr. Hahn (mentioned in chapter 1), the supposed secret service agent and member of the German-American Bund, claimed that a pope in the 16th century claimed Jews were an unfit people and "[I]f there are any Communists or Jews in the audience, let them step right out there now (points to a vacant part of the room) and I'll kick the Jesus out of them."[31] A Joseph Hartery had been fired for an attempting to attack a co-worker with an axe and had been arrested for threatening another man with a knife. He opened a street meeting by announcing that if there were any communists in the audience they better leave. Hartery, known as "Little Napoleon," described by John Roy Carlson as an "undersized, pug-faced man with a large metal cross pinned on his shirt," complained about a hammer and sickle he claimed had been painted on the wall of St. Paul's Church. This, he said, "aroused the temper of Christian

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people and they would stand for no more of the disorder and destruction caused by Communists."[32]

A pamphlet entitled "Anti-Communism is Christian Self-Defense!!" was reprinted in a letter by C.F. Bree's in the *Brooklyn Tablet.* He complained that members of American Federation of Musicians , Local 802, were forced by union's Jewish leadership to play free concerts to support "Spanish Democracy," even though the "real purpose behind all that interest in Spain is the destruction of Christianity." Bree appealed for an end to the "embarrassment" of Christian members having to participate in activities promoting their own destruction.[33] Speakers echoed these sentiments on street corners throughout 1939, often in a more base manner, referring to communists as "lunatics," "idiots," and "low animals."[34] Outlandish claims were made, such as a bogus *New York Times* report that a picture of Franklin Roosevelt had been hung in Moscow in 1931, before he was nominated by the Democratic Committee, with the caption "President of the United States Soviet America."[35]

Floyd Caridi, a member of the Christian American Citizens Committee Against Communism,[36] definitively defined the anticommunism of Fronters in a speech on November 10, 1938. Speaking at the same location as John Cassidy and Russell Dunn often spoke (Flatbush Avenue and Albemarle Road in Brooklyn), Caridi told the crowd that communism hated Christianity and aimed to destroy it, "When the Communists talk about the violent overthrow of the social order, they are talking about the social order established by Jesus Christ." That social order was embodied in Christian American civilization. Caridi warned the crowd that the social order was on the verge of destruction because of communist literature and infiltration into American institutions,

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such as the police department, National Guard, and navy. In other words, the greatest enemy to Christian America was coming from within. He charged that "the CIO with the Communists is far from dead." He went on to warn them that they should "Watch La Perkins importing the reds … Samuel Dickstein is Russian born." He tried to shock the audience with the Communist's arrogance and confidence by quoting Earl Browder statement that "The Communist revolution of the United States is won." Caridi went on to defend his group against its critics: "If red-baiting is un-American, so is fascist-baiting and if Jew-baiting is un-American, so is Christian-baiting un-American …"[37]

Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia was a lightning rod for the Front's diatribes, held up as a prime example of government's conciliatory attitudes towards communists. He did not escape the CF attack. The previous night there was a communist rally at the same location, and Caridi complained that what had happened there had been identical to communist attacks on Catholics in Spain, Russia and Mexico. He accused LaGuardia of keeping police from doing their jobs and enforcing the laws when he did not let them arrest communists who ridiculed the American flag on King's Highway. Addressing his remarks directly to LaGuardia, Caridi warned the mayor that if he did not do something about the "Kings Highway commissars" and foreign agitators who attacked citizens and the police, then "American citizen's patience will no longer be tried, we will ride up with guns." He warned that there will be a lot of trouble "because the American people won't stand for this." Speeches like these that pushed the Christian Front to the radical periphery of American Catholic anticommunism and made them a target for the government's investigations of anti-American groups, even as the CF was claiming that they were the true defenders of Americanism.[38]

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In January 1939, John Cassidy told an audience that the Christian Front must defend the government and their Christian heritage against communists. Every race, color and creed has a right to exist in America, but when the revolution comes "one hundred and thirty millions of Christians won't have the chance to live if America goes Communist." "We fight Communism as Christians because Communism would wipe out Christianity, as it has in Russia, Loyalist Spain, and Communist Mexico," Cassidy warned. Glancing toward Jews who did not agree with the CF's form of anticommunism, he acknowledged he had been called a fascist because he attacked communism and pledged that he and the Front were ready to defend all minorities as long as those minorities are "devoted to American principles." Aware that his audience had sympathized with Franco in the Spanish Civil War, he said the Front was planning to do the same thing to communists in the America as Franco had done in Spain.[39]

Christian Fronters protested the appearance of the American Youth Conference in New York to claim that they had to act to save American Christian youth from communism. The Front's protests against participation in Youth Congresses were standard fare among Catholic anticommunists, and for good reason. Communists dominated the American Youth Conference, which had been formed in 1934 as an alliance of many youth organizations. Only a few of the organizations in the AYC were actually communist-dominated, but the CP's allies and several "secret communists" assembled a controlling coalition and the AYC endorsed the Party's positions, which had been made more palatable by the Party's adoption of the Democratic Front's newly moderate stances in the late 1930s.[40]

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Well before the formation of the CF, the National Catholic Welfare Conference discussed the Second World Youth Conference at length in 1938. The NCWC warned Catholics against participating in the Conference because the Youth Congresses were dominated and infiltrated by communist and other left-wing united front groups.[41] When the American Youth Conference met in New York July 1939, the Christian Front blasted the participants. The Front was particularly outraged when the Congress rejected an anticommunist platform plank that would have equated anticommunism to anti-Nazism and anti-fascism. The rejection of the anticommunist plank led to fourteen groups leaving the conference. Participants who voted against the resolution said they opposed the expulsion of any group based on its beliefs and considered the anticommunist bloc's purpose had been to disrupt the congress. Among the anticommunist groups in that bloc was the Latin American League (one of the fourteen groups that left the conference), chaired by Christian Fronter Floyd Caridi. The Conference became extraordinarily contentious as charges of Coughlinism and anti-Semitism were made against Caridi. At one point, Ben Epstein of the American Jewish Congress shouted down Caridi when Caridi stood to defend the amendment. Epstein called the Fronter "an open anti-Semite who has beaten Jews in the streets of New York." Other members of the Conference echoed Epstein's accusations. Caridi responded that these accusations were "a red herring to defeat the amendment" and denied being either anti-Semitic or that he was a member of the Christian Front. In fact he had been a speaker at least thirteen CF rallies in 1939 alone.[42]

During the Conference, Fronters accused the Roosevelt administration of communist sympathies by pointing out that Eleanor Roosevelt attended what it called

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"strictly Communist" American Youth Conference.[43] Fronter Jack O'Shea gave a crowd in Queens Village a brief history of the AYC, explaining how it after its formation six years earlier, it had been dominated by the Young Communist League for the last four years. O'Shea recounted the events that precipitated the Caridi-led bloc to walk out of the Conference, telling three hundred listeners gathered on the corner of Springfield Boulevard and Jamaica Avenue how the anticommunist bloc had wanted the following statement placed in the AYC record, "That the American Youth Congress condemns Communism because it is opposed to the principles of a belief in God, the inviolability of human rights, private ownership of property and internal peace; and further be it resolved that the American Youth Congress condemns Nazism and Fascism which are viciously opposed to these principles of American democracy." The Congress's rejection of this statement, and the fact that a resolution was sponsored by the Young Communist League had been adopted, was proof enough for Fronters that the AYC was communist.[44]

The AYC was not the only popular organization considered communist dominated by the Front. Al Lomax, who called himself "Al Christian," told Fronters at a closed, members-only meeting of the North East Bronx Unit that CF members should join community groups if they had fallen under communist control. One of these was, they claimed, the PTA. By Lomax's estimation, half the of the PTA's meetings were actually communist events hiding behind the Association's name. By joining the PTA, Fronters could re-instill American values into an organization that had enormous influence on American education. If the Front did not take action, then the youth of America could potentially be brainwashed by communist thinking — just as it had been in other countries described by Curran. Of course, being "altruistic," the Unit claimed it

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was not looking for any glory in exposing these communistic groups. It intended to turn over any such information to the American Legion and the VFW because those organizations would "gladly take up matters and see to it that only American ideals are practiced." It was highly unlikely that those listening in Clark's Hall on East Tremont Avenue that night in January 1940 would have been able to wield a great influence on New York's PTA, even if every member in attendance joined the Association since there were only sixteen people in attendance.[45]

* * *

The Christian Front's anti-internationalism and its blatantly anti-Semitic anticommunism were often intertwined. For the Front the terms "internationalist" or "internationalist bankers" were euphemisms for Jews. Coughlinites were hardly the first to use this rhetoric. Henry Ford had published the classic anti-Semitic text, the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, under the title "The International Jew" in the 1920s, a work that accused Jews of conspiring to overthrow Christian civilization.[46] Fear of this conspiracy permeated the Front from its inception.

Soon the Front, like other Coughlinites, would become vulnerable to the same charges as Ford. The *Daily Worker* accused the Brooklyn Tablet's Patrick Scanlan of being a fascist and an anti-Semite because of his opposition to arms to Loyalist Spain and his demand that the government deport Albert Einstein because of Einstein's support for ending the arms embargo. The editorial stated that "The *Daily Worker* and other Communist papers and institutions for too long have been stomping with their blood-soaked, mud-sodden shoes on things sacred to Catholics and Americans." Portraying Catholics as the foremost champions of Americanism, *Social Justice* declared that "American Catholics heretofore have had as their ideal preservation of American

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Democracy for Americans…The kind of Democracy that existed in the United States before Communism rodents chewed their way into the structure." Scanlan reprinted the *Social Justice* editorial in the June 11 issue of *Brooklyn Tablet*.[47]

In the same issue of the *Tablet*, Scanlan also replied to an article that had appeared in the June 4 edition of *The Nation*, which denounced both Coughlin and Curran for being part of the Church's anti-labor, anti-progressive, and anti-democratic "menacing hierarchy." Scanlan claimed that The *Nation*'s editors wanted to make it unconstitutional to "defend the Church, to uphold religion, to decry the enemies of Christianity." The real reason for *The Nation*'s bigoted campaign against Catholics was that Cardinal Hayes had prayed for Franco. The "crime" committed by Hayes, according to Scanlan, was the act of prayer itself and not his support for Franco because Scanlan said the *Nation* opposed any freedom of prayers. The *Nation's* editorial was just another instance of Christian America being attacked by communists and their allies. Scanlan claimed that *The Nation* ignored anti-Catholicism and only spoke out against anti-Semitism and anti-Negro propaganda, voicing the common resentment that only Catholic victimization was being ignored as the left focused on anti-Semitism.

Scanlan published letters in the *Brooklyn Tablet* that promoted the Jewish-Bolshevik stereotype. Charles Mazzarella wrote a letter directed to Rabbi Louis Gross, editor of the *Jewish Examiner*, which appeared in the *Tablet* on June 25, 1938. Mazzarella said Gross' accusation that Patrick Scanlan was a "Jew-Baiter" because of his call to deport Einstein was caused by Gross' hysterical state of mind. The persecution of Jews in Germany and the discredit that had befallen Jews in America because of their association with communists was the cause of Gross' hysteria, wrote Mazzarella.

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Mazzarella concluded that Scanlan's sympathy for the suffering of Catholics in Spain was no less than Gross' sympathy for Jews in Germany. Denying any anti-Semitism on his own part, Mazzarella laid the blame for anti-Semitism on Jews themselves. He warned Jewish leaders to exercise more self-control, or they would lead Jews into "inextricable chaos." Rabbi Gross' reply was published in the same issue: "If only Jews 'behave' then the problem of persecution is solved?" asked Gross. "That is not true — persecution would continue. Jews have been kicked around long enough." He found it amazing that Catholics find communism in every Jew, but overlook the real menace of fascism; after all, look what happened to Catholics in Germany.[48]

A *Tablet* article in December complained about Jewish "lack of sympathy" for Catholic suffering and revealed how this fueled Coughlinite anti-Semitism. The *Tablet* complained that there was a general suppression of news about Christian persecution and of Father Coughlin's views on this subject, even though there was "a morning, noon and night denunciation of the lesser persecution of our friends, the Jews." The *Tablet* reported that at an interdenominational roundtable the persecution of the Jews was denounced while a Jewish representative had scoffed at Catholics' suffering in Spain because they were being persecuted by fellow Catholics. The *Tablet* pointed out that the Spanish anarchists were funded by Russia and implied that since because Jews were at least ideologically allied with the communists, they had claimed that they could not support a resolution condemning all persecution because the Jews present said they "did not have authority to represent their organizations."

The *Tablet* also accused the American Jewish Congress of turning a deaf ear to complaints about Christian persecution by the Loyalists while it wailed about Nazi

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persecution of Jews. The *Tablet* hoped that Jews would finally understand the Catholic perspective. In what could be read as an effort to shame Catholics into joining organizations like the Christian Front, the *Tablet* said Catholics themselves were to blame for the public's disregard of Spanish suffering because Catholics had an inferiority complex and had kept quiet — Catholics simply did not talk about persecution in Mexico or Spain.[49]

* * *

The situation in Spain certainly played a significant role in the development of Christian Front anti-Semitism, but it was not its only source. The fact that the Communist Party's greatest recruitment successes was with from native-born, white collar New York Jews, attracted to the Party because of its fervent anti-fascist attitude, contributed to the CF's anti-Semitism in the City.[50]

Jewish failure to support Catholics' claims of communist brutality in Russia and Spain while asking for support against Hitler's regime in Germany struck Fronters as hypocrisy and became both a source of anti-Semitism and a reason to call for unity in defense of all Christian faiths.[51]

From the inception of the Christian Front, meetings at St. Paul's Church in Manhattan exemplified an anti-Semitic anticommunism fueled by fanaticism. Here, in fact, anti-Semitism was the central issue, based on an irrational association between Judaism and communism without worrying about any empirically observable facts, all this resulting in a demonization of all Jews.[52] A Mr. O'Connell, who said he was proud Christians had kept Jews out of the insurance business, asked Father John E. Burke, C.S.P., "Father, why doesn't the Catholic clergy come out openly and tell us that our

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enemy in Spain, our real enemy there, is the Jew?" Burke responded, "I know the Jews are 100% against us in Spain." Another attendee, E.P. Kerwin, agreed with the Paulist father.[53]

Burke's occasional attempts to quell anti-Semitism at some meetings and separate communism from Judaism were not successful. When Burke said, "This is a meeting to fight communism" the response was John Cassidy's Coughlinesque "We have one common enemy, the international bankers, the people behind communism, and we all know whom they are." A meeting at St. Paul's on September 16 was attended by Front founders Marcel Honore and Walter Ogden, along with Paulist priests Burke and Joseph McSorley and former Democratic candidate for Queens District Attorney Adrian Humphries. McSorley introduced the topic "Should Catholics Cooperate with Communists?" and argued Catholics should not because of incompatibility of Catholicism with communism. He became nervous when he was asked if the Church was lax in not publicizing that Judaism was behind the creation and spread of communism. McSorley responded with an idea later echoed by the *Brooklyn Tablet*, "Yes, I admit that but it is equally the fault of the laity and their lack of action." He agreed with another attendee that the Catholic clergy not had done enough to expose to the public that the "Jew is the real one behind Communism." There was still more anti-Semitism at the meeting in the Church rectory. Adrian Humphries, who claimed to have spent time in Germany in 1932, said that Hitler did what he had to do to bring the country "out of the grasp of the Jew. They owned and controlled 80% of everything in Germany." Focusing on abuse of Christians at the hands of Jews, he concluded Christians had no chance in

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law or medicine because Jews "had complete control of finances and ground everyone else under their heel."[54]

The American Jewish Committee monitored the St. Paul's meetings in 1938 and charged that the principle source of Christian Front anti-Semitism was Father Charles Coughlin. It was Father Coughlin who promoted the idea that communists and Jews were the same. It was his ideological followers who obeyed him like puppets (such as Joe McWilliams who called all Jews communists at a CF meeting). The CF claimed only to be anticommunist but that wherever they took their fight, they were confronted by Jews.[55] The Front's standard response to accusations of anti-Semitism was complete denial while posing as martyrs for their cause. Brother David Ahern, an unabashed defender of Coughlin (he told his audience that he would "shed every drop of his blood for Father Coughlin"), denied Coughlin's anti-Semitism in a January 1939 speech. Ahern, claiming that he was not anti-Semitic either, told his Brooklyn audience that it was the Jewish people who were persecuting Coughlin and keeping him from the airwaves. In typical Fronter rhetoric, Ahern presented Coughlin not only as the victim, but also as the embodiment of Christ's teaching to "turn the other cheek." He said Coughlin had nothing against the Jews and has actually frequently forgiven them for the "terrible crimes they are committing against him." Ahern compared the Jews refusal to accept Christ to Jews not accepting Coughlin — "Forgive them for they know not what they do" he told the crowd. He excoriated the Church hierarchy for not supporting Coughlin and told the crowd to write the Pope about the situation in America. He made an exception for Brooklyn Bishop Thomas Malloy whom he thanked for his tolerance and support. It was simply unfathomable to Fronters why the Church and Christian

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America did not support the one individual, Father Charles Coughlin, who would keep America safe from Communism, Nazism, and Fascism. Since communists stick together, Catholics and Protestants, all Christian Americans must stick together to save the United States.[56]

Father Coughlin's attacks on "internationalists" was one of his favorite radio broadcast topics in 1939.[57] International finance, which he claimed was dominated by atheistic Jews, caused the misery of the masses of innocent Jews and Gentiles. He used the "international Jew" and international bankers as scapegoats for the corruption, abuse, and demise of capitalism, which would allow communism to rise to power.[58] He accused the House of Rothschild, the "age-old banking group that holds most of Western Europe in hock," of pushing America into another war to save international bankers.[59]

Coughlin's distinction between good Jews and "bad, international Jews" was the same argument Hitler used in Nazi Germany, according to Nathan Shapiro in the January 1939 issue of the *Brooklyn Jewish Center Review.* Shapiro noted that Jews suffer under communism, as do all religions, but Catholics and Jews alike cannot ignore the immediate menace of Nazism. This went to the heart of the public debate on the anti-Semitism of Coughlinites. To a Coughlin/Christian Front supporter, such as Patrick Scanlan, worries about the danger of Nazism and anti-Semitism were seen as conciliatory towards gestures toward communism. Scanlan wrote a note on his copy of Shapiro's article stating, "Why does not this paper come out four-square against Communism?"[60]

Albert Gunnison's "history" of the Christian Front explained accusations of anti-Semitism by Jewish War Veterans by relying on the good Jew versus bad Jew thesis. The JWV's leadership had told the Jewish community that the CF was anti-Semitic, even

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after the CF had held a common meeting with the Jewish group. The DF also made efforts to deny its anti-Semitism attempted by distinguishing between the "Red Jew" and the "democratic Jew." Fronters claimed the only real anti-Semitism was in Russia, where they "chase out the good Jews and keep the Red Jew. Hitler chased out the Red Jew and kept the good Jew in the country," and recommended that same strategy should be adopted in America.[61]

Once the war began in Europe there was little question in Coughlin's mind who was at fault and what the ramifications would be for America. The international bankers had caused the "carnival of corpses" for the "handful of usurers who gained their fortune" and "who own us" (Christian Americans). Congress had to decide whether to "keep us free or sell us into bondage to the international bankers, the international politicians, the international war-mongers, and the international plunder bunds whose spokesmen … unctuously will try to entice us into this maelstrom of murder to stop Hitler and will continue to create more Hitlers so long as they dominate the destinies of the world." Even if the war promoted economic recovery, it would be a false recovery, risking Americanism and Christianity for internationalists' "blood profits."[62]

With war nearing at the end of August 1939, Joe Leveque denounced Jewish international bankers for victimizing Christians:

> "The international bankers are another bunch of slaughterers. They're the ones who helped to kill the Christians in the foreign countries of Europe. They are no good. They slaughter people for gold. They are always scheming in some way to get money and take everything away from you Christians, just like they have for the past 2000 years. We're not going to let them do it any longer. I have no use for these kikes. Communist and socialist organizations are fronts for Jews. They are all for 'Jewism.' The international bankers are murderers of the Christians. They take pleasure in this."[63]

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Coughlin's radio broadcasts and newspaper editorials were the basis for much of the Christian Front's anti-Semitic agitation. A week after Coughlin blamed international bankers for starting the war in Europe; his words were echoed at Columbus Circle. Citing Father Coughlin as the only man in the United States who knew how to tell the truth, George Boian urged America to stay out of the war, just as Coughlin demanded. Boian, as a typical Coughlin-inspired Fronter, saw his mission as exposing the conspiracy against America by the Reds, Communists, Bolsheviks, and International Racketeers, who are "framers and will frame you." And when Boian asked the crowd, "Who are the Racketeers?," the crowd answered "Lepke" and "Buckhalter" referring to the notorious Jewish gangsters. James Sard then said the three greatest men of the day were Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco, because they were the only hope against international communism. He then praised "greatest priest that ever lived, Father Coughlin … he exposed the names of the Bolsheviks, such as: Kuhn-Loeb, Jewish International Bankers, by telling the truth. They [the Jews] slaughter his name in the vice newspapers." Boian and Sard's "warnings" were not heard by many, since the crowd numbered only fifty, but Sard explained, "Don't judge the US by the Columbus Circle atmosphere there are trusted men awake in America."[64]

The CF's attacks on internationalists continued into 1940. A twenty-two year-old Russian immigrant guest speaker Igor Benson attacked communist apologists and linked the founding of Soviet communism to outsider "Internationalists," just as Coughlinites had been doing for years: "Communism is no longer a paradise, as people believe it is, but rather a menace to the civilized world. Communism was not organized by the Russians. Russia was made the experimental country by the Internationalists.

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Communism was supported by capitalists, and in the same breath is trying to destroy capitalists."[65]

The viciousness of Christian Front attacks on internationalist communism intensified whenever Fronters fueled their anticommunism with their anti-Semitism. Sometimes the attacks were simple name calling, "They're nothing but kikes …they are specialists in rape their belief tells them that they can violate a Christian girl and get away with it." They chanted "Down with Communism, Down with Jews."[66] Sometimes their anti-Semitic anticommunism went beyond Jew-baiting and taunting to threats of violence. "God help any Jew or Communist that tries to break up this meeting," Joe Hartery warned the 600 or 700 Bronxites gathered on the corner of 138th Street and Willis Avenue.[67]

Coughlin certainly fueled this fire by broadcasting and printing stories in *Social Justice* tracing a connection between the Roosevelt administration and Jewish communists. One fantastic *Social Justice* story described a secret September 1938 conference in Paris between New Dealer Henry Morganthau, Jr., described as being from one of the "most exclusively Jewish American families," and Jewish communist operatives. Coughlin described these operatives as the "half Christian, half Jew" William Christian Bullitt (ex-husband of Louise Bryant, the widow of John Reed, "America's most notorious Communist, whose corpse is buried at the Kremlin in Moscow"),[68] French Premier Leon Blum ("whose real name is 'Garfunkelstein,' and whose books advocate sexual promiscuity outside of marriage") and "the well known bank robber" Maxim Litvinov, Soviet Secretary of Foreign Affairs. Coughlin was forced to retract this story because Morganthau had not been not in France at that time, but he stood his ground on

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the symbolic truth of his fabrication: "I am aware that he [Morganthau] was not there physically, but I am also aware that he was there spiritually."[69] On the street, Fronters relied on the same "spiritual" truth to justify accusations that Roosevelt and the New Deal were attempting to run the government on the same principles as Soviet Russia, and had filled government positions with "International agents and fellow travelers."[70]

This rhetoric seemed justified to those attracted to the Christian Front because of the Popular Front alliance between communists and some liberals in the 1930s. This led to a substantial communist infiltration of a number of government agencies.[71] Rumors of this infiltration provided ammunition for Fronters when they complained about communist domination of the Workers' Alliance as a reason for they were not getting jobs. The Workers' Alliance, an organization of WPA workers was firmly under communist control, led by CP member Harold Brockway. The Workers' Alliance increased its membership from 10,000 in 1937 to 260,000 paying members (another 140,000 were in arrears) in 1939. Seventy-five percent of WPA workers were members of the Alliance. Despite the fact that the WA had decidedly non-revolutionary goals, and mingled and cooperated with New Dealers, Fronters explained what might have been their own personal employment failures though the Coughlin model of a communist conspiracy aimed at Christian Americans.[72]

Nevertheless, anti-Semitic attacks constituted only 16% of all topics in the Front's anticommunist speeches. This is certainly not to deny that the Christian Front was anti-Semitic, or that they used anti-Semitism in their call for Christian unity. Certainly ethnic conflict was an important factor leading to the Front's appearance, as Ronald Bayor's seminal work proves.[73] But it is to say that anti-Semitism was only one weapon in their

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anticommunism arsenal. As significant as anti-Semitic anticommunism was, there were several other focuses of the Christian Front's anticommunism beyond Jew-baiting.

* * *

When Christian Front speakers spoke about anticommunism, their focus was usually on the atrocities perpetrated by communists around the globe and how to prevent the carnage from spreading to the United States. Descriptions of the terror and destruction perpetrated by communism throughout the world and its threat to America (the imminent invasion) accounted for 41% of all anticommunism speech topics in police reports. Stories of brutal persecution, murder and rape of nuns, priests, and lay Christians by communists in Russia, Spain, and Mexico were proof that Christians needed to unite to defend the Cross of Christ.[74]

Republican Spain's religious persecution provided a wealth of material for the rhetoric of anticommunist Catholics. Monsignor Fulton Sheen insisted that "this claptrap of saying that if we do not take sides in the Spanish civil war we are 'enemies of democracy' must be stopped."[75] Edward Lodge Curran dedicated his 1937 pamphlet, *Franco: Who is he? What does he fight for?*, to the Spanish followers of Franco who were fighting for "home and country and freedom and culture and social justice, for all the things which we hold dear in America." Curran attacked the "biased press of England, France, Mexico, and America" who threw their collective weights and influence behind the Spanish Loyalists "who are loyal to no one but Moscow;" and the lies, suppression of facts and half truths perpetrated by the *Daily Worker*, *Soviet Russia Today*, *The New Masses* and the North American League for Spanish Democracy. Similar attacks on the press for ignoring Catholic misery in Spain were a mainstay of

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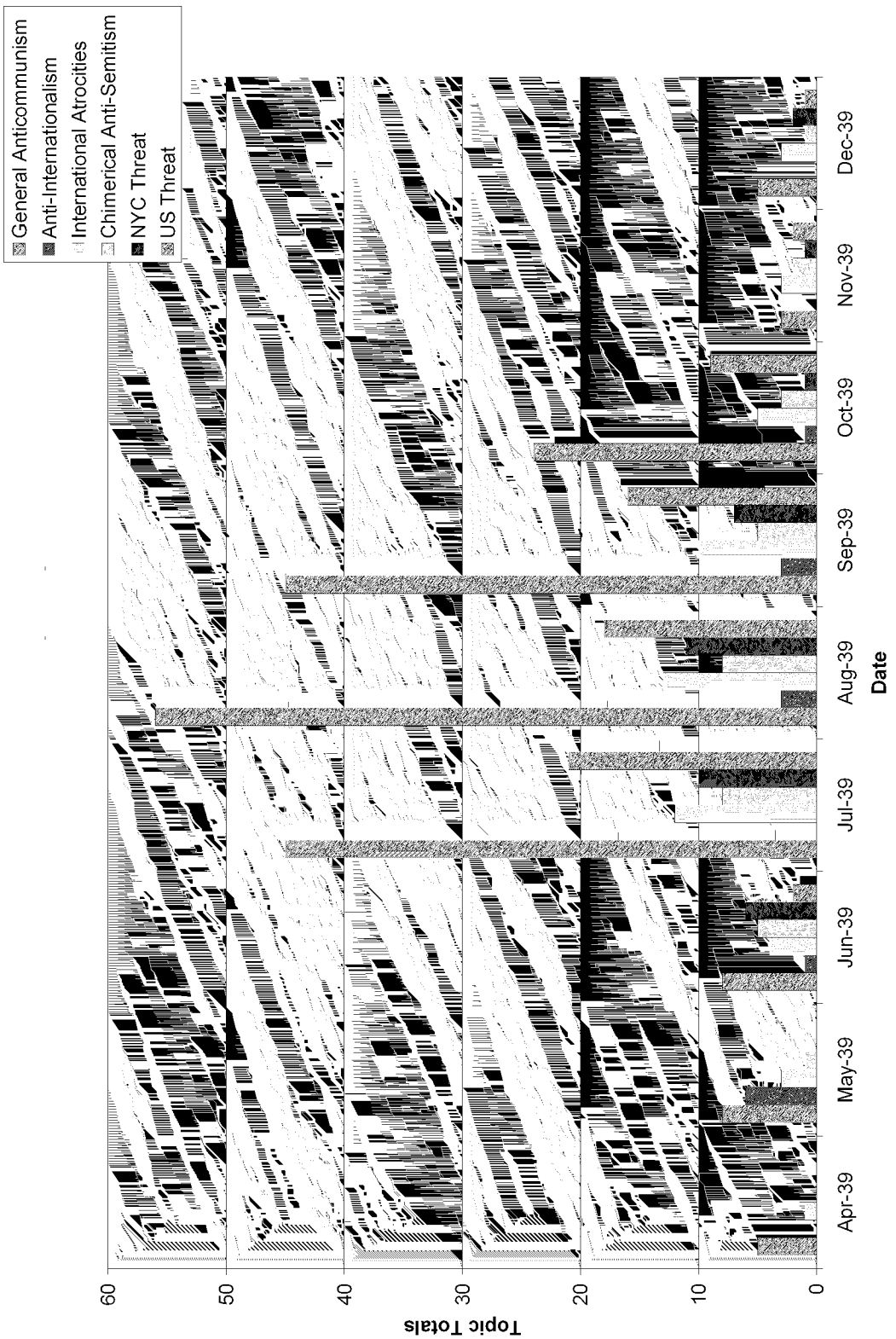
Chart 16: Dangers of Communism Topics Subcategories by Date, 1939



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Front rhetoric and Curran provided the blueprint: "The present campaign of misinformation and misrepresentation of the American Press concerning the Spanish Revolt has robbed it forever of the right to be considered a medium of truth or accuracy or fair play." Curran apologized to the Spanish people for the failure of the American press "to do them justice," and the blindness of American people to "the real issues at stake in Spain." This myopia he attributed to the "red forces in America."[76]

For Curran, as for many American Catholics in the 1930s, the real issue in Spain was that it was the "decisive battle ground of civilization." The cause of the Nationalists "is the cause of all opposed to the godlessness, the immorality, the tyranny, the brutality, the dictatorship of Communism …" He used the battle against communism on the Iberian Peninsula to help create an American identity for Catholics in the United States. The Brooklyn priest compared the Spanish Nationalists' struggle to the patriots during the American Revolution because the Nationalists were fighting against "the destruction of home, of religion, of political freedom, of intellectual culture, of economic liberty, of everything we hold dear in America." To completely Americanize the Nationalist cause, Curran had to distance Franco from the other un-American "ism" of fascism. Relying on nothing more than his own authority as a clergyman, he simply wrote, "[the] Nationalist cause is not a fascist cause. Franco is not a Fascist." In Curran's convoluted reasoning, since the advancement of communism meant the advancement of political and economic and social slavery, the distinct antithesis of the American ideal, by fighting communism Franco was somehow working towards political, economic and social freedom.[77]

The Christian Front continued on this tack even after the return of public religious services under Prime Minister Juan Negrín in 1938. There was no indication that

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anticlericalism was very important to Negrín personally, and this change in Spanish religious policy was a calculated result to win support among the middle classes and to appear more attractive to Western democracies. This proved to be too little, too late and had almost no effect on either constituency, and especially not on Fronters in New York City.[78]

In November 1938 Floyd Caridi launched an attack on the press for ignoring Spain in terms very reminiscent of Curran's writings. Caridi asked, "Why doesn't the press become load-mouthed when the nuns are raped, when the Christians are slaughtered, when the churches are burned. Why besmirch the issue in Spain?"[79] In an essay entitled "Orgy of Destruction" in Curran's *Franco: Who is he? What does he fight for?* Curran had written:

> "The torture and murder of priests (*about which the American Press has been so silent*), the torture, raping and murder of nuns (*about which the American Press has been so silent*) have been looked on by the Reds as deserving praise."[80]

The CF later sponsored showings of the film *Spain in Arms* as more proof of communism's inhumanity.[81] At street meetings the Front's descriptions of atrocities in Spain became more and more exaggerated, and Curran's ideas were the source, even if Fronters did not credit Curran for statements such as, "Wherever the Reds have been forced to retreat they have left a holocaust of hatred and revenge in the shape of burning churches and raped women and murdered men and abandoned babies. The civilian population of Spain has been slaughtered by the Reds, in retreat or in advance, and not by Franco"[82]

The Front's rhetoric became even more heated as war drew near in Europe in late summer of 1939. In mid-July, the Front claimed there had been crucifixions of thousands

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of Christians in Russia and Spain and 27,000 priests and nuns butchered in Spain by the Communists; two weeks later the horrors in Spain were described as "hundreds of thousands of Christian people, clergymen, and nuns were murdered, mutilated by the hands of so-called fighters for 'Democracy';" by August the totals were "300,000 Christian men, women and children." Once a general war broke out in September 1939 the Front described "the butchering of 20,000,000 Christians in Europe in the past 20 years" and the slaughtering of over 400,000 "women, children, priests, nuns, and ministers" by the communists.[83]

The Coughlinites feared that hostilities in Europe increased the likelihood that the Roosevelt administration or Congress would overturn the Neutrality Acts and drag the United States into the war. If the United States became involved in a European war, American troops would then not be available to defend against a communist invasion, which, you will remember, was going to come from Mexico way. Just one week before Germany invaded Poland, Fred Kemp warned that the radio news from Europe was nothing more than a communist trick to get the American public to send the Army and Navy away from our shores, to leave the country unprotected. Five days after the German invasion of Poland, Daniel Kurtz embellished this notion by declaring that communists, who were specialists in taking over governments, wanted the United States to fight in Europe so that 230,000 of their comrades could enter the country from Mexico with the help of communists already entrenched in United States government key positions.[84] The rhetoric in the streets was fixated on the belief that a communist invasion and revolution, even if not inevitable, was highly probable. Time and again the CF reiterated their theme that the evil of communism in the United States must be

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"eliminated forever" to prevent the same persecution that occurred in Russia and Loyalist Spain.[85]

* * *

The European war convinced the Front that the "Zero hour!" — when the "threatening menace" would strike against the American public and "undermine the very foundation of our Republic, its economic structure, philosophy, and morale" was near. Christians were told they "must get guns and put the Communists in front of us and shoot them first; clean the US of the Bolsheviks." If the CF failed the result would be the end of Christian-American civilization. It was a "war between Christ and the anti-Christ."[86]

Communism was not just an economic and political force for Father Coughlin and his followers. It was a force that destroyed everything in its path, including peoples' bodies, minds, and souls. If Americans' souls were destroyed, the country would certainly collapse in the face of a communist revolt. The seeds of this 1939 rhetoric were planted by Coughlin's speeches and essays in *Social Justice* the year before. In his 1938 Lansingburg speech, when he called the New Deal "un-intentionally Communistic," Coughlin told Catholics and Protestants go back to church and pray to prepare for the "battle of the age" the coming war against communism. Coughlin specifically excluded Jews from his call to arms and warned the crowd that, "In the fight between Christianity and chaos, Catholics and Protestants must join hands for the preservation of Christianity; otherwise, it is not unthinkable that what happened in unsuspecting and falsely secure Germany, Mexico and Spain will happen here."[87]

Coughlin claimed to have a dependable informant in "Moscow Headquarters" who assured him that the U.S. government would be forced to borrow sixteen billion six

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hundred million from the Federal Reserve in April 1941. The plan was not end the Depression. It was a "policy of destruction" that would devastate agriculture, private property, private initiative, morality-organized religion, and wealth through confiscatory taxation. The ultimate goal was total government control. Coughlin wrote that the Depression "will be called by its proper name -- a bloodless revolution instigated, propagated and directed by the powers of anti-Christianity." Coughlin told his readership that "Most of you are soldiers in the army of Christ insofar as you are confirmed. Soldiers were never of such quality, remain faithful to your organization which is your church. Group yourselves together to forestall the assaults of Satan." Coughlin again presented himself as the self-proclaimed purveyor of the truth. He complained about the public's "mass ignorance" of Moscow's plan to cause a communist revolution in the United States by bankrupting the government through borrowing.[88] Readers of the *Brooklyn Tablet* agreed with Coughlin's analysis, but blamed the "mass ignorance" on the laxity of Christian leaders.[89] New Christian leaders would have to step forward to lead American Catholics in defense of the nation. The Front was ready, or so they claimed.

Coughlin warned that the nation was about to be "flooded by refugees who, in many instances, participated in the spread of Communism in European nations." Due to the international crisis and the threat of communist revolution, these "alien" voices could not be raised in America without dire consequences.[90] The Front then warned that preparations for the communist invasion of America were already underway inside the United States and Mexico. The communist forces would include returning Abraham Lincoln Brigade veterans who had fought for Loyalists in Spain. Even though the

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Lincoln Brigade had violated the law by enlisting in a foreign army and fighting in a revolution, the CF complained they were still allowed to return to America "unquestioned and glorified." The Front called the Brigade veterans "Spanish murderers, who have killed hundreds of Christians including nuns, priests, and monks… who will reap a harvest and then go to Mexico to promote a revolution" at the invitation of Trotsky. The CF held street meetings "to urge people to be prepared for the day when uncontrollable hordes from Mexico would invade the country to terrorize Christianity."[91] Once in America, the communist horde planned to overthrow the government by seizing power plants, water works, and arsenals, armed with the 10,000 guns they had already acquired under assumed names.[92]

The Front charged that conspiracies organized by the federal government were paving the way for the impending communist take-over. One story focused on the deportation of a "Mr. & Mrs. McNeil (also referred to as O'Neill in another speech) back to Ireland and the possible deportation of another woman who was here for 51 years and whose husband died making the world safe for democracy in 1918." The McNeils (or O'Neills), who had entered the United States illegally through Canada, were supposedly being deported for speaking out against communism. Fronter "Panama Bill" compared the plight of the Irish family to the favored treatment given a communist "man named Bridges on the West Coast" (union leader Harry Bridges) who was not deported by "Madame Perkins" back to "Australia or England or wherever he came from." Fronter Martin Ryan appointed to another government conspiracy to pen the immigration doors to "Spanish murderers, who have killed hundreds of Christians including nuns, priests,

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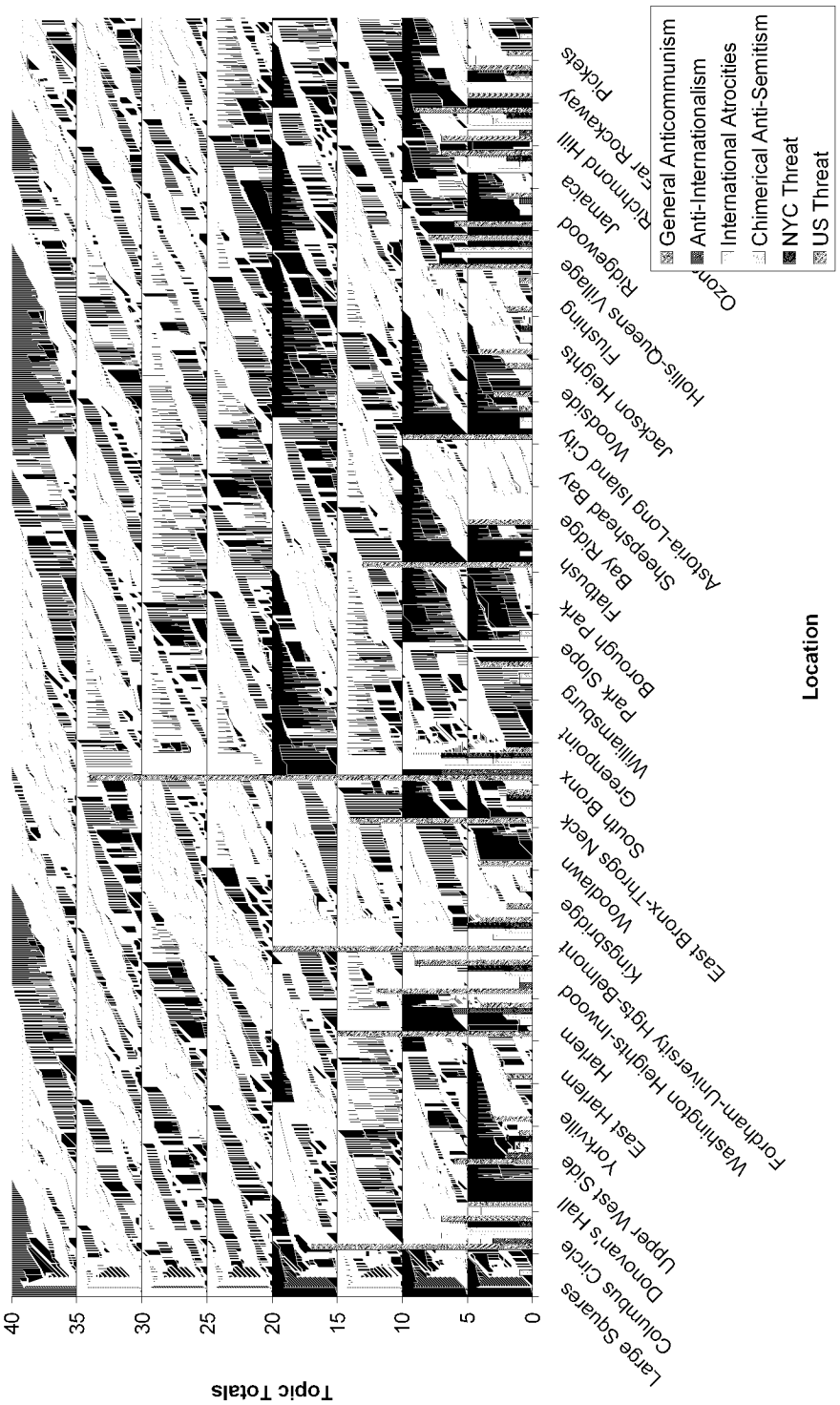
and monks" and who will "reap a harvest and then go to Mexico to promote a revolution."[93]

Chart 17: Dangers of Communism Topics Subcategories by Location, 1939



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"Panama Bill" also played on racial fears when speaking on a predominately white block (93.6% white) bordered by a largely black population (42%) in Harlem.[94] Bill claimed a black secret service agent named White was sent with one hundred other Negroes from Harlem to Russia to study the latest methods for a communist revolution. The communists promised them that at the end of the revolution they would be given several states in the South, where they could live as they choose.[95]

The Front's warnings in July 1939 about a communist invasion did not take place in a vacuum, because a month earlier, Montana Congressman Joseph Thorkelson delivered an address, "Shall Congress Take Charge?" on the same theme. In his speech, loaded with anti-Semitism, Thorkelson claimed that "international money-mad fanatics" and "international shylocks" wanted to take over America and it a home for themselves and "their strange un-American cults." "We are rapidly falling into the hands of the Communists," he told Congress, because the 50,000 people who fought for the communists in Spain were being allowed to enter Mexico. They would infiltrate the United States to spread communism or "as a fighting unit when civil strife breaks here." He repeated the Coughlinite chestnut that "Mexico is communistic and the home of Bronstein, alias Trotsky." The 50,000 Lincoln Brigade veterans were "communist dupes" fighting for red Russia "in order to destroy a Christian government in Spain." The communist plan was to continue the great menace of the "invisible government" that was already well-established in America. This "invisible government" had "promoted wars, revolutions, espionage, corruption," engineered the First World War, financed the Russian Revolution, and promoted revolution in Spain. The next step was to sabotage the United States government to gain more power and create a haven for communists. They

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could accomplish this by the ownership of gold — because gold buys spies and espionage, saboteurs, and the acceptance of communism to recruit fighters.[96]

The Front claimed it had a membership of from one to five million men enrolled in a CF army to defend the Church and the country against the Reds and to halt the revolution at their doorsteps. Speakers told crowds that the Christian Front army planned to form a battalions and Sports Clubs in every CF unit to train Christian men to strengthen their "minds and bodies in preparation for a revolution on our shores."[97]

Father Coughlin continued to promote the Christian Front in a radio broadcast after his August testimony before the Dies Committee. Coughlin claimed his testimony had offered proof that millions of innocent people had succumbed to the Popular Front, which consisted of sixty well-established organizations. The radio priest called these organizations "un-Christian and un-American" and urged that these organizations be countered by Christian forces within all communities, schools, colleges and churches, creating a "counter-force" of Americanism. The counter-force could be called the Christian Front (or anything else, for that matter, as long as it existed). To be able to deny responsibility for any violence by his "counter-force," he rejected any direct involvement in the counter-force, but offered it advice and guidance. He would later maintain his deniability when the Christian Front members were arrested by the FBI the following year for following his advice.[98]

The call for a Christian Front army was the most striking example of the Front's Christian unity rhetoric. The Front called for Christian youth in America to band together, so that Americans would never experience the terrors of communism. Speakers specifically stated that membership was open to *all* Christians: Lutherans, Baptists,

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Presbyterians, and Catholics. But before anyone could be accepted for membership he would be investigated to see whether he met the requirements of the organization, that is, was he a Christian? These Christian soldiers would begin defending Christianity the second "one drop of Christian blood has been shed … and if a drop of Christian blood is shed on this soil, there won't be a Communist left to gloat over it."[99]

In September, Daniel Kurtz and Raymond Dalton began employing a new fear tactic to recruit members for a unified front — that woman and children need to be protected from the immorality of communist forces. Not only were communists intent on butchering Christian women and children but they would also unleash "free love" on Christian America. Kurtz warned, "If this country did not fight communism then people will see their children treated immorally and then murdered in their presence while a bayonet is held against their throat." It was the Front's duty to "protect and preserve the womanhood and our children from being raped by those Communistic mongrels." The battleground between the "uncontrollable bestial hordes" of communism and Christianity would be the streets of New York City.[100]

Kurtz and Dalton's as attacks on communist immorality was not original with them. Once again, they were parroting of the ideas of the anticommunist Catholic clergy. Thomas J. Feeney, S.J. had attacked alleged communist immorality in his analysis of the physical cult of communism — that communism overvalues the body and undervalues the soul.[101] But it was Edward Lodge Curran who provided the most detailed look at the alleged immorality of communism, details then taken up by he Fronters. Curran explained the immoral doctrine of communism was based on the ends justifying the means, even if the means are lies, murder, theft, treason, violence, dishonoring parents, or

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forgery. Women would become unsexed and their traditional feminine roles would be destroyed. Communists forced women to work in factories and train for war, meaning that the home and child-rearing would become subordinate to the interests of a communistic state. This, in turn, would result in babies being left in state institutions during the day. To make sure that nursing mothers lose no time in the factories "the very milk is drained from their breasts to be fed mechanically to their infants by State hands during the hours of their toil." This ultimate result would be that children would belong to the State, not their parents. The State would then teach children that there was no God and they must obey the State only. This was all part of the communist formula to destroy the family, parental authority, and to advance class struggle by espousing militant atheism.[102] It was the blueprint to break the will and destroy future generations of American families, ensuring communism for years to come.

Expanding on the theme of immorality, Curran attempted to prove that communism would also destroy the Catholic sacrament of marriage and basic Church teachings. Russia endorsed abortion; divorce was simpler than marriage in Russia by simply having one spouse by fill out a form without any grounds required. All this was proof of communism's immorality. Curran wrote that communism advocated "free love," i.e. the freedom of sexual activity, "Young girls are urged not to resist seduction or immoral advances provided of course the seducer or tempter is a man of strong communistic principles." Communist authorities supposedly forced female students to "submit sexually unquestionably." He concluded that the "nearer you approach the extreme, and, as it were, animal primitiveness, the more communistic you become."[103]

* * *

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Fronters often complained about being victims of communist violence and vandalism in New York simply because they were Catholics or Christians. Mary Fox claimed to have witnessed a "frail elderly man" selling *Social Justice* being surrounded by a hostile crowd; she had come to the rescue of high school boys selling *Social Justice* in front of Abraham and Straus Department Store; she had seen a woman almost getting struck in front of Macy's for selling the paper. Fox wrote to *Brooklyn Tablet* editor Patrick Scanlan that the elderly man was told to leave a street corner by a police officer, who had approached him in a "brutal and insolent manner." She began to fear for her safety because she thought that she was surrounded by communists. As she was entering the subway, the police officer yelled that he was a "Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus, but you, you're a fanatical Catholic." In her letter, Fox offered to go to court over this incident because it was a "shame the way Catholics are being treated." The old man, unaware of that Fox had come to his rescue, ran away to avoid arrest.[104] Owen King spoke about an experience at Union Square, where he claimed that he and four other distributors of *Social Justice* were "kicked and mauled" by communists. Joe Hartery warned communists to stop painting the hammer and sickle on Christian churches' doors, promising he would retaliate for every defaced door, broken window, and molested priest or nun by beating two or three communist youths. Others mentioned Catholic priests and nuns being attacked, communists breaking up meetings, and hammer and sickles being painted on the windows of Christian-owned businesses. The Front complained that they did not receive sympathy for churches being defaced with red hammers and sickles — but Jews always received sympathy for any swastikas painted on their doors.[105]

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To prove the CF's value as the defender of the faith, one Front speech told about five thousand communists who had allegedly picketed the Italian Consul across the street from St. Patrick's Cathedral. Picketers supposedly would gather in front of the Cathedral after Easter services, where they insulted and spat on female parishioners, and threw prayer books and beads on the sidewalk after tearing them from congregants' hands. A few weeks later, when communists gathered again, they claimed two hundred fifty Christian Front men had confronted the 4,000 communists in front of the Cathedral.[106]

The Front called other public institutions, ranging from the City College of New York (CCNY) to the New York Police Department, hotbeds of communist activity or targets of a communist takeover. CCNY was called the "Communist College of New York," whose "crack-pot" educators encouraged their students to insult and abuse religious worshippers, and march for "peace and democracy" with "that wonderful body of men" the Abraham Lincoln Brigade.[107]

The Front's accusations against CCNY were not completely without foundation. Throughout much of the 1930s, New York's municipal colleges, especially the CCNY and Brooklyn College campuses, was a center of strength for communism among students. There were frequent confrontations between administrators and communist sympathizing students. During the 1933-34 academic year, many CCNY and Brooklyn College students took the "Oxford Pledge," which originated in Great Britain's Oxford University, vowing they would not fight in a war for their country. The administration admonished, punished, suspended and dismissed communist students from the colleges for this.[108]

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Internal city politics helped the Front turn their general distrust of CCNY students during the summer of 1939 into a full-blown conspiracy theory involving the entire city government. Paul Kern, a brash member of LaGuardia's junior brain-trust and head of the Civil Service Commission, clashed over control of the Parks Department with *the* New York City power-broker, Robert Moses. Moses leaked material from an investigative file smearing Kern as a communist. When Kern began a program that awarded points toward promotion for municipal employees who reported corruption, Moses denounced Kern as a representative of the Soviets in America and damned Kern's plan as "un-American." Both Father Coughlin and the Christian Front called Kern's plan a plot for a communist takeover of the Police Department.[109]

Social Justice reported on Kern's plan in early September. The article was read aloud at Christian Front street meetings in Queens on September 9 and 10. Kern's "Secret Police," the Front claimed, would oversee and spy on Christian police officers, demoralizing the police force, destroying fifty years of progress, and eventually forcing out all Christians from the Department. With no experienced, courageous Christian police officers, who knew how to respond to emergencies, the door would be open for communists to gain full control of the City. With a preference for agents of the "Russian-Sovietized-Communistic-OGPU-styled" secret police, police department appointments would go to Kern's favorites, "college boys" from "red CCNY," who "don't know the difference between a nightstick and salami." Audiences at the rallies were urged to protest the merit and promotion system in the Department, sign petitions against this "Communist Move," and send them to City Hall with "enough signatures it would take six months to read them all."[110] As autumn turned to winter, Kern's plan was still on the

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minds of CF speakers. By November, the "spy system" was characterized as more evidence of a Jewish plot within the City. LaGuardia was accused of replacing thirty sergeants at the switch-board with thirty civilians, twenty-seven of whom were Jews, whose purpose was to spy on the Christian police. Daniel Kurtz told this story to fewer people than supposedly had been replaced at the switchboard — as only twenty people were standing to hear him on the corner of Liberty Avenue and Lefferts Boulevard.[111]

Front speakers were well aware that the NYPD was monitoring their activities at least six weeks before it was revealed publicly in September 1939. The *Brooklyn Tablet* reported on July 29, 1939 that police were taking notes on anticommunist speakers, under the direction of that "Champion of Liberty" from the mayor's office, Nathan Frankel.[112] The article implied that it was a Christian Front street meeting that was monitored since the rally had taken place at a "populous thoroughfare" and the platform had an insignia on it. Detective Mario Fochi's name was written on Patrick Scanlan's notepad, indicating he knew at least one name of a member of the New York Police Department's Alien Squad who was taking notes on the Front's street meetings. On the same notepad, Floyd Caridi's name also appears. Caridi, the well-known CF speaker, spoke at many of the more popular Front locations throughout the city. The *Tablet*'s criticism of the city's administration was very similar to that of the Front and *Social Justice* in the late summer. The *Tablet* asked whether New York now had secret agents and spies from the "American Kremlin" reminiscent of the Gestapo or OGPU reporting on American citizens exercising their right to free speech. The suggestion was that a conspiracy within government was protecting communists because communists and atheists who condemned America and instill hatred were never harassed, investigated, or shadowed,

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even though they were the ones openly advocating the overthrow of the Republic. "What was behind those seeking to harass those who speak out against communism?" asked the paper.[113]

The presence of officers and detectives at their meetings provoked Front speakers to denounce the police. Albert Gunnison used police attendance as "proof" that Mayor LaGuardia was anti-Christian and pro-communist and was trying to deflect attention from his administration because note-taking only occurred at "Christian" meetings, and not at communist meetings. However, the Front also qualified their criticism of the police because they were just following orders of the "little red mayor." Speakers always blamed the investigations of the Alien Squad back on the Mayor, asking what the "Little Flower" was afraid of. According to the Front, the Squad would perform a real service if it investigated LaGuardia and "tell the public who he really is."[114]

In fact, Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia seems to have been regarded by the Fronters as the real enemy. Beginning with the earliest Front meetings at St. Paul's, LaGuardia was accused of being a Jewish communist sympathizer. At the September 16, 1938, meeting New York City was referred to as "the world's hotbed of Jewish Communism and . . . the actions of the Mayor, well known as a Jew, are a bad reflection upon the city throughout the country." One Fronter desired to visit "that dirty Jew LaGuardia … [and] wanted to punch him right in the nose."[115]

Mayor LaGuardia was a public target of poisonous barbs from the Front throughout the summer of 1939. Taunts included calling him "little red stinkweed," "a mental degenerate and bum," an associate of communists, and a communist himself. Fronter John Scanlan, who also served as the chairman of the Flatbush Anti-Communist

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Committee, wrote in the *Brooklyn Tablet* that if LaGuardia was interested in banning foreign uniforms, he should start with the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, which, of course, the mayor would not because of His Honor's communist sympathies. In September, the police controversy, LaGuardia's prohibition on protests in front of foreign consulates, and his limits on the number of CF pickets allowed in front of municipal radio station WMCA (where Coughlinites were protesting Father Coughlin's removal from the radio station for almost a year) all infuriated Front. LaGuardia's reduction in the number of CF pickets while communists could speak unmolested on WMCA was called "purely an act of Christian persecution."[116]

Daniel Kurtz invented a fanciful biography for the Mayor, questioning his ancestry and patriotism; this despite LaGuardia's having left his seat in the House of Representatives in 1917 to join the American forces, eventually being sent to Italy.[117] Kurtz tried to discredit the Mayor by using his Jewish roots to link him to a communist conspiracy to overthrow the government. Kurtz made references to LaGuardia's Jewish mother, Irene, and also claimed that he was married to a Jew (LaGuardia's wife, Marie, was actually Lutheran). Speaking to an Italian audience, Kurtz asked, "What has the Mayor done for you? When LaGuardia was looking for your vote, he said he was Italian … but he is not Italian, but a Jew who is following in the footsteps of his Jewess mother's race."

Kurtz's speech departed even further from the truth when he claimed that the Mayor, a captain in the aviation corps during the First World War, had spread "the evil doctrine of communism in Hungary" by smuggling communist literature into the country and organizing the communists. This led to "the overthrow of the respective government

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by Bela Kun, alias Aaron Cohen (more Jewish-conspiracy), and 60,000 Christians murdered or mutilated." After Hungary, LaGuardia supposedly helped Kun organize communists in Italy and flew out of Barcelona and Switzerland with contraband. Kurtz hoped that after the public heard this story, the "truth" about LaGuardia, the Mayor would never get another vote from a Christian and could not be "elected janitor, let alone a third term as Mayor."[118]

Social Justice continued to fuel the Christian Front fire against LaGuardia during the autumn. The mayor was slated to succeed Secretary of War Harry Woodring according to an anonymous source of Coughlin's because "He paid tribute to communism as 'a rare contribution to mankind.' As the country's arch anti-Nazi over the last six years, LaGuardia has rallied a following of Reds and Jewish internationalists."[119] The same issue reported that LaGuardia made a deal with a Jewish construction company, the Mayer Brothers, to build a Jewish-only apartment at Columbus Circle, an area known as "little Moscow" because "until recently the Circle was a hotbed of Red and Jewish agitation against Christian Americanism." *Social Justice* gave the CF credit for clearing the communists out of the Circle, "This summer however, the Christian Front and other patriotic groups baited the Soviet arsonists in their own lair and for the first time the Stars and Strips of the United States out fluttered the red rag in Columbus Circle." As further evidence of undue Jewish influence upon the city's administration, the Mayer Brothers were accused of wanting a guarantee from the mayor that Christian meetings in Columbus Circle would be permanently outlawed.[120]

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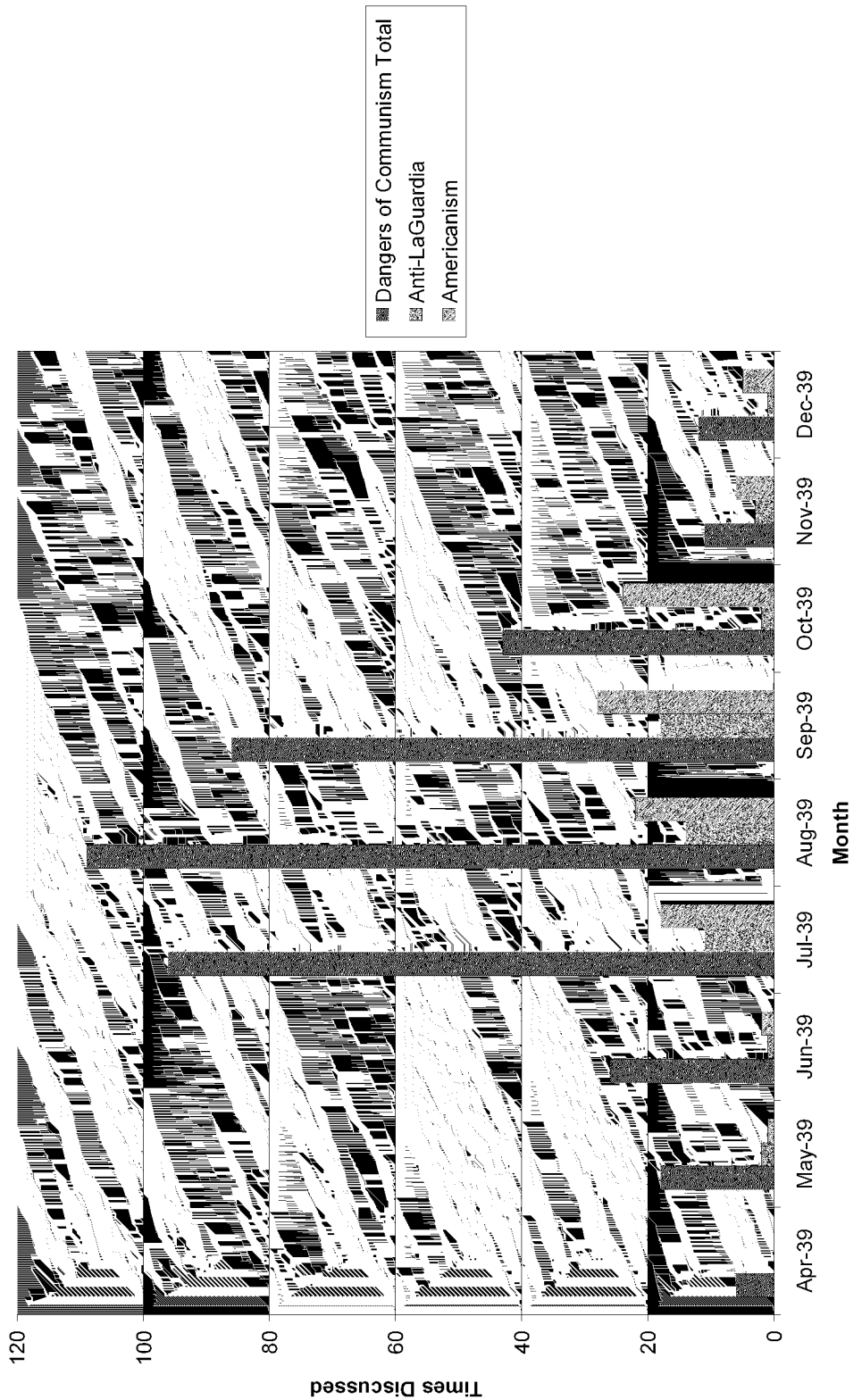
Chart 18: Correlation between Anticommunism, anti-LaGuardia, & Americanism Speeches, 1939



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Daniel Kurtz and his fellow speakers did not always have to invent their own anecdotes for their diatribes against the Mayor. They could count on contributions from some mainstream politicians. Fronters targeted the 1939 World's Fair as an example of communist Jews taking over the city for a year after Adrian Humphries, the failed Queens District Attorney candidate, had based his campaign on warning about the menace of World's Fair in Queens because a "beautiful residential County is about to be ruined by the influx of Jew[s]." Even though he lost the primary, at a September 1938 St. Paul's meeting of the CF Humphries continued to warn about Jews overrunning Queens at the World's Fair. He told fellow Fronters that "Jews absolutely control New York City."[121]

At the opening of the Soviet Pavilion at the 1939 World's Fair, LaGuardia had said that the Russian people had the right to any government they choose and that our own government was a result of a "bloody revolution" that was "not very popular with the dynasties of Europe at the time." Father Edward Lodge Curran denounced LaGuardia's speech and said, "real Americans resent[ed] the fact that the most prominent object at the World's Fair … is the red star at the top of the building of Soviet Russia … which stands for the destruction of the rights of God and the rights of humanity."[122]

Fronters claimed LaGuardia's words had let "the Little Flower LaGuardia show his true colors." They called for a boycott of the World's Fair and told LaGuardia he should concentrate on local matters, such as jobs and the reduction of taxes, and not try to solve European economic conditions. LaGuardia was also accused of forcing police to sell tickets to the World's Fair to see the "big red building."[123]

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Christian Fronters exploited widespread resentment of the Soviet flag's prominence at the World's Fair, demanding that the American flag be raised higher than the red star of communism. The controversy ended only when the "Paul Reveres of Astoria," a patriotic Christian organization, purchased a plot of land on the highest spot in the vicinity, and announced plans to erect a four hundred fifty foot pole with a twenty foot American flag and a twenty foot banner with a Christian cross. At that point, LaGuardia ordered an American flag raised on a pole at the parachute site, thirty feet higher than the red star, all without ceremony.[124]

LaGuardia was certainly bothered by the Front, but he told the *New York Times* that the situation was under "proper observance" and that he would not suppress views contrary to his own; inciting riot and espousing racial and religious hatred, however, did not fall under free speech, and those cases would be dealt with properly under the law.[125]

For Fronters the second most despised person in the city was the communist president of the Transport Workers Union, Michael Quill. Quill, elected president of the TWU in the fall of 1935, faced sustained opposition from the Catholic Church and church-affiliated organizations once it became apparent that the left-leaning union had become an important force within the Irish community. It did not help that Quill was on good terms with the American Labor Party. The organization of the ALP and its alliance with Quill had temporarily weakened Irish political influence by challenging the strength of the New York State Democratic Party, with whom the Irish were solidly tied. Ethnically, Jews and Italians were prominent in the ALP, displacing Irish power. More importantly for Coughlinites, communist elements took control of the Manhattan branch of the ALP in 1938, and continued to control it until the early 1940s. The ALP's good

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showing in elections was just another sign to the Fronters that communists were taking over New York and another reason to view Quill as their enemy. Not surprisingly, it was Father Curran who led the opposition to Quill's TWU, and continued to lead it for years.[126]

For these reasons Lodge and the Front attacked and disparaged Mike Quill's Catholicism. Because the TWU was a *de facto* Irish union, the Front appealed to the union membership's sense of Irish Catholic pride. Quill was denounced as a "degenerate" for turning against the Irish people and for allowing his union to become infested with communists. Irish in the Front crowds, a significant number of them no doubt members of the TWU, were told the union would soon investigate Quill and "chase him to the other end of Ireland, for he is only an Irish Communist."[127]

Coughlinites tried to gain control of the mostly Irish Catholic TWU beginning around February 1939, when Quill was in the midst of contract negotiations with the city. On February 6, twenty-nine transit workers on the Sixth Avenue subway line removed fuses and closed switches, causing a six minute delay. The men were apprehended and found guilty of sabotage by a union tribunal. Among them was Thomas Stack, a ringleader, and several others were members of a Social Justice Distributors' Club. They acted, in part, because some of the men were laid-off to make room for displaced workers with more seniority transferred because of the closing of the Sixth Avenue Elevated line. When the incident was made public, a Christian Labor Front group located in Jackson Heights attacked the "Judeo-Communist TWU leadership." The Front protested and picketed both the closure of the Sixth Avenue El and the Fulton Street El in the early spring, but to no avail. This increased the CF's anger toward Quill and LaGuardia.[128]

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Christian Front supporters followed Quill to the 1939 biennial CIO convention in Atlantic City. An unidentified New York priest handed out pamphlets accusing Michael Quill of being a communist. Delegates were not happy with the CF invasion of their convention. Some pointed out that when they worked seven days a week they could not get a priest to conduct mass — but now these priests had the time to come to Atlantic City and hand out pamphlets accusing the CIO of being reds. One delegate stated, "Rebels wouldn't come to our union hall. They went down to Donovan's saloon [the Manhattan headquarters of the CF after they were expelled from St. Paul's]. That's where the Christian Front and other groups that are criticizing the CIO are meeting and parading. One of them said right in the power house that he was the best union-buster that ever walked on two feet."[129]

* * *

Front speakers claimed they were defending their cultural heritage by unifying all Christians, working to exterminate communism, atheism, all other un-American 'isms,' and by "upholding the spirit and ideals of Christianity … under the flag and cross of Jesus Christ." Intentionally or not, Christian Front speakers occasionally used Nazi symbolism to explain CF patriotism. At the end of a Christian American Citizens Committee Against Communism meeting (a group affiliated with the CF) those on the platform gave a "fascist salute" to the flag — raising their hand to the flag. The audience followed with the salute, but the witness did not think they knew what they were doing. This was after thanking the patriotic American Legion and Catholic War Veterans in attendance for their support. On another occasion, James McCluskey, explaining to the

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crowd of five hundred gathered in Washington Heights why he was there, told them that the Christian Fronters were the "Storm Troopers of Christ and Americanism."[130]

Richard Gid Powers explains that America the 1930s needed to find a principled defense of democracy against both communism and fascism. Some anticommunists fell short of this standard and so became vulnerable to the charge that they were at heart fascists, their anticommunism simply a weapon against Jews and other political enemies. Certainly, the Christian Front's use of unsophisticated, crude anticommunism as they proclaimed themselves protectors of a Christian America that existed only in their minds numbered them among the many who abandoned a principled defense of democracy against communism.[131]

Certain Catholic voices were now becoming increasingly concerned with the unprincipled anticommunism of the Coughlinites. Monsignor Michael Lavelle, the Vicar General of New York, was "worried about the constant hammering at communism." Hoping that he would not be misunderstood in any way as favoring communism, he simply explained that such attacks "make people miserably unnecessarily." His whole point was that the Communist Party did not have many members and received a low number of votes in federal and state election; therefore, the threat was not extraordinarily great. Emerson Hynes of the *Catholic World* agreed. He worried that Catholic anticommunism had largely become too negative and destructive in nature to remain a positive force in America and the Church.[132]

The Christian Fronters defined themselves as the standard-bearers of Americanism, battling enemies who had taken over what to them was an exclusively Christian America, their foes being a cabal of communists, internationalists, and Jews.

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Fronters saw themselves as true — even truer — Americans because they were fighting to restore Christianity to America. Anticommunism was going to lead the country to this goal. And for the Front the way to accomplish this was to act, buy, vote, and think Christian.

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Notes

[1] Det. William A. Justy to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, Aug. 9, 1939; Report of Meeting, Sgt. Lynch, 43 Pct. & Det. Justy, Alien Squad, Aug. 8, 1939, OCF.

[2] Edward Lodge Curran, *Facts About Communism* (Brooklyn, NY: International Catholic Truth Society, 1937) 138; Powers, *Not Without Honor* 117.

[3] Jacob Schiff was one of an influential group of Jewish businessmen that dominated Jewish organizations in the 1920s. Powers, *Not Without Honor* 46-47.

[4] This story persisted and was repeated by Raymond Dalton on September 7. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, Sept. 8, 1939, OCF.

[5] The Black Legion was an anti-Catholic, anti-Semitic, anti-black, anti-labor vigilante group with a reported membership of 100,000, although that is very difficult to confirm. The group was militaristic with regiments divided into various squads, each with its own task: death, arson, and flogging. Members were disciplined with physical beatings. Members were sworn to secrecy for good reason. They left a trail of lynching, murders, floggings, and arson in six Midwest states. At least fifteen murders were blamed on the Black Legion.

[6] Rt. Rev. Msgr. Fulton Sheen, *Communism Answers Questions of a Communist* (New York: Paulist Press, 1937[?]) 24-29, JOC-DBA.

[7] Curran, *Facts About Communism* 137.

[8] Curran, *Facts About Communism* 150; Sheen 34.

[9] David L. O'Connor, "Defenders of the Faith: American Catholic Lay Organizations and Anticommunism, 1917-1975," diss., State University of New York at Stony Brook, 2000: 12-23.

[10] *Ibid.*12-23, 33.

[11] Sheen 46.

[12] On pages 17-20 of Feeney's pamphlet, he included these destructive elements of communism:

- Communism overvalues knowledge and undervalues wisdom.
- Communism overvalues quantity and undervalues quality.
- Communism overvalues speed and undervalues sureness.
- Communism overvalues noise and undervalues silence.
- Communism overvalues mechanical efficiency and undervalues individual craftsmanship.

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- Communism overvalues the natural and undervalues the supernatural.
- Communism overvalues self-expression and undervalues self-restraint.
- Communism overvalues the majority and undervalues the individual.
- Communism overvalues the intellect and undervalues the will.

[13] Thomas J. Feeney, S.J., *Communism Our Common Enemy* (St. Louis: The Queen's Work, 1937) 3-10, JOC-DBA.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] Curran, *Facts About Communism* 29.

[16] *Ibid.* 125, 127.

[17] For more on McWilliams, who was nicknamed "Joe McNazi," see Robert Lewis Taylor, "A Reporter at Large: The Kampf of Joe McWilliams," *New Yorker* Aug. 24, 1940: 33-38.

[18] Murray Garrson to Fiorello LaGuardia, "Confidential Report on Outdoor Anti-Semitic Meetings Submitted by the Anti-Defamation League," August 12, 1939, Christian Front file, FLP, Roll 18; Police Report, Sept. 15, 1939; Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, Sept. 7, 1939, OCF.

[19] Edward Lodge Curran, *Great Moments in Catholic History* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1938) ix, xi, 99.

[20] *Social Justice*, April 4, 1938: 14.

[21] *Ibid.* 14, 18.

[22] *Ibid.* 18.

[23] Harvey Klehr and John Earl Haynes, *The American Communist Movement: Storming Heaven Itself* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992) 84.

[24] Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade* (New York: Basic Books, 1984) 221-22.

[25] *Brooklyn Tablet*, June 4, 1938: 1.

[26] Edward Lodge Curran, *The Hand of Pilate: A Reply to Earl Browder's Message to Catholics* (Brooklyn, NY: International Catholic Truth Society, 1938?) 2-3.

[27] *Ibid.* 7-10, 23.

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On pages 12 and 13 of *The Hand of Pilate*, Edward Lodge Curran listed groups that all Catholics should avoid because of their communist control. The organizations were:

ACLU
American Friends of Spanish Democracy
American League for Peace and Democracy (which used to be the American League Against War and Fascism)
American Youth Congress
American Students Union
League for Industrial Democracy
Workers' Alliance
North American Committee for Spanish Democracy

[28] *New York Times*, May 25, 1939: 3.

[29] Bayor 161.

[30] *New York Times*, Dec 19, 1939: 19.

[31] "Minutes - Christian Front meetings," Christian Front file, AJCL.

[32] Carlson 76; Police Report, June 14, 1939, OCF. Hartery's criminal record is outlined in *Who are the leaders of the "Christian Mobilizers"?* (New York: Organization Council of the Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League to Champion Human Rights, Inc., 1939), SHSW. Carlson repeats the information concerning arrests in the pamphlet nearly word for word.

[33] Christian Front file, AJCL.

[34] Police Report, July 26, 1939, OCF.

[35] Det. Joseph Carrington to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, July 31, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 16, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation, Aug. 25, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 29, 1939; Police Report, Oct. 7, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, Oct. 11, 1939, OCF.

[36] The group was affiliated and/or a version of the CF. This was the same group founded by John Cassidy and Russell Dunn. Caridi spoke at many Christian Front meetings.

[37] Floyd Caridi Speech, November 10, 1938, box 8, USAJP-AF.

[38] *Ibid.* The transcript of Floyd Caridi's speech is available because Isadore Rubin, Executive Secretary of the Flatbush Council for Religious Good-Will, supplied it to US District Attorney Harold Kennedy during *US v. John Prout, et al.*

[39] John Cassidy Speech, January 4, 1939, box 8, USAJP-AF.

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[40] Klehr and Haynes 88.

[41] *Brooklyn Tablet*, May 7, 1938: 5.

[42] *New York Times*, July 4, 1939: 1. The thirteen rallies are according to the police reports in the OCF.

[43] Det. William A. Justy to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigating Bureau, July 7, 1939; Lt. Allgier, Report of Meeting, July 6, 1939, OCF.

[44] Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, July 14, 1939, OCF.

[45] Police Report, Jan. 6, 1940, OCF.

[46] Feldman 46. Coughlin published the *Protocols* in *Social Justice* as well in 1938.

[47] "Pat Scanlan and the Reds," *Social Justice*, May 30, 1938: 6; *Brooklyn Tablet*, June 11, 1938: 7.

[48] *Brooklyn Tablet*, June 25, 1938: 7.

[49] *Brooklyn Tablet*, Dec. 3, 1938: 11.

[50] Klehr and Haynes 86.

[51] Bayor 99-100; Marcus 181; Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Information Bureau, July 7, 1939, OCF.

[52] The idea for the chimerical anti-Semitic communism category comes from Till Van Rahden's article "Beyond Ambivalence: Variations of Catholic Anti-Semitism in Turn-of-the-Century Baltimore," in which he studies Jewish-gentile relations on a local level and the role of Catholicism in Jewish-gentile relations by examining three major Catholic weeklies in Baltimore.

[53] "Memorandum on the Christian Front," Christian Front file, AJCL.

[54] "Minutes - Christian Front meetings," Christian Front file, AJCL.

[55] "Memorandum," Christian Front file, AJCL.

[56] Brother David Ahern Speech, January 4, 1939, box 8, USAJP-AF.

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[57] Coughlin was heard on WHBI (Newark, NJ) in the New York metropolitan area in 1939. WMCA in New York City refused to carry Coughlin's broadcasts at the end of 1938. For the WMCA controversy, see Marcus 160-165.

[58] Also see June 4, 1939 broadcast. "Father Coughlin's Anti-Semitism," *Memorandum on Father Coughlin and Social Justice*, American Jewish Committee (1940), AJCL.

[59] May 28, 1939 radio broadcast and repeated in *Social Justice*, June 5, 1939, "Father Coughlin's Anti-Semitism," and "Anti-Semitism in *Social Justice*," *Memorandum on Father Coughlin and Social Justice*, American Jewish Committee (1940), AJCL.

[60] The article, "Coughlinism A Survey of a Pro-Fascist Movement," recounted Father Coughlin's anti-Semitic radio broadcasts and articles in the *Brooklyn Tablet*, going as far as counting the number of lines and words spent on anti-Jewish ranting in Coughlin's speeches. Charles Coughlin file, TSC-DBA.

[61] Allen J. Santry, Christian Front Speaker, letter to Patrick Scanlan, Editor, *Brooklyn Tablet*, Brooklyn, January 14, 1939, TSC-BDA; Police Report, Aug. 18, 1939; Police Report, July 23, 1939, OCF.

[62] September 17, 1939 radio broadcast, "Father Coughlin's Anti-Semitism," *Memorandum on Father Coughlin and Social Justice*, American Jewish Committee (1940), AJCL.

[63] Ptl. Francis L. Hillick to Commanding Officer, Third Division, Aug. 29, 1939, OCF.

[64] Ptl. Francis L. Hillick to Commanding Officer, Third Division, Sept. 26, 1939, OCF.

[65] Benson was introduced as a White Russian and in US for two years. He was a member of National Union of New Russian Generation, composed of White Russians to fight Communism in US and Russia. Police Report, Jan. 13, 1940, OCF.

[66] Nathan Frankel and Byrnes MacDonald to Fiorello LaGuardia, Final Report: Activities of Anti-Semitic Groups Within New York City, November 6, 1939, Christian Front file, FLP, microfilm roll 19; Murray Garrson to Fiorello LaGuardia, "Confidential Report on Outdoor Anti-Semitic Meetings Submitted by the Anti-Defamation League," August 12, 1939, Christian Front file, FLP, microfilm roll 18; Police Report May 25, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, June 30, 1939; Ptl. Francis L. Hillick to Commanding Officer, Third Division, Aug. 29, 1939, OCF.

[67] Police Report, June 16, 1939, OCF.

[68] Bullitt had divorced Bryant several years earlier, and Bryant was dead by the time this fictitious meeting took place.

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[69] Marcus 192-198; "Report on Anti-Democratic Statements of Father Coughlin and Social Justice," *Memorandum on Father Coughlin and Social Justice*, American Jewish Committee (1940), AJCL.

[70] Police Report, Aug. 10, 1939, OCF.

[71] Harvey Klehr John Earl Haynes and Fridrikh Igorevich Firsov, *The Secret World of American Communism* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1995) 105-106.
Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, historians have found strong evidence of communist infiltration into the Roosevelt Administration, specifically into the National Labor Relations Board, AAA, National Youth Administration, the National Research Project of the WPA, the Treasury Department, and the Federal Theatre Department. See Klehr and Haynes 105 *n*26 and Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield* (New York: Basic Books, 1999) 104-121.

[72] Klehr 254, 294-97.

[73] Bayor 155-162.

[74] Police Report, June 17, 1939; Police Report, June 30, 1939; Police Report, July 5, 1939; Police Report, July 11, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 31, 1939; Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Alien Squad, Aug. 30, 1939, OCF.

[75] Sheen 26.

[76] Edward Lodge Curran, *Franco: Who is he? What does he fight for?*, (Brooklyn, NY: International Catholic Truth Society, 1937) 4-7.

[77] *Ibid.* 7-8, 12, 39.

[78] Negrín returned religious services in the military on June 25, 1938. He then created General Commissariat of Religion in his personal offices, with jurisdiction over all religious regulations, nominally granting religious freedom on December 8, 1939. Payne 257.

[79] Floyd Caridi Speech, November 10, 1938, box 8, USAJP-AF.

[80] Curran, *Franco: Who is he? What does he fight for?* 20-21.

[81] Christian Front flyers, box 8, USAJP-AF; John F. Cassidy, box 614, vol. VII: 3475, 3541; William Gerald Bishop, box 613, vol. VIII: 4432; Michael Vill, box 614, vol. VII: 3665, USAJP-CCF; Police Report, May 4, 1939; Det. Sam Goldhuber to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, Dec. 2, 1939, OCF.

[82] Curran, *Franco: Who is he? What does he fight for?* 26.

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[83] Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, July 14, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation, July 28, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation, Aug. 16, 1939; Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, Sept. 7, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, Sept. 29, 1939, OCF.

[84] Police Report, Aug. 26, 1939; Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, Sept. 7, 1939, OCF.

[85] Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, July 14, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, July 19, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation, July 28, 1939; Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, Sept. 7, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, Oct. 6, 1939, OCF.

[86] Report of Meeting, Lt. Kelly, 104th Pct., Sept. 1, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 2, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 11, 1939; Ptl. Francis L. Hillick to Commanding Officer, Third Division, Sept. 26, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, September 29, 1939, OCF.

[87] *Brooklyn Tablet*, May 28, 1938: 4.

[88] *Social Justice*, June 6, 1938: 5.

[89] *Brooklyn Tablet*, June 11, 1938: 8.

[90] *Social Justice*, April 3, 1939: 5.

[91] Det. William A. Justy to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigating Bureau, July 7, 1939; Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, July 12, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, July 14, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation, July 28, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation, Aug. 16, 1939; Det. William A. Kuntz to Commanding Officer, Alien Squad, Sept. 8, 1939, OCF.

[92] Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation, Aug. 2, 1939; Report of Meeting, Lt. Kelly, 104th Pct., September 1, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 2, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 15, 1939, OCF.

[93] "Bridges" is a reference to Harry Bridges, the Australian-born communist leader of the San Francisco Longshoremen's Union. The Dies Committee went after Frances Perkins

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for not deporting him. However the Labor Department said they could not find enough evidence for deportation. Powers, *Not Without Honor* 127.
Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, July 12, 1939; Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, July 12, 1939, OCF.

[94] Bill spoke on the corner of 133rd Street and Amsterdam Avenue, which was located in tract 219. Tracts 213 (46% black), 215 (40%), 217 (47%) and 223 (41%) immediately border tract 219, with a total black population of 11,948 of 28,615 residents. *Census Tract Data on Population and Housing, New York City: 1940* 147.

[95] Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, July 12, 1939, OCF.

[96] Joseph Thorkelson, "Shall Congress Take Charge?" June 22, 1939, *App. Cong. Rec.* 2802-05.

[97] Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation, Aug. 2, 1939; Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Bureau Criminal Alien Investigation, Sept. 11, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 14, 1939; Det. Edward F. Rogers to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, Nov. 17, 1939, OCF.

[98] *New York Times*, Aug. 21, 1939: 6.

[99] Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Information Bureau, July 7, 1939; Police Report, July 11, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation, Aug. 16, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 11, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 14, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 15, 1939, OCF.

[100] Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, July 19, 1939; Report of Meeting, Lt. Kelly, 104th Pct., Sept. 1, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 2, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 6, 1939; Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, Sept. 7, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 11, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 15, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 23, 1939, OCF.

[101] Feeney 19.

[102] Curran, *Facts About Communism* 72-74, 80-81; *The Hand of Pilate* 14-17.

[103] Curran, *Facts About Communism,* pp. 73-74; *The Hand of Pilate,* p. 19.

[104] Mary Fox, letter to Patrick Scanlan, Editor, *Brooklyn Tablet*, July 30, 1939, Edward Lodge Curran file, TSC-DBA.

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[105] John Cassidy Speech, January 4, 1939, box 8, USAJP-AF; Police Report, June 14, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, July 11, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, July 14, 1939; Report of Meeting, Sgt. Roulston, 30 Pct., Aug. 8, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 18, 1939; Police Report, Dec. 5, 1939, OCF.

[106] Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Information Bureau, July 7, 1939, OCF.

[107] Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, July 12, 1939; Police Report, July 23, 1939; Det. Joseph Carrington to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, July 31, 1939, OCF.

[108] Klehr and Haynes 75.

[109] Thomas Kessner, *Fiorello H. LaGuardia and the Making of Modern New York* (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Co., 1989) 487-488.

[110] Police Report, Sept. 11, 1939; Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Bureau Criminal Alien Investigation, Sept. 11, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 12, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 15, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 23, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, Oct. 5, 1939; Police Report, Oct. 7, 1939, OCF.

[111] Police Report, Nov. 22, 1939, OCF.

[112] Of course, it makes no sense that Frankel, who was a member of the New York Industrial Relations Board, would be able to command the NYPD of doing anything. He was undoubtedly targeted because he was Jewish.

[113] *Brooklyn Tablet*, July 29, 1939: 9; Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[114] *New York Times*, Sept. 14, 1939: 1; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation, Aug. 2, 1939; Det. William A. Justy to Commanding Officer, Bureau of Criminal Alien Investigation, Aug. 4, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 18, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 31, 1939; Det. William A. Kuntz to Commanding Officer, Alien Squad, Sept. 8, 1939, OCF.

[115] "Minutes - Christian Front meetings," Christian Front file, AJCL.

[116] *Brooklyn Tablet*, March 11, 1939: 12; Det. Joseph Carrington to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, July 31, 1939; Det. Joseph Carrington to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, Sept. 8, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 23, 1939, OCF.

[117] Kessner 47-60.

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[118] Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation, Aug. 11, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation, Aug. 25, 1939; Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, Sept. 7, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 11, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 23, 1939, OCF.

[119] *Social Justice*, Oct. 23, 1939: 1.

[120] *Ibid.* 3.

[121] "Memorandum on the Christian Front," Christian Front file, AJCL.

[122] *New York Times*, May 18, 1939: 22.

[123] Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Information Bureau, July 7, 1939; Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, July 21, 1939; Report of Meeting, Lt. Stauffer, 105th Pct., July 20, 1939; Police Report, July 23, 1939; Police Report, July 26, 1939; Det. William A. Justy to Commanding Officer, Bureau of Criminal Alien Investigation, Aug. 4, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 19, 1939; Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, Sept. 7, 1939, OCF.

[124] Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Information Bureau, July 7, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 26, 1939, OCF.

[125] *New York Times,* July 21, 1939: 5.

[126] Bayor 40-41; McCarthy 39; Joshua B. Freeman, "Catholics, Communists, and Republicans: Irish Workers and the Organization of the Transport Workers Union" *Working-Class America: Essays on Labor, Community, and American Society*, ed. Michael H. Frisch (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983) 273-274.

[127] Det. William A. Justy to Commanding Officer, Bureau of Criminal Alien Investigation, Aug. 4, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 16, 1939, OCF.

[128] McCarthy 39; Police Report, May 5, 1939; Police Report, May 8, 1939, OCF.

[129] *New York Times*, Sept. 22, 1939: 46.

[130] The CACCAC meeting took place at Erasmus Hall High School in Brooklyn. John Cassidy was reportedly the man leading the audience in the salute. It should be noted that this information was supplied to US District Attorney Harold Kennedy during *John Prout, et al. v. United States* by Isadore Rubin, Executive Secretary of the Flatbush Council for Religious Good-Will. Cassidy was a defendant in that trial. Rubin was obviously trying to aid Kennedy's prosecution of Cassidy, hoping that this information

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would be introduced as evidence. It was not. John Cassidy and Brother David Ahern Speeches, January 4, 1939, box 8, USAJP-AF.
Det. Joseph Carrington to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, July 31, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation, Aug. 16, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 31, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, Oct. 5, 1939, OCF.

[131] Powers, *Not Without Honor* 117.

[132] McCarthy 126; *New York Times*, June 24, 1938: 20.

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Chapter 5 Act, Buy, Vote Christian: November 1938 – December 1939

"It is Christ or chaos! ... It is either Christian social justice or pagan social decay!"
- Father Charles Coughlin, "What of the Future?" radio broadcast, August 27, 1939.[1]

The Christian Front's goal of Christian unity led to a boycott movement that grew out of efforts to remove Coughlin from the airways. The buy Christian program was in retaliation for the Jewish boycott of Nazi goods. As a result, Fronters were in contact with extremisms' notorious figures like General George Van Horn Moseley.

Fronters reveled in their delusion that the Christian Front was at the head of a crusade to retake America for Christians. Its pursuit of Christian unity eventually led it to claim it was the duty of all Christian Americans to act, buy, and vote Christian, with the Christian Front making sure they did their duty.[2]

It was an overcast, yet mild, late summer day on August 29, 1939. Joe Leveque, who had been arrested just seven days earlier for disorderly conduct and offensive language, stood before a crowd of one hundred at Columbus Circle and 59th Street in Manhattan. Obviously, his arrest and sentence of seventy-five days in the workhouse had not changed his opinion on the best way to bring Christianity back to America. His plan for acting, buying, voting, and thinking Christian was expressed with odious bluntness: "The Jews stink and anything that stinks we have to get out of the way so let's get the Jews out of the country. We have got to put them out of business. They have always been trimming the Christians and we are going to put a stop to it. They should have the gas turned on them. We want no Jews in America. Never vote for a Jew." Once again, Leveque found himself in handcuffs, charged with disorderly conduct. This time the complainant failed to appear in court and the charges were dismissed.[3]

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Two weeks later, in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, Arnold McCullough praised the Christian Front's progress towards a unified Christian America in the single year of its existence. McCullough noted how the CF brought people *Spain in Arms*, which showed the "true facts" about Spain; organized its own labor school to educate Christian workers on union activities; and picketed WMCA. He denounced *Look*, *Life*, *Time* and the *Voice of Human Rights* magazines for spreading false propaganda about Father Charles Coughlin.[4]

Earlier in the summer, George Gunning read an audience on 133rd Street and Amsterdam Avenue excerpts from the *Daily Worker* and the *Socialist Leader*. Gunning read a *Daily Worker* story concerning the election of Communist candidates to the City Council in 1939. As he put it, this was to inform the audience about the enemy's plans. As a good Christian, he too was determined to elect candidates. If communists complained that others were trying to block their electoral efforts, it was a good thing because Christians were determined to do just that. Moe than ever, he said, the press was distorting the headlines because the communists control the media "through their fellow travelers." The only way to battle these lies was to get new readers for *Social Justice* and the *Brooklyn Tablet*, because "they DO tell the truth."[5] Other Christian Front speakers talked about how impressed they were with the CF's advances in large cities of the west and New England, and they praised the CF's efforts to bring people educational talks by speakers from other states with "true facts and not propaganda."[6]

* * *

Christian unity was the most popular topic for CF speeches, surpassing even communism. Included in the Christian unity speeches were religiously-based anti-

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Semitic diatribes based on what they saw as the control of important industries by Jews, most notably the media. Of the 1,503 different speech topics during 1939, 29.34% (441 in all) were directly concerned with Christian unity. The call for Christian Americans to act, buy, vote and think Christian accounted for 318 of the 441 speech topics (72.11%); or 21.16% of the grand total of speeches. This does not include the 125 speech topics that were specifically directed to supporting Father Coughlin and his right to free speech (i.e. the WMCA protests), or vocal support of other CF clerical supporters (such as Father Curran), or the promotion of selling *Social Justice*. Nor does the Christian unity totals include the 133 speeches concerned with the internal administration of the CF, which included such topics as self-promotion, recruiting, and their association with other "Christian" organizations. Therefore, if all of these speech topics were added together under one umbrella category of Christian unity, it would equate to nearly half of all the topics Fronters spoke about during 1939 (46.5%). The importance of Christian unity to the CF was therefore immense.

Acting Christian logically could include everything Fronters spoke of when they were proposing a Christian America. Whether they urged people to vote Christian or buy Christian or support Coughlin, they saw them all as furthering the cause of Christian unity. Many times Fronters would not even define "act Christian" — they would just say it. In the police reports of CF meetings, many times the topic was listed simply as "act Christian." The Fronters became more specific when they spoke about buying and voting Christian. These definitions were more obvious. Buying Christian included patronizing Christian-owned businesses, boycotting Jewish-owned businesses, and railing against the "Jewish-controlled" media which fed into their anti-Semitism. Voting Christian did not

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refer only to voting for Christian candidates based strictly on their religion. There was a greater goal for voting Christian, according to the Front. By voting, Christians would be using the "American and democratic way" to replace politicians who were viewed as having usurped power (i.e. communists and internationalists). In other words, the Christian Front was using both economic and political means to bring about their goal of Christian Americanism.

Christian unity topics dominated speeches in August and September of 1939. It was during those two months that the topic surpassed all other themes (139 in August; 127 in September). The danger of communism had greater tallies in May, June, and July (the third highest total for Christian unity during 1939 was in July, with 85). It seemed the Christian Front first became agitated about the impending communist revolution and then offered its solution later in the summer. Once World War II began in Europe, by October the importance of Christian unity as a speech topic waned, supplanted once again by communism and the neutrality issue. This trend continued even in the face of the November elections (it was mentioned only seven times). After the Front's failure in getting Christian candidates elected, Christian unity emerged once again as a significant topic in December, surpassing the dangers of communism for the first time since August.

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Chart 19: All Christian Unity Topics by Date, 1939

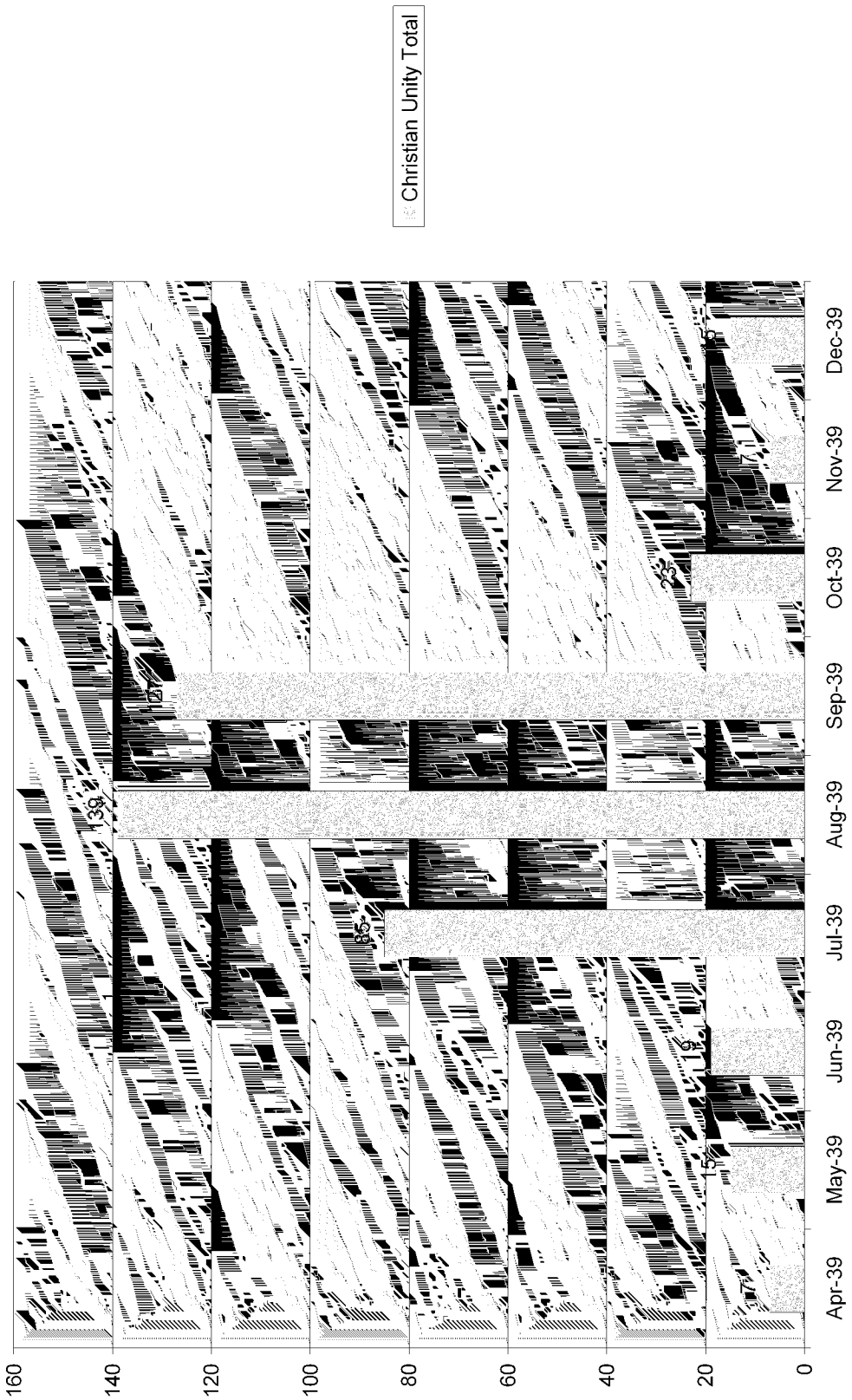

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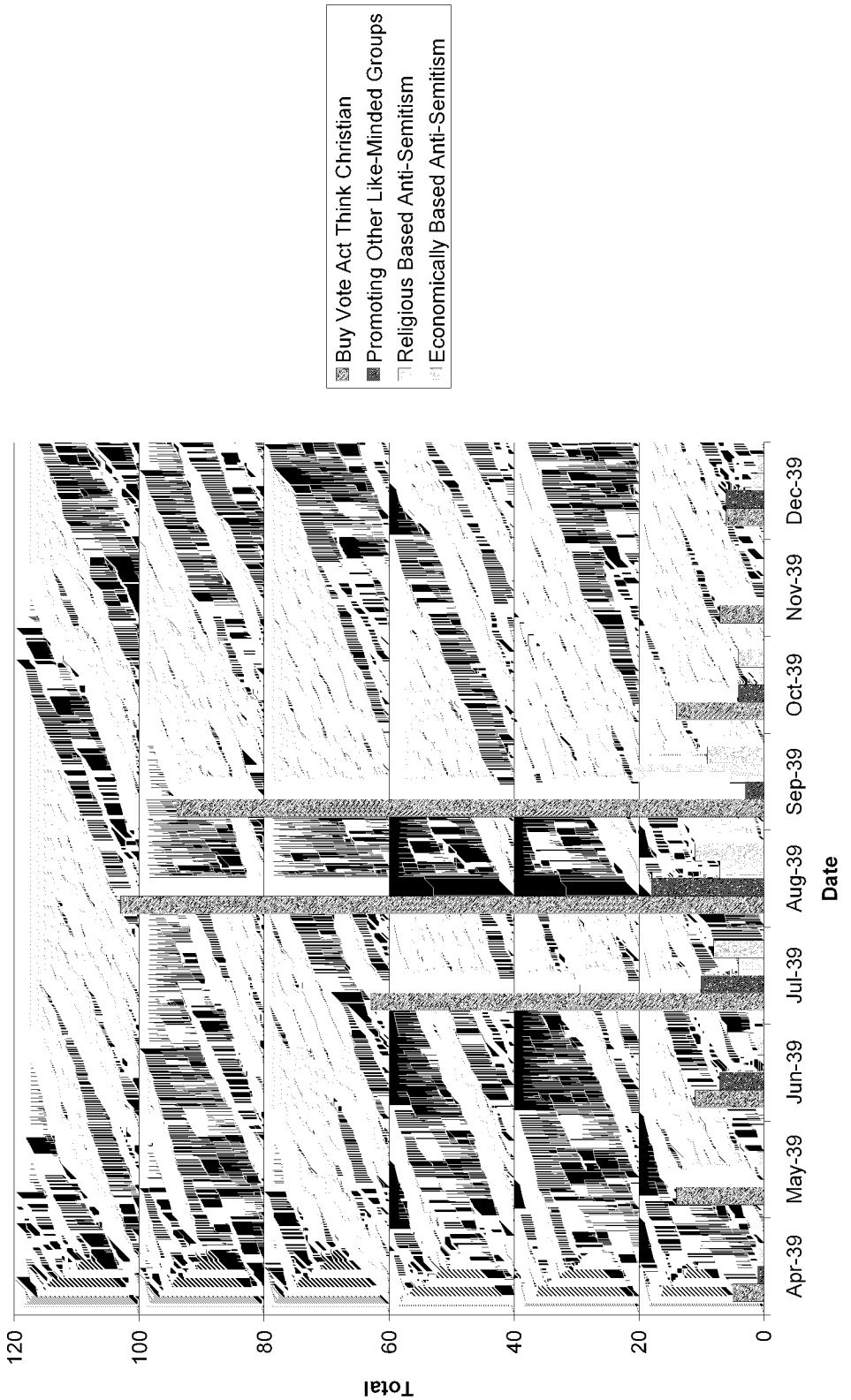
Chart 20: Christian Unity Topics Subcategories by Date, 1939



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Columbus Circle, the grand meeting place for street rallies, was witness to more Christian unity speeches than anywhere else in New York City: ninety speeches. With respect to other New York neighborhoods where the Front called for unity, the most popular were the ethnically diverse areas of the South Bronx, Washington Heights-Inwood, and Harlem. In each of these neighborhoods, Christian unity was the most prevalent CF speech topic, surpassing the dangers of communism in each case. Each of these neighborhoods had a significant foreign-born population (between 27.04%-33.62%), with similar distributions among Irish, German and Jewish residents. Jews usually represented between one-quarter to one-third of the foreign born population.

If the CF was trying to target Jews, what might be more significant was the large number of German residents in these three neighborhoods, who may, or may not have been Catholic. The Front may have targeted neighborhoods with a large German population in hopes that Catholics and Protestants would unite against communistic Jews. Jamaica, Queens was a good example of Front efforts to promote unification between Christian denominations. Jamaica witnessed the fourth highest number of Christian unity speeches in New York neighborhoods (excluding Columbus Circle). As was the case with the other neighborhoods, Christian unity dominated the speech topics here. It was the only neighborhood in this category with a small foreign-born population: 8.86% of all families. Those who were foreign-born came from either Germany or were Russian Jews. The average family expenditures were some of the highest in the City, so speeches about economic woes were not important (in fact, only three were reported — the fewest of any CF topic in Jamaica). In other German neighborhoods, such as Ridgewood in Queens, or Yorkville in Manhattan, where there was less overall CF activity, Christian

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unity was the most significant topic. Sixteen of the twenty-seven recorded speech topics in Ridgewood dealt with unity; six of the nine in Yorkville were concerned with the same.

Chart 21: All Christian Unity Topics by Location, 1939

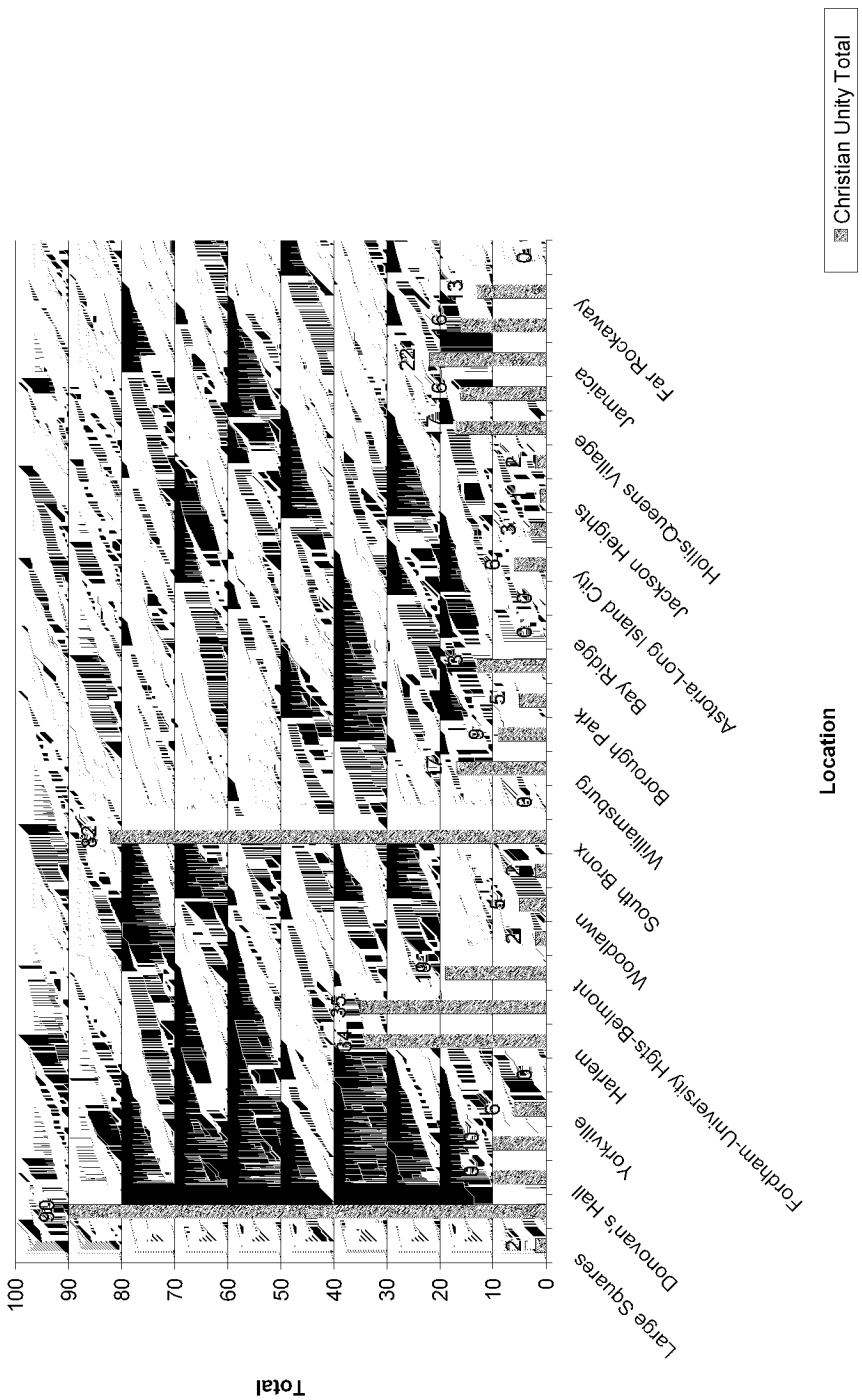

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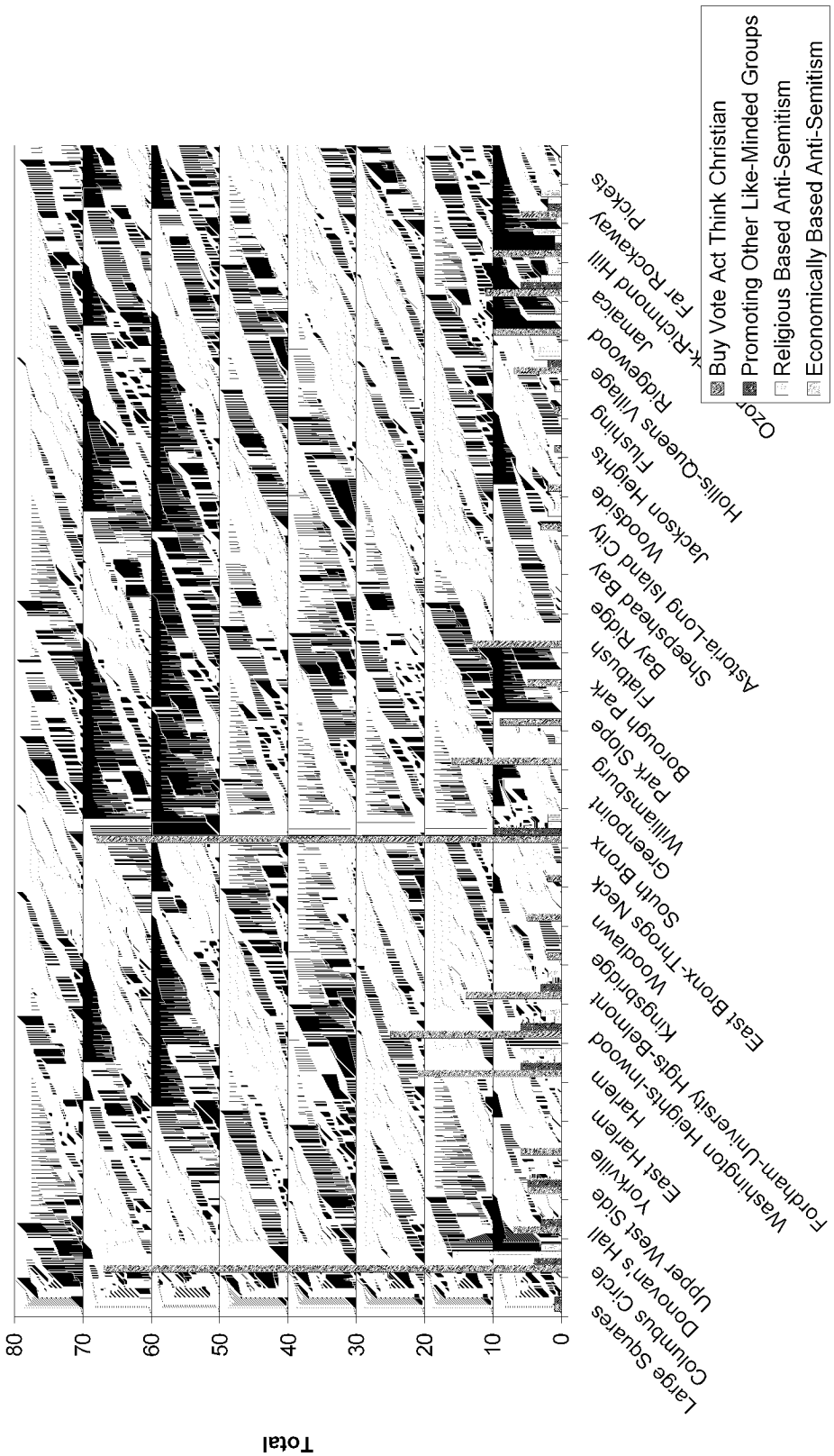
Chart 22: Christian Unity Topics Subcategories by Location, 1939



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* * *

One of the most popular and public ways for the Front to act Christian was to support Father Charles Coughlin. This was accomplished in a number of ways: screaming it on the streets, writing to sympathetic newspapers, such as the *Brooklyn Tablet*, selling *Social Justice*, and picketing WMCA radio station.

Regarding support for Coughlin as a Christian duty was common even before there was a Christian Front, as was seeing the priest as a victim of conspiracy. Those who took the time to write letters supporting Coughlin did fit the profile of those who joined the Front, including their references to the so-called conspiracy, even if there was no evidence that these people ever joined the Front or attended Front rallies.

One event that spurred letters in support of Coughlin was an interview (and the ensuing press coverage) with Detroit Archbishop Edward Mooney that appeared in the *Michigan Catholic* on October 7, 1937. Archbishop Mooney commented on Father Coughlin's statement that he thought President Roosevelt was showing "personal stupidity" for appointing ex-Klansman Hugo Black to the Supreme Court. Mooney said Coughlin's statements were not submitted to him for review, inferring that he did not agree with Coughlin's abrasive style and so distancing the Detroit archdiocese from the radio priest's poor judgment. Coughlin later cited Mooney's censorship as the reason for briefly leaving the air in the fall and winter of 1937-1938, although it was more likely caused by financial strain.[7]

This incident prompted letters to the *Michigan Catholic* from Brooklynites, who carbon-copied Coughlin ally Patrick Scanlan. Irene Downing wrote that Mooney's rebuke of Coughlin became headline fodder for the "Wall Street Financial Racketeers and

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Industrialists and their bought press" and that these "Racketeers" considered this publicity as very beneficial for themselves. This would also be a theme for Front agitation the following year. Downing said that it had become a crime to "tell the truth about a BIG politician," but it was "perfectly right and proper to insult, slander or libel the representative of Christ — the most beloved of any who has ever placed foot on American Soil!" She concluded by blaming the Church hierarchy for turning their collective backs on Coughlin and ignoring average Catholics facing poverty who "claim the earnest support of one good priest." Scanlan, impressed with the letter, sent a copy to Father Coughlin with the comment, "This is hot. Strong, un-diplomatic but thoughtful."[8] Downing lived at 1787 West Third Street, Brooklyn, a middle class block surrounded by lower income areas of mostly Russian and Central European Jews. Her particular census area (areas 410/412) also had numerous Italian families, but very few Irish. Her support for Coughlin may have stemmed from her relative isolation, or her feeling a minority in her own neighborhood. The Christian Front activity closest to her residence, although there is no way of knowing whether she supported the CF, took place more than a mile away, at East 17th Street and King's Highway. However, the likelihood was good that she agreed with much of the Front's rhetoric, considering the tone of her letter.

A letter by James Hickey echoed many of Downing's sentiments. His letter, sent directly to Archbishop Mooney, criticized the majority of the Catholic clergy, especially the hierarchy, for ignoring the anticommunist writings of Leo XIII and Pius XI. In his opinion, only one man, Father Charles Coughlin, was leading Catholics out of "our House of economic bondage into the Promised Land" by relying on those papal writings. Catholics had finally found their guide, but Mooney silenced him, thereby depriving the

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American people of the voice that had guided America since 1930. The real reason for Mooney's censorship of Coughlin, Hickey charged, was that Wall Street claimed the Archbishop as their own. Coughlin refused to deceive his followers by repeating Mooney's ideas, leading to the Archbishop's criticism of Coughlin, which effectively silenced the radio priest. Hickey described Coughlin as "the greatest religious minister of the modern world, with the exception of our Pope," and his censorship had left the nation without a leader to tell them the truth. Coughlin was also described as "the great emancipator" and "great humanitarian," who deserved credit for the defeat of the World Court, for payment of the Soldiers Bonus, and for increased conversions to Catholicism. Hickey acknowledged that the priest had to be subservient to the Archdiocese of Detroit, but pointed out that Coughlin's radio parish extended throughout the entire country, and that he really belonged to all Americans. He begged Mooney to return Coughlin to his "radio parish" for the good of the Catholic Church and the future of the United States.[9]

A copy of Hickey's letter was sent to Scanlan, who noted that the letter was "well worded." Hickey lived in the lower-middle class Italian neighborhood of Borough Park, where 35.12% of the families were foreign born. He too may have felt the same sense of isolation as Downing, being so heavily outnumbered by Italian families (1,465 Italian families to 381 Irish). Again, we will never know if Hickey ever supported or attended Christian Front meetings, but his feelings certainly echoed that of the Front. He also lived only two blocks away from CF member Patrick McNichols, who was recorded as attending one Front meeting on September 15, 1939.[10]

Downing's and Hickey's frustration that the Catholic Church's leadership was ignoring the plight of Coughlin led them to a call for a boycott, not against the

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conspiratorial forces threatening to destroy the Church, but against the Church itself. Coughlinites called on Catholics to boycott Catholic churches that failed to support Coughlin. A flyer with a blaring heading, "Catholics! Wake Up!" was distributed in November 1937 (and mailed to the *Brooklyn Tablet*). It appealed to Catholic friends of Coughlin to put Coughlin back on the radio. The flyer, which may have been produced somewhere in Brooklyn, claimed that the only way to do this was with a boycott of non-cooperating churches. The individual who mailed the flyer to the *Tablet* included a note, "This is what we intend to do," but there is no indication that such a boycott ever took place.[11]

The *Brooklyn Tablet*'s "Letters to the Editor" were filled with encouragement for the radio priest. Catholics in New York knew they had a sympathetic ear in Patrick Scanlan. Coughlin supporters often wrote Scanlan about how the attacks and slights suffered by Coughlin were emblematic of a larger assault on the Catholic Church in America. Ethnicity and income did not seem to be a determining factor in these letters. The common ground was the feeling that the Church was under attack by alien forces within the United States.

Joseph J. Green, who lived in a mostly native born neighborhood on an upper-middle class block near Grand Army Plaza (just north of Prospect Park) complained to Scanlan that a news commentator on radio station WOR referred to Father Charles Coughlin only as "Coughlin," deleting his proper title "Father." Green expressed his pain and indignation at this remark, which he found offensive towards all Catholics. This was made even more painful for Catholics because the Jewish ecclesiastics discussed to in the

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same story were referred to as "Rabbi" or "Doctor;" after all, no one would ever dare to refer Rabbi Stephen Wise simply as "Wise."[12]

J.M. Stallmiller wrote a letter of support to Scanlan in November 1938, calling it a Christian act to "defend Father Coughlin and the Roman Catholic Church." Stallmiller lived in the mostly German, lower-middle class neighborhood of Glendale, Queens. This was not far from where Daniel Kurtz's Queens Unit of the Christian Front held meetings on Myrtle Avenue in Ridgewood.[13]

According to the police reports, Daniel Kurtz's activities made Queens Village the second most active area in New York for Christian Front recruiting. In this lower-middle class neighborhood (approximately one-third German), there were six speeches between the months of April and December 1939 for the specific purpose of supporting Father Coughlin. And it was from the Queens Village home of Edward Hawkins that a letter reached the *Brooklyn Tablet* calling Coughlin a great patriot because he had exposed communism and brought the Church to the common people through his radio program. Coughlin credited once again for "the defeat of the World Court, payment of the Soldiers Bonus, defeat of the Reorganization and Neutrality bills and the keeping of the embargo on Spain," and supporting a living wage. In fact, Hawkins concluded that Father Coughlin was the true embodiment of the Church in America because he had done more than any other man to disseminate the anticommunist Encyclicals of the Popes.[14]

It is impossible to determine whether Kurtz or the CF had any direct influence on Hawkins' letter. However, Hawkins' reasons give some insight on what made someone become a Coughlinite. To the existence of opposition to Coughlin was enough to make Hawkins support the priest —he felt Coughlin both personified the American Catholic

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Church, and that an attack on the priest was an attack on the Church and American Catholics.[15]

The incident that had the most impact in transforming the Christian Front from a small group meeting in basement rectories to a group causing havoc on the streets of New York with public displays of force and protest was the battle between radio station WMCA and supporters of Father Coughlin.[16] This turned into one of the first public "Act Christian" demonstrations under the auspices of the CF.

The problems with WMCA began when Coughlin — in his November 20, 1938 weekly radio broadcast — called the Nazi treatment of Jews necessary to stem the tide of communism. According to *New York Times* Berlin reporter, Otto Tolischus, this made Coughlin a hero in Germany. In the days that followed, WMCA revealed that they had received an advanced text of the speech which was reviewed by the director of the Anti-Nazi League, Professor Johan Smertenko before Coughlin went on the air. Professor Smertenko corrected the factual errors and returned the speech to the station, which in turn sent the corrected text to Coughlin, suggesting that the factual corrections be included in the November 20 broadcast. Archbishop Mooney was also informed of the inflammatory nature of the talk and the corrections that had been made by the professor. Mooney took no action against Coughlin and the speech was broadcast in its original form.[17]

WMCA, embarrassed that their station was used to disseminate falsehoods, wanted to save face, and so it gave airtime to Smertenko to refute Coughlin and publicly challenge the priest's facts. To make sure that the station did not experience a repetition of the situation, WMCA president Donald Flam insisted that Father Coughlin submit

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texts of his speeches forty-eight hours in advance of their scheduled broadcasts. Father Coughlin refused. WMCA countered the refusal by terminating the radio priest's broadcasts. Coughlin's next broadcast, on November 27, 1938, was instead carried on Newark station WHBI, which had a weaker signal, meaning that many listeners in the metropolitan area could no longer receive the broadcasts. During the November 27 broadcast, Coughlin continued with his anti-Semitic assaults, claiming that the Jews had financed the Russian Revolution.[18]

The November 20 and 27 broadcasts were the beginning of protests that lasted more than a year. Following the second speech, six thousand people attended a meeting sponsored by the Coughlinite-fronted Committee for the Defense of American Constitutional Rights. They appealed for Coughlin's right to use the airways without restriction. At the rally, Coughlin's name was cheered; President Roosevelt's name was booed.[19]

On December 3, the *Brooklyn Tablet* reported that the newspaper had received a tremendous number of complaints concerning the WMCA situation. Patrick Scanlan spun the story in a positive nature, emphasizing that WMCA's actions were unsuccessful in silencing Father Coughlin. Equating WMCA to Hitler silencing his opposition on the airwaves, the *Tablet* outlined the errors of WMCA:

1. "Browder and a large number of assorted radicals" were allowed to speak on the station. Scanlan asked, "Why the discrimination?"
2. The sending of Coughlin's manuscript to Professor Smertenko violated radio ethics because manuscripts were not supposed to be delivered to "partisans" before the message is aired.
3. Donald Flam's description of Coughlin to "an infamous speaker who is generally recognized for fanatic statements" was unfair.

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The editorial concluded, perhaps reflecting its inflated sense of Coughlinite strength, that the paper was not surprised that WMCA was worried about its broadcasting future; nor was it surprising that "a group of some of the best known Jews" met and announced that a "radio gag" on Coughlin would be a bad idea because of freedom of speech issues. The paper seemed to think that not even the supposedly Jewish-controlled media wanted to deal with the backlash caused by Coughlin's dismissal because of Coughlin's overwhelming popularity. This was mere conjecture on the *Tablet's* part.[20]

At a Christian Front meeting in Prospect Hall on December 1, John Cassidy proposed a resolution calling for the Dies Committee to investigate WMCA for discontinuing Coughlin's broadcasts. Christian Front supporter Father James Keeling, curate of the church of St. Francis of Assisi in the Bronx, repeated this demand eight days later at his church. Father Keeling implied that Coughlin's suspension was part of a greater communist conspiracy. He demanded that the Dies Committee summon Donald Flam to explain why communists were allowed to broadcast on WMCA and Father Coughlin was not.[21]

Two weeks later, the Christian Front's meeting at the Manhattan Opera House was sponsored by the Committee for the Defense of American Constitutional Rights. It was at this meeting that the plan to picket WMCA was first announced. The speakers included Cassidy, Father Curran, Queens Borough President George U. Harvey and Allen Zoll of the American Patriots, Inc., the last an anti-Semitic, super-patriot group. Also in attendance was John T. Prout, Jr., one of the Fronters who would be arrested by the FBI in 1940. Prout was listed as an usher on the handbill. Zoll took the lead and began picketing the station three days later, on Sunday, December 18, 1938, between the hours

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of 2:00 PM and 4:00 PM. The protests, under the leadership of the Christian Front, were some of the largest CF rallies in the city, usually drawing between 200 and 5,000 people.[22]

The WMCA protests became a binding force among Coughlin supporters. The *Brooklyn Tablet* reported that these pickets, together with the malicious attacks on Coughlin were "winning him thousands of friends everyday," including increased support from the Catholic press.[23] WMCA provided an issue that became a springboard for many other activities of the Christian Front, and one that began to ally the Front with other super-nationalist groups, among them the German-American Bund. There was evidence that Zoll was connected with the Bund, a connection first made by Theodore Irwin who cited Zoll's letter to the *Deutsche Weckruf* thanking Bund leader Fritz Kuhn for arranging the WMCA protests.[24]

The protests reached beyond New York City to other strongholds of Front activity. When a Boston radio station refused to air Coughlin's sermons in 1939 for much the same reasons cited by WMCA, nearly a thousand people met at Mechanics Hall to organize a Boston chapter of the Committee for Defense of American Constitutional Rights. The Committee's three goals echoed what was heard in New York. They wanted to defend free speech, protest against the "radio [that is, Jewish] monopoly," and to demand government action against communism and un-American activities. According to the Bostonian, communists were responsible for the ban of Coughlin.[25]

The pickets continued into 1940, even after Donald Flam accused Zoll of trying to extort $7,500 from him to stop the picketing. Flam claimed he had already given Zoll $200. Zoll was arrested for this, although he was acquitted. This incident, and the

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multiple brawls that took place between pro and anti-Coughlin factions, resulted in LaGuardia issuing a directive restricting to limit the number of different pickets in front of the building to four.[26]

The protests against of WMCA were too important for the Christian Front to abandon. They represented exactly what they had to do to "act Christian." They felt they were defending the one man who could lead America back to its moral, Christian core. More importantly, it was the most dramatic public display of their existence — until some members found themselves in federal custody. Father Keeling, D'Arcy, and Cassidy continued to support the pickets during the cold, winter months at a meeting at the Bronx Winter Garden in February 1939. Joe Hartery publicized the pickets at the conclusion of every CF street rally he attended in the Bronx during May 1939. The Front wanted to make it very clear that they were protesting WMCA in the name of Father Coughlin. At an August meeting of WMCA demonstrators at Donovan's Hall in Manhattan, Fronter John Geis distributed ballots to determine what the protestors should call themselves. "The Friends of Father Coughlin" and "The Friends of Social Justice" were suggested. Geis promised he would write to Father Coughlin and get his permission to use his name, and then interrupted the meeting so that the group could listen to Coughlin on the radio.[27]

Ostensibly, the WMCA issue was free speech according to the Christian Front. More specifically, it was viewed as an unfair application of free speech — those who were allowed to have it, and those who were not. Dan Mackey, Jr. of Brooklyn complained to the *Brooklyn Tablet* about a lecture by Dr. Victor F. Calverton at the Brooklyn Jewish Center, which was described as "atheistic, anti-Christian." Rabbi Israel

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Levinthal defended Dr. Calverton's right of free speech, as long as he spoke with dignity. Mackey questioned the dignity of Calverton's speech. He compared the situation to the attacks on the *Brooklyn Tablet* in the *Brooklyn Jewish Center Review* because the *Tablet* published the discourses of Coughlin, "whom a Jewish Radio Monopoly bars from the airlanes [*sic*]."[28] The *Tablet* was also thanked by an unidentified reader for supporting Coughlin. This reader said that if Catholics did not stand behind Coughlin they should be ashamed of themselves and that with Coughlin broadcasting on the Newark Hoyt Brothers station (WHBI) "the Jews will now to work on Hoyt Brothers — the poor persecuted Jews. Lovers of fair play and free speech."[29] It was all about conspiracy.

The Christian Front took these same sentiments to the streets of New York. Stanley Smith led a march from Columbus Circle to Carnegie Hall, chanting "Down with Communism, Down with Jews, We demand free Speech." Crowds were urged to join the WMCA picket. Groups collected money to keep Coughlin on the air. One group in Greenpoint, Brooklyn supposedly contributed $100 a month, and had sent Coughlin $1,000 by August 1939. Petitions were sent to WMCA threatening that sponsors' products would be boycotted if Coughlin was not returned to the air. This particular announcement was curious in its timing (October 16, 1939) because businesses who advertised on the radio station had been picketed since early April. Obviously, these protests were not having much of an effect.[30]

The Front habitually scapegoated Jews as the cause of Coughlin's troubles. The only reason for Coughlin's removal they could understand was that a minority group was trying to silence Coughlin because he alone exposed their control of important positions in the federal and state government and of the press, radio, movies, and schools. Fronters

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vowed that they would never let these groups restrict their street meetings and free speech, which were guaranteed under the Constitution.[31] They told crowds the National Association of Broadcasters was meeting to create an unconstitutional, censorship body. Raymond Dalton read from a *Herald Tribune* article that NAB policy was that no radio time was going to be sold to speakers dealing with controversial issues, except under rigid limitations. Dalton then told the audience that "A new method was doped out by the international bankers who completely control all radio stations to silence the Rev. Charles Coughlin entirely." Fronters demanded that Christians object to the creation of this body because they were to be the targets of this censorship. Threats were made that the Front would "retaliate accordingly" to curtailment of Christians' free speech.[32]

According to the CF the reason "certain forces" were trying to remove Father Coughlin from the airwaves was because he dared speak the truth and so the minority feared being exposed as the leaders of the Communist Party. Daniel Kurtz promised that if Coughlin was removed, there would be protests all over the country. No group or force could stop these meetings. He pointed out how *Equality* and *Nation* were sold without interference, but *Social Justice* was banned at newsstands and on the streets of New York. Buying *Social Justice* and boycotting the daily newspapers because of their lies was the duty of all Christians. The Far Rockaway audience disagreed and constantly heckled Kurtz to the point that he asked the police to stop the taunts.[33]

The Christian Front continued to support Father Coughlin whenever and wherever they could. CF National Director John Cassidy wrote an open letter to all members of the organization, explicitly stating that the sale and distribution of *Social Justice* was part of the job of the Christian Front. The letter, addressed to "Christian Brother[s]," opened

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with the line, "This message is one of the most important acts of the C.F." It was the duty of every Front member to spread the truth about the enemy. This act of Christianity was so important because "men can't fight the enemy if they do not know what the cause is all about." Cassidy explained that the only way the uninformed could find out the truth was to read *Social Justice*. Acknowledging that all Fronters cannot be *Social Justice* vendors, Cassidy told them that they could all be agents of the truth. The job was simple — each member was to take home three or four copies of *Social Justice* every Friday, after the weekly meetings, and give the newspaper to their friends and family, or sell copies to neighbors and co-workers. The letter concluded, "To know the truth is to know what you are fighting for. Take it, Sell it, Fight for it" — and the truth was that of Coughlin.[34]

The Front nearly always framed the words of Coughlin as the "truth" spoken in the face of the lies perpetrated by the communist/internationalist/Jewish-infiltrated and controlled government and media. Daniel Kurtz told a Manhattan crowd of five hundred that Christians did not get the full news because the radio, newspapers and movies were controlled by a "minority group" trying to destroy the "truly Christian" circulation of the purveyor of truth: *Social Justice*. He later told a crowd in Far Rockaway not to read the daily newspapers because of their propaganda. Owen King urged a crowd in the Bronx to buy *Social Justice* and "learn the truth as Father Coughlin tells it." Andrew Daigle and Joseph Hubert did the same a month later, telling the audience on 204th Street and Perry Avenue to listen to Coughlin for the "true facts about communism." They made it a point to focus on one of Coughlin's broadcasts in which he insisted that Christians unite to fight communism. In Queens, Kurtz insolently referred to a Jewish War Veterans' call to

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stop Father Coughlin and the Christian Front by force, if necessary, as a pusillanimous act of desperation by the opposition: "Asiatic groups of the Bronx, East Side, etc. could not stop the Christian Front, and the reason the Asiatics want Father Coughlin off the airways is because he speaks the truth in reference to the Asiatic groups."[35]

Defense of Coughlin took other forms. Raymond Dalton publicly denounced Gene Tunney and Attorney General Frank Murphy for calling Coughlin anti-Semitic. Monetary support for the Shrine of the Little Flower was another form of Christian action. A collection totaling $56.74 was taken during a CF Bronx Unit meeting at the Tri-Boro Palace, to be sent to the "great American Father Coughlin" to "help him in his great cause." John Stevenson sold tickets at Sangerbund Hall for Father Coughlin's October 25, 1939 American Citizens Committee sponsored birthday ball. Daniel Kurtz insisted that all Queens Unit members to be present at the party and buy tickets.[36] The most common way to monetarily support Coughlin, as Cassidy insisted in his "Christian Brother" letter was to sell *Social Justice*.

Social Justice, and other like-minded (especially anticommunist) publications, such as the *National American* and the *Brooklyn Tablet* were sold at nearly every Christian Front street rally, pickets and private meetings. Purchasing was seen by some as a way to keep Father Coughlin on the air. The *Tablet* was described as the only truthful paper which was "fearless … [the] one paper that is not controlled."[37] People attending one of the rallies at Columbus Circle were told to get behind "the drive of *Social Justice*" by Fronters who saw themselves as self-sacrificing martyrs for Coughlin's cause. Fronter Frank Gleason said that believed in Coughlin's ideals so

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passionately he sacrificed his own economic well-being by sending money out of his own pocket to Coughlin.[38]

Social Justice vendors' widespread and very pubic presence throughout the City, often in areas where the Christian Front was not rallying, became a great source of confrontation and violence. During April 1939, twenty to twenty-five Fronters who picketed stores in the South Bronx for advertising on WMCA usually concluded their day of protesting by announcing that they were taking the IRT subway to Times Square to sell *Social Justice*. Each seller was protected by four or five men. At times, there were as many as seventy-five to one hundred Fronters riding the subway, of whom only ten or fifteen were selling *Social Justice*. The others were there to intimidate and start trouble.[39]

When they got off the train, they met more Coughlinites who were already selling the newspaper. Sometimes the number of Times Square *Social Justice* hawkers reached twenty-five or thirty-five. Times Square was a prime destination not only for Christian Fronters. During the spring and summer of 1939, free speech took its most raw form at the "crossroads of the world" with all varieties of newspapers and their vendors espousing alternative politics and solutions to the problems of America. One night in late April, one hundred twenty-five men and women were selling different papers, covering the complete political spectrum: from the extreme Right of *Social Justice* and *Liberation* to the extreme Left of the *Sunday Worker*. Coughlinites usually found themselves arguing with crowds, especially when Jewish newsboys were selling the *Daily Worker*. Small riots ensued in the South Bronx where Fronters faced off with those selling *Equality*. Violence seemed inevitable when such a cauldron of contentious ideologies

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mingled together espoused by individuals who were not strangers to getting into trouble and who blamed each other for their woes.[40]

Even though Front hooligans packed subway cars with stormtrooper tactics they always painted themselves as the victims when confronted and violence ensued. Walking up and down the aisles shouting insults at Jews, they physically assaulted anyone they thought looked Jewish with little fear of retaliation by the outnumbered strap-hangers. Even while making veiled threats to those who would interfere with the selling of *Social Justice* at El stations, Fronters complained when they got into trouble for selling *Social Justice* and the *Brooklyn Tablet*, calling themselves victims of the "Tribe of 42nd Street," who allegedly assaulted them. Edwin Westphal claimed to be a victim of a Jewish conspiracy while selling *Social Justice* in Union Square. Westphal got into an argument with two Jewish women and was then arrested for disorderly conduct. In his mind, his arrest and subsequent fine of ten dollars by Judge Rothenberg was only because he argued with Jews and went before a Jewish judge. He told the crowd at 98th Street and Amsterdam Avenue that the fine would not stop him from selling *Social Justice*.[41]

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Chart 23: Support of Coughlin by Date, 1939

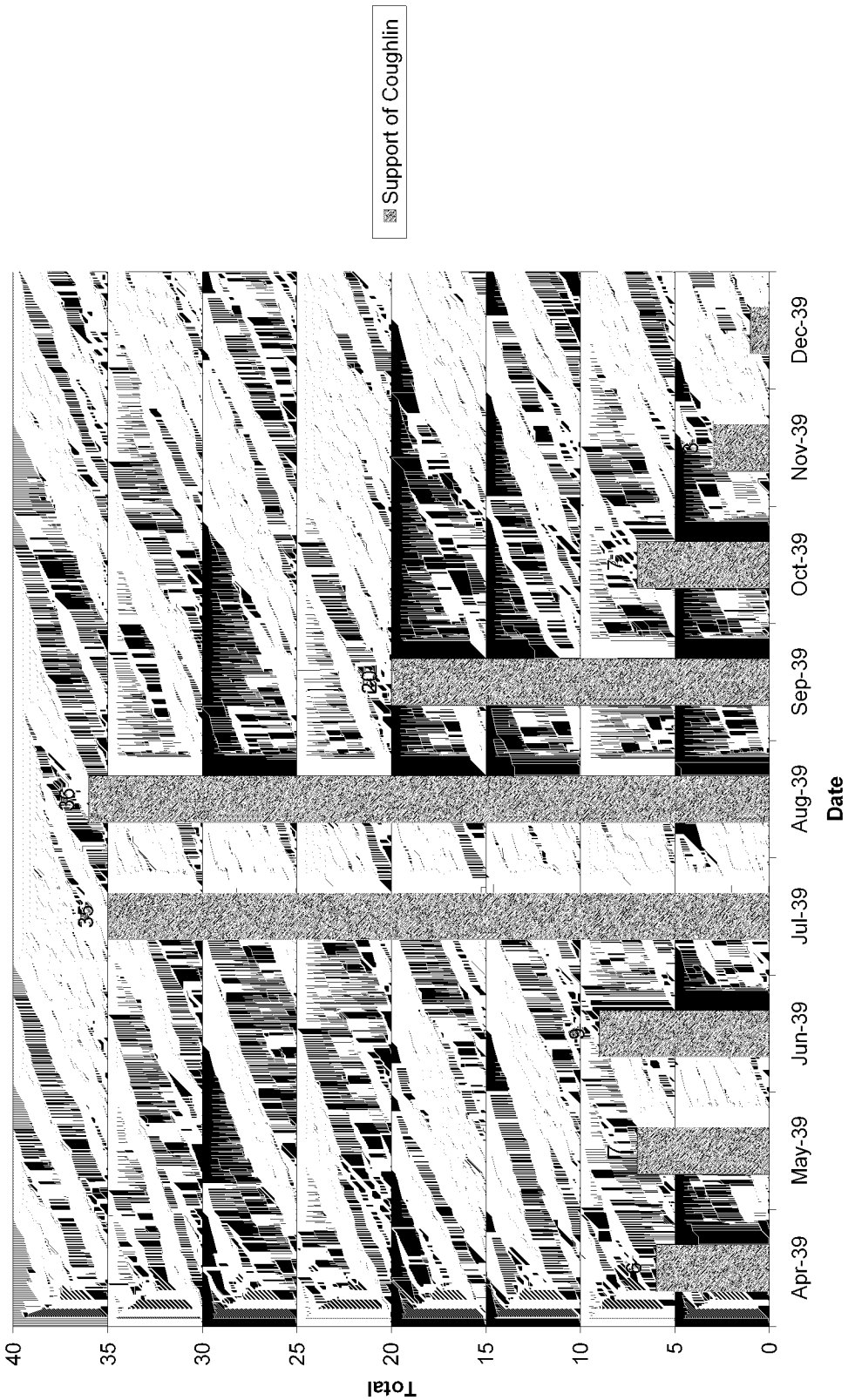

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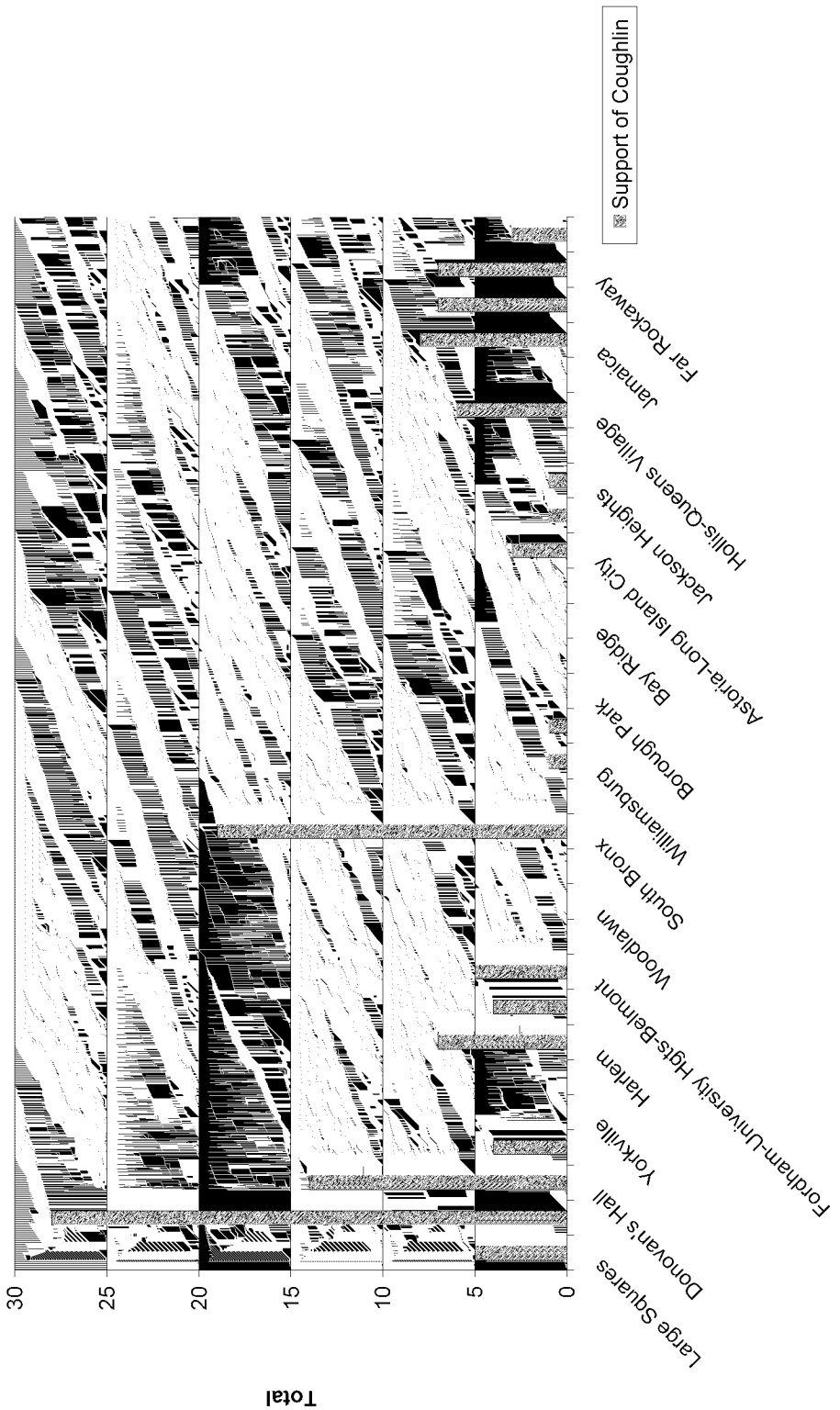
Chart 24: Support of Coughlin by Location, 1939



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The battle against communist controlled labor unions provided another opportunity for Catholics to perform Christian acts in the eyes of conservative Church leaders. Reverend Edward Lodge Curran wrote in his reply to Earl Browder's invitation to Catholics to join his Popular Front that Catholics should save the American labor union movement from communistic control. At an annual communion breakfast representing 20 parishes in North Queens, Curran stressed the importance of united Catholic action against communist union infiltrators. Declaring that the Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII in 1891 was the only voice for labor in the late nineteenth century, he portrayed the Catholic Church as a long-time friend of labor. He was hoping to dissuade Catholics from supporting communist-led unions, which he hopefully referred to as "false rumors concerning the attitude of Catholics toward labor and unionism."[42]

When it came to unionism, the concerns of the Church's authorities and rank-and-file Catholics were in conflict. During the desperate times of the Depression, workers were most concerned with a job and a living wage, regardless of who supplied it. For Church leaders, it mattered greatly if those trying to help workers were communists.

The fight over ideological union leadership also created some strange bedfellows, namely the *Catholic Worker* movement was for a time allied with Coughlin and the *Brooklyn Tablet* until Coughlin's rhetoric became too much for the *Catholic Worker* to stomach. The *Brooklyn Tablet* supported the *Catholic Worker* to counteract the radical papers that were misleading the Catholic unemployed and working class, in the opinion of the Brooklyn diocese. The *Catholic Worker* itself supported Coughlin until 1937. It

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turned against the priest when Coughlin claimed that a policy of neutrality during the Spanish Civil War meant sympathy for communism.

James Fisher explains the quarrel between the Front and the *Catholic Worker* in *The Catholic Counterculture in America, 1933-1962*: the Christian Front was supposed to defend against the enemies of the church, but it only fueled hatred and created more suffering for Catholics. On the other hand, the *Catholic Worker* movement emerged as a voice of enlightenment by promoting a sophisticated version of the gospel of acceptance of both Catholics and Jews. In the face of this conflict, the *Tablet*'s envious attitude toward Jewish labor's successes turned it against the *Catholic Worker's* ethic of reconciliation. The Front held Catholic leadership, and in some cases Catholic laborers themselves, at fault for allowing communist domination of labor unions.[43]

As was discussed in chapter 1, the fear of communists' taking over unions was one of the personal, driving forces behind those who formed the original unit of the Christian Front in New York. Musician Harry Thorne's dispute with his union, Local 802 of the American Federation of Musicians after being fired by the Goldman Band. . According to a pamphlet printed by the Christian Labor Front (the group he organized after being pushed out of the original Christian Front), the union was dominated by communists: his proof was that the union's leadership had diverted the Local's energy to support Spanish Loyalists during the Spanish Civil War. He claimed his firing was upheld by the union because he was not a communist. As a leader of the Christian Labor Front, his goal was to form blocs within unions along religious and racial lines.[44]

For the CF, the only acceptable unions were those under Christian leadership. Early in 1938, those same Catholics who later went on to form the Christian Front

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hatched a plan to establish small, semi-autonomous units led by Christians within unions. These cells were to "bore from within" left-wing unions and oust the communist leadership. This plan was designed to counter the communists' financial support and physical aid to striking workers that subsequently positioned the communists to gain control of the union. After the Front gained momentum, Albert Gunnison suggested that the CF plan to do everything the communists were doing: hold street meetings, picket, and agitate to get Christian leaders into labor unions.[45]

Other Catholic labor activists, who actually shared the CF's goals of Catholic labor leadership quickly became alarmed at Fronters' methods. The liberal Association of Catholic Trade Unionists, established in 1937 to emphasize the social teachings of the Church in unions, feared CF infiltration into the unions would cause irreparable ethnic and religious schisms. In the end, as was the case with s many of their initiatives, the CF failed miserably. Few Christian Front cells in unions were created.[46]

Nevertheless, the Christian Front expressed the fears of Coughlin, Curran and others that Catholic workers might find themselves in communist unions. To Fronters, this could occur only with the aid of conspiratorial brainwashing conducted by corrupt unions. Claiming that the Front was the true standard-bearer of American labor and to define an acceptable Catholic-American labor identity, CF leaders Raymond Dalton and Arnold McCullough announced that the Christian Front was not against labor unions and in fact supported all unions whose platform was a decent living wage. They also announced that the Front was organizing its own labor school to educate Christian workers about union activities. They warned audiences to reject propaganda calling Father Coughlin and the Christian Front anti-labor — they were only against the

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communist leadership of unions which was blatantly un-Christian. In November 1939, the Front branded the United Autoworkers un-Christian and heretical for planning a strike before Christmas. The Fronters revealed they had learned of these plans because a Christian UAW member had secretly informed Coughlin.[47]

Edward Lodge Curran's *Facts About Communism* (1937), provided the blueprint for the Front's attacks on the CIO. In, it Curran analyzed the communists' influence within the CIO and described how the Communist Party was mobilizing behind the CIO — not for the benefit of American workers — but rather for the benefit of the Moscow-controlled CP. He did not try to dissuade Americans from organizing under the auspices of the AFL or CIO, but he warned that the CIO would only devote itself the true welfare of workers if the communists were ousted.[48]

Curran's relatively restrained writings about labor turned into pure vitriol at Front meetings. For the Front, the communist control of labor unions meant "Jewish" control. The same anti-Semitic association was sometimes also made by Catholic leaders who were associated with the Front. In September 1938, Father Burke urged a St. Paul's audience to fight Jewish control of labor unions.[49] Front speakers denounced John L. Lewis for not fighting for the interest of the AFL, but rather for "the Internationalist." Fronters demanded labor unions under Christian, not Jewish, leadership. Sometimes Fronters tried to be careful with their language, referring to control of labor unions by "a certain minority;" other times they simply followed their hearts and denounced Jewish "racketeers in labor organizations, labor unions, politics, and every industry."[50]

David Dubinsky, the leader of the ILGWU, was a favorite target of the Christian Front, especially the August 21, 1939 issue of *Social Justice* in which Coughlin published

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a letter allegedly from a Christian ILGWU member who complained about having to contribute to a refugee fund. Coughlin responded with a call to organize a Christian American labor union, specifically for "real Americans," because workers were currently "exploited and enslaved" by "legislative vultures who aspire to make martyrs of themselves." Dubinsky was called a "virtual dictator among his own people" and a "duplicate Stalin" who made a mockery of the word "democracy" because he was the president, secretary and treasurer of the ILGWU. He also denounced Dubinsky's Jewish followers: "How can they have the audacity to preach against oppression and racial hatred where right here in supposedly free America we are being made to jump through their hoops!"[51] Helping inflame the attacks on Dubinsky was the ethnic conflict between the Jewish leadership of the union and the large number of Italians in the ILGWU (especially Local 89) who were dependant on Jewish contractors and manufacturers. Additionally, Dubinsky's ILGWU was the nucleus of the American Labor Party's, aggravating the conflict between the Irish and Jews.[52]

The Christian Front found a hero for their cause in New Jersey. In June 1938, Jersey City Mayor Frank Hague refused to allow CIO to organize in his city, claiming they were planning a communist uprising. Testifying in Federal District Court on June 10, Hague attacked the CIO as part of a movement to overthrow the government and destroy all forms of religion. He charged that all of its leaders, except John L. Lewis, were communists. He defended his denial of permits for the CIO street meetings, not solely on the grounds that they were communist, but for their own protection against the crowds that resented the communists' agitation against the government. The mayor claimed Harry Bridges had sent "500 strong-arm men and killers" to Jersey City during

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the 1936-37 seamen's strike and that William Carney (the CIO regional director in New Jersey had threatened an invasion of 3,000 men in November 1937. He pointed to the CIO strikes in Michigan as "riots, bloodshed and disturbances," more proof of a "Red Invasion." He refused to allow "any un-American group coming into Jersey City" and opposed renting of private halls to groups such as the CIO and others who "urge the overthrow of the government." He insisted this was no issue of free speech — no man should be denied the right to speak — but he could not surrender Jersey City to this invasion. Fronters cheered Hague for demonstrating the way American democracy should work, and drew unflattering comparisons between LaGuardia and Hague. At one of the December 1938 WMCA protests, the Front displayed a placard reading, "We Want Mayor Hague – He Can Handle Things."[53]

* * *

For many of the Christian Fronters (and Christian Mobilizers) who roamed the subways and streets yelling anti-Semitic diatribes, vandalizing Jewish businesses, and assaulting anyone who looked Jewish with black jacks and brass knuckles, getting the "fair share" Christians deserved meant buy Christian. The Front placed abusive stickers on the windows of Jewish shops and compiled a "Christian Index" to help organize boycotts against Jewish merchants. *Social Justice* salesmen clustered around Jewish owned department stores.[54]

The Christian Front's Buy Christian movement began soon after the WMCA pickets when protesters expanded their demonstrations to boycotts of the station's sponsors. Taking advantage of this, on December 29, 1938, John Cassidy announced the

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organization of the Christian Front Flatbush Unit to fight communism and its allies by organizing boycotts where possible, by force if necessary.[55]

The "Buy" movements in New York City were commonplace throughout the 1930s. The promotion of economic support of one ethnicity over another usually adopted the strategy of buying only from one's own group while boycotting the offending group. The "Buy Christian" slogan was common to all anti-Jewish groups.[56] In part the Buy Christian movement was a backlash to Jewish boycotts of Nazi Germany's goods. For example, in December 1933, the United German Societies established the German-American Business League (DAWA) to defend themselves against the Jewish boycott. While the Jewish effort to boycott Nazi goods was rooted in a serious threat to Jewish survival, it brought to the surface many ugly anti-Semitic responses such as the Buy Christian movement, which helped lead to groups like the Front and the German-American Bund. The Bund became active in the DAWA in 1935 and almost immediately "Don't Buy from Jews" flyers began to appear.[57]

In the early 1930s, there was almost no open criticism of Nazi Germany within the German-American community. This resulted in serious deterioration of German-Jewish relations in New York and elsewhere. The Jewish community wanted to strike out only against Nazis. But, as Ronald Bayor points out, it became increasingly difficult for them to distinguish between Nazi supporters and German-Americans who remained silent on open criticism of Germany.

The Jewish War Veterans were the first to call for a boycott of German goods in March 1933. After the April 1, 1933 the Nazis in Germany ordered a general boycott of Jewish businesses, American Jews decided on a response. The American Jewish

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Committee (AJC), led by Samuel Untermyer, joined a boycott of Nazi goods as part of a larger, world-wide Jewish response. In 1936 and 1937, *ad hoc* Jewish organizations were formed to specifically promote the boycott. In 1937, the AJC and Jewish Labor Committee sponsored "Anti-Nazi Week" rallies calling on Jewish youths to join the boycott of German goods as part of world's youth "bloodless war." Mayor LaGuardia saluted the Yiddish slogan, "Boycott Nazi Goods," which hung on the ballroom walls of the Hotel Capitol at a Jewish Labor Committee convention. At an anti-Hitler rally in Madison Square Garden on March 15, 1937, Dr. Joseph Tenenbaum, chair of the AJC Boycott Committee, promised that if the boycott was enforced for six months, Hitler would be stopped. In 1938, the boycott was extended to Austrian goods. Tenenbaum claimed the boycott was effective in hurting the Germans, and that it was also helping the American textile and toy industries. The boycott movement never became as strong as it could have, however, because there was never a formal alliance between these different boycott organizations. In fact, the B'nai B'rith and the Independent Order Abraham B'rith did not join the boycott until 1939.[58]

The Jewish boycott of German goods was very much neighborhood based, which led to local ethnic tensions. Women were the primary shoppers for their families and so their participation was critical. For that reason, between 1934 and 1941, the AJC gave its Women's Division the day-to-day leadership of the boycott because of its knowledge of local consumer habits. It was the women's responsibility to promote the boycott. They distributed literature to ensure business compliance with the boycott and to foster awareness of alternative products to those of the Nazis, and they established information

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bureaus on manufacturers to be boycotted, passed out lists of boycott violators, organized the use of pickets, and (beginning in 1939) recruited protestors.[59]

There were several objections raised to the Jewish boycott of German goods. The *Wall Street Journal* warned that the boycott was dangerous, fearing that economic war would lead to a military war. Some Jewish leaders also had serious reservations. Some rabbis did not want the private sector to attempt to solve the Nazi problem, but rather leave it to those in government equipped to handle such situations. The *Jewish Examiner* warned its readers to be careful how the boycott was enforced and who it was enforced against. This became an issue when it came to the large number of German-American merchants who did not sell German-made goods but were unfairly targeted anyway. In June 1934, German-Americans and American Jews, representing organizations of 17,000 people, signed an agreement that both deplored boycotts of American manufacturers and denounced foreign governments that promoted racial intolerance, although the Jewish representatives refused to stop the boycott of German goods. The AJC, which initially opposed the boycott, gave in under public pressure in 1933, and never actually endorsed the boycott, but rather affirmed the right of individuals to boycott. American Jews who opposed the boycott feared Nazi reprisals in Germany and also worried that the Jewish boycott would lead to increased anti-Semitism in America. Critics of the of the AJC's and Jewish Labor Committee's anti-Nazi tactics claimed there was no evidence that the boycott had eased the situation of Jews in Nazi Germany, but rather had made the situation worse. They also said the boycott had an adverse affect on the public's view of Jews because it associated them with the most extreme anti-Nazi viewpoint.. Samuel Untermyer responded with a plan to avoid generating more anti-Semitism by attempting

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to gain support from non-Jews for their anti-Nazi activities, predicting that Catholics and Protestants would face the same fate as Jews in Nazi Germany, unless they joined the fight against Nazism. He said the boycott was matter of self defense and the only effective weapon against the Nazis, short of war. He too hoped a united effort would bankrupt Hitler within six months.[60]

Untermyer's approach was somewhat successful, particularly after America's views of Nazi Germany turned hostile in 1938. A 1938 Gallup Poll showed that 96% of Jews, 64% of Catholics, and 61% of Protestants supported the boycott of German goods. William Jay Schieffelin, chairman of the Volunteer Christian Committee to Boycott Nazi Germany, praised the boycott and warned against any relaxation. But the boycott put many German-Americans on the defensive, since their interests were at stake. They became ever more sensitive on issues involving Germany. The pressure mounted for German-Americans to declare themselves against Nazism, which many did.

At the same time, German-American groups, such as the National Council of the Steuben Society of America, complained about unfair treatment. Statements concerning Nazi atrocities in ethnic German newspapers were downplayed or described as being exaggerated. Others questioned whether or not America had any right to question the German people's choice of government. Nazi sympathizers in the German-American community took advantage of the increasing bitterness over the boycott and urged retaliation against the Jewish community. German-American Bund organizers, testifying before State Senator John J. McNaboe's committee to investigate Nazism and communism, blamed the Jews for the confrontation with the Bund. Jews blamed for the loss of German-American jobs because of the boycott. The Bund claimed that it were

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acting only in self defense when they joined boycotts of Jewish businesses, and many of these German anti-Jewish boycotters then joined the Christian Front.[61]

The Christian Front quickly took up the boycott of Jewish businesses. Marcel Honore told the meeting of Fronters on August 4, 1938 that he intended to go to Jewish-owned department stores in the city to ask management "How many employees have you? How many Jews have you employed? How many Christians have you employed?" If he got unsatisfactory answers, Honore planned to demand that at least 60% of the employees be Christian and to back up his demands would organize pickets with signs reading "THIS STORE UNFAIR TO CHRISTIANS." The Front leader hoped that this would terrify the stores' ownership and also demonstrate the power of the CF.[62]

At last Coughlin joined the controversy. In a January 1939 broadcast he stated that the Jewish boycott of German goods would thrust the country into a war and that Americans "are opposed to any policy designed to create a world war for the sake of revenging the ill treatment meted out to any Jew or group of Jews resident in Germany …"[63] Readers of the *Brooklyn Tablet* wrote that they were grateful that it had published Coughlin's views concerning the Jewish boycott of German goods, because it was their opinion also that the boycott hurt American trade.[64]

The Christian Front's favorite boycott targets were businesses that advertised on WMCA. In their mind, this was yet another way they could defend Coughlin against his enemies. It was another very public way to "act Christian." And no place were they more active then the South Bronx's Third Avenue corridor that was home to Sach's Furniture Store, A.S. Beck Shoe Store, and Michael's Furniture Store.[65] This was very close to the Front's Bronx Unit Tri-Boro Palace headquarters (located at 137th Street and

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Third Avenue), making it the most active Front neighborhood in the city. Every weekend in the spring and summer of 1939, crowds ranging from twenty to 450 picketed the offending stores. Led by Joe Hartery, some pickets were joint efforts of the Front, Crusaders for Americanism, and German-American Bund. There were fights when hecklers called Hartery a liar. Fronter Bill O'Connor announced that he was making a movie about the picket lines, the Front's street demonstrations, and the sale of *Social Justice* in New York. O'Connor planned to show a preview of the film at the Crusaders meeting at the Tri-Boro Palace in late June, and hoped it would be ready in September for the whole country to promote the boycott of Jewish businesses. It was never made.[66]

Fronters may have physically confronted a vice president of Michael's Furniture Store. There is in the Diocese of Brooklyn Archives a record of a January 21, 1939 interview of a Mr. Loewi of Michael's by a Fronter named Kelly, who claimed he represented several Citizens Committees, was a member of the Christian Front, and was chairman of a Catholic Action Committee. Kelly was joined in the interview by a "Miss Molloy," who appears in a CF police report as reading the minutes and a treasury report at August 20, 1939 meeting of WMCA demonstrators at Donovan's Hall. Kelly said Loewi was not impressed with him or the groups he represented; nor did Loewi intend to do anything about sponsoring programs on WMCA. He told Kelly he felt that the removal of Coughlin was justified. The confrontation escalated when Kelly told Loewi that Michael's Brothers would be placed on a list of stores that will be boycotted because of their support of WMCA, and that their support of WMCA meant they were not in favor of free speech. When the Michael's vice president told the Fronter that the store employed many Christian employees, Kelly responded that it did not matter because no

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American should work for a company that supported un-American principles. He concluded that talking to Loewi was had been "a waste of time and the only way he could get Loewi to act like an American was by getting his friends to take action."[67] Whether or not this interview ever actually took place is immaterial; it does communicate the feeling of the Front toward non-Christian businesses. No matter what they did, even if they employed they would to be targeted. WMCA was an important issue, but not the only issue. The Front was attempting to prove that local Jewish businesses were un-American because they did not support Coughlin's call for a Christian America.

The Front's reasons for targeting Sach's and A.S. Beck may have gone beyond on the WMCA issue to class and employment. In March 1938, Nathan Sachs of Sach's Furniture warned the industry against offering liberal credit to low income families for furniture, this despite federal, state and local housing drives to promote the furniture market. Sachs told a meeting of fellow furniture manufacturers that if credit was too liberal, families might overextend themselves beyond their ability to pay, bankrupting businesses. The CF saw this as a conspiracy to deny the necessities of life to its members, that is, to Christians. Then in the summer of 1938, the A.S. Beck Shoe company signed an agreement to give blacks in Harlem at least one-third of the white collar retail jobs. This agreement was negotiated by the Uptown Chamber of Commerce, which represented two hundred black organizations. Even though the agreement specifically stated whites were not to lose their jobs, blacks would replace them as they quit or were transferred.[68] This too drew the ire of the CF, because the Front viewed it as denying their membership the basic American values of shelter and employment.

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The Buy Christian movement, spearheaded by the Christian Front, contained two distinct, but not mutually exclusive, elements. Some speakers focused strictly on supporting Christian businesses simply because the proprietors were Christian. Crowds were urged to support Christian businesses, even "if they have to walk 20 blocks to a Christian store."[69] The CF's hope was a Christian buying campaign for all Christians in New York City. "Panama Bill" returned to the Irish enclave in Harlem on July 11 announcing that each race in the city should support their own. Speaking to a handful of the low-income Irish immigrants who resided around 133rd Street and Amsterdam Avenue, he argued "that if you are an Irishman why don't you deal with an Irishman and give him an opportunity for making a living and if you are of any other race why don't you patronize your own and see that they exist in a better fashion." Not only were the Irish supposed to support Irish businesses, they should give better support to their churches, parochial schools, and charitable organizations.[70]

The second aspect of the boycott movement specifically aimed at hurting Jews economically. The Buy Christian movement was colored very heavily by anti-Semitism. It was not enough simply to support fellow Christian businesses for the sake of their economic well-being. In the mind of many Fronters, the best way to show Christian economic power was to break the perceived "Internationalist" Jewish death-grip on the American economy. At a July 20 rally, Daniel Kurtz gloated that the Buy Christian movement was beginning to have an effect because 680 stores had closed since the campaign began.[71]

According to the Front, Jews had solidified themselves as controllers of the economy through their control of the media. The perceived Jewish control of the press,

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radio, movies, department stores, theaters, and money market allowed this "certain minority" (as Jews were often described) to feed propaganda easily to the "innocent" American people and so mold public opinion to suit their selfish purposes. This was one reason buying and reading *Social Justice* and the *Brooklyn Tablet* was so important to Fronters. It was also why they thought Coughlin was forced off WMCA — the Jews feared this "truth" being exposed. The only way to change this situation in the media was to buy and vote Christian.[72]

Jewish celebrities could not escape the Christian Front's wrath and were drawn into the boycott. Obvious targets were Jewish entertainers like Eddie Cantor, Jack Benny, and George Burns. The CF called for a demonstration in front of the Loew's State Theater beginning June 29, 1939, when Cantor was to perform, to answer Cantor's "slandering remarks" about Father Coughlin. Bill O'Connor urged people to stop smoking Camel cigarettes because Camel's radio program employed the singer. John Geis called Cantor a "kike" at Columbus Circle, accusing the singer of what the Front claimed was tantamount to child abuse. Geis told the crowd that Cantor took 500 school children from their books and had them march on Broadway with "Eddie Cantor buttons" on their coats, without giving them carfare or lunch money. Benny and Burns were referred to as "self-confessed … arch-criminals." They were allowed to continue to speak over the airwaves — the same airwaves that were denied to Father Coughlin — because radio was controlled by the "minority" of which they were members. It was all part of the same conspiracy in the eyes of the Front.[73]

The Front used ugly anti-Semitic stereotypes to describe Jewish business policies. Jews were accused of "cut-throat business tactics" and could undersell legitimate

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businesses because of their sweatshops. Jewish businessmen were called "circumcisers" because of their strategy of posting going out of business signs in stores that were staying in business. Their false advertising enticed unsuspecting Christian patrons to shop at their shops, thinking they were getting a good deal. The result was those patrons did not shop at Christian-owned businesses. In other words, Jews were taking their "pound of flesh" from Christians — they methodically cut-off Christian shoppers from Christian merchants. Jewish merchants were denounced for unfair business practices and were accused of being irreligious because they failed to live up to the "Commandments of Moses."[74]

The CF claimed it was not doing anything the Jews were not already doing. "Boycott the boycotters" or "I urge all of you to vote for Christians only. Wake Up! Wake Up! Use their weapon. Boycott!" were common slogans from the moment the CF joined the boycott in 1938 to retaliate against the Jewish boycott of Nazi German products.[75] In Queens Village, where the foreign-born were few and scattered, Daniel Kurtz read a letter signed by Max I. Feintage, Chairman of the Committee for Jewish Resettlement, in which Feintage had said "Ask your neighbor to give a Jew a job" and "Patronize the Jewish merchants in your neighborhood." Kurtz responded, "Were we to go ask these people to give Christian unemployed Americans a job, we would be classed as Anti-Semites." For Kurtz, the most significant part of Feintage's letter dealt with patronizing Jewish businesses. This allowed him to justify the CF's Buy Christian tactics, "We cannot stand for things like this and imitation is supposed to be the sincerest form of flattery, so we intend to flatter them. WE ARE GOING TO BUY CHRISTIAN." He complained about "these people" not having concern for "our" unemployed, and

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blasted their desire to bring more Jews into the country to take jobs away from "our" citizens or place them upon relief at "our expense." This was proof enough for him to imply that a Jewish cabal was running the United States government. After all, "there is no other country in the world whose government would stand for these tactics."[76] As always, the CF portrayed themselves as the victims in anything they did. Raymond Dalton complained that for giving out "Buy Christian" flyers, he was called anti-Semitic. But, if the opposition gives out throw-aways without showing the sponsor, then that is considered OK.[77]

The Front also considered buying Christian as a weapon in the battle against communism. A few days after Kurtz's "Feintage speech," Edward Westphal, in a much more ethnically mixed Fordham Heights neighborhood, told the large crowd of 600 that the only remedy for the Christian unemployment problem, which was caused by Jews and made Christians more susceptible to the appeals of communism was to buy Christian, which would led Christian businesses hire more Christians.[78] On the same corner "Panama Bill" called on the Irish to support one another, stating that supporting Christian merchants would "deal a death blow to the Communist Jew" and would weaken the minority group's financial power in the country. The speeches included direct threats to unnamed pro-communist businessmen and it was "up to the Christians to find out who they are and exterminate them."[79]

In Far Rockaway Daniel Kurtz bragged about his courage with tales of bravery in the face of "the minority" while urging crowds to "buy Christian, even if they had to go out of their way to do so." Kurtz's favorite story was about a Christian Front meeting where only seventy-five Christians were opposed by 8,000 Orientals and Asiatics. The

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courageous Fronters did not leave the boardwalk until their message of "buy Christian" was delivered. It was their Christian duty to deliver the message because "Rockaway belongs to white people … It is the intention of the CF to bring the truth to people, despite objections." Two days after telling the story on 31st Street and Ditmars Avenue, Kurtz retold it at the corner of Fresh Pond Road and Myrtle Avenue. But the second time the story was told, Kurtz had become even braver, since now it was only fifty Christians who faced-down 8,000 Jews. According to police reports, Kurtz was probably referring to the August 18 rally in Far Rockaway, where there were three speakers and 350 in the audience, who spent much of their time booing Kurtz.[80]

At the same time Kurtz was "defiantly" staring down 8,000 Asiatic Jews on the boardwalk of Far Rockaway, George Gunning was putting together a new Christian Index at Donovan's Hall in Manhattan, a list of Christian owned businesses in specific neighborhoods that good Christians were supposed to patronize. Gunning wanted applications for inclusion on the Index to be distributed to Christian merchants by Fronters on their home blocks. The idea of a buyer's index was not new or unique to the Front. Edward James Smith of the Protestant War Veterans had called for one; the Harlem Italian League in East Harlem attempted to create a list, and so on. Most ethnic groups created some type of index during the boycott period.[81]

George Gunning's motives for his Index went beyond supporting Christian businesses. The only requirement for a business to become a member of the Index and its umbrella organization, The Christian Consumers and Merchants League, was a "pledge to defend Christianity and Americanism against Communism and other subversive forces … The Christian Index is an entirely voluntary work. There is no charge for listing in the

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Christian Index." The platform of the non-profit League, which had no membership dues because a majority of its members were on home relief and the WPA, was to solve grievances between consumers and merchants, to maintain a research bureau, to sponsor weekly broadcasts, and to establish its own Christian employment bureau.[82]

Gunning also tried to spread the CF idea that minority (i.e. Jewish) businesses were the financial support for communism. Christian organizations, such as the CF and the Merchants and Consumers League, told followers not patronize storekeepers who supported "the Communist and fellow Communist travelers." His language tended to be stronger than that when telling audiences where to shop. He threatened violence towards any local business that "aid and abet" communists, who have to be "eradicated from the locality." In a strategy similar to that employed by the AJC in their boycott, Gunning invited women to join the CF auxiliary to promote the new Christian Index. The CF saw the Index, therefore, as an excellent weapon for the CF army in its campaign against un-Americanism.[83]

The boycott was also an obvious way of creating Christian unity by bringing Christians together as a monolithic economic unit to combat the supposed Jewish stranglehold on the American economy. He announced and distributed his new (and free) Christian Index in the Irish section of Harlem, crowing that "Organizations with constructive programs" that conduct themselves "in a diligent manner" wins their fight. He urged the crowd to take the Index and display it in prominent places to remind shoppers who the Christian merchants were and to patronize them, and reassured them that their collective power was growing. As proof, he said the American Jewish

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Congress had begun to denounce the list because they knew organized Christian businesses were taking trade away from Jewish merchants.[84]

One form or other of a Christian Index was a Christian Front mainstay through 1940. Indexes organized in Queens and Brooklyn.[85] When Fronter Joseph McWilliams organized the Christian Mobilizers in mid-1939, one of his main efforts was to continue the Christian Index movement and to stress "Buy Christian." The American Jewish Committee, which was monitoring both groups, wrote that McWilliams appeared to be successful in "worming his way into the 'Buy Christian' movement. Whether he has actually taken over the Christian Index from Gunning is doubtful" but the "Buy Christian" slogan was lifted by the Mobilizers from the Christian Front.[86]

McWilliams carried his Index into the heavily German Yorkville section of Manhattan through 1941. He distributed thousands of Christian Consumer's Guides there, and tried to expand his pamphlets to cover the outer boroughs, "Our strategy is to develop a good strong self-conscious Christian middle-class." His goal was a fair share of economic power, so that Christian "boys and girls can get a fair share of jobs in retail establishments." Some businesses thanked McWilliams for their inclusion.[87]

The list itself was pure conjecture. The "Christian" businesses included in the pamphlet were admittedly just guesses as to whether they were owned by Christians and so a disclaimer appeared on the cover, "The businesses in this Guide were not consulted about being listed." Consumers were expected to hand merchants cards distributed by the Mobilizers that read:

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Mr. Christian Merchant:
The Christian Mobilizers' Slogan is
"BUY CHRISTIAN"
and that is why I Bought Here.
Courtesy of
The Christian Mobilizers[88]

In 1941, McWilliams' guesswork in creating the list got him into trouble. By this time, he had taken charge of the boycott. This did not go unnoticed by Lawyer George Mintzer, who, on February 6, 1941, sent letters to a large number of businesses listed on the Christian Consumer's Guide. Mintzer informed the proprietors that they were listed in the Guide being circulated by the American Destiny Party and McWilliams, a man who was notorious for spreading Nazi propaganda in the city. Not surprisingly, several of the owners were none too happy about their inclusion, expressing their dismay at being associated with "[an] organization founded on prejudice and intolerance" and said they were "wholly out of sympathy with the aims of Mr. McWilliams and his American Destiny Party." All these businesses, including New York Yankees owner Jacob Ruppert, whose brewery was on the list, clearly stated that they did not authorize their stores to be listed in the Christian Consumer's Guide. Ruppert informed Mintzer that he was personally writing to McWilliams to remove his business from the Guide.[89]

* * *

Standing in the middle of Dyckman Street on July 22, 1939, Edwin Westphal, a member of several Christian nativist and pro-Nazi groups, yelled to passersby that "When we Christians gain control, we will gag you the same as you Jews are gagging us now."[90] There was no better way for a Christian to prove his Americanism and Christianity, according to the Front, than to vote Christian. Voting Christian had several meanings. Voting Christian bolstered Christian power at the expense of the communist and

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internationalist enemy in the same way as the "Buy" movements. Throughout Manhattan, Queens and the Bronx, Fronters told crowds to use good judgment and investigate candidates before voting. Before voting, Christian citizens were supposed to ascertain whether candidates were communist or Christian. Only this type of "intelligent" voting could ensure proper Christian representation in all levels of government, retaking the positions of authority they once held.[91]

The Christian Front had grandiose plans for voting Christians into office. In July, George Gunning suggested to Harlemites that Christians should organize into one political party, a Christian National American Party with a Christian platform, which would nominate Christian candidates. The day after unveiling this plan, he and James Downey promised a different crowd, about thirty blocks away, that the Christian Front was going to secure a place on the November ballots. One month before the 1939 elections, these grandiose but baseless political fantasies were still being promoted as proof of the enormous progress made by the CF throughout the entire country, as the Front boasted of its goal of five million members before the 1940 presidential election.[92] By 1940, former Fronter Joseph McWilliams, now leading the American Destiny Party, was receiving letters from around the country requesting information on how to join his new New York based party. However, even though the letters came from as wide-ranging locales as California, Illinois, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Virginia, New Jersey, and upstate New York, they were actually few in number, and mostly came from crack-pots.[93]

Despite the fact that the Christian Front never became a political party itself, and never got a candidate on any ballot in 1939, they did make some politicians take notice and seek their support. Fronters vicariously enjoyed a sense of achieving their political

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aspirations through the fortunes of men like Senator Robert Rice Reynolds, whose immigration policies were supported by the Front, and Representative Jacob Thorkelson of Montana.

Dr. Thorkelson, a surgeon by trade, became a hero to a number of anti-Semitic groups in 1939.[94] His anti-Jewish, anti-Roosevelt speeches, which were rarely presented on the House floor, but simply inserted into the Congressional Record, usually concentrated on the idea of an internationalist banker-communist-Jewish "invisible government" of "international Shylocks" who had formed a cabal to take over America. In "Who Owns the Money, Who Owns the Gold?" (March 1939) and "Shall Congress Take Charge?" (June 22, 1939, see Chapter 4) Thorkelson characterized the Federal Reserve as unconstitutional because it took the power to coin money out of the hands of Congress and placed it the hands of private property owners. Ideas like these, so similar to Coughlin's, made him an idol to Fronters. Thorkelson's paranoid fear of an "invisible government" and "Hidden Hand" of Jews undermining the Constitution and centralizing banks and credit was no different from Coughlin's radio rants or Front diatribes. For Fronters, the senator from Montana legitimized their rhetoric and encouraged them in their plans of action. Christian Front defendants William Gerald Bishop and Macklin Boettger testified that they were great supporters of Thorkelson (and Reynolds) during their federal trial for conspiracy to overthrow the government. In fact, Bishop's plan to redistribute gold wrestled away from the Federal Reserve after his planned *coup d'etat* was directly attributed to Thorkelson's "Who Owns the Money, Who Owns the Gold?" speech.[95]

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By October, any alliances Thorkelson may have had in Congress were crumbling. According to *Time* magazine, he could "count his Congressional chums on this thumbs" because of his association with fascist-minded General George Van Horn Moseley and his bizarre anti-Roosevelt statements.[96] But his friendship with Moseley and references to the "Hidden Hand" resonated deeply with the CF.

The 64-year-old retired Army Major-General George Van Horn Moseley had drawn public attention to himself with his derogatory public utterances about Jews and FDR, some bordering on treason. At a New York Board of Trade meeting on December 14, 1938, Moseley stated that the problems of the nation were caused by Washington, "as our administration gives aid and comfort to our enemies who are operating within our very gates under a definite mission to destroy our present form of government." His speech before three hundred people at the Hotel Biltmore, entitled "Have Enemies Captured America from Within?" blamed the New Deal on the Jews. *The Patriot Digest* editor, Caldwell Patton, chaired this meeting, where the principles and actions of the Nazis were defended and the General called on citizens to "smash the New Deal" as he defended the principle of an army rebellion.[97]

These were the exact qualities that the Christian Front sought in a presidential candidate. Major-General Moseley was praised at Front meetings as a great "Christian American," given the same respect as Father Coughlin and spoken of with the same esteem as General Franco. The air around Columbus Circle was filled with predictions that Franklin Roosevelt would not be elected to a third term and would be replaced by Moseley. The Major-General was seen as the perfect man to investigate communist infiltration into the Army and Navy. And, after the inevitable communist revolution

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occurred, necessitating martial law, Moseley was seen as the man best suited to be installed as the temporary dictator until the communists were defeated.[98]

Van Horn Moseley's speeches did not capture the attention only of the Christian Front. Congress noticed. Martin Dies' House Un-American Activities Committee summoned Moseley to testify at the beginning of June, and this prompted Roy Tozier to write an exposé on the Major-General, which appeared in the June 7, 1939 edition of *The New Republic*. The American League for Peace and Democracy-led attack on Christian Front activities in August 1939 linked Moseley (and Father Coughlin) to the Front's call for a dictatorship. At the same time, New York Congressman Samuel Dickstein reported to Congress HUAC's findings that General Moseley had "fascist leanings."[99]

Moseley's two day testimony before the Dies Committee lasted eleven hours. Accompanied by Congressman Thorkelson, he rambled how "the Jew is an internationalist first, and a patriot second," a distinct nationality, regardless of the country he resides in. He demanded that anyone associated with "World Jewry" be forbidden to hold public office and denied the right to vote because they had shown themselves loyal to a world Jewish state and could not, therefore, be loyal to any country. The World Jewish state supposedly operated "through the medium of Communistic organizations to impose its will," which were, not surprisingly, the same groups that were leading the boycott against Nazi German goods (the American Jewish Congress, American Jewish Committee, B'nai B'rith, and Jewish Labor Committee). He called for the President to call out the army to defend against the immanent Jewish-led communist revolution, while assuring Congress that he was not personally anti-Semitic. He also praised the German-American Bund and recalled his meetings with Fritz Kuhn. During his testimony,

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Moseley expressed a concern about being assassinated and jokingly asked if the water he was drinking was not tainted or poisoned. An aide, Charles B. Hudson, "a short, fanatic, plump man with a bald pate" who was an avid supporter of the general, feared that the cup of water might have been poisoned by the "Hidden Hand." and whisked the water away.[100] From that moment on, Hudson became known as "Poison Cup Charlie."

Hudson was credited by native fascists for coining the term "Hidden Hand" (along with other phrases such as the "Judeo-Socialistic-Communistic UNDEAL Organized-Jewry-Finance World-War I" and "Synagogue of Satan") in his bulletin, *America in Danger*, which was filled with stories that blamed Jews for everything from Lincoln's assassination to the Johnstown flood. Jacob Thorkelson had been one of his Midwestern fundamentalist followers..[101]

For the rest of the summer and into the autumn, the Christian Front rallied in support of Moseley and Hudson and defended their bizarre behavior at the Dies Committee, claiming that Moseley's testimony had been "suppressed" because it revealed the truth about the communist control of the government. Fronter Raymond Dalton read crowds alleged excerpts of General Van Horn Moseley's testimony, which he said had been kept out of the *Congressional Record*. Daniel Kurtz praised Moseley for his testimony, calling it the truth about communism.[102] The American Nationalist Party distributed the "Suppressed Statement," printed by the Concord Press of Washington State. It was filled with the chestnuts repeated so many times in the late thirties were repeated. There were individual good Jews and internationalist bad Jews; not all Jews were communists, just the ones involved in the international conspiracy like Kuhn-Loeb, millions of Christians were killed at the hands of Russians, led by Trotsky; Soviet

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minister Litvinov was held in high admiration by the Jews, etc.[103]

Front associates also made personal contact with Moseley, still hoping he would run for president. In September, Joseph McWilliams who by this time was leading the Christian Mobilizers, but was still in contact with the CF, met with Moseley in Atlanta. McWilliams impressed the former general with his character and energy. The two were in agreement about the situation in the United States, including opposition to increased Jewish immigration from Poland and both feared Jews would take advantage of the public's hatred of Hitler to strengthen their position in this country: The "Russian Communistic campaign throughout the country," they agreed, was "largely controlled by the Jews."[104]

But important as acting, buying, and voting Christian was to the Christian Front in its goal of reestablish a Christian America to defeat communism, nothing was possible unless the Christian Front could convince Americans to "think Christian."

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Notes

[1] Edward Lodge Curran, *The Challenge of the Pact and the Challenge of Social Justice*, (Royal Oak, MI: Charles E. Coughlin, 1939).

[2] These were the actual words of Christian Fronters. They would constantly urge crowds to "Buy Christian, Think Christian, and Vote Christian," or used similar phraseology. For example, see James Downey on July 3 or Martin Ryan on July 4. Police Report, July 5, 1939; Police Report, July 5, 1939, OCF.

[3] The complainant for the second arrest was identified as Cecile Bergman of 705 Girard Avenue in the Bronx.
Nathan Frankel and Byrnes MacDonald to Fiorello LaGuardia, "Final Report: Activities of Anti-Semitic Groups Within New York City," November 6, 1939, Christian Front file, FLP, Roll 19; Ptl. Francis L. Hillick to Commanding Officer, Third Division, Aug. 29, 1939, OCF.

[4] Police Report, Sept. 14, 1939, OCF.

[5] Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, July 12, 1939, OCF.

[6] Report of Meeting, Sgt. Roulston, 30 Pct., August 8, 1939; Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, Sept. 8, 1939, OCF.

[7] Brinkley 166; Marcus 141.

[8] Irene Downing, letter to the *Michigan Catholic*, October 8, 1937, Charles Coughlin file, TSC-DBA.

[9] James Hickey, letter to Archbishop Edward Mooney, October 11, 1937, Charles Coughlin file, TSC-DBA.

[10] Hickey lived at 756 45th Street, Brooklyn. James Hickey, letter to Editor of the *Brooklyn Tablet*, October 11, 1937, Charles Coughlin file, TSC-DBA.
Source for McNichols attending a CF meeting: Christian Front List, OCF.

[11] The envelope that contained the flyer had a Brooklyn postmark. "Catholics! Wake Up!" Flyer, November 28, 1937, Charles Coughlin file, TSC-DBA.

[12] Green's address was 8 101-7th Avenue, Brooklyn. Copy of the letter was also sent to WOR. Joseph J. Green, letter to *Brooklyn Tablet*, November 27, 1938, Charles Coughlin file, TSC-DBA.

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[13] Stallmiller lived on 73-23-71 Street. J.M. Stallmiller, Sr., letter to *Brooklyn Tablet*, November 28, 1938, Charles Coughlin file, TSC-DBA.

[14] *Brooklyn Tablet*, August 19, 1939: 7.

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] Theodore Irwin, "Inside the 'Christian Front'," *Forum and Century* vol. 103, no. 3 (March, 1940): 105.

[17] Marcus 160-61.

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] *Ibid* 163; James Wechsler, letter to Gardner Jackson, January 19, 1940, GJP.

[20] *Brooklyn Tablet*, December 3, 1938: 11.

[21] "September 1939," Christian Front file, AJCL; Harold C. Urey, et al., memorandum to Frank Murphy, box 8, USAJP-AF.

[22] *New York Times*, Jan. 30, 1939: 14; "September 1939," Christian Front file, AJCL. Alson Jesse Smith, *The Christian Front: Coughlin's Storm Troopers* (New York: American League for Peace and Democracy, 1939): 12; Harold C. Urey, et al., memorandum to Frank Murphy, box 8, USAJP-AF; James Wechsler, letter to Gardner Jackson, January 19, 1940, GJP; "What Is the Christian Front?": 1-2.

[23] *Brooklyn Tablet*, July 29, 1939: 9.

[24] Irwin 107.

[25] Judith Larrabee Holmes, "The Politics of Anti-Communism in Massachusetts, 1930-1960," diss. University of Massachusetts, 1996, 124.

[26] Marcus 165.

[27] "September 1939," Christian Front file, AJCL; Police Report, May 5, 1939; Police Report, May 8, 1939; Police Report, May 12, 1939; Police Report May 15, 1939; Police Report May 26, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 21, 1939, OCF.

[28] *Brooklyn Tablet*, Apr. 22, 1939: 9.

[29] Unsigned letter to *Brooklyn Tablet*, Nov. 27, 1938, Charles Coughlin file, TSC-DBA.

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[30] Police Report May 25, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 10, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 23, 1939; Report of Meeting, Lt. Handwerg, 30 Pct. & Ptl. Owsianik, Alien Squad, August 22, 1939; Police Report, Oct. 17, 1939, OCF.

[31] Police Report, Aug. 16, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, Sept. 29, 1939, OCF.

[32] Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, July 12, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, Oct. 5, 1939, OCF.

[33] Police Report, Oct. 7, 1939, OCF.

[34] John Cassidy, letter to Christian Brother, July 28, 1939, Christian Front file, AJCL.

[35] Police Report June 2, 1939; Det. Joseph Carrington to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, July 31, 1939; Det. William A. Justy to Commanding Officer, Bureau of Criminal Alien Investigation, Aug. 4, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 31, 1939; Police Report, Oct. 7, 1939;Police Report, Nov. 22, 1939, OCF.

[36] Police Report, July 11, 1939; Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, Aug. 4, 1939; Police Report, Oct. 3, 1939, OCF.

[37] B. Marble, letter to *Brooklyn Tablet*, Nov. 28, 1938, Charles Coughlin file, TSC-DBA; Police Report, July 11, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 23, 1939, OCF.

[38] Police Report, July 26, 1939, OCF.

[39] Police Report, Apr. 17, 1939; Police Report, Apr. 24, 1939; Police Report May 15, 1939, OCF.

[40] Police Report, May 1, 1939; Police Report, May 8, 1939; OCF.

[41] For a recounting of the subway rides to Times Square, John Roy Carlson provides an "eyewitness" account in *Under Cover*, 67. The descriptions provided by Carlson are similar to the Alien Squad police reports. The law firm of Greenbaum, Wolff, & Ernst represented a victim of subway violence and the hands of Christian Front *Social Justice* peddlers. The victim was actually arrested for disorderly conduct after he complained to a police officer that he was beat-up and received a black eye by a gang of men protecting a boy selling *Social Justice* on a subway bound for Brooklyn. The case was dismissed, but not before both John Cassidy and Bernard D'Arcy complained to the magistrate that *Social Justice* vendors must not be molested. Harold H. Stern, Memorandum, Jan. 17, 1940, box 8, USAJP-AF.

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Police Report, Apr. 18, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, June 30, 1939; Police Report, July 23, 1939; Police Report, Nov. 22, 1939, OCF.

[42] *Brooklyn Tablet,* May 7, 1938: 16. Curran, *The Hand of Pilate* 2.

[43] James Terence Fisher, *The Catholic Counterculture in America, 1933-1962*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989) 73, 85-86.

[44] Certificate of Incorporation of Christian Front, Inc., box 6, USAJP-AF; The Pro-Semitic Persecution of Harry Thorne (Long Island, New York: The Christian Labor Front, undated), box 9, USAJP-AF.

[45] *Brooklyn Tablet*, Jan. 28, 1938: 6; McCarthy 38; Police Report, Sept. 14, 1939, OCF.

[46] McCarthy 38.

[47] Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation, Aug. 16, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 31, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 15, 1939; Police Report, Nov. 14, 1939, OCF.

[48] Curran, *Facts About Communism* 139-43.
Curran's concerns, as were the concerns of much of Catholic labor's leadership, were not necessarily misplaced, but were perhaps exaggerated. There is ample proof that John L. Lewis had an explicit understanding that he was negotiating with the CPUSA when organizing the CIO, specifically with Earl Browder, William Z. Foster and Clarence Hathaway. Klehr, Haynes and Firsov 105*n*26; Klehr and Haynes 81-84.

[49] See also the July 14, 1939 meeting, which union problems were discussed. "Memorandum on the Christian Front," Christian Front file, AJCL.

[50] Police Report, Aug. 10, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigaton, Aug. 11, 1939; Report of Meeting, Lt. Touhey, 18th Pct. & Det. Schmidt, Alien Squad, Aug. 27, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 28, 1939; Ptl. Francis L. Hillick to Commanding Officer, Third Division, Aug. 29, 1939, OCF.

[51] Police Report, Sept. 2, 1939; Report of Meeting, Lt. Kelly, 104th Pct., September 1, 1939, OCF; *Social Justice*, August 21, 1939: 5.

[52] Bayor 20-21, 40-41.

[53] Det. Joseph Carrington to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, July 31, 1939 OCF; McCarthy 158; *New York Times*, June 11, 1938: 1.

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[54] Emanuel Slee, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, October 25, 1939, FLP, Roll 19; Irving Sobelman, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, August 16, 1939, FLP, Roll 18; *New York Times*, Aug. 14, 1939: 32; Aug. 15, 1939: 4; Nov. 25, 1939: 12; Dec. 15, 1939: 22; Irwin 102; Alson Jesse Smith 17; Taylor 35; Wechsler 2, 94.

[55] Harold C. Urey, et al., memorandum to Frank Murphy, box 8, USAJP-AF.

[56] According to the American Jewish Committee, the slogan originated with Christian Fronter John Geis, editor of *Wisdom*. "Christian Mobilizers: Their Purpose, Aim and Activities," 3, Joseph McWilliams file, AJCL. "Joseph McWilliams biography," Joseph McWilliams file, AJCL.

[57] The objective of the German-American Bund was to attract German-American support, aiming its propaganda at any discontent within that community. Their ideology was based on:

1. German-Americans were denied their proper place in American society and they should unify to right this wrong.
2. This failure of a rise to power in America was traced directly to the Jews, who had an unfair amount of power.

The membership of the Bund was primarily recent working-class German immigrants. Most, including their leader Fritz Kuhn, were mostly naturalized citizens. The number of members has been debated. The Justice Department estimated 8,500 in 1938; Fritz Kuhn estimated 20,000 in 1938 (40% of whom were in New York City); HUAC estimated 25,000 in 1939.

On August 17, 1937, Kuhn described the organization as a "patriotic, law-abiding, American organization, fighting Communism and Marxism as un-American ideals" who were "victims" of malicious propaganda. In February 1939, the Bund sponsored a "Mass Demonstration for True Americanism" as part of George Washington birthday exercises in Madison Square Garden, which included a huge figure of George Washington was flanked by giant swastikas on the stage. On June 27, at the Bronx headquarters of the Christian Front, the Tri-Boro Palace, the chant of "Free America" was established as the battle cry of the Bundists, who called the swastika "100% American" and "the symbol of free men everywhere."

The Bund established twenty-four camps around the country and where they merged international fascism with nativist Americanism. On August 18, 1940 at Camp Nordland in New Jersey, they staged a pro-American mass meeting in conjunction with the Klu Klux Klan, announcing that both groups were bonded by common principles and objectives.

Beginning in the summer of 1938, the Bund was investigated by the House Committee on Un-American Activities. HUAC concluded that the German-American Bund was promulgating ideology for the purpose of furthering Nazism within the United States and to establish a Nazi government within America. Approximately twenty-five letters constituted a connection between the Bund's Chicago post and the Nazi government of Germany. The camps were also cited as being "completely Nazi

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Germany," under the guise of "true Americanism" and were used to "Hitlerize" German-American youth.

Further connections were made between the German-American Bund and Nazi Germany. Activities of Nazi consuls, the Bund's distribution of propaganda directly linked to the German Ministry of Propaganda and Enlightenment, the constant return of Bund leaders to Germany was used as evidence of an alliance between the Bund and Hitler. American Nazi leader Colin Ross was exposed as a Nazi agent and his relationship with Kuhn and the Bund was used as evidence of the Bund's Nazi activity and anti-American tendencies. In November 1939, Kuhn's reign as Bundesfueher ended with his conviction for misuse of Bund moneys.

For further background on the German-American Bund, see the following: Bayor 58-63, 66-70; Carlson, *Under Cover*; Francis MacDonnell, *Insidious Foes* (New York: Oxford UP, 1995); *New York Times*, Aug. 19, 1937; William Orbach, "Shattering the Shackles of Powerlessness: The Debate Surrounding the Anti-Nazi Boycott of 1933-41," *Modern Judaism* (1982 2[2]): 167; United States. Cong. House. Special Committee on Un-American Activities House of Representatives. *Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States: German-American Bund.* 77th Cong., 1st Sess. App.-Pt. IV. Washington: GPO, 1942.

[58] Bayor 66-70; Naomi W. Cohen, "The Transatlantic Connection: The American Jewish Committee and the Joint Foreign Committee in Defense of German Jews, 1933-1937," *American Jewish History* (2002 90[4]): 363-64; *New York Times*, Nov. 22, 1937: 9; Mar. 6, 1938: 19; May 23, 1938: 5; May 21, 1939: 24; June 20, 1939: 6; Orbach 160.

[59] Rona Sheramy, "'There are Times when Silence is a Sin': The Women's Division of the American Jewish Congress and the Anti-Nazi Boycott Movement," *American Jewish History*, (2001 89[1]): 110-114.

[60]Bayor 66-70; Cohen 358, 363-64; *New York Times*, June 8, 1934: 13; Mar. 27, 1937: 18; June 4, 1937: 16; June 13, 1937: 31; Orbach 151; *Wall Street Journal,* Nov. 21, 1938: 4.

Many Jews in America first counseled inaction in 1933, fearing increased anti-Semitism. It was their opinion that Nazism was an internal German problem. The AJC hoped, somewhat naively, discreet diplomacy and passivity would win out. The problem would be brought to an enlightened public, who would then be convinced by rational arguments about the dangers of Nazism. The problem would then be discussed in Congress and other public forums. The AJC membership, many of whom were socially and economically still connected to Jews in Germany, were following the tradition of assimilation, which had been practiced since the eighteenth century in western countries. Jewish anti-boycotters in the United States were very specific with their reasons:

1. The boycott would never topple Nazi regime and the inevitable failure of the boycott would only exemplify Jewish impotence in the world.
2. Nazis would take reprisals upon German Jews. Additionally, they feared a German-American boycott of Jewish goods.

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3. A Jewish-led boycott betrayed a lack of patriotism. The public boycott would impinge world peace; hamper diplomacy between US, Great Britain and Germany, furthering the stereotype of the international Jew and a state-within-a-state.

This reason is contradictory to the first reason given. If Jews were so impotent, how could any of their actions hamper world diplomacy? — *The author*.

4. A Jewish-led boycott would increase popular anti-Semitism. Average American citizens did not appreciate the anti-Nazi stance of Jews and would get irritated at the endless protesters.

Cohen 355-57, 363-64; Orbach 153-58.

[61] Bayor 58-59, 66-70; *New York Times*, June 25, 1938: 4; Mar. 2, 1939: 2.

[62] "Minutes - Christian Front meetings," Christian Front file, AJCL.

[63] *New York Times*, Jan. 30, 1939: 14.

[64] *Brooklyn Tablet*, Feb. 25, 1939: 8.

[65] These stores were located at 145th Street and Third Avenue, 150th Street and Third Avenue, and 152nd Street and Third Avenue, respectively.

Reverend Alson Jesse Smith's *The Christian Front: Coughlin's Storm Troopers* describes the protests at the three Bronx stores, equating the Christian Front's actions to Berlin before Hitler came to power (p. 13). Smith, a Methodist minister, wrote the pamphlet for the American League for Peace and Democracy.

[66] Police Report, Apr. 17, 1939; Police Report, Apr. 24, 1939; Police Report, May 1, 1939; Police Report, May 5, 1939; Police Report, May 8, 1939; Police Report, May 12, 1939; Police Report May 15, 1939; Police Report May 29, 1939; Police Report June 5, 1939; Police Report, June 12, 1939; Police Report, June 19, 1939; Police Report, June 21, 1939; Police Report, June 23, 1939, OCF.

[67] "Interview with Mr. Loewi, Vice President of Michael's Brothers, 511 Fulton St., Brooklyn, January 21," Charles Coughlin file, TSC-DBA. Police Report, Aug. 21, 1939, OCF.

[68] *New York Times*, Mar. 25, 1938: 34; Aug. 8, 1938: 1.

[69] Police Report, June 16, 1939, OCF.

[70] Police Report May 31, 1939; Detective Joseph Carrington to Commanding Officer, Bureau of Criminal Alien Investigation, June 7, 1939; Police Report, July 5, 1939; Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, July 12, 1939, OCF.

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[71] Police Report, June 30, 1939; Police Report, July 5, 1939; Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, July 21, 1939; Report of Meeting, Lt. Stauffer, 105th Pct., July 20, 1939, OCF.

[72] Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigaton, Aug. 11, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 26, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 2, 1939; Report of Meeting, Lt. Kelly, 104th Pct., Sept. 1, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, Oct. 21, 1939; Police Report, Dec. 12, 1939, OCF.

[73]Benny and Burns received suspended sentences and were fined $8,000 and $10,000, respectfully, for smuggling in 1939. *New York Times*, June 3, 1939: 5; Police Report, June 23, 1939; Police Report, July 23, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 31, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 6, 1939, OCF.

[74] Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, July 12, 1939; Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, July 21, 1939; Report of Meeting, Lt. Stauffer, 105th Pct., July 20, 1939, OCF.

[75] "Minutes - Christian Front meetings," Christian Front file, AJCL; Police Report May 26, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, September 29, 1939, OCF.

[76] Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Information Bureau, July 7, 1939, OCF.

[77] Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, Aug. 4, 1939, OCF.

[78] Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, July 11, 1939, OCF.

[79] Report of Meeting, Sgt. Roulston, 30 Pct., Aug. 8, 1939, OCF.

[80] Police Report, Aug. 19, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 31, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 2, 1939; Report of Meeting, Lt. Kelly, 104th Pct., September 1, 1939, OCF.

[81] Bayor 57-86; "Memorandum," Christian Front file, AJCL; Police Report, Aug. 21, 1939, OCF; Testa 28.

[82] As Gunning put it, it was against the policy of the League to "deprive them of the price of a bottle of milk by charging them dues."
Police Report, Aug. 15, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 16, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 23, 1939; Report of Meeting, Lt. Handwerg, 30 Pct. & Ptl. Owsianik, Alien Squad, Aug. 22, 1939, OCF.

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[83] *Ibid.*

[84] *Ibid.*

[85] Police Report, Nov. 21, 1939; Police Report, Jan. 13, 1940, OCF.

[86] "Christian Mobilizers: Their Purpose, Aim and Activities," 3, Joseph McWilliams file, AJCL; "Joseph McWilliams biography," 2-3, Joseph McWilliams file, AJCL.

[87] Dorothy Ryan, letter to Joseph McWilliams, undated; newspaper clipping, Joseph McWilliams Correspondence file, AJC.

[88] Once the Christian Mobilizers dissolved and McWilliams became involved in the American Destiny Party, the same card was distributed with the only difference being the "Courtesy of …" statement. Joseph McWilliams file, AJCL; Christian Mobilizer file, AJCL.

[89] In addition to Ruppert's brewery, the other businesses that responded to Mintzer were: Anthony & Joseph, Inc., Barrett Nephews & Co., Gristede Brothers Grocery, Daniel Reeves, Inc., and Regal Shoe Store.
J.A. Haleus, letter to George Mintzer, Feb. 21, 1941; A.E. Nelson, letter to George Mintzer, Feb. 8, 1941; Herman Goldman, letter to George Mintzer, Feb. 13, 1941; Jacob Ruppert, letter to George Mintzer, Feb. 13, 1941; W.R. Duncan, letter to George Mintzer, Feb. 10, 1941; Charles Christensen, letter to George Mintzer, Feb. 8, 1941; Charles Christensen, letter to Herman Steinkamp, Feb. 7, 1941; Law Offices of Bondy & Schloss, letter to George Mintzer, Feb. 10, 1941, Joseph McWilliams Christian Index file, AJC.

[90] Westphal was associated with the CF, Crusaders for Americanism and identified as a Vice President of the German-American Bund by the NYPD. "Memorandum," Christian Front file, AJCL.

[91] Report of Meeting, Sgt. Roulston, 30 Pct., Aug. 8, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 15, 1939; Det. William A. Justy to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, Aug. 16, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, Sept. 29, 1939, OCF.

[92] Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, July 12, 1939; Report of Meeting, Sgt. Spottke, 24th Pct., July 12, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, Oct. 6, 1939, OCF.

[93] Joseph McWilliams Correspondence file, AJC.

[94] According to *Under Cover*, Thorkelson's Congressional office was a hang-out for well-known native pro-Nazi fascists William Dudley Pelley (leader of the Silver Shirts),

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George Deatherage, James True, General George Van Horn Moseley, and Joseph McWilliams. Carlson 87.

[95] "Comes the Revolution," *Time*, Oct. 30, 1939; William Gerald Bishop, box 614, vol. IX: 4647; Macklin Boettger, box 615, vol. VI: 2893, 2954-55, USAJP-CCF. Joseph Thorkelson, "Shall Congress Take Charge?" June 22, 1939, *App. Cong. Rec.* 2802-05.

[96] "Comes the Revolution."

[97] Roy Tozier, "Moseley of the Fifth Column," *The New Republic,* June 7, 1939: 119-120.

[98] Macklin Boettger, box 615, vol. VI: 2950; 3010; John Prout, Jr., box 611, vol. V: 2358; Peter J. Wacks, box 612, vol. II: 1004, USAJP-CCF; Ptl. Francis L. Hillick to Commanding Officer, Third Division, Sept. 26, 1939, OCF; Alson Jesse Smith 10.

[99] Alson Jesse Smith 5, 7; *App. Cong. Rec*. Aug. 2, 1939: 4042; Tozier 119-120.

[100] *New York Times*, June 1, 1939: 1; June 2, 1939: 8.

[101] Carlson 141-42.

[102] Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, Aug. 4, 1939; Police Report, Oct. 7, 1939, OCF.

[103] "The Suppressed Statement of Major General George Van Horn Moseley, before the House of Representatives Committee on Un-American Activities, June 1, 1939," American Nationalist Party, box 59, 1929-1944 file, ASE-AJC.

[104] George Van Horn Moseley, letter to Joseph McWilliams, September 7, 1939, Joseph McWilliams file, AJC.

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FOR CHRIST AND COUNTRY: THE CHRISTIAN FRONT IN NEW YORK CITY, 1938-1951

Volume II

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2006

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Chapter 6 Think Christian: August 1938 – December 1939

"It is proven by their [the Jews] *own sayings that they are out to conquer the world and make slaves of all Christians."*

- Christian Front meeting at St. Paul the Apostle Church, August 4, 1938.[1]

Some police reports recorded CF speeches simply as "think Christian." Thinking Christian bound together the act, buy, and vote elements of the Christian Front's program for Christian unity. If individuals did not "think" the way the Front wanted, then they could not act the way the Front wanted. Now the world may be a complicated place, and the reasons why good people suffer may be difficult even for deep thinkers to understand. But if a person could "Think Christian" the complexities melted away. And as far as the Front was concerned, "Thinking Christian" meant blaming the Jews. Once Jews were understood to be the underlying cause of the world's problems, the world became easy to understand.

Religiously based anti-Semitism was an integral element of "thinking Christian" for the Front.[2] By attacking Jews specifically on religious terms, e.g. referring to Jews as "Christ-killers" or for their unwillingness to accept Christ as their savior, Jews were defined as the "Other." And the "Other" not only prevented the coming of the Kingdom on Earth, that is, the Jews were the reason for the failure of Christianity, but in America the Jews were the reasons why the country was not fulfilling its destiny: Thinking Christian defined Jews as "un-Americans" the "Other" in the United States who were causing the country's collapse.

Sitting with Paulist Fathers in the rectory of their church, a Fronter identified only as "Cooper" blamed every evil in the world on the Jews. Martin Luther was nothing more than a puppet of the Jews, who used him to split Protestants from the Catholic

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Church. "Every little trouble can be traced to the Jews," he told the meeting's attendees, describing his worry that the Jews' next target was to divide Catholics, just as they had succeeded in dividing Protestantism into many denominations.[3] One Fronter, Robert Mason, told a crowd at Columbus Circle that Jewish law permitted the raping of three year old Christian girls, a statement that landed him in jail for disorderly conduct by using offensive language.[4]

World War I veteran Joe Gallagher, an Oklahoma transplant who joined the Christian Front in New York, claimed he had been appalled by what he encountered in New York. This was not what Gallagher, who bragged that his ancestors had been in this country for 150 years, was fighting for when he went to war to defend "real Christian American principles." Jews in Oklahoma plainly did not try to get away with what they did in New York. Jews in New York had been "boring in for years and that is why they have gotten such a hold on everything." After all, if a Jew ever did anything like this in the West, Christians would "take care of him." His solution was simple: "All the dirty Jews should be hung from a tree." This is a Christian country and should be 100% Christian; all office holders should be Christian and Christians must become powerful enough to drive out the Jews. The power would come from a united Christian front.[5]

Religiously based anti-Semitism was the basis of "thinking Christian," and by "religiously based", I mean rhetoric attacking Jews strictly for their religious beliefs and not for their supposed any political or economic associations to communism or international bankers. Thinking Christian connected the other elements of the Front's program for Christian unity: acting, buying, and voting Christian. However, thinking

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Christian included much more. It was a call for all Christian denominations, Catholic and Protestant, to join together as a monolithic ideological, political, and economic force.

As was the case with so much of the CF's ideology, its religiously-based anti-Semitism derived directly from Coughlin and his program of social justice. Edward Lodge Curran explained the connection between Coughlin's notion of social justice and Christianity during an August 1939 radio broadcast. The entire history and teaching of Christianity had culminated in the social justice movement. Curran described "the medieval guilds of the ages of Christian faith" as the first labor movements in history, and since the guilds' purpose was both economic and spiritual, they were examples of organized social justice. The greatest modern-day threats to Christian social justice were the paganism of communism and Nazi Germany. The greatest American defender of Christian social justice was Father Coughlin, whose thirteen years on the radio propagated its message to Americans through the words of the popes. Curran added that Christian social justice was not limited by race, color or religion. It was for all Christians and Jews to accept, if they so chose. It was because that choice that was available to Jews, but they had rejected it, that Coughlinites justified their anti-Semitism, sometimes back-handed and subtle, but most times straight-forward and blatant.[6]

Two days after Curran spoke, Coughlin broadcast a sermon, "What of the Future?" as a follow-up to Curran. Coughlin's talk was published in the same pamphlet, *The Challenge of the Pact and the Challenge of Social Justice* as Curran's speech. In it, Coughlin blamed European leaders, going as far back as the fifteenth century, for conspiring against the social doctrines of Jesus Christ. These leaders opposed the guild systems mentioned by Curran, instituted class conflict, re-established the materialism of

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the Roman Empire, and abandoned the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ and the brotherhood of man. It the place of Christian brotherhood, Europeans re-adopted the pagan individualism of ancient Rome. The evils of capitalism he traced to the evil of trying to get along without God, trying to succeed without following the path of Christ; and removing the teachings of Christ from banks, factories, and schools, and labor unions. Listeners who connected the dots knew who Coughlin meant: the Jews. Jews were the internationalist bankers; Jews were the factory owners; Jews had usurped the control of education and labor unions, all in the name of communism.[7]

Mary Christine Athans argues that Coughlin's emotional tirades against Jews beginning in 1938 emanated from his encounter with the theological views of Father Denis Fahey, C.S.Sp. According to Fahey's ideas on neo-Thomistic philosophy in *The Mystical Body of Christ in the Modern World* (2nd ed., 1938), the Jews' rejection of Jesus as the Supernatural Messiah, and their decision to wait for their own Natural Messiah, meant that the Jewish role in history was in active conflict with the Divine Plan of Order. The Natural Messiah, who would be the Antichrist and would lead a "Body of Organized Naturalism," would oppose the mystical body of Christ (led by Jesus as the Supernatural Messiah).

Coughlin used Fahey's ideas, often quoting from him and corresponding with him, to describe godless communism as the mystical body of Satan. The radio priest then connected these ideas to Judaism. In the pages of *Social Justice* and on his radio broadcasts, Coughlin began to shift away from criticizing politics and economics on their own terms and framed his arguments based on their connections to the mystical bodies of Christ and Satan as he called for a Christian Front.[8]

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Before Father Coughlin began seeing the mystical body of Satan as the Jews, he had hoped that they would accept the doctrine of Christian brotherhood. At a 30,000 strong presidential rally for William Lemke in Cleveland's Municipal Stadium, Coughlin stated, "I am not asking the Jews of the United States to accept Christianity and all of its beliefs, but since their system of 'a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye' has failed that they accept Christ's principle of brotherhood."[9] By the time he had started calling for the formation of the CF, Coughlin was expressing doubts that Jews could or would accept the principle of brotherhood as Christians understood it. Jews' refusal to accept Christian brotherhood and their decision to turn to the satanic lures of communism meant that they could never be true Americans and were forever cursed.[10] These ideas resonated even in some anti-Coughlinite clergy. Father Floyd Kessler tried to explain his own views on the subject to Coughlin's main New York supporter, Father Curran, in Curran's magazine, *Light.* Father Kessler said that anti-Semitism was wrong, but went on to say that the persecution of the Jews was attributed to their involvement in the crucifixion, which had made them a damned people.[11] The *Brooklyn Tablet* claimed that since there were more anti-Christian than anti-Semitic groups, anti-Semites were victims acting in self defense. *The Tablet* gave several recent examples: two individuals, intruders into the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade, had mockingly dressed themselves as bishops; there had been an anti-Catholic remark in a Flatbush public school regarding free speech (probably referring to Coughlin); and a rabbi had demanded the *Tablet* be banned from the mail. All this showed that Jews were responsible for their own problems.[12]

Religiously-based anti-Semitic Front speeches reached their peak in September 1939, during the Jewish High Holidays' season (Rosh Hashanah was on September 14,

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1939). Not surprisingly, the Front focused on the Catholic teachings that Jews were responsible for the crucifixion. Circulars asking "Why are Jews Persecuted for their Religion?" were distributed at Buy Christian rallies in the Bronx. Lawrence Gilpatrick prayed "That the time will come when Christians will appear before Christian judges and not before Jews." His statement could be interpreted as both secular and spiritual. He was literally speaking about the courts, and the Fronters' complaints at being fined by Jewish judges (they rarely referred to any Christian judges in their complaints about being persecuted). But there was also an implication that the Heavenly Judge was Christian as well, and at the time of the Final Judgment Christians would ultimately be vindicated. The Front tried to convince audiences that all Jews were clandestine co-conspirators against Christianity and had always been. Daniel Kurtz promised a crowd that he would tell the facts and truth about the *Talmud* because the Christian Front had members who read and understand Hebrew. These "religious scholars" informed Kurtz that the *Talmud* called Christians a "goy," thus claiming the common Yiddish term for a gentile had come from their scripture. The implication was that Jews used secret codes amongst themselves to further their plans against Christians.[13]

Jews in New York City were becoming increasingly concerned with their safety as the Front continued to grow louder, if not larger. Jewish organizations like the American Jewish Committee continued to monitor Front meetings but they were not always successful. An attempt by Jews to attend a Christian Front meeting at the Tri-Boro Palace led to a confrontation and they were unceremoniously asked to leave.[14] Of greatest concern to these Jewish organizations was connection between the Front and other groups. Their fear was a web of anti-Semitism could lend strength to all of these

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groups, whereas individually they were relatively weak. Front members and speakers often had personal association with other nativists and with pro-Nazi organizations, and would promote these like-minded groups (such as the American Nationalist Party, the Christian Crusaders, or the German-American Bund[15]) at CF rallies and meetings.

* * *

The Christian Front's hope that all Christians would join with them went against ignored ethnic divisions within the Catholic Church. CF supporters were able to point to so few examples of inter-denominational or inter-ethnic cooperation that it should have been clear that Christian unity simply was not that all that important to most Christians.[16] And when the American Institute for Public Opinion (AIPO) conducted surveys of all Americans in February 1937 and May 1938 asking if respondents thought the Protestant churches in the United States should combine into one, a majority thought it was a bad idea.

Table 11
Should US Protestant churches unify?
It has been suggested that all Protestant churches in the United States combine into one church. Do you think it would be a good thing? (February 23, 1937)
Do you think it would be a good thing for all Protestant churches in the United States to combine into one church? (May 20, 1938)

Date	Yes	No
February 23, 1937	44%	56%
May 20, 1938	47%	53%
Catholics (Feb. 1937)	46%	54%
Middle Atlantic (Feb. 1937)	46%	54%

Hadley Cantril, ed. *Public Opinion, 1935-1946* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1951), p. 105.

Even though most Catholics rejected unity with Protestant churches because of the long tradition of Protestant anti-Catholicism, the Christian Front was very willing to accept non-Catholics as members. According to Edward McCarthy's primary work on the CF, this willingness probably originated with Pius XI's encyclical on atheistic

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communism, *Divini Redemptoris* (March 19, 1937) and perhaps on *Quadragesimo Anno*, in which members of other faiths were invited to join Catholics to fight communism.[17]

That said there never was a doubt, at least amongst the Front's founders, that Catholicism would be preeminent in the organization. Protestants were invited to join their program of social justice, but as followers. Marcel Honore based his hopes of the CF becoming a national movement in America mainly on the "strength of the Catholic religion behind them," but he also hoped to have Protestants unite with them: "We are most desirous of marching side by side with the Protestants."[18] Father Curran extended a back-handed invitation to Protestants and Jews, even while implying their rejection of the Church or Christ, respectively, meant they could never be full members:

> If certain Protestant groups will not accept Christ as God, they can at least accept His spiritual leadership and the social justice principles by which the pagan Roman world was once transformed because He came. If the Jews will not accept the divinity of Christ, they can remember that in flesh and blood He belonged to them and they can accept Him as a prophet of social justice. This is the heart and soul of the social justice movement which we espouse: social justice for all under the spiritual leadership of Christ.[19]

The Christian Front promoted itself, as it turned out delusionally, as the model for Catholic-Protestant unity. Both Catholic and Protestant clergy were invited to speak at what the Front billed as "a large meeting for peace." Other unity meetings welcomed "Christian Americans only." The CF's efforts to mobilize a unified Protestant-Catholic front disregarded historic and religious realities, and the Front blamed their failure on the standard scapegoats — the "opposition," which was doing everything it could to block unity, and the ignorance of priests and ministers. After the Brooklyn Church and Mission Federation passed a resolution calling the Christian Front un-American, John Cassidy told CF members at Prospect Hall in Brooklyn that the ministers were not well

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informed; that all they knew was from the daily press's propaganda. The only way to counter this was for the Front to take matters into its own hands and enlighten the clergy with "the true facts about the Christian Front" when Fronters spoke before Catholic and Protestant groups. Those invitations were few and far between and became impossible for Cassidy once he was incarcerated two weeks later by the FBI as a defendant in *United States of America v. John Prout, Jr., et al.*[20]

In August 1939, Alson Jesse Smith wrote an expose of the Front (published by the American League for Peace and Democracy) in which he described the Front as "overwhelming Irish Catholic, with a sprinkling of Germans and Italians." He went on, "So far the Coughlinites have been unable to make much progress with Protestants, although there are undoubtedly many Protestant bigots in the affiliated organizations." Though most Protestants were in the same sort of economic distress as Catholic Fronters, they refused to join the Front because of their bitter anti-Catholicism. Smith's assessment of the anti-Catholicism may have been correct; however, that did not stop some nativist Protestants from joining the Christian Front.[21]

The nativist Protestant element that entered the Front movement, however, did not let abandon their old prejudices. These Protestant Fronters did not think that Christian unity would be successful because it was being led by Catholics. They thought the leaders of the CF should be Protestants. On at least one occasion a Catholic CF leader shared their sentiments. The same month that Smith published his pamphlet, Daniel Kurtz blamed Catholics for not supporting *Social Justice* and ignoring *Social Justice* newsboys selling the paper in front of Catholic Churches on Sundays. He said that the only real supporters of Father Coughlin and *Social Justice* were Protestants! This lament

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was after he failed to meet his goal of 100,000 Queens Unit members after the first two months of its existence.[22]

It may have been more than a coincidence that at the same Christian Front street meeting that announced the formation of Christian Mobilizers, Edward James Smyth, Chairman of the Executive Board of the Protestant War Veterans, also spoke about breaking the economic power of the Jews by buying Christian. Smyth was a raging anti-Catholic, who spoke at several Bund and Klan rallies, including Camp Nordland in New Jersey, but this did not keep him from being active in the Front and Mobilizers. Smyth's affiliation and communication with German propaganda agencies brought him to the attention of the federal government and Smyth became a fugitive in 1942. In Smyth one sees that the Front's anti-Semitism was so attractive to some that it could outweigh their anti-Catholicism, as Smyth could simultaneously denounce Roman Catholicism and praise Coughlin.[23]

The Tri-Boro Palace was home to more than just the Front. The American Nationalist Party (ANP), and later the Christian Mobilizers had headquarters in the building.[24] The American Nationalist Party was more than a local New York nativist group. According to *Under Cover*, John Roy Carlson's popular 1943 book about a massive American fascist conspiracy, the ANP had dozens of branches in at least three states and a sponsored a storm trooper unit that worked out in a Yorkville gym.[25] The cross-over between the ANP and the Christian Front was quite extensive. At the conclusion of their meetings in the Tri-Boro Palace, Fronters requested that the audience to return to the hall on Wednesday evening to hear Stanley Smith, leader of the ANP, talk about the "raging battle" with communism in the United States.[26] Smith, president of the

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ANP, was very familiar to Fronters. He was associated with the Front almost since the beginning; he addressed meetings at St. Paul's in 1938, spoke at CF meetings throughout the summer of 1939 and was a regular at the WMCA picket lines as an intense supporter of Father Coughlin. The AJC described him as one of the most active anti-Semitic leaders in New York City, who was trying to build a coalition of all anti-Semitic groups in the City through distribution of anti-Semitic literature.[27]

ANP meetings were held on the same street corners and halls as the Christian Front; in addition to the Tri-Boro, this included Donovan's, Sangerbund Hall, in Ridgewood, Queens and on Arthur Avenue in the Bronx. In 1939, several of the Front's leaders joined the ANP and became active in their leadership. Fronters regularly attended ANP meetings, where they sold *Social Justice*. Many of these speakers were the same core of individuals who joined the Protestant nativist Christian Crusaders and German-American Bund. John Cassidy's friend, Russell Dunn, led ANP rallies focused on unemployment and how Christian Americans must unite. When Dunn became destitute in 1939, Smith took up a birthday collection for him at a March 29, 1939 rally, where Dunn also spoke. John Cecil, of the anti-Semitic Immigration Conference Board, was a featured speaker at both ANP and CF meetings, especially when the main topic was the refugee problem and influx of Jewish immigrants. Daniel Kurtz appeared at a CF street rally with Cecil on at least one occasion to support Cecil's anti-immigrant program.[28]

Because of shared membership the American Nationalist Party's rhetoric and propaganda followed the same lines as the Christian Front. Flyers distributed throughout the City in 1939 promoting their Wednesday meetings provide examples of their mean-spirited anti-Semitism. Cartoons portrayed stereotypical Jewish images with hook-noses,

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and as bloated bankers Christianity. These caricatures were often referred to as the "organized minority," and as communists and internationalists. They were seen as controlling the war and as pulling FDR's strings; communism was a dagger slicing through Christianity over a pool of the "Blood of Christian Martyrs"; or communism was an octopus with a Jewish caricature as head, controlling government, schools, business, international banks, movies and radio, newspapers, law, and the federal reserve; or it could be a chef mixing a pot of "Red Revolution" on the flames of the media with the *Protocols* as the cookbook; a magician controlling the public and encouraging communism, causing unemployment, desecrating art and music, perverting Christian doctrines, promoting filth and encouraging indecency; then again, it could be a tornado destroying Christian civilization. ANP flyers, much like the Front's, called for Christian unity as the only defense of Christian security in the country. A flyer called for an "American Awakening" that would kick Jewish communists, internationalists and bankers out of the country. Another juxtaposed a Christian pilgrim braving the wilderness against a Jewish caricature in control of the press, movies and radio, the *Protocols* on his bookshelf. Another had a member of the "organized minority" firing a Christian breadwinner from his job compared to a Christian pioneer building America — both emblematic of the ANP's "true Americanism."[29]

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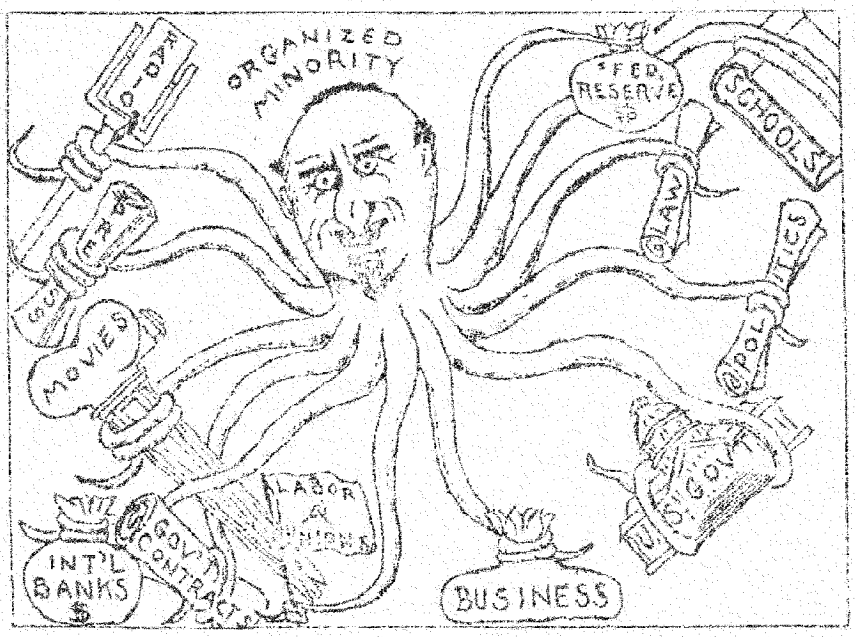
Illustration 1: American Nationalist Party flyers

AJC Memorandum and Collection of ANP flyers, American Nationalist Party, Box 59, 1929-1944 file, ASE-AJC; American Nationalist Party file, AJCL.



STOP THE DEPRESSION!!!

CAN AMERICA STAND TEN MORE YEARS OF OPPRESSION OF CHRISTIAN PEOPLE??? FOR YEARS THE INVENTORS OF THE BOYCOTT HAVE INSTRUCTED THE GULLIBLE CHRISTIANS WHOM TO BOYCOTT - BUT FOR WHOSE BENEFIT?? WHAT DID THE CHRISTIANS GAIN BY IT?? THE ANSWER IS UNEMPLOYMENT. THERE ARE MANY THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE ORGANIZED MINORITY BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE. BOYCOTT THE ENEMY OF CHRISTIANITY - THE ORGANIZED MINORITY. READ CHRISTIAN LITERATURE. READ THE TRUTH AND COME AND HEAR THE TRUTH AT OUR MEETINGS.

THE AMERICAN NATIONALIST PARTY

MEETINGS ARE HELD EVERY WEDNESDAY EVENING AT THE TRI-BORO PALACE, 137th STREET AND THIRD AVENUE, BRONX, N.Y. AT 8:30 P.M.

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SEP 13 1939 FF2 9/13/39 SEP 13 1939
Columbus Circle

CHRISTIAN FOREFATHERS BRAVING THE WILDERNESS THAT A NEW NATION MIGHT GROW AND PROSPER.

ORGANIZED MINORITY - UNDERMINING A NATION AND TAKING THE FRUITS THEREOF.

TOLERANCE FOR THE CHRISTIANS. PROSPERITY FOR THE CHRISTIANS.

COME AND HEAR THE CHRISTIAN PLAN TO RESTORE PROSPERITY. THE ONLY PRACTICAL SOLUTION OF THE UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEM. HELP PUT ALL CHRISTIAN AMERICANS BACK TO WORK AT A DECENT LIVING WAGE. COME AND HEAR TWO OUTSTANDING CHRISTIAN AMERICAN SPEAKERS. SEP 13 1939

THE AMERICAN NATIONALIST PARTY

SEP 13 1939 DEDICATED TO CHRISTIAN CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT.

MEETINGS ARE HELD EVERY WEDNESDAY EVENING AT THE TRI-BORO PALACE, 137th STREET AND THIRD AVENUE, BRONX, N.Y.

SEP 13 1939 SEP 13 1939

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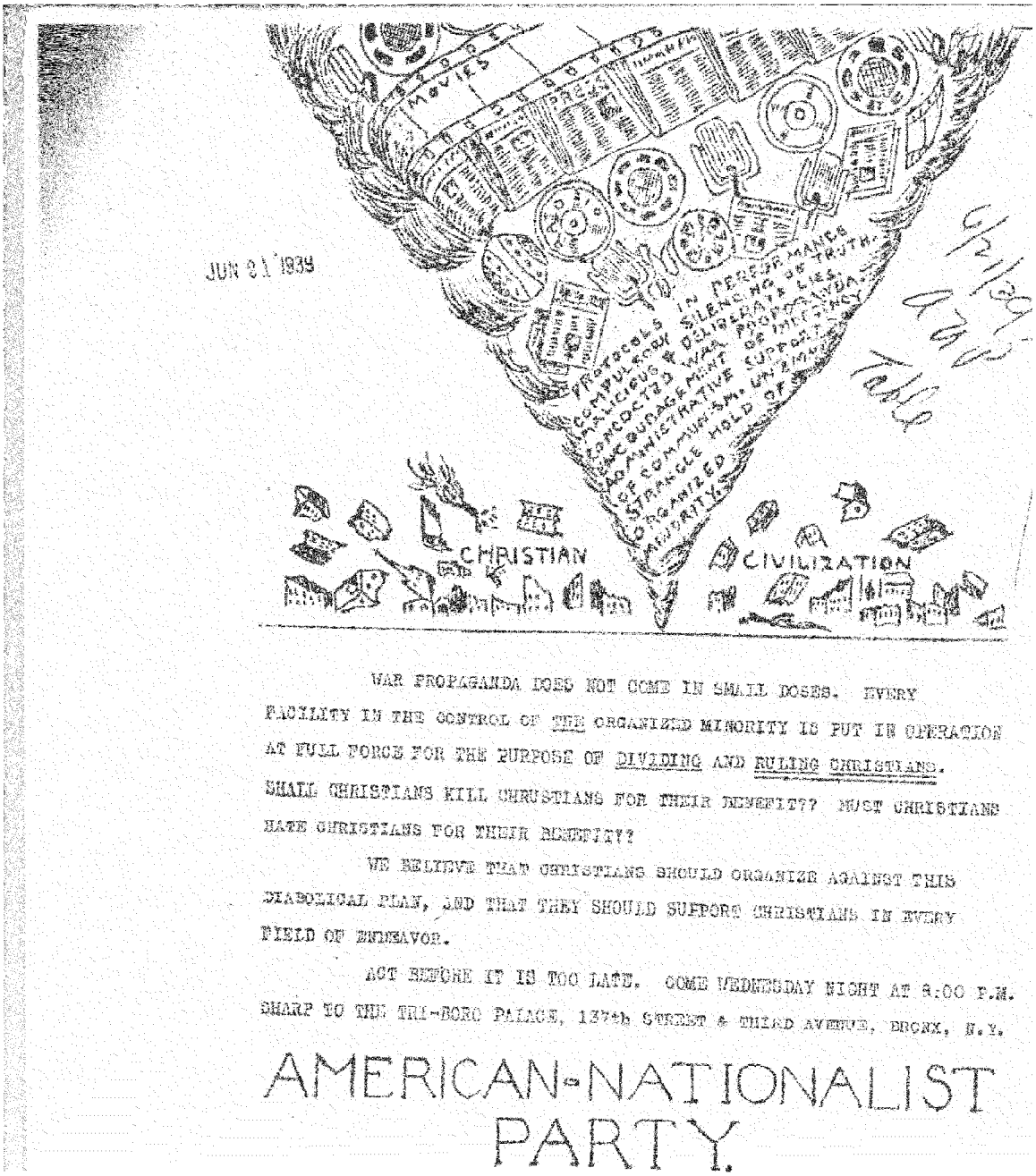

WAR PROPAGANDA DOES NOT COME IN SMALL DOSES. EVERY FACILITY IN THE CONTROL OF THE ORGANIZED MINORITY IS PUT IN OPERATION AT FULL FORCE FOR THE PURPOSE OF DIVIDING AND RULING CHRISTIANS. SHALL CHRISTIANS KILL CHRISTIANS FOR THEIR BENEFIT?? MUST CHRISTIANS HATE CHRISTIANS FOR THEIR BENEFIT?

WE BELIEVE THAT CHRISTIANS SHOULD ORGANIZE AGAINST THIS DIABOLICAL PLAN, AND THAT THEY SHOULD SUPPORT CHRISTIANS IN EVERY FIELD OF ENDEAVOR.

ACT BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE. COME WEDNESDAY NIGHT AT 8:00 P.M. SHARP TO THE TRI-BORO PALACE, 137th STREET & THIRD AVENUE, BRONX, N.Y.

AMERICAN-NATIONALIST PARTY.

* * *

At the 1939 trial of Fritz Kuhn, leader of the German-American Bund, Bundist August Klapprott asked his friend and Christian Fronter, Joe McWilliams, if he was a Catholic. McWilliams was deeply offended and responded, "Hell, no, I'm no Catholic.

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I'm a Protestant. I don't believe in no Pope. The whole damned bunch of them have been racketeers. Don't get the idea I'm Catholic because my name sounds Irish."[30]

Joseph McWilliams was born on March 23, 1904 on the Cheyenne Indian Reservation in Hitchcock, Oklahoma. Irish on father's side and Cheyenne on his mother's, this former communist speechwriter, and erstwhile friend of Jews and a onetime Hindu convert made his living as a salesman and inventor before turning to anti-Semitism and extreme anticommunism in 1938. McWilliams' failure as an inventor, his womanizing, and his patronage of prostitutes forced him into debt. He owed money to most of his friends, investors and the Internal Revenue Service. Then he found his niche. American Jewish Committee observers, who first noticed this good-looking and vain street firebrand in April 1939, described McWilliams as a "highly dynamic personality, a persuasive speaker, a master showman and a psychologically attuned rabble-rouser." He spent so much time speaking on the streets of New York in 1939 that he was fired from his job at McWilliams & Dennison.[31]

It was during the Spanish Civil War that McWilliams claimed he first discovered that Jews were responsible for all the troubles of the world after a close friend was killed fighting for the Loyalists, and so he decided to dedicate himself to anti-Semitism. . That was the catalyst for McWilliams, and he turned for answers to the German-American Bund and Father Coughlin.[32] Initially McWilliams was not trusted by the German-American Bund because he was not German and they thought he was a plant, but eventually he became friendly with Bund leader Fritz Kuhn. McWilliams's admiration for the Bund led to the formation of his own group, the Christian Mobilizers, modeled on the Bund, but with a "Christian color and an American background"[33]

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Before organizing the Mobilizers, Joseph McWilliams spoke at many nativist Christian rallies. The American Nationalist Party, American Patriots, Crusaders for Americanism, American Brotherhood of Christian Congress, the Bronx boycott line, and the WMCA pickets were on McWilliams' itinerary, and he joined the Christian Front. Columnist Walter Winchell dubbed him "Joe McNazi," because of his all-encompassing activity among New York's nativists. However, his hyperactivity did not necessarily translate into popularity with these Christian groups, and in fact he was not trusted by many of them. At least twice he was kicked out of American Nationalist Party meetings and he was attacked by John Cassidy at CF meetings, possibly because a jilted girlfriend spread rumors that McWilliams never believed in Christianity and was still attending Hindu temples, suggesting he was an opportunist rather than a "true believer."[34]

There were other reasons for the conflict between the Christian Front leadership and McWilliams. He associated with anti-Catholic Protestant nativist groups (especially the Ku Klux Klan) and the Bund. On the other hand, others in the increasingly fractious Front became McWilliams' disciples and followers.

McWilliams announced the formation of the Christian Mobilizers while he was still an active member of the CF and he acted as a self-appointed CF representative at a June meeting with the New York City Police Department discussing the WMCA pickets. On June 29, 1939, at a well-attended Front street rally in the Bronx, McWilliams' followers distributed a petition to the crowd of five hundred, requesting that each person have it signed by Christian a businessman and fifteen Christian men and women. The purpose of the Mobilizers, according to McWilliams, was to unite the Christian people to "Buy Christian and Christian only." One Mobilizer flyer warned that any toleration of

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Jewish businesses would lead to Christian destruction. McWilliams promised his disciples that when he reached his goal, "he would free America from the influence of the international Jew." Fronters who joined the Mobilizers ended their speeches with announcements for Mobilizer meetings.[35]

The Christian Mobilizers quickly gained a reputation of being more violent than the Christian Front. This stemmed from McWilliams' attitude toward the Front, which he felt was not aggressive enough with tactics too conservative to be effective. In his words, they were "too wishy-washy" to do anything. He recruited some of the more violent and mentally unstable members of the Front as the leadership of the Mobilizers: Joe Hartery (who McWilliams paid $5-$6 dollars per week) and George Gunning (who co-published the Mobilizer newspaper) were high-ranking Fronters who joined McWilliams; other active Fronters who led the Mobilizers were John Olivo (who drilled the Christian Mobilizer Guard Unit and was a former juvenile delinquent), John Zitter, Edmund Burke, and Bundist Edwin Westphal. All had criminal records, ranging from attempted murder, burglary, automobile theft and assault to violation of copyright law, disorderly conduct and soliciting.[36]

McWilliams regaled audiences with stories of Christian persecution and exhorted listeners to greater militancy, claiming that he would sweep all the Jews out of New York. Flyers distributed in the German Yorkville section of Manhattan promised residents that they would be "free from control of Jews." In his egotistical and arrogant manner, McWilliams took it upon himself to "invent a better America" in his own image. That image was German, nativist and Protestant. This did not necessarily mean that Catholics were excluded. A number of Catholic clergy were simultaneously involved

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with both the Front and the Mobilizers. Father Peter Baptist Duffee of St. Francis of Assisi Church in Manhattan (who was also on the advisory board of *Wisdom* magazine) and Reverend Edward Brophy of the Precious Blood Church in Long Island City both were active in McWilliams' political party, the American Destiny Party (ADP).[37] Father Brophy spoke at an ADP rally in support of McWilliams after one of his many arrests. Nevertheless, nearly eighty percent of the CM's membership were first or second generation German (the rest were Irish), drawn both to McWilliams and the group he modeled the Mobilizers on — the German-American Bund.[38]

There was extensive cooperation between the Christian Mobilizers and German-American Bund in 1939 and 1940, so much so that the AJC thought that the Mobilizers were seeking alliance with the Bund, rather than the Front. The Bund supported the Mobilizers both ideologically and monetarily. In one August 1939 fortnight, McWilliams spoke to at least four joint Bund-Mobilizer audiences. Several hundred joined McWilliams in giving a Nazi salute in Astoria, Queens; Bund leader Fritz Kuhn and George Deatherage[39] were invited guests at a Mobilizer rally in Innisfail Park; McWilliams was a featured guest speaker at the August 20 Bund meeting in Staten Island and at the Bund's Camp Siegfried on August 27. Edwin (aka Edward) Westphal, an active member of the Christian Front, planned to publish a Mobilizer-Bund newspaper with McWilliams. Westphal's Christian Front speeches were anti-Roosevelt and Christian unity rants, and he promoted the other groups he was associated with at New York street corners. In addition to the Front, Mobilizers, and the Bund, he was vice president of the Crusaders for Americanism. A typical Westphal harangue could be heard more than a block away from where he was yelling and included rants such as,

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"When we get into power, we'll get our vengeance. We have special means. I'd like to see a million more Jews come here, then our revenge will be complete. We'll fix the Jews the way Hitler fixed them."[40]

The Bund was associated with the Christian Front well before the establishment of the Mobilizers, and continued to work with them afterwards. Some Front speakers and members were Bundists. Fronters also willingly went on stage with their German counterparts. An admitted member of German-American Bund attended an early CF meeting at St. Paul's, where he commented that he intended on "sacrificing his life to kill every Jew." Herbert Lewis, a former Protestant minister, spokesman for the German-American Bund, was on the same podium as CF leader John Cassidy at Erasmus Hall in January 1939 and spoke at other members-only Front meetings, including at St. Paul's rectory.[41] George A.Van Nosdall, the rotund leader of the Crusaders for Americanism, member of both the German American Bund and American Nationalist Party, made appearances at CF meetings and rallies, including the WMCA protest, where he sold *Social Justice* and other extremist newspapers. These associations generated sympathy for the Bund among some Fronters, especially after Fritz Kuhn was arrested. Margaret Maher called this "persecution of Fritz Kuhn and the German-American Bund by Thomas Dewey and the 'little red flower'."[42]

The Front and the Mobilizers were tightly entwined in the public's eye. William Murphy, a former WMBZ commentator who worked for *Social Justice*, did not know the two were separate groups until he was so informed by anti-Mobilizer Fronters at a September meeting.[43] And even though the Mobilizers and the Front shared space at the Tri-Boro Palace and held meetings at Ebling's Casino (in the heart of Front territory, on

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156th Street and St. Ann's Avenue in the South Bronx), the Catholic leadership of the CF came to despise McWilliams' Mobilizers.[44] CF leaders complained to Coughlin that McWilliams made a dent in their organization by siphoning members away and cost them money. William Bishop reportedly called the Christian Mobilizers a "bunch of tramps" because of the publicity generated by their activities in the Bronx. John Cassidy wanted them thrown out of the Christian Front because of their troubles with the police.[45]

The Bronx Christian Front became so infiltrated by Christian Mobilizers that the "Central Office" dispersed the Bronx units by October 1939. When Al Lomax reconstituted the North East Bronx Unit of the Christian Front in January 1940, he promised that the Unit would be peaceful and would only attack communists. He tried to avoid controversy and rowdiness of other groups with "Christian" in their name (which were invariably associated with the Front) was to hold closed meetings for members only and never have public assemblies. Lomax's peaceful attempts were not very successful, and only sixteen people attended his Clark's Hall gathering.[46]

Fighting between supporters of the Front and supporters of the Mobilizers took place on the street in front of large crowds. On the corner of Dyckman Street and Sherman Avenue in Manhattan, at a CF rally of six hundred people, Fronters James McClusky and Albert Gunnison got into a dispute that resulted in Gunnison calling for the arrest of McClusky.[47]

This confrontation began when McClusky told the crowd that other groups representing themselves as the Christian Front were holding meetings at this location, but they were not authorized. In the future, only speakers authorized by the CF's "Main Office" would be allowed to speak. He closed the meeting stating that the Front was in

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no way connected with the Christian Mobilizers and did not approve of their tactics — the only purpose of the Christian Front was to fight communism and as soon as the mayor and the President "got rid of these Communists" the Front would cease to function.[48]

Albert Gunnison, a very active member of the Front in the Bronx (he appears in more than twenty police reports in 1939), then attempted to take the podium, but was rebuffed by McClusky. Gunnison accused McClusky of censoring him. At that moment Gunnison request that a police captain present arrest McClusky. The captain, not wanting to get involved in Christian Front in-fighting, refused Gunnison's request and referred him to the Magistrate's Court to get a summons if it was justified. The crowd, possibly familiar with Gunnison as a Bronx Unit member, immediately called on Gunnison to speak. McClusky responded that he would check Gunnison's record with the "Main Office" before letting him do so. Gunnison relented and agreed.[49]

This incident showed two things: first, the Christian Front as a well-organized single functioning unit in New York simply did not exist. It was always being splintered, with active members therefore unfamiliar with one another. Second, at least some Fronters were worried by the cross membership between the Front and other, even more violent and disreputable, organizations. McClusky undoubtedly feared that Gunnison, with whom he was unfamiliar, would speak out of turn with respect to the Front's brand of Christian thinking or that Gunnison would come out in support of the Mobilizers.

American Jewish Committee investigators took advantage of McWilliams' vanity and demagoguery, which had won him many enemies. Investigators planted rumors against him that gained wide circulation in hopes that both the Mobilizers and Front would collapse under the stress of in-fighting. The Mobilizers were considered the

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weaker of the two because it was largely a one man organization. Without McWilliams, who alone knew how to appeal to the mob appeal, the AJC hoped the Mobilizers would disintegrate into a squabbling, ineffective group. One such rumor was that Christian Front members were instructed that their membership would be cancelled if they were members of the Mobilizers. Catholic Fronters were also angry at McWilliams' appearance at a Ku Klux Klan convocation in Atlanta on Labor Day weekend in 1939. Apparently at the same time he was visiting George Van Horn Moseley to discuss Moseley's presidential bid. At the convocation, the Mobilizer leader solidified his alliance with the Klan and was elected to its Nationalist Supreme Council. The AJC gleefully imparted this information to the Christian Front through contacts they had monitoring the organization. Catholic leaders of the Front vigorously questioned McWilliams about his actions in Atlanta. Some members, including George Gunning, who were dual members of the Front and Mobilizers, quit McWilliams' group. In their internal reports, the American Jewish Committee took credit for the schism between the Front and the Mobilizers.[50]

* * *

Catholics in the Christian Front were scrambling to re-establish their identity and revive the true meaning "Christianity" within the group. Beneath the surface, old-fashioned anti-Catholic Protestant nativists battled with Catholics for ideological control of Christian unity. Anti-Semitism and anticommunism were not enough to overcome old-time prejudices. In August 1939, when Christian unity was being talked about more than at any other time, like-minded groups were being promoted at Front meetings more

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they would ever be again. Since many of these like-minded groups included anti-Catholic nativist Protestants, Catholic Fronters felt the backlash.

The problem of Christian identity was important enough for certain Fronters to make an issue of it in public. George Gunning urged all followers of various religions, whether they were Catholics or Protestants, to forget their differences of faith and join as Christians in the "fight to combat the common enemy, Communism and Judaism" in the United States (this was before Gunning left the Mobilizers after discovering Joseph McWilliams' association with the KKK). Burnett Evans called for unity of all Christian people, regardless of creed, to combat evil Communism in "our Christian nation," including a perfunctory invitation for Jews to join the fight.[51]

The watershed event in the efforts of the extremist Christian organizations to demonstrate their collective strength was a parade planned for August 19, 1939. This "Christian" parade from Union Square to Columbus Circle was first announced in Donovan's Hall on July 30 by Lawrence Gilpatrick, who was introduced as a young student studying for the priesthood. The nineteen-year-old Gilpatrick, a *Social Justice* distributor who spoke at several Columbus Circle CF rallies in July and August, was joined for the important announcement in Donovan's by Christian Fronters/Mobilizers Joe Hartery and Edwin Westphal, *Wisdom* editor John Geis, and Front leader Frank Gleason. Supposedly, Gilpatrick had been in direct contact with Father Coughlin and was told by Coughlin himself about plans for a mass "Anti-Communist parade in Manifestation of Christianity." This Donovan's Hall meeting was the only eyewitness account of a Christian Front meeting published in *Commonweal*. According to John Roy Carlson's investigations, privately Coughlin had always planned to sponsor the parade.

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Publicly, it was Gilpatrick who applied for the permit. Coughlin's reason for publicly disassociating himself with the parade was obvious, considering its potential for violence. Planning to join their fellow Coughlinites were members of the Bund, Mobilizers, and William Dudley Pelley's fascist Silver Shirts, all planning to "protect" their Christian brothers from Jewish attacks on the parade route by carrying brass knuckles and lead pipes wrapped in newspaper.[52]

For the next two weeks, the Christian Front directed followers all over the city to attend the August 19 parade. Even thought the CF was not actually sponsoring the parade, they described it as one in which "all Christian factions are participating." The Front publicly separated Coughlin from it, saying it was "without the knowledge or sanction of Father Coughlin." Undoubtedly, this was because of the bad publicity it was attracting and in anticipation of its potential for becoming nothing more than a bloody riot. Legalities were dismissed as Fronters vowed to march with or without a permit, even if the "opposition" attempted to "break-up" the parade, and the Front made a veiled threat to respond to violence in like manner. Nevertheless, the parade permit was granted in Gilpatrick's name with a promise of police protection for the marchers.[53]

Just days before the parade, Jewish residents, small business owners (especially on the scheduled parade route), branches of the Jewish People's Committee in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens, clergy, and some union leaders flooded Mayor LaGuardia's office with letters protesting a permit allowing such "anti-democratic and anti-social activities" in the City. They warned the Mayor that allowing the Christian Front[54] to march would incite rioting and bloodshed. Business owners complained about the "Buy Christian" campaigns and how the parade would encourage it.[55]

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LaGuardia defended granting the parade permit. The "Little Flower" said freedom of speech demanded allowing this "Manifestation of Christianity" to take place. In his letter to the Kletzker Young Men's Benevolent Association, LaGuardia wrote, "The mere fact that an organization is permitted to parade in New York City is no indication of the approval of its policies by the Mayor or the city administration. My policy has been to guarantee the rights of assembly and free speech to all … as Mayor, I have a responsibility which I must assume and which I will not shirk."[56]

The parade never took place, and on August 17 Coughlin himself halted it. On the same day the American Jewish Alliance was protesting in front of City Hall and both the C.I.O. and Friends of Democracy were telegraphing the mayor's office, Lawrence Gilpatrick conferred with Father Coughlin and then sent a memorandum to New York's Chief Inspector Louis Costuma requesting him to withdraw the parade permit "in behalf of peace and order." Coughlin and the Christian Front had been put on the defensive by the anti-parade protests to LaGuardia's office. After the parade was damned as pro-Nazi, pro-fascist, and anti-Semitic, Coughlin and the Christian Front publicly disavowed any association with the parade.[57] It was rather curious that if neither Coughlin, nor the CF had anything to do with its planning, they had the power to cancel the parade. Fronters quickly changed their party line at their street rallies. On the day of the parade's cancellation, William Massey told six hundred people in the Bronx that the Front had never been going to participate and had never said that they would. They counted on their audiences to forget that the parade was planned and first announced by members of the Christian Front.[58]

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The Front reconvened at Donovan's the day after the parade was supposed to take place. Lawrence Gilpatrick told his comrades that it was his decision alone to cancel the parade after meeting with Chief Inspector Costuma. He did so after a telephone conversation with Father Coughlin, who thought it best that the parade be postponed. Gilpatrick did as his "idol" advised.[59]

Of course there had to be scapegoats since, "certain groups would have started trouble and innocent people may have been hurt." The "certain groups" referred to may not have been Jews and communists, as one would assume. Not to rule them out, however, the "groups" may have been the Bund or Silver Shirts who were planning violence. Neither the Front nor Coughlin could afford to be associated with a public brawl, as was anticipated. A unified Christian movement in New York had never truly emerged, as Fronters realized after the parade debacle. Phil LeMay complained that the parade was mishandled from the beginning, should have been planned weeks in advance, and not left in the hands of one man. The Social Justice Committee, under the auspices of the CF, should have planned with the different groups that wanted to participate — not that those groups would have agreed on anything.[60]

The next day at a CF meeting, again at Donovan's, that included Joseph McWilliams' number two man in the Mobilizers, James J. Stewart,[61] the dissension amongst various Christian organizations became obvious. One Fronter warned against all of them "fighting and knocking each other" because each organization is the same and they were losing the focus of a united Christian cause. Stewart had to defend the Christian Mobilizers, who were being criticized by Father Coughlin for their public violence. Stewart claimed that Coughlin was misinformed about the Mobilizers and that

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he was going to make sure that the priest heard the truth about as organization which was worthy of Coughlin's support.[62] "The Christian Mobilizers had been the first Christian organization to come out openly on the street corners fighting Communism at its own game," Stewart told his fellow Fronters.[63]

Frank Gleason, who chaired at least thirteen Christian Front street rallies at Columbus Circle and spoke at several more, willingly accepted Stewart's explanations. Although Gleason replied that he did not disapprove of actions taken by Christian Mobilizers, he was not happy that some of them were selling *Social Justice* for their own personal gain.[64]

One week after Stewart's speech, other Front leaders urged the Front to disassociate with the Mobilizers. Brooklyn unit chair Fred Kemp insisted that the CF was not connected with the Christian Mobilizers in any way and had no desire to be associated with any of these "rabble rousers or Jew-baiters." His Christian Front unit would bring the true facts about communism to the American people and conduct themselves in a "Christian gentlemanly manner."[65]

Other Fronters were anxious about the Mobilizers' confrontations with the police. The Mobilizers' role in the August 19th parade was probably a factor in its cancellation, and the Front was not happy. The week before the parade, Edwin Westphal whipped a crowd into a frenzy of anti-Semitic violence at Crimmins Avenue and 141st Street, and a heckler berating him was severely beaten. Free-for-all fist fights between Mobilizers and those coming to the aid of the heckler followed. Police Captain John T. Collins of the Alexandria Street station managed to reach the platform and announced, "This is an unlawful meeting because of the unruliness of the crowd. I therefore order you to

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disperse." Several Mobilizers, chanting, "Shut up, you Jew" rushed the platform before being beaten back by police. Mobilizer Benjamin Stafford struck Collins in the jaw, and when Sergeant Robert McAllister went to aid his captain, the officer was hit behind the left ear with a lead pipe by another Mobilizer, Louis Popchinsky. Both Stafford and Popchinsky were hauled off to jail, but not before the crowd of five hundred grew to two thousand at the station house.[66]

A few days later, William Massey spoke at a Christian Front street rally at 204th Street and Perry Avenue in the Bronx. Massey wanted to make it very clear that the Front was in no way connected to other Christian organizations that engaged in violent confrontations with the police, obviously meaning the Mobilizers. He promised that the Front would co-operate with the Police Department at all times. Organizations not fitting the Christian Front's brand of unity were deemed to be falsely Christian, derisively referred to as "would-be" Christian. Nevertheless, it was impossible to distinguish between the two because so many Fronters were members of the other groups.[67]

* * *

As parishioners of St. Benedict's Church were leaving Sunday morning mass on September 10, 1939 they were confronted about half a block away from the church by Christian Front Queens Unit leader Daniel Kurtz. Kurtz implored them to buy *Social Justice* and support Father Coughlin. He also distributed a flyer requesting that they come to the Catholic War Veterans Hall to receive a copy of the Christian Index. Kurtz's plan was to return to the same spot the following Sunday to speak for five minutes after the morning and noon masses.[68]

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Later that same day, after the noon mass at Our Lady of Perpetual Help (located several blocks away from St. Benedict's), Kurtz repeated his pleas outside that church. To gain attention to his cause, he read the first page of that week's *Social Justice* to exiting parishioners, which discussed LaGuardia's Secret Police spying on Christian police officers. He told the approximately seventy-five people who were listening that the Christian Front already had five million Christian soldiers almost completely organized, and these Christians would take the fight to the communists. Like any 'army' recruiter, he promised anyone joining a command position in a flawless organization — there would be "a leader for each city block who would be in command of the Christians on that one block, and in that unit fashion the organization was going to operate smoothly." Kurtz was offering Catholics the opportunity to take destiny into their own hands — to protect themselves because no one else was willing.[69]

The next day, at the weekly Christian Front meeting held at Sangerbund Hall, Kurtz told his fellow Fronters that he had taken it upon himself to "awaken Catholics in relation to Father Coughlin" by holding street meetings in front of Richmond Hill's Catholic churches and he would continue to do so every Sunday morning from this point forward. He was tired of so-called Catholics, like the *Voice of Human Rights*, spreading their false propaganda about the CF. His program for waking-up Catholics to the realization of Father Coughlin's greatness came just two weeks after he had proclaimed that Protestants were the real Coughlinites.[70]

The Christian Front's Central Headquarters was not happy with Kurtz. They issued a letter, which was read aloud at the following week's members-only Sangerbund Hall meeting that severely criticized Kurtz for holding meetings in front of Catholic

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churches on Sundays. Kurtz, defending himself in front of his fellow Fronters, said headquarters was misinformed about the topics discussed. He was willing to take the blame, even though he only had the good of the organization in mind, and the only topics he had discussed was the lack of interest by Catholics in the cause and their failure to buy *Social Justice*.[71] But that was exactly the point — if the Christian Front's goal was a unified Christian movement, no matter how deluded that perception was in actuality, their members could not publicly attack other Catholics.

Daniel Kurtz said the dispute with "Central Headquarters" had resulted in a decline in morale after they cancelled four of his scheduled meetings. He was positive that Floyd Caridi was going to replace him as the head of the 1,200-member Queens Unit. Caridi, who was in attendance, did not in fact take over, but did defend "Central Headquarters" by claiming it was not their policy to cancel meetings. He was critical of Kurtz's leadership, giving him a back-handed compliment by saying the Queens Unit was doing fine, but that it should have a larger audience at its members meetings. He said that sometimes the stress of leadership was too great and the leader loses control.[72]

During the autumn the Queens Unit quickly became a symbol of Christian Front in-fighting. At the root of the problem was its demagogic leader, Daniel Kurtz. Higher-ranking Unit members were becoming dissatisfied with the lack of attendance at the membership meetings, so headquarters extracted promises that the roster would be checked to see who was and was not attending. However, there were no real repercussions. Kurtz, though he had said his goal was 100,000 members, brought in only ten new members to Sangerbund Hall by September 25. He told his new recruits that each new member must attend at least one street meeting. His enthusiasm somewhat

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revitalized, Kurtz said he needed additional speakers because it was the intention of the Queens Unit to hold five street meetings every night with new literature, rather than the usual one per night. Kurtz told fellow members that there would be no apologies given for actions at the outdoor meetings, implying he intended to continue use of abusive language and to raise the possibility of violence. This was in defiance of an edict issued by Caridi the week before.[73]

Front leadership was increasingly concerned with bad publicity, especially if it was connected to anti-Semitism. The parade debacle, the well-publicized Christian Mobilizer police riot, the flood of anti-Christian Front/anti-Coughlin articles and pamphlets (by Alson Jesse Smith, James Wechsler, Roy Tozier, and Robert Lewis Taylor), and a public warning to Francis Cardinal Spellman by *Equality* which appeared in the *New York Times* calling his attention to the association between the Christian Front, the Paulist Fathers and the German-American Bund, and the beginning of the war in Europe all contributed to this concern. The Front wanted to present themselves as 'true Americans' and were feeling the pressure of their bad press.[74]

Caridi felt that the problem was that the CF was being blamed for the Christian Mobilizers' subversive activities and he wanted to make clear to the membership that the Front was not connected with *any* other organization that held street meetings. He warned street speakers to be careful about criticizing Jews and using such terms as: "hooknoses, cucumbers, eagle-beaks, etc." According to Caridi, the proper way to refer to Jews was using the euphemism "anti-Christian." Speakers were granted permission to criticize Rabbi Wise, *The Jewish Examiner*, and the Jewish War Veterans. Using the term "Buy Christian" was now being discouraged in favor of more coded language: to

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"support the advertisers of the Brooklyn Tablet." There was also fear of being investigated. Speakers were told to be wary of references to LaGuardia because officers of the NYPD's Alien Squad were at their meetings.[75]

The Secretary and Treasurer of the Christian Front, Walter Ogden, even refused requests for collections for jailed Fronters Ralph Ninfo and Joe Leveque to avoid any public controversy. Ogden said Ninfo was "hot-headed" when he was arrested at a non-Christian Front, Christian Citizens Committee sponsored meeting. Ogden wrote a letter to Ninfo's father, a meeting between Ogden and Ninfo's mother, and Ogden's promise to attempt to reduce the sentence barely convinced other CF members that the jailed Fronter was not being totally abandoned by the organization. Actually the Front was the last group Ralph Ninfo's father, Bronx city councilman Salvatore Ninfo (American Labor Party) and general organizer for the ILGWU, wanted to hear from. The councilman said he wished his son was "put in jail for the rest of his life. This boy has been dragged into this by the Coughlinites and the Christian Front."[76]

Kurtz only abided by instructions issued from "Central Headquarters" one more week. He told members at the weekly Queens Unit meeting (which by October 1 numbered only forty) that these instructions must be followed in a "militant manner." He probably did not mean even to go this far, and made this statement only because Walter Ogden was in attendance. The Front, at least in Queens, was becoming more and more ineffective. Intermissions at members-only meetings were cancelled because too many people left. Members were not paying their dues, leaving the Unit in debt after it purchased a mimeograph machine to print flyers and leaflets. Speakers lacked and enthusiasm, and were becoming fewer. One suggestion by Raymond Dalton was to

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exchange members between the Queens and Brooklyn units to get more potential speakers. Communists were blamed for taking notes at street rallies and then requesting the speakers to be arrested (which was probably true, although the complainants were not necessarily from communists, but rather the general run of angry New Yorkers).[77]

A lack of money plagued the Christian Front, and was becoming an issue at street rallies during the latter part of the summer. The Brooklyn Unit had only ten dollars in its treasury by October. Considering the financial make-up of much of the Front's membership, this should not be all that surprising in the midst of the Depression. However, as the Front expanded throughout New York in 1939, their expenses increased as well and they could not afford items such as circulars and placards that would help make them a credible public force. Members complained that they were not compensated for driving speakers across the city, from Queens to the Bronx, and vice-versa. George Gunning asked one audience for money for speakers, stands, flags, and bunting. To recruit speakers, lawyer and Fronter Paul Antonio promised a Columbus Circle crowd that there was money to be made if you were a good public speaker. He claimed he was a lawyer and he was paid every time he spoke in court; therefore, good speakers get paid. Some members turned to the Front for financial support. One unidentified person was in dire need of fifteen dollars and promised he would pay back the treasury as soon as he could. At the same meeting, John Geis announced that money was needed for the costs of their latest demonstration. Unfortunately for them, there was only $14.30 left in the treasury. A collection from the two hundred members in attendance was taken for both the destitute member and demonstration costs. The total amount collected was $21.15.[78]

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As the Christian Front was loosing momentum because of in-fighting and public attacks during August and September, so recruiting new members became an increasingly important purpose of their street rallies. Seventeen different speeches in August and twenty-one more in September specifically mentioned recruiting strategies. Prior to those two months, it was hardly mentioned at all. Dances were held in the early spring to encourage youths to join before August, but once the CF began fracturing there was almost a sense of desperation in their recruiting pitches. Members were criticized for their activities at the outdoor meetings and for a lack of recruiting, which became the single most important factor in street rallies. "Speakers' sessions" were held every Tuesday in Prospect Hall (Brooklyn) to teach members how to address crowds and recruit. Trying to distance the Front from violence, William Bettinger told a crowd of three hundred in Queens that the Christian Front preferred "fighting men to fight with their voices, not their fists." Curiosity seekers were discouraged from the street rallies. An angry Daniel Kurtz chastised one crowd by yelling that "these meetings were not for entertainment, but to recruit new members for the Christian Front!"[79]

Daniel Kurtz and his Queens Unit were the most active recruiters, mostly in Jamaica, Hollis and Queens Village. Kurtz was frantic about organizing his 100,000 men Christian Front army and making sure his Unit had the largest circulation of *Social Justice* in the city. His plan? He was convinced he would succeed beyond a shadow of a doubt once the CF manned its recruiting stands with members wearing overseas caps. Other self-delusional unit leaders tried to convince potential recruits that their organization was an imposing force— that the movement which then existed in seventeen states that would move into thirty-two states by October 1, 1939 (the speech was made on

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August 29). The "great strides" made by the Queens Unit during the previous two months were trumpeted, but more speakers were needed to volunteer their time (speakers were not paid, nor could they have been considering the lack of funds). When questioned as to why all of their meetings were on the streets, the answer was simply stated because the CF could not get halls. The implication was that they were barred from halls because Jews kept them out. The reality was that they could not pay the rent.[80]

The Christian Front in Queens was on the verge of collapse by the middle of October 1939. Raymond Dalton pleaded with the Front members at the weekly Sangerbund Hall meeting that Christian unity was required to defeat communism. But there was no unity. He said arguments were no longer going to be tolerated at these members-only meetings and anything said must never be repeated. Dalton did not want any signs of weakness exposed to the enemy. His pleas went unheeded.[81]

The moment Dalton left the podium that night, up stepped Daniel Kurtz. His one week of obedience to CF Headquarters ended as soon as he began to speak. "The Brooklyn and Queens Units will no longer take orders from headquarters. Those Units will be under the leadership of Cassidy, Gunnison, and me." Kurtz declared war on the "subversive forces" within the Queens Unit attempting to remove him from the leadership. "I organized the Queens Unit on June 27 without the help of headquarters" and there was no way he was going to turn it over to Floyd Caridi, who was had been appointed leader of the Unit in a September 12 letter sent by headquarters. He told the audience that Caridi did not know anything about organizing an army and refused to "pussyfoot as to the order received" about patronizing the *Brooklyn Tablet* advertisers.

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There was to be no coded language in Kurtz's Christian Front: "I will tell the audience to Buy Christian and I will praise the German-American Bund!"[82]

Chart 25: Christian Front Recruiting by Date, 1939

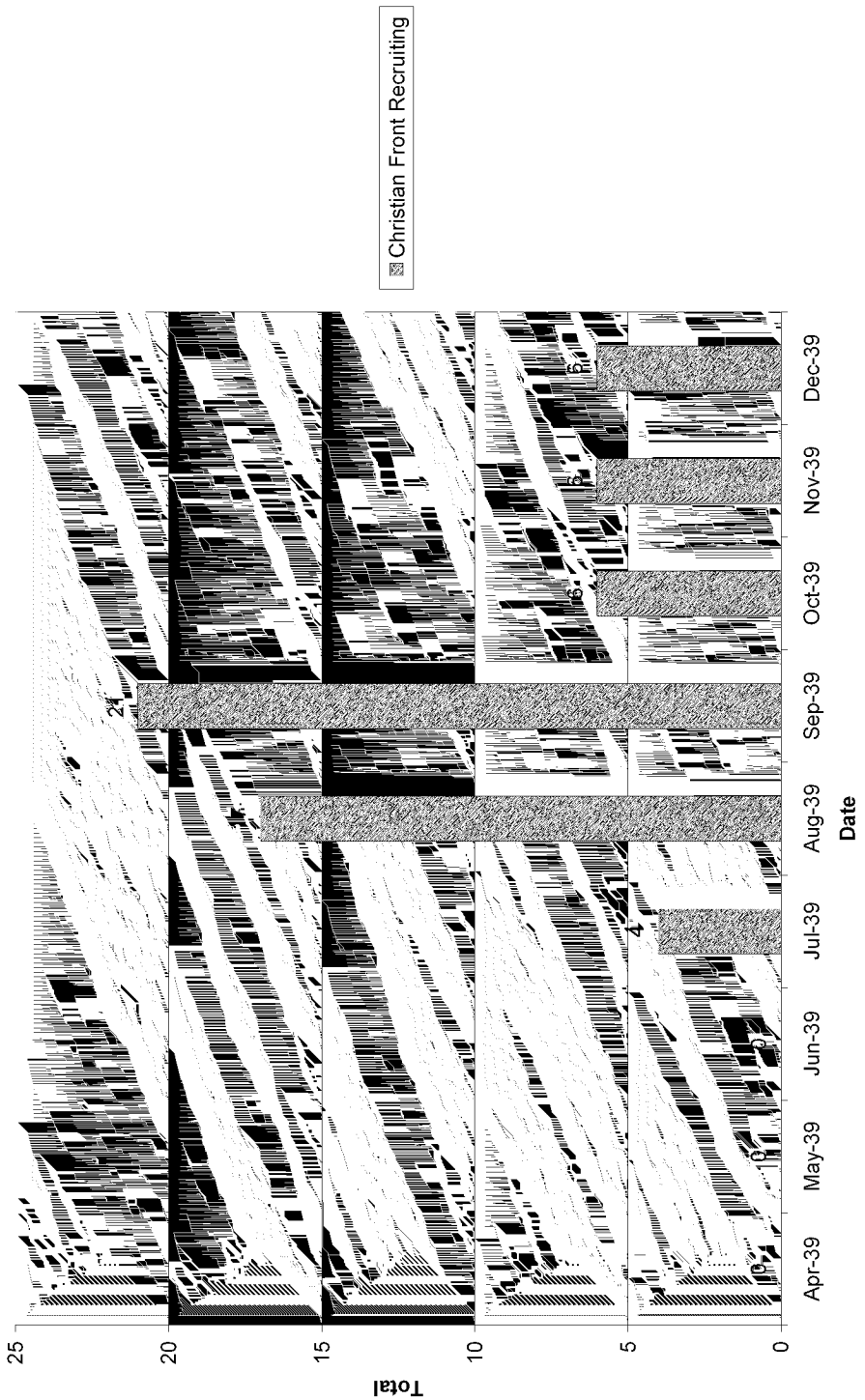

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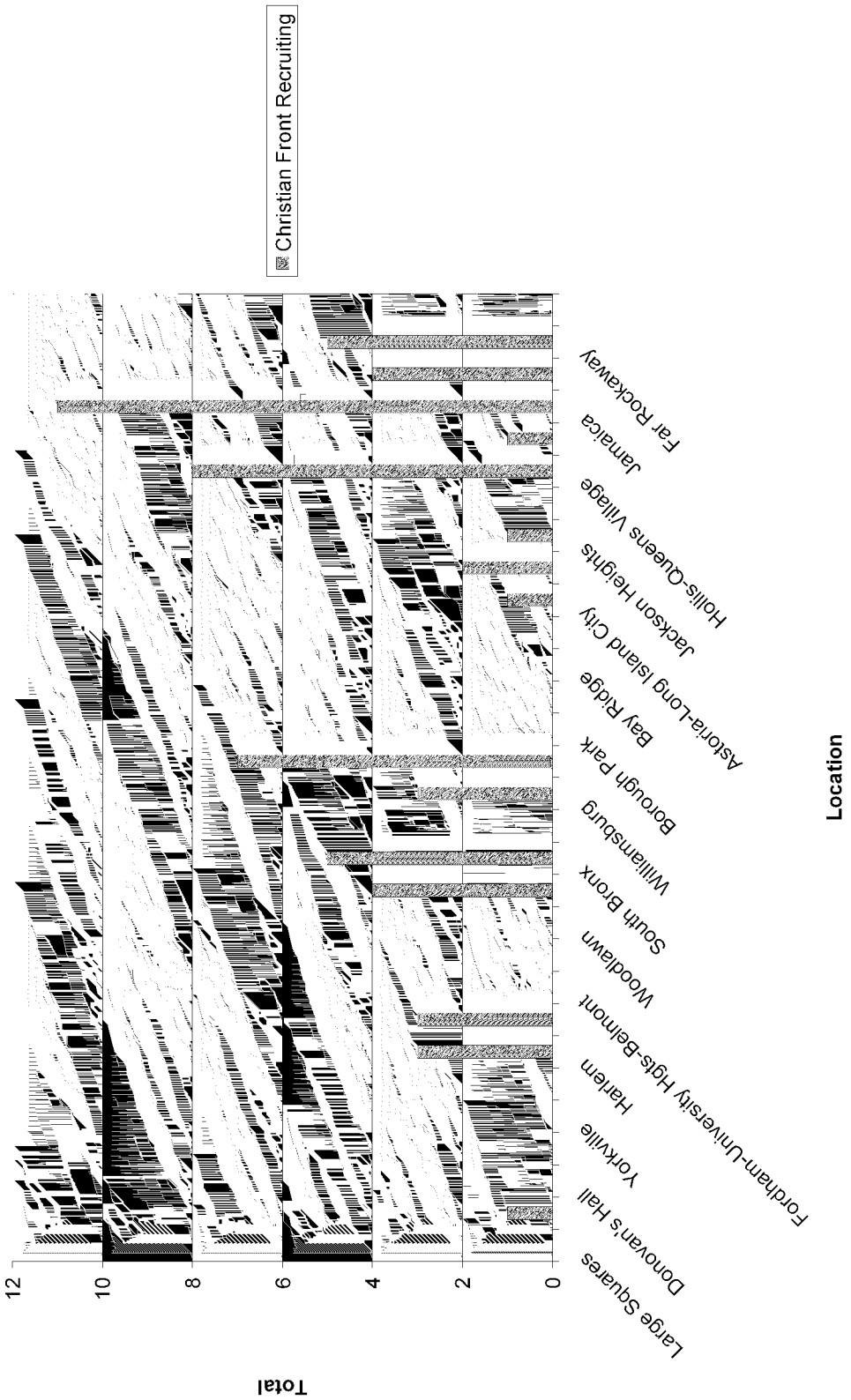
Chart 26: Christian Front Recruiting by Location, 1939



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Frank McCoy, the Queens Unit secretary, who had driven Kurtz to the infamous Far Rockaway meeting where Kurtz "stared down" the thousands of Asiatics, demanded that Daniel Kurtz leave the chair because of refusal to establish an arbitration board (appointed by CF members or headquarters) to solve the dire problems faced by the Queens Unit. The Unit was behind in its expenses and Kurtz was not listening to anyone to solve its problems of recruitment and income.[83]

The fighting continued. Fred Kemp, who was named temporary chair of the Brooklyn Unit when John Cassidy was out of town (for no other reason than Kemp was always available because he was unemployed) fought with Cassidy over the Brooklyn Unit's membership list. On several occasions Cassidy attempted to retrieve the membership list from Kemp to return their Front applications to the members, thereby eliminating any record of their Front membership. Kemp refused to surrender the list to Cassidy, telling him that it was given to "the proper people." Accompanied by two henchmen, Cassidy visited Kemp's home and later confronted him at Prospect Hall. Cassidy was desperate to get the list to eliminate any record of membership that could later haunt the Fronters. When Cassidy attempted to retrieve the list from the female landlord at the office rented by the Brooklyn Unit, she demanded payment of $90 for back rent. The cash-strapped Cassidy offered her $79. After taking the money, she told Cassidy he did not have the list. Kemp resigned from the Brooklyn Unit, taking his following with him into a newly formed Flatbush Unit. Cassidy learned of this "underground work," which he viewed as an attempt to remove him from leadership, and disbanded both the Flatbush and South Brooklyn Units, vowing to discover who was responsible for this covert action. Several Brooklyn Unit members were then kicked-out

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from the Front because they attempted to "capitalize on the organization" for personal, ambitious gain.[84]

Why were some Christian Front leaders, especially Cassidy, so worried about the membership lists? One can only speculate. If he knew of plans for the events of early 1940; Cassidy may have been concerned that the plots of the Brooklyn Sports Club would be exposed. Or, the lists could find their way into the hands of more violent nativist Christian organizations, such as the Bund, or even the Klan. Catholic Fronters certainly would not want to have their names and addresses in the hands of anti-Catholics, nor would they want their names associated with groups that were likely to be investigated by the government — especially the Bund or Klan.

Marcel Honore, president of the Christian Front, attended this debacle. Not much of a speaker, Honore in his broken-English questioned Kurtz. "How long have you been a member of the Christian Front?"[85] Kurtz responded, "One year." Honore told Kurtz, "The Christian Front was organized two years ago with a few men who are still members of the Queens Unit. Headquarters receives half of the dues of the Unit … If members wish to not be associated with the organization they should return their cards to headquarters and they will receive their applications back." The implication was that Kurtz should leave the organization.[86]

Kurtz angrily responded to Honore, "The same tactics were being used here as were used to demolish the 59th Street Unit (referring to Columbus Circle), and that I am still the Unit's leader, I will conduct street meetings, and form my own army."[87] Raymond Dalton, closely allied with Kurtz, returned to the podium to support his friend.

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He too attacked headquarters, and embarrassed Honore by telling the audience that the Front's leadership never helped speakers who were in need or were arrested.[88]

The fighting in Queens lasted another three weeks. Fred Kemp planned to have multiple units throughout Brooklyn and Queens with their own advisory boards to avoid a "one man dictatorship," implying that this was Kurtz's leadership style. Using the most disparaging terminology he could think of, Kemp described Kurtz's control as "Semitic tactics," which could not continue if the Front wanted to continue to organize.[89]

John Cassidy was invited by Daniel Kurtz to attend the Sangerbund Hall meeting on October 30 to discuss the friction within the Queens Unit and to debate Kurtz's future as its leader. Cassidy had met Kurtz six weeks earlier and had no intention of taking sides in the debate. He was there only to offer suggestions as to how the Unit and meetings should be run. As expected, Raymond Dalton defended his Kurtz, stating that Kurtz never received any cooperation. He was loudly shouted down by members who denounced Kurtz for his obnoxious way of conducting street meetings in front of Catholic Churches in Richmond Hill, which had led to a decrease in sales of *Social Justice.* They said he acted like a dictator; refused to form any committees; he as lambasted for his praise of the German-American Bund because the Front was against all foreign "isms." Front leaders in other cities were removed by the "Central Office" whenever their personal ambitions surpassed those of the group, so why not in Queens? One member suggested that Cassidy, who was becoming the *de facto* leader of the Front, be present at the next meeting to chair an election to determine the future of the Unit's leadership. The suggestion was unanimously accepted.[90]

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It was at this meeting that the mysteriously described "headquarters" or "Central Office" of the Christian Front met its demise. Front members were always hearing about it, but were never told of its actual location. Flyers always carried only a post office box address. St. Paul's had publicly disassociated with the Front months earlier, although a church employee (Walter Ogden) was still considered part of the Front's leadership. Cassidy was upset that the "Central Office" sent him to various cities to recruit and build the Christian Front, but that the CF did not pay for his trip (it was supposedly paid for by another, unnamed organization, maybe Coughlin himself?). Although he claimed not to have any political ambitions and he was content in his current position within the Front, Cassidy declared the "Central Office dead and no longer existing" because its leaders had deserted the organization in its time of need. He said they were only interested in money: the Central Office on 59th Street paid $50 per month rent, which was "exorbitant," Ogden lived in a penthouse, and Honore was always calling for dues (Cassidy did not feel dues were necessary and took members without dues or initiation fees). Cassidy also thought the Central Office's approach to fighting subversives with propaganda was a mistake because of its lack of money, which seemed strange considering his stance on collecting dues. His implication was that "subversives" and communists should be fought in more organized and militant way. One of the most significant developments stemming from Cassidy's feud with Kurtz was the organization within the Brooklyn Unit, under Cassidy's leadership, of a 120-member Sports Club. Of that, much more later. Cassidy also invited a former prominent army officer, who used an alias, to speak at Brooklyn Unit meetings.[91]

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By November 6, Walter Ogden had left the Christian Front. Marcel Honore stayed silent at a meeting he had with John Cassidy, and was on the verge of resigning as Front president. Fred Kemp, still challenging Cassidy's leadership, was still insisting that 59th Street was in charge and had promised Kemp the leadership of both the Queens Unit and Prospect Unit in Brooklyn. Cassidy was trying to avoid a revolution. Queens Unit members continued to denounce Kurtz because of his association with the Bund, which was associating the entire Front membership with the Bund. Not only did they want Kurtz deposed, they wanted him expelled for attempting to bring Bund policy into the CF, which could be construed as anti-Catholic. Frank McCoy insisted that Kurtz should be removed as leader because he was a member of the nativist American Nationalist Party, and he feared that the Queens Unit membership list would land in the hands of that group. Kurtz attempted to defend himself, blaming the now discredited "Central Office" with stealing his idea of creating a "Christian Front Army," and swearing that he never double-crossed the membership, as was rumored. He promised to allow Ray Dalton to act as chairman and that he would remain in the background as proof of his devotion to the cause.[92]

The attendance at the Queens Unit continued to decrease to pathetic levels after the fighting ended. The November 13 meeting attracted only twenty people; November 20 only fifteen. In normal Christian Front fashion, the excuses were that the Front was under attack by "subversive forces." This time, however, these forces were from within. Although the troublemakers were removed, they were still in possession of the membership lists, so members could not all be notified about the meetings (even though weekly meetings were always held at Sangerbund Hall since the Queens Unit's

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inception). Daniel Kurtz intended to resume his brand of street meetings and threatened to propagandize against the illegitimate "subversive group calling itself the Christian Front." Kurtz promised to return the CF applications and stated that plans were being made to contact all members. As soon as everyone was contacted and the mimeograph machine was recovered, committees would be formed and publicity would begin again. Several units could be expected in Queens by spring 1940.[93]

Ray Dalton, the temporary chairman, returned to Kurtz's plans of forming a local Christian merchant list and not "pussy-footing" around the Buy Christian slogan. With the Christmas season quickly approaching, the Brooklyn Unit planned to obtain a five ton truck to drive around Brooklyn and Queens with signs on it stating, "Christmas is for Christians" and "Buy Christian."

Marcel Honore's credibility amongst Fronters was destroyed as "new information" about him was "discovered" by a former clerical worker at the 59th Street office that alleged he was an organizer for the Communist Party in France. This offered a perfect explanation for the inaction by "headquarters" — the Front was infiltrated by communists. By the November 20 meeting, Honore had resigned from the Christian Front and John Cassidy was National Commander. The CF got back to business as usual as it waned about the Communist Party's plans to destroy the Front by having speakers arrested on false complaints, about the Jewish War Veterans and the League to Combat Fascism and Dictatorship trying to block the Front's "Buy Christian" campaigns. The CF warned members against listening to WCNW's Amy Ellis on weekend evenings because she criticized Coughlin.[94]

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The Sangerbund Hall meetings at the end of the year were just as poorly attended, much to the consternation of both Kurtz and Dalton. Both were convinced that a "Monster Mass Meeting" under the auspices of the Christian Front, scheduled for December 11 would attract a large crowd in the numbers reached before the bickering — many more than the twenty people on December 4. Three thousand flyers were supposedly distributed. Only sixty people showed up on December 11. Ray Dalton could not understand it since all the enemies of this organization who opposed its leadership had been expelled. A disappointed Daniel Kurtz was glad that at least the troublemakers were driven out of the organization and he still expected the CF to prosper. In attendance (and unknown to him, enjoying his final weeks of freedom before being arrested by the FBI) was Frank Malone who offered Kurtz some solace. Malone congratulated Kurtz on being such a hard fighter for Christianity, and for speaking on street corners every night in the face of the enemy. He said there had been similar trouble in the Brooklyn Unit, but the "bad ones were weeded out," as was done in the Queens Unit. It was only a matter of time before the Queens Unit would return to its membership of 1,500. Kurtz thanked Malone, noting that he did everything in the "name of Christianity" and under his newly reorganized leadership this dissension would not occur again.[95]

* * *

Nine days before his arrest by the FBI, John Cassidy was named National Leader of the Christian Front at Prospect Hall in Brooklyn. Cassidy thanked members for their cooperation in 1939 and wished them a Happy New Year. He reminded them that they had until February 2 to retrieve their membership applications; if not; their applications

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would be destroyed, so that there would be no record and no one would get into trouble or be arrested. Just two days before his arrest, after inducting two new members, Cassidy criticized a statement that the Christian Front was filled with troublemakers who had been arrested at street meetings. He denied that any speakers had been since the spring 1939. To avoid unnecessary legal troubles, no street meetings were to be held under the name Christian Front during the coming spring, unless they received permission from the directors.[96]

By the end of 1939, the Front's efforts to present itself as the embodiment and sole custodian of a Christian America had only pushed the group further to the extremist fringe of American politics. Despite its real weakness, the Front's opposition took at face value Father Coughlin's claim that New York City's Christian Front was "no longer a dream and it grows stronger, more courageous and determined."[97] The Christian Front's rallies on the streets of New York became so boisterous and paranoid about the Jewish-communist government's conspiracy against them that their fears became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Jewish defense groups, Fiorello LaGuardia, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation who all viewed the CF's version of Americanism as just as subversive as communism or Nazism took serious notice and were convinced – or claimed to be convinced – that the CF was indeed a powerful organization. Raymond Dalton and other CFers tried to live up to that assumption.

But actually its in fighting made the Front weaker than ever and completely insignificant in the scheme of American politics. Attendance at meetings toward the end of 1939 often numbered less that fifty. Dalton urged the twenty people gathered in Sangerbund Hall to "work as hard as the communists do to increase membership … the

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Christian Front has recently received publicity as a powerful Christian organization, and if the enemy saw the attendance at these meetings they would know the real truth."[98] That was the real truth, but the coming attack from its enemies, led by the FBI that would infuse new life into this lifeless corpse.

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Notes

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[1] "Minutes - Christian Front meetings," Christian Front File, AJCL.

[2] By this, I mean anti-Semitic rhetoric attacked Jews strictly on their religious beliefs; not because of any political or economic associations to communism or international bankers.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] The complainant in Mason's October 7, 1939 arrest was Harold Nametz of 50 Ocean Parkway, Brooklyn. The charges against Mason were dismissed.
Nathan Frankel and Byrnes MacDonald to Fiorello LaGuardia, "Final Report: Activities of Anti-Semitic Groups Within New York City, November 6, 1939," Christian Front file, FLP, Roll 19.

[5] Ptl. Francis L. Hillick to Commanding Officer, Third Division, Aug. 29, 1939, OCF.

[6] Curran, *The Challenge of the Pact and the Challenge of Social Justice.*

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] Mary Christine Athans, "The Fahey-Coughlin Connection: Father Denis Fahey, C.S.Sp., Father Charles E. Coughlin, and Religious Anti-Semitism in the United States, 1938-1954," diss., Graduate Theological Union, 1982, 107-141; Mary Christine Athans, "A New Perspective on Father Charles E. Coughlin," *Church History* (1987 56[2]): 224-235.

[9] *New York Times*, Aug. 17, 1936: 5.

[10] McCarthy 129.

[11] Floyd Kessler, "Anti-Semitism," *Light*, VII (September 1939): 5-6.

[12] *Brooklyn Tablet*, Dec. 3, 1938: 11.

[13] Police Report, April 17, 1939; Report of Meeting, Sgt. Roulston, 30 Pct., August 8, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 23, 1939, OCF.

[14] Police Report, May 11, 1939, OCF.

[15] The American Nationalist Party proclamation of September 25, 1935 included much of the same rhetoric as the Christian Front would use three years later. Included are anti-Semitic statements about Jewish control of the media, Jewish hopes of destroying Christian America, the existence of a Jewish state-within-a-state. The proclamation

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concludes, "Buy Gentile! Employ Gentiles! Vote Gentile!" American Nationalist Party file, AJCL.
A letter signed "E.J.," mailed to ex-Fronter Joe McWilliams, suggests that McWilliams start a campaign of "Vote Christian, Buy Christian, — avoid the shylock" after the leader of the Christian Crusaders was "silenced by the funk in city hall." E.J., letter to Joe McWilliams, undated, Joseph McWilliams Correspondence file, AJC.

[16] An example of this "grasping at straws" to prove inter-ethnic Catholic unity was a letter to the *Brooklyn Tablet* by Salvatore Marturano praising Father Curran, who defended Italians. The *Tablet* exalted this letter as a refutation of the impression that Irish Catholics did not care about the fate of other Catholics and it assured that Italians would aid Irish Catholics in their battle against communism. *Brooklyn Tablet*, Feb. 25, 1939: 8.

[17] McCarthy 138.

[18] This was announced at an early CF meeting in St. Paul's, on August 4, 1939. "Minutes - Christian Front meetings," Christian Front File, AJCL.

[19] Curran, *The Challenge of the Pact and the Challenge of Social Justice.*

[20] Police Report, Sept. 19, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 26, 1939; Police Report, Nov. 22, 1939; Police Report, Jan. 6, 1940, OCF.

[21] Alson Jesse Smith 18-19.

[22] Police Report, Aug. 29, 1939, OCF.

[23] Carlson, p. 153; Michael Sayers and Albert E. Kahn, *Sabotage! The Secret War Against America* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1942) 142; Police Report, June 30, 1939, OCF.

[24] American Nationalist Party file, AJCL.

[25] Carlson 42-43.

[26] "AJC Memorandum and Collection of ANP flyers," American Nationalist Party, Box 59, 1929-1944 file, ASE-AJC; Police Report, July 11, 1939, OCF.

[27] "AJC Memorandum," American Nationalist Party, Box 59, 1929-1944 file, ASE-AJC; "Memorandum on the Christian Front," Christian Front file, AJCL.

[28] A July 2, 1942 AJC memorandum indicates that a large proportion of ANP members were also German-American Bund members and that the association between the two groups had been strong since 1938.

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John Cecil spoke at three CF meetings in July 1939: at Tri-Boro Palace, Donovan's and Springfield Boulevard and Jamaica Avenue.
AJC Memorandum and Collection of ANP flyers, American Nationalist Party, Box 59, 1929-1944 file, ASE-AJC; Police Report, July 11, 1939; Report of Meeting, Lt. Judge, 18th Pct., July 14, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation, July 28, 1939, OCF.

[29] AJC Memorandum and Collection of ANP flyers, American Nationalist Party, Box 59, 1929-1944 file, ASE-AJC; American Nationalist Party file, AJCL.

[30] Qtd. in Carlson 85.

[31] "Christian Mobilizers: Their Purpose, Aim and Activities," 1; "James McWilliams;" "Joseph McWilliams biography," 1; "Memorandum: Joseph Ellesbury McWilliams," Joseph McWilliams file, AJC.

[32] Taylor 37-38.

[33] There is a photo of McWilliams and Kuhn together in the Joseph McWilliams file at the AJC. Joseph McWilliams biography; "Christian Mobilizers: Their Purpose, Aim and Activities," Joseph McWilliams file, AJC.

[34] MacDonnell 38; "Memorandum: Joseph Ellesbury McWilliams;" "Joseph McWilliams biography," 1-2, Joseph McWilliams file, AJC.

[35] "Joseph McWilliams biography," 2, Joseph McWilliams file, AJC; Police Report, June 30, 1939; Police Report, July 5, 1939; Police Report (2), July 5, 1939; Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, July 12, 1939, OCF.

[36] "Christian Mobilizers: Their Purpose, Aim and Activities," 2, 6; "Joseph McWilliams biography," 1, Joseph McWilliams file, AJC; Nathan Frankel and Byrnes MacDonald to Fiorello LaGuardia, Final Report: Activities of Anti-Semitic Groups within New York City, November 6, 1939, Christian Front file, FLP, Roll 19; Taylor 32-33; *Who are the leaders of the "Christian Mobilizers"?* New York: Organization Council of the Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League to Champion Human Rights, Inc., 1939, SHSW.

[37] In 1940, McWilliams was the American Destiny Party candidate for representative from the 18th Congressional District (Yorkville section of Manhattan). He received support from Congressman Jacob Thorkelson, who delivered a speech to the Christian Mobilizers on March 4, 1940. The ADP barely received 1,000 votes in the election. *App. Cong. Rec.* May 6, 1940: 2707-2727. MacDonnell 38.

[38] *App. Cong. Rec.* August 2, 1939: 4043. Christian Front File, AJCL. "Christian Mobilizers: Their Purpose, Aim and Activities," 2, Joseph McWilliams file, AJC. Taylor 32-33.

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[39] George Deatherage led several Christian and nationalistic fascist organizations, including: the North & South American Fascist Union, American Nationalist Confederation, six different, and the Knights of the White Camelia. Deatherage's world vision and ultimate plan was to create and expand a Nazi state throughout North and South America, integrating Canadian, American, and Mexican Nazi groups. In 1938, he called the swastika the "real Christian Cross" and adopted terror and fear tactics that he had learned as a member of the KKK, which included swastika burnings. See Ribuffo and Carlson 139-41.

[40] The mass meeting in Innisfail Park is detailed in Leonard V. Finder, "The Un-Christian Front: Mobilizers of Violence in New York," *The National Jewish Monthly*, October 1939: 42-53, Charles Coughlin file, TSC-DBA.
"Christian Mobilizers: Their Purpose, Aim and Activities," 3, 5-7, Joseph McWilliams file, AJC; "Joseph McWilliams biography," 2-3, Joseph McWilliams file, AJC; Police Report, June 16, 1939, OCF; Westphal qtd. in Carlson 88.

[41] This took place at the September 16, 1938 meeting. Fronter Hahn made these comments. "Minutes - Christian Front meetings," Christian Front File, AJCL.

[42] Van Nosdall also sold the *Brooklyn Tablet, Blackshirt, Liberation, Deutscher Weekruf and Boobachter*, and *National American*. Christian Front file, AJCL. Carlson 5; Christian Front List; Police Report, April 19, 1939; Police Report, July 26, 1939, OCF.

[43] Police Report, Sept. 19, 1939, OCF.

[44] "Christian Mobilizers: Their Purpose, Aim and Activities," 3, Joseph McWilliams file, AJC; Alson Jesse Smith 15.

[45] Bayor 101; Michael Beirne, box 614, vol. VII: 3831; Denis Healy, box 612, vol. I: 109, box 612, vol. II: 582, USAJP-CCF; "Memorandum, September 20, 1939," Joseph McWilliams file, AJC.

[46] Police Report, Oct. 31, 1939; Police Report, Jan. 6, 1940, OCF.

[47] Det. George Ballenstadt to Commanding Officer, Alien Squad, July 24, 1939; Police Report, July 24, 1939, OCF.

[48] *Ibid.*

[49] *Ibid.*

[50] "Christian Mobilizers: Their Purpose, Aim and Activities," 3, 7-8, Joseph McWilliams file, AJC.

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[51] Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, June 30, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation, Aug. 16, 1939, OCF.

[52] Carlson 62-63; Finder 53; "New York Meeting," *Commonweal*, Sept. 1, 1939: 429; Report of Meeting, Lt. Touhy, 18th Pct., & Det. Kuntz, Alien Squad, July 30, 1939, OCF.

[53] *Ibid.*; Police Report, Aug. 10, 1939; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation, Aug. 16, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 16, 1939, OCF.

[54] The parade was consistently identified in these letters as a "Christian Front" activity.

[55] Harry Heine, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, July 15, 1939; Rev. Leland Henry, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Aug.15, 1939; Marshal Berger, Hamilton Heights Jewish People's Committee, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Aug.15, 1939; Abraham Bunin, West Bronx Jewish People's Committee, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Aug.15, 1939; Jacob Spiner, Crown Heights Jewish People's Committee, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Aug.15, 1939; B. Greenberg, Bensonhurst Jewish People's Committee, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Aug.15, 1939; Asher Micowitz, Jewish People's Committee, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Aug.15, 1939; Pauline Liposky, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Aug.15, 1939; F.Cameuir, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Aug.16, 1939; David Freedman, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Aug.15, 1939; Donald Schwarz, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Aug.16, 1939; Fried Nicholas, Secretary of Waiters Union Local 2, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Aug.16, 1939; Rose Rabinowitz, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Aug.16, 1939; Sigmund Gropper, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Aug.16, 1939; Joseph Sutton, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Aug.16, 1939; Joseph Barone, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Aug.16, 1939; Joseph Curran, President, National Maritime Union of America, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Aug.16, 1939; S. Elliot Pye, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Aug.16, 1939; G.G. Fisher, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Aug.16, 1939, Christian Front file, FLP, Roll 18.

[56] Fiorello LaGuardia, letter to M. Feder, Aug. 16, 1939, Christian Front file, FLP, Roll 18.

[57] *New York Times*, Aug 18, 1939: 2.

[58] Police Report, Aug. 18, 1939, OCF.

[59] Police Report, Aug. 21, 1939, OCF.

[60] *Ibid.*

[61] Stewart was a member of the Christian Front as well, and was listed as a speaker at nine different CF meetings in the 1939 police reports.

[62] Police Report, Aug. 21, 1939, OCF.

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[63] *Ibid.*

[64] *Ibid.*

[65] Police Report, Aug. 29, 1939, OCF.

[66] Carlson 88; *New York Times*, Aug. 14, 1939: 16.

[67] Det. William A. Justy to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, Aug. 16, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 18, 1939, OCF.

[68] Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Bureau Criminal Alien Investigation, Sept. 11, 1939; Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Bureau Criminal Alien Investigation, Sept. 11, 1939, OCF.

[69] *Ibid.*

[70] Police Report, Aug. 29, 1939, Police Report, Sept. 12, 1939, OCF.

[71] Police Report, Sept. 19, 1939, OCF.

[72] *Ibid.*

[73] Police Report, Sept. 26, 1939, OCF.

[74] The New York Times mentioned Walter Ogden by name, who refuted the attack in a statement to the *Times* on September 30, 1939. Police Report, Sept. 19, 1939, OCF. *New York Times*, Sept. 26, 1939: 21; Sept. 30, 1939: 3.

[75] *Ibid.*

[76] Ralph Ninfo, using the alias "Ralph Smith," made a speech at Broadway and 72nd Street, where he said, "If I had my way I'd kill all the Jews in America. If I had $100,000 from Hitler I'd kill you all." Both he and Leveque went on a hunger strike after their "unjust convictions" for anti-Semitic speeches at Columbus Circle. So weak after their five-day hunger strikes they both had to be assisted into court by attendants. Magistrate Henry Curran spoke of the danger of these violent speeches and stated that Jesus Christ was a Jew and "these people who call themselves the Christian Front and Christian Mobilizers are dragging Christianity through the dust. They do not speak for Christianity." The next day they ended their hunger strikes and were sentenced to 75 days in the workhouse for disorderly conduct.
New York Times, Sept. 21, 1939: 28; Sept. 24, 1939: 3; Sept. 26, 1939: 21; Sept. 27, 1939: 15; Police Report, Oct. 3, 1939, OCF.

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[77] Police Report, Oct. 3, 1939, OCF.

[78] Police Report, July 26, 1939; Report of Meeting, Sgt. Roulston, 30 Pct., Aug. 8, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 16, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 21, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 29, 1939; Police Report, Oct. 31, 1939, OCF.

[79] Police Report May 31, 1939; Police Report, July 11, 1939; Report, Sept. 2, 1939; Report of Meeting, Lt. Kelly, 104th Pct., Sept. 1, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 5, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 12, 1939; Police Report, Oct. 3, 1939; Report of Meeting, Sgt. Tierney, 72nd Pct., Nov. 25, 1939, OCF.

[80] At a Sangerbund Hall meeting, one unidentified Fronter blamed Mr. Shapiro, manager of the Manhattan Center on 34th Street and 8th Avenue, for barring John Cassidy from speaking at an anti-war mass meeting organized by the New York Committee to Keep America Out of War, and threatening to cancel the meeting if Cassidy appeared. Shapiro was also accused of restricting the sales of the *Brooklyn Tablet* and prohibiting any other Christian organization that Cassidy was associated with from holding meetings at the Manhattan Center. The caveat, as it always was with the CF, was Shapiro's Jewish and ideological brethren, the Friends of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, who allowed to schedule a dance and rally at the Manhattan Center on October 6, 1939.
Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Alien Squad, Aug. 30, 1939; Police Report, Aug. 31, 1939; Det. Thomas Jenkins to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, Sept. 1, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 19, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 26, 1939, OCF.

[81] Police Report, Oct. 17, 1939, OCF.

[82] *Ibid.*

[83] *Ibid.*

[84] *Ibid.* Police Report, Oct. 31, 1939, OCF.

[85] *Ibid.*

[86] *Ibid.*

[87] *Ibid.*

[88] *Ibid.*

[89] It was Kemp's intent to have a seven, nine, or eleven man advisory board, which would select its own leader. The board leader would perform the work of organization, according to the CF's preamble, constitution and by-laws. If the leader did not fulfill his duties, he would be removed by the board. The board would also be required to submit

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reports to headquarters to avoid any misunderstandings of any one Unit and not disrupt other Units. Police Report, Oct. 24, 1939, OCF.

[90] Police Report, Oct. 31, 1939, OCF.

[91] Police Report, Oct. 17, 1939; Police Report, Oct. 31, 1939, OCF.

[92] Police Report, Nov. 7, 1939, OCF.

[93] Police Report, Nov. 14, 1939; Police Report, Nov. 21, 1939, OCF.

[94] *Ibid.*

[95] Police Report, Dec. 5, 1939; Police Report, Dec. 12, 1939, OCF.

[96] Police Report, Jan. 6, 1940; Police Report, Jan. 13, 1940, OCF.

[97] "Report on Anti-Democratic Statements of Father Coughlin and Social Justice," *Memorandum on Father Coughlin and Social Justice*, American Jewish Committee (1940), AJCL.

[98] Police Report, Nov. 28, 1939, OFC.

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Chapter 7 Guilty By Association: January – February 1940

"This would appear to be more a conspiracy against the New York Communist Party and its affiliates, than a seditious conspiracy against the authority and government of the United States."
- Charles Coughlin, January 29, 1940.[1]

Guilty by association is a story of two competing conspiracy theories that manifested themselves after the arrests of eighteen Christian Fronters by the federal government. The trial, which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, concerned a simple — yet fantastic — plot to overthrow the government. The conspiracy theories also were on trial. On one side, the New Dealers on the Left who despised the Dies Committee's anticommunist witch-hunt advanced a conspiracy theory that the Committee was a tool of pro-fascist anti-Roosevelt elements in the federal government. Conversely, the Right's conspiracy theory promoted the idea that the Left's only mission was to disgrace anyone who disagreed with the New Deal. The Christian Front — and those who were or were not associated with them — fell squarely in the middle of this tug-of-war. The grassroots extremism of the Christian Front was influencing Washington, if only as a pawn in a high level smear campaign over partisan politics.

* * *

Attorney General Frank Murphy ordered FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to investigate the Christian Front and other similar groups in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston during the 1939 FBI investigation of the German-American Bund.[2] The result was that the federal government began to the Christian Front as part of a much larger and more ominous pattern – a Nazi underground.

The Coughlinites' militant thug-like actions in the ethnic conflict of street politics was not in itself enough to draw the federal government into an investigation of the

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Christian Front. Nor were appeals by the Front's targets that the CF's tactics were becoming increasingly threatening throughout 1939 enough to make the case for federal involvement. The Federal investigation of the Front took a concerted campaign by a wide-ranging coalition of New Dealers, the Left, and interventionists.

The Left's response to the Coughlinite challenge was loud, vigorous, and effective. The July 22, 1939 issue of *The Nation* carried James Wechsler's "The Coughlin Terror," an outline of the six month evolution of the anti-Semitic movement in New York City. Wechsler concluded that New York's experience with Coughlinism had national significance. The City had become a laboratory for "fascist experimentation" because of its heterogeneous population, police inactivity against Christian Front hooligans, and the timidity of public officials. The CF was going to become a national problem.[3]

Wechsler's article did not go unnoticed by Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, and it put him on the defensive. He denied that the police had coddled Christian Front hooliganism. Arrests were made when arrests were warranted since inciting to riot and stirring up racial and religious hatred did not come under the protection of free speech — and such cases were dealt with properly by the law. He assured the city that the situation was under "proper observance," but did not go further. He could not reveal that the Criminal Alien Squad had been monitoring the Christian Front meetings throughout the city since April.[4]

Nor did the article go unnoticed by the Christian Front itself. Almost all of Floyd Caridi's speech on July 22, 1939 concentrated on "The Coughlin Terror" article. Caridi,

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along with his supporters, arrogantly claimed that he did not understand which terror was referred to in the article.[5]

It was painfully obvious to LaGuardia that his vision of New York as a city of peace for all races, creed, and colors was being threatened. How could this happen in LaGuardia's New York? The mayor was flooded with complaints from New Yorkers in every borough when the outdoor Christian Front meetings began. What was puzzling to the Jews of New York was LaGuardia's response to the problem — or more aptly stated his lack of response.[6]

The August 19 parade discussed in Chapter 6 was only one incident when LaGuardia's inaction puzzled Jewish New Yorkers. Jews feared panic and riots in their neighborhoods. The rallies conjured up visions of murder and pogroms. They complained about the distribution of anti-Semitic literature, police inaction, noise, the foreign roots of the movement, and criminals in the CF leadership. Some Jews said they had lost all confidence "in the integrity and efficiency of our police department" and others referred to the Front's behavior as "a usual Nazi method." They compared Christian Front tactics to "gangsterism," and, unconsciously using CF rhetoric, wrote that "this is America, not Spain." Members of the West Side Association of Commerce complained that the nightly rallies at Columbus Circle in front of the main entrance to Central Park, was ruining their quality of life: psychologically, residentially and commercially.[7]

LaGuardia was calculated in his response. The liberal and politically savvy mayor did not want to restrict the freedom of speech of any group or upset members of his Catholic constituency who might sympathize with Coughlin without acting like

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extremists or thugs themselves. He had to balance his response by assuring those who feared the Christian Front that action was being taken while at the same time keeping secret his police department's covert monitoring of the CF. The mayor revealed only that the police were gathering evidence to prosecute any serious violations of the law. He said arrests would be made for criminal offenses but never for exercise of free speech. LaGuardia reported that there were 238 cases of arrest or summons with respect to anti-Semitic activities in New York City between June 1939 and December 1939, and 112 resulted in convictions.[8]

The first official contact between the city and federal governments concerning the Christian Front was on September 26, 1939. LaGuardia contacted the US Department of Labor, Immigration and Naturalization Service, supplying District Commissioner, Rudolph Reimer with a schedule of meetings of groups whose speakers "launch attacks on religious and racial groups other than their own." The list included members of the Christian Front because the mayor believed that a number of them entered the country illegally. LaGuardia pledged that the New York Police Department would cooperate with any investigations. Reimer promised to handle it promptly.[9]

LaGuardia may have been prompted to get in touch with Reimer as a response to a communication from Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins. Perkins had forwarded to LaGuardia a letter from Murray Garsson, the author of the ADL's "Confidential Report on Outdoor Anti-Semitic Meetings," in which Garsson had written that "There is a small group, consisting in the main of foreigners who call themselves by various names but mostly 'The Christian Front,' who are advocating the overthrow of our government and are attempting to incite riots against certain groups of our citizens."[10]

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The federal government was already well aware the Christian Front well before Perkins received Garsson's letter. The Christian Front's activities in New York City had caught the attention of the influential, crusading anti-fascist Congressman Samuel Dickstein of New York.[11] Dickstein publicly asked why the Christian Front was not under federal investigation for openly calling for the overthrow of democracy. He stated that New York was overrun with such subversives who threatened bloodshed and sabotage. Dickstein warned that time was short if America were to escape an onslaught of European totalitarianism. To escape this fate, the nucleus of American fascists — the Christian Front —must be exposed. Dickstein equated the Christian Front with the Gestapo and he claimed it was financially supported by leaders directly in Nazi employ.[12]

* * *

The genesis for the federal government's interest in groups like the Christian Front began well before there even was a Christian Front. The decisions that led to investigation of the CF can be traced to 1934, when, on March 9 of that year, Roosevelt ordered FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to gather evidence on "Nazi groups, with particular reference to the antiracial activities and any anti-American activities having any possible connection with official representatives of the German government in the United States."[13]

As the international situation became more volatile in August 1936, the President decided he needed a regular source of comprehensive information on domestic subversion. Roosevelt had just proclaimed neutrality in Spanish Civil War and he needed advance warnings about any developments that could restrict his diplomatic options. He

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was especially worried about agitation or propaganda campaigns that might mobilize public opinion against his foreign policies.[14]

On August 24, Hoover met with FDR to discuss the question of subversive activities in the United States, particularly fascism and communism. It was Roosevelt's desire to obtain a "broad picture" of these subversive movements and their respective effects on the economic and political life of the country as a whole, as opposed the usual Secret Service investigations, which were concerned only with direct threats on the life of the president. And because the investigations went beyond any known violations of federal law, the probe was to be hidden from Congress. Hoover suggested that the appropriation of the FBI contain a provision that it might investigate any matters referred to it by the Department of State.[15]

The next day Roosevelt, following Hoover's suggestion, directed Hoover to investigate subversive activities in the United States, particularly fascism and communism, via Secretary of State Cordell Hull.[16] One month later, on September 10, Attorney General Homer Cummings verbally directed Hoover to proceed with the investigation of subversive communist and fascist activities, and to coordinate any information he found with the Military Intelligence Division and Naval Intelligence Division. According to Hoover, this was the authority he needed to proceed in the investigation. Hoover then reorganized his old General Intelligence Section from the Red Scare days to collect intelligence on subversive activities and have it available for ready reference.[17]

By 1938, the Department of Justice was fully engaged in gathering evidence on foreign subversive infiltration, especially into the armed forces. The threat of this "Fifth

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Column" became more credible to Americans after the Nazis seized power in Austria on February 16, 1938, and Franklin Roosevelt announced that the army, navy, and FBI were on the "greatest spy hunt ever." Later that month the FBI, led by agent Leon Turrou, uncovered an extensive Nazi spy ring in New York City.[18]

In April 1938, FDR warned the country of the danger of fascism within the United States. Those who still felt communism was a greater threat inside America's borders were put on notice about the President's priorities. Two weeks after Texas Representative Martin Dies repeated his 1937 call for the House to investigate all foreign "isms" (i.e. communism, fascism, and Nazism) the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) (known also as the Dies Committee), was launched in late May to investigate un-American propaganda. By November, FDR had appropriated an additional $50,000 for Military Intelligence, $50,000 for Naval Intelligence, and $150,000 for the FBI to handle counter-espionage activities.[19]

In January 1939, a few days after President Roosevelt appointed Frank Murphy as the new Attorney General, he told Murphy that the FBI should check into the organizations which were being investigated by the Dies Committee. The Bureau, along with Naval and Military Intelligence, immediately received more appropriations specifically earmarked for counter-espionage and sabotage, especially within the armed forces. The military got $35,000 and the Bureau got $75,000.[20] The FBI's new appropriation was not accompanied by any expansion of the FBI's statutory authority to conduct counterespionage operations. The Bureau still had to operate under a 1916 law that required the State Department to make a request to the Justice Department for such investigations, and the price they required was control over the investigations. A

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cumbersome committee, led by Assistant Secretary of State George Messersmith, convened to oversee the Bureau's counter-subversive work. Hoover protested and Murphy passed Hoover's concerns along to the president.[21]

Frank Murphy was more than obliging. Murphy found it especially sweet that he had an opportunity to upstage the Dies Committee, for which he had no love, holding Committee responsible for his 1938 loss of the Michigan governorship. At a January press conference, he announced that a Justice Department investigation of alleged violations of criminal statutes that had been exposed by the Dies Committee, including "Nazis, Communists, and certain other organizations operating in this country."[22]

On June 26, 1939, heeding Hoover and Murphy's advice, FDR dissolved Messersmith's interdepartmental committee and arranged that all investigative activity relating to espionage, counter-espionage, sabotage, subversive matters and neutrality law violations were to be handled by the FBI alone. The political purpose for all these investigations of foreign agents in 1939 was to demonstrate the government's concern over the "growing menace of foreign espionage."[23]

One day after Roosevelt's September 5, 1939, proclamation of neutrality in the European conflict, Murphy told the FBI to take charge of all investigative work in matters relating to espionage, sabotage, and violations of neutrality regulations. Hoover requested that all local law enforcement officers turn over to the nearest FBI representative any information obtained by them relating to such violations.[24] Theoretically, the Criminal Alien Squad in New York should have turned over the information they collected on the Front to the FBI at this point. Indications are that they did not.

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Two days later FDR declared a limited state of emergency in the United States. Included in the declaration was an executive order that the State Department was to guard against the spread of propaganda considered subversive to the American form of government by any foreign nation. This laid the legal groundwork for the federal government to move forward with prosecutions of groups they considered subversive, such as the Christian Front.[25]

FDR's early concern about American communism ebbed after the Soviet Union ordered American Communists to support him and his anti-Nazi diplomacy. However, his concern about American fascists grew, especially during his fight with the isolationists. And with Hoover diligently gathering information, by the end of the year, the FBI had files on the Silver Shirts, Father Charles Coughlin, Joseph McWilliams and the Christian Front.[26]

Frank Murphy told a December 1939 cabinet meeting he was ready to convene a federal grand jury in Washington to hear a number of espionage and subversion cases prepared by the Justice Department. Americans expected, Murphy held, to the best of its ability the government should prevent sabotage, violence, or subversive activities against the United States. The best way to deal with subversive activity, he argued, was according to the law, and so he wanted only experienced and responsible professionals in the fight against sabotage and subversive activities. Those professionals were to be found in the Department of Justice, and so he did not want the cases to fall into the hands of over-zealous, inexperienced amateurs like the Dies Committee.[27]

Murphy wanted to steal the headlines from HUAC and its Red-hunt, and he even hoped his actions would eventually persuade Congress to abolish the Dies Committee.

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To this end, he included some leftists in his sweep and indicted two businessmen and several persons allegedly associated with communists for failing to register as agents of foreign powers. Earl Browder, secretary of the Communist Party, and two other communists were indicted and eventually convicted for passport fraud.[28]

On January 8, 1940, Murphy turned his attention to the purveyors of religious hatred and announced that they too would be prosecuted. The most dangerous of these extremists were anti-Semites were those who camouflaged their hatred under a pose as "defenders of God, America, and the Constitution," Murphy wrote in *Christian Social Action* a month after he left office. He was describing the Christian Front.[29]

The arrests of eighteen members of the Christian Front in New York on January 14, 1940, and the subsequent FBI raids on Christian Front units in Philadelphia and Boston a few days later, were among Frank Murphy's last official acts before he became a Supreme Court Justice. But the sedition case that was supposed to end the Dies Committee did not, and Martin Dies was happy to take credit for the arrests by stating they were based on the work of his committee.[30]

* * *

Two weeks before the eighteen were arrested, *Social Justice* almost prophetically reported that "A recent survey shows that four well-placed saboteurs could wreck New York City." Two weeks later, in the issue that appeared the day after the arrests, Coughlin responded to Roosevelt's statements that dictatorships abroad had come about when democratic action to improve internal conditions had failed. Coughlin asked if it was not a "greater menace" to retain democracy when those who were elected were no longer capable of achieving peace, prosperity, and national happiness. The indictment of the Christian Front in New York was a sign for Coughlin that Roosevelt was no longer

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capable. Coughlin held the president responsible for incarcerating individuals he thought were working to improve America much more so than Roosevelt.[31]

The eighteen CF members arrested by the Federal Bureau of Investigation in New York were charged with conspiring to overthrow the government of the United States. The bizarre goal of the complex plot was to establish a right-wing dictatorship and eliminate the Jews. The conspirators decided that a communist revolution was not coming quickly enough to suit their purposes, so they had decided to bomb Jewish businesses, buildings, and neighborhoods along with the offices of the *Jewish Daily Forward*, the *Daily Worker*, and the headquarters of the League of Peace and Democracy. The Cameo Theater in Manhattan, where the "indecent" Minsky brothers were accused of subsidizing communists' movements by renting it out for films of communist achievements, was also to be bombed.[32] Several congressmen who voted for the repeal of the arms embargo were marked for assassination. This list included Representatives Emanuel Cellar and Sol Bloom. According to the FBI and the United States Attorneys, the conspirators believed these actions would launch a wide-spread anti-Semitic movement in America, which would force the federal government to protect the Jews with the army. That, in turn, would provide proof that the government was protecting one special minority and would demonstrate the Jews' powerful influence over the government. Street fighting and chaos would ensue followed by an uprising by communists and Jews, with the aid of some government officials. The result would be the long-awaited communist revolution in America. Only then would Fronters be in a position to launch their attack on the Communist Party. To block this Jewish-led communist revolution, the Action Committee (a militaristic off-shoot of the Christian

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Front with 200,000 – 300,000 members) would then step to the fore, defeat the communists, and establish a dictatorship.[33] Even *Social Justice,* referring to the plot of the Christian Front defendants, said "Truly, this is fantastic."[34]

The Department of Justice was feeling pressure to prove that it had uncovered the much ballyhooed Fifth Column in America.[35] The FBI's evidence that the Fronters were part of a Brown network was mostly circumstantial, centering on an exchange of literature, speaking engagements, and cross-attendance of meetings between known extremist groups. Nevertheless, proof by interlocking letterheads was quickly endorsed by Samuel Dickstein, Martin Dies, and the press. The selling of William Dudley Pelley's literature at Front meetings, and his relationship with William Bishop (who was a member of the Silver Shirts) was used by Samuel Dickstein to prove that Pelley was as guilty of treason as the Fronters. Dickstein tried to influence the trial by testifying before the Dies Committee in April 1940 that Pelley was the force behind General George Van Horn Moseley. Van Horn Moseley had also been, it will be recalled, William Bishop's choice to be dictator after the inevitable communist revolution because it would be necessary to institute martial law.[36]

The more immediate concern in the case was the threat to national security. The FBI was looking for any alliances between foreign agents and individuals with the means of carrying-out a violent attack. The prosecution theory was that the conspiracy hatched by the Front had far-reaching security implications because it had links emanating from the Nazi government in Germany and even Hitler himself. The FBI suspected several of those arrested of being Nazi spies. More than anything else, that was the basis of the FBI agents' investigation into the Christian Front. It was likely that the special agents

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focused their attention on the eighteen arrested specifically because of the Fronters' military backgrounds and associations with Nazi sympathizers, especially the German-American Bund.

And many of the Fronters did have military backgrounds. LaRoy Keegan was a Navy veteran. John Prout, Jr., Macklin Boettger, Andrew Buckley, Nick Ernecke, and Alfred Quinlan were all active members of the National Guard at the time of their arrests. Most had reached an officer's or non-com's rank: Quinlan was a sergeant and Buckley was an Army Sergeant in Regimental Headquarters Company of the 165th Infantry, New York National Guard (the company from which the ammunition was supposedly stolen). Prout, who initially enlisted in 1928 and reenlisted in 1931, was a captain in the 165th and had hoped to be appointed to West Point. Michael Beirne, who was not a United States citizen, was a member of the New York National Guard between 1929 and 1935, before being forced to resign after the Guard rated his character as "undesirable for retention in the New York National Guard."[37]

Both Prout and Beirne had reason to strike out against the military establishment; both were slighted by the military at one point in their careers. This, obviously, was not definitive evidence that they were trying to overthrow the government and may have just been coincidence. Nevertheless, it served to establish a possible motive for their alleged actions.

The United States government was also in the process of establishing that the German-American Bund's leaders were in contact with Nazi agents and had assisted in several agents' escape from the country to avoid apprehension during the FBI's investigation of the Christian Front. Fritz Kuhn denied direct contact with the Nazis (this

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would have been grounds for prosecution), but did admit that the Bund paid for members to go to Germany, albeit not for "[military] training purposes."[38]

The association between the Front and Bund was well known to just about everyone, including the government. Bundists and Fronters alike freely admitted their interaction. FBI sources and investigators believed that Fronter Nick Ernecke, who was also a member of German-American Bund and visited Camp Siegfried, had promised that the Bund was willing to aid the Christian Front-led revolution. Ernecke's idea was that the Front should do what Hitler did in the Beer Hall Putsch by taking over government buildings and utilities. The FBI took this information very seriously because they believed that Ernecke and William Bishop were German agents, and their co-defendant, Michael Vill had visited Hitler in Heimwehr. [39]

Macklin Boettger and Michael Vill tried to rebut the Bureau's accusations of espionage by fully admitting on the stand that they attended both Bund and Friends of New Germany meetings, but that they had done nothing wrong. Boettger admitted he had attended a German-American Field Day at Randall's Island sponsored by the Bund. Vill was a member of Friends of New Germany (FONG), which was particularly damaging because the group was controlled by Rudolf Hess and his US-based representative, Fritz Griebl, who was the focus of a Nazi spy case. Both Boettger and Vill defended themselves by saying they had realized the groups were un-American — and so they had rejected the groups. Boettger said it had been wrong for the German-American Bund to display the Nazi flag; even though he himself was photographed holding the flag at the Field Day. Vill claimed he left FONG because of its militaristic

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policy, which included the wearing of uniforms and displaying the Nazi flag in front of an American flag at FONG meetings.[40]

The FBI investigations extended the Brown web beyond Nazi associations. Informant Denis Healy told the Bureau there were thirty to fifty Falangists in New York, armed and ready to come to the aid of the Christian Front. Ex-Bundsmen and a squad of Irish Republican Army soldiers reportedly had been recruited by the Action Committee to form a military unit. The plan, advocated by Boettger, was approved by Bishop if the IRA agreed to come out against international Jewish bankers. Bureau investigators disproved any involvement of the IRA because it had heard rumors that Bishop was a German agent and the IRA did not want to ally themselves with the Germans.[41]

J. Edgar Hoover announced that the evidence supported every charge in the indictment. To counter skeptics, who stated seventeen men could not overthrow America, Hoover played on the fear of *communism*, by answering "it took only twenty-three men to overthrow Russia."[42]

* * *

As complex as the alleged conspiracy was, it paled in comparison to the maneuvers of partisan politicians trying to take advantage of the situation. From the moment the eighteen were arrested, New Dealers attempted to link all isolationists to this conspiracy, which they claimed was only the tip of a Brown/Nazi Fifth Column iceberg. The anti-Roosevelt camp used the arrests of the "eighteen boys" (as they were often referred to) as proof of communist and internationalist infiltration of the administration; or simply as a presidential ploy to move the country closer to involvement in the European war.

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The new Attorney General, Robert H. Jackson, picked up where Murphy had left off, and vowed that the investigation would be expanded to take any individual or group who may have aided and abetted these defendants or other subversive groups with similar ends. The investigation would expose anyone supplying monetary support or moral support to their programs. Jackson named an assistant to the chief prosecutor of the case, Harold Kennedy, to make sure the New Deal would be represented on the prosecution. This was O. John Rogge, Chief of the Criminal Division and one of Murphy's appointees. Rogge's assignment during the upcoming trial would be to furnish helpful evidence for Kennedy. This was the beginning of Rogge's long career as a legendary fixture in far right demonology.[43]

This "helpful evidence" went beyond the actual charges the seventeen defendants were facing in *United States of America v. John Prout, Jr., et al.*[44] Inside the courthouse, the defendants faced charges that they were active members in the Action Committee and between January 1, 1939, and January 15, 1940, they conspired to overthrow and destroy by force the government of the United States; and they conspired to steal, embezzle, purloin, and carry away personal property of the United States, specifically from the 165th Regiment of New York National Guard (in Manhattan) and the 2nd Battalion Naval Militia of New York State (in Brooklyn). Outside the court the real issue was who else could be shown to be somehow connected to the defendants.[45]

President Roosevelt was kept informed of the arrests and closely observed the case. Of particular interest was the Attorney General's office's attempt to establish a link between FDR's old enemy, Father Coughlin and the defendants from Christian Front.

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The January 20, 1940, issue of *The Hour* attempted to make this connection and Jackson sent the president a copy.[46]

The FBI had been trying to establish this connection since the middle of 1939. The New York field office had a file captioned, "Subversive Activity, Seditious Conspiracy, Theft of Government Property" in relation to *USA v. John Prout, Jr., et al.*, that explored the relationship between Coughlin and the Front. This relationship and the possibility that there was a wider relationship between Coughlin, the CF and the Catholic clergy in Brooklyn concerned the Justice Department on two levels: first, to examine how far the conspiracy to overthrow the government went; second, to determine if the Coughlinites' relationship with the Brooklyn Diocese was expanding their influence throughout the American Catholic Church. Coughlin's own words helped establish the link for the government. He had written CF leaders meeting at St. Paul's (dated May 3, 1939), to praise their excellent work in boosting the circulation of *Social Justice*: "You have no idea how closely I am watching New York and how happy I am at the progress you are making."[47]

The Bureau tried to establish these relationships for the prosecution through an analysis of the *Brooklyn Tablet*. The Bureau singled out an account of a May 1939 celebration of Franco's victory in Spain, attended by Coughlin's New York representative Bernard D'Arcy, at which Judge Herbert O'Brien read a letter from Coughlin, "More than at any other time we need a strong, virulent, sanctified group of Christian Americans who know how to interpret tolerance but also know the dangers of compromise. The time has arrived when defensive policies mean giving way to an offensive plan; for the best method of defense is always of offense." The Bureau was

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hoping to use Coughlin's words as proof that he ordered, or at least implied, that the Christian Front move forward with plans to overthrow the government.[48]

The Bureau used Coughlin's relationship with John Cassidy to establish his influence over the Christian Front in New York. The Bureau first learned of the affiliation between the two in *The Hour*'s 1939 issues. References to Coughlin and Cassidy's proclamations to utilize the "Franco way" if the civil authority failed to defend against "invaders of our spiritual and national rights," was seen as a threat of violence. The FBI obtained a letter dated September 13, 1939, from John Cassidy to Father Coughlin on Christian Front stationary, in which Cassidy referred to a recent visit to Royal Oak, at which time "we discussed a plan for the building of an organization along the lines that will result in the creation of a real defense — a mechanism against the enemy you have long been fighting."[49]

Cassidy's deference to Coughlin made clear strength of the Christian Front's ties to the radio priest were strong, since Cassidy wrote there was no one in the CF who contradicted Coughlin's ideas and "there are none who would not fight to defend the principles for which you stand." He disclaimed any political ambition because he felt it would weaken the CF as a whole, promising Coughlin, "I have made public pronouncements to the effect that at no time would I consider myself as an aspirant or a candidate for public office because it would tend to destroy the strength of the only organization at this time feared by the Communists." The Brooklyn leader was waiting for an order from the priest to begin the Front's physical battle with the communists. Cassidy wrote, "All I am waiting for is the signal to go and when and if I get it I shall never let up until the enemy quits or is beaten … If the fight is worth the battle, we are at

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your disposal and the men are waiting for the word." Cassidy promised that the Front would refrain from anything that would embarrass Coughlin or the cause of Social Justice.[50]

New Dealers were prepared to snare anyone associated with the CF, even before Robert Jackson's announcement on January 21 that he was expanding his investigation of the Christian Front. The obvious target was Coughlin. Another was Martin Dies, whose association — real or imagined — with Merwin K. Hart, President of the New York Economic Council and founder of the American Union for Nationalist Spain, was seen as a motive for Dies' eagerness to pursue communists and not fascists. The government's ultimate objective was to establish direct connections between the defendants and Coughlin, Hart, and ultimately Dies. The political purpose of the exercise was to discredit Dies and HUAC.

In January 1940 the Institute of Propaganda Analysis attempted to hold the Christian Front responsible for the existence of a Brown Network of fascist sympathizers and outright fascists. Their approach was to use even casual associations between groups and individuals to tie the conspiracy together, even though it had been the inability of these same groups and individuals to get along with one another that had kept them on the "powerless fringe of American politics."[51]

Gardner "Pat" Jackson, a civil libertarian from the Sacco and Vanzetti era (as a reporter for the *Boston Globe*) and former member of Roosevelt's Agricultural Adjustment Administration, used his position as head of Labor's Non-Partisan League to organize a clearinghouse of incriminating evidence against Coughlin, Hart and Dies. James Wechsler, who later became the quintessential liberal voice for the *New York Post*

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during the height of the Cold War, did most of the research and supplied documents to Gardner Jackson two days before Robert Jackson's announcement of the Front investigation. Gardner Jackson was the man who made the connections for Attorney General Jackson.

Before offering to supply the Attorney General's office with proof that Coughlin, Hart and Dies were all part of a Brown Network, Gardner Jackson had sent a telegram to the Attorney General's office the day Robert Jackson was appointed. The telegram was signed by high profile academics, civil rights and union leaders, including Franz Boas, Adam Clayton Powell and A. Philip Randolph, and stated that the Fronters under arrest "could not have undertaken their fantastic program without financial and moral support and other assistance from higher up." They pointed specifically to Coughlin's original call for platoons and public praise of the CF's "heroism." Coughlin's threat of using the "Franco way if necessary" to achieve goals "seems to us an incitement to the sort of seditious conspiracy for which the seventeen men including Cassidy are under arrest." They suggested that Coughlin's connections to John Cassidy ran deeper than public praise and an investigation of the priest was necessary.[52]

The day after sending the telegram, January 19, 1940, Thomas E. Stone, representing the sixteen eminent signatories, provided a "carefully verified" documentation and history of the Front to the Attorney General. The documents attempted to prove a relationship between Coughlin and Cassidy through the auspices of Bernard D'Arcy, (the New York distributor of *Social Justice*), and to show their association with other pro-Nazi groups, specifically the German-American Bund. The documentation Stone provided was a mixture of quotes from *Social Justice*, the *Brooklyn*

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Tablet, and Coughlin's radio broadcasts calling for a formation of a Christian Front in 1938, together with eyewitness accounts of Christian Front rallies. Most of the evidence was circumstantial at best. Stone wanted the Attorney General to focus on Cassidy's calls for the use of force beginning in 1938, and so Stone's "documentation" planted a seed in the federal prosecution's minds that the conspirators were involved in a long-standing plot under the direction of Coughlin.[53]

Stone claimed that these documents were the grounds needed to launch a federal investigation of Father Coughlin. O. John Rogge took the material very seriously and urged it be carefully considered in the current investigations. He requested that CF prosecutor Harold Kennedy investigate Stone's findings, and to keep Rogge apprised of any developments.[54]

For Gardner Jackson and James Wechsler, the lynchpin holding the Brown Network together was Hart, whose friendship with conservative big business leaders James Rand, Lamont DuPont, Alfred Sloan, and J.H. Alstyne looked suspicious (and dangerous) to interventionists and union leaders.[55] Prominent supporters and members of the Christian Front associated with Hart's organizations. Martin Dies associated with Hart. Therefore, by extension, Dies and his committee were part of the Front conspiracy or at least close enough for the purpose at hand.

The day Stone sent his material to the Attorney General's office Wechsler sent Gardner Jackson several letters and articles to buttress the connection between Hart and the Front. His proof was tenuous at best and based completely on circumstance. Most of it focused on Hart's association with American Patriots leader Allan Zoll and D'Arcy. The supposed proof consisted of letters written on Hart's committee stationary authored

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by Zoll and D'Arcy, their part in organizing a pro-Franco meeting that Hart chaired, and the fact that D'Arcy and Cassidy spoke at the same rallies. In a letter that D'Arcy sent to distributors of *Social Justice*, Hart's name appeared as chairman of the General Committee Mass Meeting for Americanism and he was also on the committee of the Christian Front's favorite war film, *Spain in Arms*. Also listed as executive committee members on the Mass Meeting were Front supporters Edward Lodge Curran, Lester Gray, Patrick Scanlan, and John Eoghan Kelly (who was also listed as the secretary and executive committee member of Hart's American Union for Nationalist Spain stationary). Since they did not suit his purpose, Wechsler ignored the names of non-CF supporters, such as Fordham University President Reverend Robert Gannon, SJ, who also appeared in the letterhead, though on the margin.[56]

If Wechsler could connect Hart to the Front he could make his case that the reason why the dangerous, anti-democratic Christian Front was never investigated by the Dies Committee was because of a close tie between Martin Dies and the Front through Hart. The packet sent to Jackson contained draft articles and materials specifically meant to discredit the Dies Committee. Wechsler also attempted to link Dies to Fritz Kuhn. Both attended a New York State Economic Council luncheon, as reported by the *New York Times* on December 9, 1938. This article was included in the packet, as was a program from the "Mass Meeting for America" held at Madison Square Garden on November 29, 1939, organized by Hart's committee. One of the featured speakers was Martin Dies. As far as the New Dealers were concerned, they were all part of the same Brown Web.[57]

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Next Gardner Jackson and James Wechsler brought the results of their research to a sympathetic ear in Congress. On the House floor on January 22 Congressman Frank E. Hook of Michigan spoke out against extending the Dies Committee and charged there was a connection between Dies and Hart and the Christian Front. Hook also accused Dies of being closely associated with William Dudley Pelley, leader of the anti-Semitic, pro-fascist Silver Shirts. He inserted into the *Congressional Record* letters between Pelley and David Mayne, the Silver Shirts agent in Washington, which mentioned the relationship and expressed confidence that Dies would not investigate Pelley, Coughlin, or the Christian Front. Hook got these documents from Labor's Non-Partisan League and the *Nation*.[58]

On the same day as Hook's speech, Gardner Jackson sent a letter Rogge a letter of introduction for Wechsler, explaining the Dies-Hart connection and endorsing Wechsler's research regarding this situation. Using Robert Jackson and Gordon Dean (of the Department of Justice) as references, Gardner Jackson explained to Rogge that his own interest in this matter was not based on personal animosity against any individuals, nor was it for monetary gain. Rather Jackson held "a deeply-held conviction that the way of the Christian Front and its encouragers is the way to a miserable life, spiritually, intellectually, physically and ever level, for all of us and our children."[59]

Jackson also instructed Wechsler to give Rogge three of Frank Hook's speeches, including the one Hook inserted into the *Record*. It is apparent that Hook's information did not simply come from the published work in the *Nation*, but was fed to him directly by Labor's Non-Partisan League. Jackson felt confident that the combination of

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Wechsler's research and the support of a congressman would push Rogge's investigation in a direction that would damage the Dies Committee beyond repair.[60]

The Coordinating Committee for Democratic Action (CCDA) in New York prepared a packet of materials for Gardner Jackson very similar to the letter the sixteen signatories sent to Robert Jackson on January 18. In fact, it was also signed by the same individuals because Jackson supplied the CCDA with the list. The difference was that the CCDA letter was sent after the Attorney General ordered a complete investigation of all those associated with the Front conspiracy. The CCDA letter advised the Attorney General that the seriousness of the charges warranted a "careful scrutiny" of all those who had consorted with the CF, even if their friends were in "high places." The only individual in "high places" named in the letter was Martin Dies. The CCDA referred to Hook's disclosure of the close bond between Martin Dies "and his impresario, Merwin K. Hart, co-worker and collaborator of the Christian Front" and a "pal and promoter of Martin Dies," as being of gravest concern, since it explained Dies' refusal to investigate the Christian Front. The CCDA charged that Coughlin, Pelley, and virulent anti-Semite James True "carried on their operations with the apparent understanding that the Dies Committee would avoid investigating them." Robert Jackson already had a request to investigate Coughlin; the CCDA wanted to add Hart, Dies, Pelley and True to that list.[61]

Merwin Hart immediately denied any "guilt by association" with the Christian Front. Martin Dies also strongly denied any association with the CF and called Hook a liar who knew his accusations were untrue. Dies turned the accusations against his accusers when he produced an unnamed witness before his committee who revealed that the documents Hook used to connect Dies and Pelley were a forgery. The witness (it was

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most likely David Mayne) revealed that Harold Weisberg of Labor's Non-Partisan League represented himself as a member of a group opposed to the Dies Committee seeking evidence of collusion between Dies and Pelley when he approached Mayne. Mayne obliged, and forged the letters, completely fooling Weisberg, Jackson, Hook and their associates, all of whom believed that the letters were authentic since they were already inclined to believe its contents. The Dies Committee had known of the plot, and waited for the Left to go public with their accusations before springing their trap, commenting that:

> The committee is in possession of affidavits showing that certain parties in New York City had offered large sums of money to the affiants for the purpose of obtaining documentary evidence showing a connection or collusion between Chairman Dies and the Christian Front … The affiants further stated that this testimony was to be used to discredit Chairman Dies and the committee and that they intended to furnish the information to Congressman Hook.[62]

Gardner Jackson was forced to admit that he gave Weisberg $105 to pay Mayne for the letters. Jackson contacted Rogge to explain, hoping that the mess would not adversely affect the CF investigation. Hook was outraged and embarrassed. The congressman attempted to deflect criticism by claiming that he had an affidavit from Mayne stating that all the letters were genuine and written by Pelley. Hook claimed that if there was any question of forgery, then the Dies Committee was responsible and had itself conspired to have the forgery produced to cover-up past infractions. Hook continued to insist that his charges against the Front and Dies were true. However, his colleagues did not want to listen to Hook any longer. Several congressmen demanded that Hook withdraw his statements from the *Congressional Record*. Within a week, Hook apologized and withdrew his comments.[63]

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The CCDA persisted, despite the forgery debacle, Hart's denials of being associated with the Christian Front and his threats of lawsuits against all the signatories. The CCDA, along with Gardner Jackson, were determined to link Hart and Dies to the Christian Front and now they charged that the Dies Committee knew the Pelley documents were forgeries before Hook made his statements and Dies should have warned Hook. Maurice Rosenblatt of the CCDA was convinced that the Dies Committee was tipped off about the Labor's Non-Partisan League's attempt to acquire documents linking Dies to Pelley by none other than Merwin Hart. The key individual in this newly formulated conspiracy theory was a discredited union official, A. Lawrence Hennessey.[64]

Hennessey was supposedly the person who had originally sold Hart the affidavits, now in possession of the Dies Committee that proved that the League was the "certain parties in New York City" who had offered money to Mayne for the Pelley documents to discredit the Committee. Hennessey had contacted a magazine editor who knew Rosenblatt, Corby Paxton, to sell his story of how the Dies Committee conspired with Hart and Mayne to entrap the League.[65]

The CCDA's Rosenblatt was suspicious of Hennessey and feared that Hennessey's proposal to sell his story may be another trap planted by the Dies Committee. Rosenblatt reported to Gardner Jackson that Hennessey had supposedly recorded the editor's offer of $4,000 for his story with a Dictaphone, which was also allegedly witnessed by detectives planted by either Hart or Dies. Rosenblatt was convinced that Hennessey planned to turn over the recordings to either Hart or the Dies Committee as proof that the League was again offering money to people for the purpose of making false allegations about Hart and Dies.[66]

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Rather than taking a risk that the CCDA or the Non-Partisan League was being tricked again, Rosenblatt suggested to Gardner Jackson that Hennessey be forced to admit that he sold the affidavits to Hart by threatening him with an FBI investigation, or by telling him that Thomas Dewey's office would prosecute him on an extortion complaint made by the National Maritime Union, or by saying that they would disclose Hennessey's dubious citizenship status. Keeping in mind that Hennessey and his backers might claim this was all entrapment, the CCDA wanted to move quickly before Hart could cover his tracks. Rosenblatt requested a report on Hennessey from Gardner Jackson that would identify Hennessey "as one of the most condemning links in the little chain of evidence on the Dies Committee."[67]

Jackson prepared this report and sent copies to the CCDA, Attorney General Robert Jackson, Gordon Dean, and O. John Rogge. The report contained information that Hennessey was associated with the Christian Front, and that he had distributed tickets to Merwin Hart's mass meeting at Madison Square Garden. This supposedly rescued now-discredited the CF-Hart-Dies link. Rosenblatt also contacted Rogge, but Rogge was now wary of the CCDA and did not return Rosenblatt's messages.[68]

Merwin Hart continued to threaten to sue the signatories and the CCDA unless they retracted all of the "libelous" statements linking him to the plot to overthrow the government. Hart stated that it was obvious to him that the CCDA letter to Robert Jackson, which was made public by the press, was based on Frank Hook's speech. Of course, he did not realize that Hook was fed the information by Gardner Jackson and/or the CCDA.[69]

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In late February Gardner Jackson, the CCDA, American Committee for Democracy and Intellectual Freedom, and the Friends of Democracy launched a counterattack on the Dies Committee and Hart in the smear war. Jackson had been backed into a corner by the forgery debacle, and defended himself by saying that he and Weisberg had believed the Pelley documents were authentic. The only way to strike back at the Dies Committee now was to find more proof connecting Dies to the Christian Front. He discussed with Hook reinserting revised statements concerning the CF into the *Congressional Record.* Hook was reluctant, and wanted to delay any action until Martin Dies himself, or a Committee member, sounded off on the floor. No one else in Congress other than possibly fellow traveler Vito Marcantonio (who was probably a communist, thereby limiting the usefulness of his support) was willing to come forward and support Gardner Jackson's claims that Mayne was still on the Dies Committee payroll and under subpoena protection. Dies' supporters pressured Jackson to halt any further action against Mayne.[70]

Frank Hook and Gardner Jackson reassured CCDA chairman Robert Searle that they would not bow to pressure from Hart or Dies. Hook still steadfastly believed that Hart, Dies and the Christian Front were connected and would not apologize to them. When he expunged his speech from the *Congressional Record* he had wanted to delete only the passages concerning the Pelley letters, which were distinct from his comments concerning the Christian Front, but House procedures dictated that the entire speech had to be removed. Nevertheless, Hook congratulated everyone who had signed the letter addressed to Robert Jackson and noted that the Attorney General was conducting a full investigation of the entire matter. Gardner Jackson made the best of the situation by

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claiming that the whole episode, though it had hardly put Dies's critics in a good light, had nonetheless inspired the Attorney General to broaden his investigation of the Christian Front.[71] The signatories remained resolute in their support of Gardner Jackson and their hatred of the Dies Committee and continued to insist that there had been a Hart-CF-Dies conspiracy, describing Mayne as a "venomous" character, and proposing a joint countersuit against Hart.[72]

Christian Fronters rejoiced in what they viewed as a victory that discredited their enemies. As far as they were concerned, the Dies Committee *was* their ally, also working to expose the administration as riddled with communist sympathizers. Hook's speech calling for termination of the Dies Committee they saw as another attempt by the administration to defend itself by impeaching those who were truly protecting America. Fronters said that Congressman Hook should be known as "the representative of the hook noses." This did not mean the Front completely trusted the Dies Committee. Father Coughlin's invitation to the Committee to investigate him was never accepted, according to Al Lomax (the new leader of the Bronx Unit), because Coughlin would expose facts damaging to the administration. Ultimately, no portion of the government could be trusted.[73]

* * *

The arrest of the Fronters also gave Mayor LaGuardia enough political currency to address the charges of police laxity in anti-Semitic matters that plagued his office since 1938. LaGuardia waited until the federal grand jury was underway in February before broaching the topic. The mayor ordered investigations commissioner William Herlands to investigate police membership in the Christian Front. Officers were instructed to

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answer a questionnaire that asked if they were members of the Christian Front or any other subversive organization, whether communist, fascist or Nazi. Of the 16,909 policemen on duty at the time of the survey, all but six replied. Only twenty-seven admitted to being members of the Christian Front at the time of the survey, although 407 admitted having been members in the past. Most claimed to have joined the Front because they thought it was a religious organization. All previous members had voluntarily quit before the questionnaire was sent out.[74]

Police Commissioner Louis Valentine did not explain why the city waited so long to seek out subversive penetration of the NYPD, nor why the Christian Front was singled out. The reason was obvious to LaGuardia's enemies: politics. Catholic supporters of the Christian Front expressed indignation. They complained that the survey was a violation of civil rights and demanded an apology from the mayor. The *Brooklyn Tablet* dubbed the police questionnaire a "the police inquisition" and judged the procedure unconstitutional and hypocritical, especially with so many "known atheists, radicals and Communists" being welcomed into the city government. The Christian Front called the police questionnaire another example of the mayor's "brazen audacity," considering that he never looked for communists on his city payroll; Simon Gerson (a member of the state executive committee of the Communist Party who was named to the Manhattan borough president's staff in 1937) they said, was sending his city paycheck "over there – to Russia."[75]

Active Fronters resented the mayor effort to lump them in with communists and subversives. The police questionnaire became a hot topic at revitalized Front meetings, which were enjoying an upsurge in the early days of the trial. Fronters denied that

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membership interfered with the ability of police officers to do their jobs. They said it should make no difference to the city what police officers' activities were while off-duty. One thousand people at Ebling's Casino were told to let LaGuardia know they resented the police questionnaire. Edmund Wilson told the crowd that if they met the mayor one hundred years from now, they should "spit in his face," but "their spit would be too good to wash his face." The questionnaire was viewed as part of LaGuardia's plan to discredit the Front because officers who dropped out of the CF were forced to say they had left because it was a "subversive group." LaGuardia was called a hypocrite, because he was more subversive than any Fronter the mayor ran the Department of Welfare, the WPA, and the Education Department, all of which were flooded with subversive propaganda and never had been investigated. However, when only twenty-seven policemen admitted to being Christian Fronters, the mayor, who was "surrounded by communists and a few phony Catholics," immediately called for an investigation.[76]

* * *

Coughlin's initial reaction to the arrests was to "roundly disavow" any association with the New York Christian Front group, even though Coughlin had twice referred to his camaraderie with Cassidy in the pages of *Social Justice*. For Coughlin there was only one explanation for this group calling itself the Christian Front — it had been penetrated by communists or Bundists. Patrick Scanlan distanced himself as well in the immediate days following the arrests. Scanlon denied *Commonweal*'s claims that the *Brooklyn Tablet* was an instigator of the Front movement.[77]

One week later Coughlin performed a complete about-face. His "I Take My Stand" broadcast on January 21, 1940 reasserted the need for a Christian Front in America. Denouncing the press for trying the defendants in the court of public opinion,

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Coughlin stated that he did *not* disassociate himself from the Christian Front movement. He fully supported the Christian men who were being persecuted by the FBI, and the treatment of the defendants by the FBI proved the need for a Christian Front and proved the government was under the control of subversive communists. The cover and pages of *Social Justice* were filled with denunciations of the mistreatment of Christians by Frank Murphy and proclaimed Coughlin's support for the Christian Front members. "Real patriots" were being harassed while 2,000 communists under the noses of J. Edgar Hoover and former Attorney General Murphy were ignored. The entire case was discredited by the government's lenient treatment of communists while it reserved harsh treatment for the Christian Front, illustrated by the extraordinarily high $50,000 bail for each of the seventeen defendants, while Earl Browder's was set at only $7,500.[78]

Coughlin did not budge from his theory that if the Front had done anything wrong, it was due to infiltration by a Bundist or Nazi Judas. If that was the case, then only that individual should be punished. But Christians should not be intimidated by being called anti-Semitic. That was the ploy of their un-American enemies who were trying to destroy the Front, thus destroying the last defense of Christian America — "Tolerance does not mean we have to shake the hand of Satan."[79]

As the Left and Right tried to outdo each other in their smear campaigns during the trial, Father Coughlin made the issue black-and-white. "… There are only two 'fronts': A Christian Front and an anti-Christian Front. There is no 'middle' front. Americans must either be pro-Christian or anti-Christian. There is no such thing as simple indifference towards Christianity: our democracy is either Christian democracy or anti-Christian democracy."[80]

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The enemies of the Christian Front, now being by Coughlinites as "a popular word for the Christian Church," were anti-God. An attack on the Christian Front was an attack on the Christian Church. Coughlin used Father Denis Fahey's version of Thomistic philosophy to explain the trial. To be against the Christian Front was to be materialistic, to reject the mystical body of Christ and to accept Satan. Al Lomax suggested to members of his CF Unit that they read Father Fahey's "The Rulers of Russia" and Father Coughlin's "I Take My Stand" to be able to answer those opposed to Christianity and Americanism. Thomas Varley praised Father Coughlin at Prospect Hall and declared that anyone who thought Coughlin should be investigated was too dumb to understand his teachings.[81]

And so both the Front's supporters and its enemies doubted that the jurors in the upcoming trial were going to be in command of the theories, which some would call conspiracy theories that would let them understand the real issues in the proceedings. The New Dealers hoped that a guilty verdict in the trial would associate all isolationists with fascism, which meant interventionists would have greater maneuverability in promoting their agenda. Isolationists and Coughlinites hoped a not guilty verdict would prove once and for all that the administration cared only about disgracing and silencing those whose isolationist policies were in opposition of the New Deal.

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Notes

[1] *Social Justice*, Jan. 29, 1940: 1.

[2] The other organizations being investigated for suspected links to Nazi espionage included Allen Zoll's American Patriots (for which Christian Front Secretary Walter Ogden was also a director). The American Patriots were affiliated with Fritz Kuhn's German-American Bund, and Zoll himself was accused of meeting with high ranking Nazi officials, namely Josef Goebbels in 1936 at the Hotel Adion in Berlin. Zoll's bail was paid by Seward Collins after his extortion indictment. Collins had also bailed out Maria Griebl (wife of Fritz, the onetime leader of the Friends of a New Germany) who was held as a material witness in the Nazi spy case. *App. Cong. Rec.* Aug. 2, 1939: 4042-45; *Brooklyn Tablet*, Jan. 20, 1940: 1; Irwin 107; *New York Times*, Jan. 15, 1940: 1; Jan. 16, 1940: 3; United States, Cong. Special Committee on Un-American Activities House of Representatives, *Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States: Hearings*, 76th Cong., 1st Sess. Vol. 6: 3813.

[3] Wechsler and Alson Jesse Smith estimated that 6,000 to 12,000 Irish-Catholic police influenced by the *Brooklyn Tablet* and/or were members of the Christian Front, although the number proved to be exaggerated. "'Christian American' Jew Baiting" *Christian Social Action*, Sept. 1939: 102; Alson Jesse Smith 11-12; Wechsler 92-97.

[4] *New York Times*, July 21, 1939: 5.

[5] Det. George Ballenstadt to Commanding Officer, Alien Squad, July 24, 1939, OCF.

[6] Murray Garrson to Fiorello LaGuardia, "Confidential Report on Outdoor Anti-Semitic Meetings Submitted by the Anti-Defamation League," August 12, 1939; Irving Sobelman, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Aug. 16, 1939, Christian Front file, FLP, Roll 18; Kessner 522.

[7] W.E. Barr, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, July 14, 1939; Robert Blumenthal, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, July 21, 1939; Abraham Cahan, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, June 26, 1939; Dr. Maurice Calman, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Aug. 15, 1939; Samuel Edelman, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, July 20, 1939; G.G. Fisher, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Aug. 16, 1939; Garrson to LaGuardia; Irving Genfan, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Aug. 15, 1939; Irving Gold, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, July 22, 1939; Aaron Golub, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, July 15, 1939; J.M. Martinez, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, July 21, 1939; Stella Orlin, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, July 15, 1939; Resolution Adopted at a Special Conference of the Officers of the New York Branches and Ladies' Clubs of the Jewish National Workers' Alliance, July 17, 1939, Hotel Pennsylvania, New York; Louis Segal, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, July 19, 1939; Benjamin Sigel, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, July 13, 1939; Jack Snow, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Aug. 15, 1939; Arthur Suffern, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, July 21, 1939; Christian Front file, FLP, Roll 18.

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Bob Brainer, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Sept. 17, 1939; James W. Danahy, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Aug. 25, 1939; Jacques Del Monte, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, September 25, 1939; Morris Ehrlich, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Sept. 13, 1939; Emil Gutheil, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Sept. 8, 1939; Lillian Hefferaua, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Sept. 14, 1939; Seymour Heilbron, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, New York, Sept. 20, 1939; Dr. Lucius Herz, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Sept. 17, 1939; Helen Hutchins, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Sept. 21, 1939; Rabbi William F. Rosenblum, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Nov. 2, 1939; Rosetta Stone, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, New York, Sept. 25, 1939; James Wharton, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Sept. 14, 1939; Christian Front file, FLP, Roll 19.

[8] Fiorello LaGuardia, letter to Emanuel Chapman, Dec. 8, 1939; Fiorello LaGuardia, letter to Isadore Freid, Nov. 13, 1939; Fiorello LaGuardia, City of New York Official Communication to Louis Valentine, Police Commissioner, August 24, 1939, Christian Front file, FLP, Roll 19.

A report submitted to the mayor on November 6, 1939 outlined the criminal prosecutions of anti-Semitic speakers: between May 22 and October 30, 1939 thirty-eight individuals were arrested. Two were in the Christian Front; sixteen in the Christian Mobilizers and twenty in other organizations. They were charged with typical rally/riot type offenses: threatening or offensive language (29); assault (6); and refusing to move (3). Fifteen were found guilty, sixteen dismissed, six unknown outcome, and one was committed to a mental institution before his court appearance. Nathan Frankel and Byrnes MacDonald, *Final Report: Activities of Anti-Semitic Groups Within New York City,* memorandum to Fiorello LaGuardia, Nov, 6, 1939, Christian Front file, FLP, Roll 19.

[9] Fiorello LaGuardia, letter to Rudolph Reimer, Sept. 25, 1939; Rudolph Reimer, letter to Fiorello LaGuardia, Sept. 26, 1939, FLP, Roll 2.

[10] Murray Garrson, letter to Frances Perkins, Aug. 14, 1939, FLP, Roll 2.

[11] Dickstein was a major Congressional figure in the investigations of subversive activities, espionage and sabotage in the summer of 1937, when he asked the FBI to investigate camps in New Jersey organized by the German-American Bund. Congress feared that these camps were being supported by the Hitler government and, in effect, creating a "Nazi army" in northern New Jersey. In August the FBI began to investigate the camps and the Bund, searching for any violation of federal law, specifically the shipment of unregistered arms across state lines. The Bund investigation extended for years afterward. Bund leader, Fritz Kuhn, denied creation of a Nazi army within the borders of the United States and extolled the organization's American patriotism. However, the *New York Times* reported that the Bund army was preparing to fight the communists when their revolution commenced on American soil the exact claims that were to be expressed by members of the Christian Front between 1938 and 1940. After this incident, Dickstein became one to the main crusaders against alleged Fifth Column activities in the United States and urged the adoption of Martin Dies' resolution in July

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1937, creating the House on un-American Activities Committee. Dickstein declared the need for such an investigation because of alleged Nazi ties to the German-American Bund. *Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States: Hearings* 3813; *New York Times*, July 23, 1937: 10; July 25, 1937: 9; July 27, 1937: 7; Aug. 5, 1937: 5; Aug. 19,1937: 40; Sept. 10, 1937: 8.

[12] Dickstein compared the nearly identical passages from Coughlin's December 5, 1938 *Social Justice* defense of Nazism and a speech by Germany's Minister of Propaganda, Josef Goebbels, on September 15, 1935, to prove influence of the German Nazis on the American movement. *App. Cong. Rec.* Aug. 2, 1939: 4042-45; *New York Times*, Sept. 30, 1939: 3.

[13] qtd. in Powers, *Broken* 167.

[14] The international situation in 1936 included the Spanish Civil War, Japan's conquest of Korea, and the Italian annexation of Ethiopia. Powers, *Secrecy and Power: The Life of J. Edgar Hoover* (New York: The Free Press, 1987) 229.

[15] J. Edgar Hoover, FBI Director, Confidential Memo, August 24, 1936, reprinted in Athan Theoharis, ed., *From the Secret Files of J. Edgar Hoover* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1991).

[16] J. Edgar Hoover, FBI Director, Confidential Memo, August 25, 1936, reprinted in *From the Secret Files of J. Edgar Hoover*.

[17] J. Edgar Hoover, FBI Director, to FBI Assistant Director Edward Tamm, Strictly Confidential Memo, September 10, 1936, reprinted in *From the Secret Files of J. Edgar Hoover*; Powers, *Secrecy and Power* 230, 538*n*7.

[18] On June 20, 1938 eighteen Nazi agents were indicted, and convicted the following January. The spies infiltrated America's armed forces and defense industries, but the government assured the public that little information was obtained. Apparently, Fritz Griebl offered to spy for the Nazis as early as 1927. This offer was forwarded to Paul Kraus, (head of the Gestapo's Maritime Bureau, which was responsible for smuggling intelligence into and out of the United States), at Gestapo headquarters and a spy network was established. Although there was no public panic, the incident was cause for grave concern and was, according to Francis MacDonnell, the key point in the emergence of the belief of a Fifth Column in American. MacDonnell 49-51; *New York Times*, June 21, 1938: 1; July, 2 1938: 28; Powers, *Secrecy and Power* 231.

The Friends of a New Germany organized in July 1933 in Chicago by "the left-overs of the former Nazi party and their friends." They were ordered disbanded in 1936 by the German Ambassador after the publication of detailed charges that it was a main importer of anti-Semitic propaganda from Germany. They were closely associated with other anti-Semitic groups which were fronts for German activity in the United States. "Jews in America," *Fortune,* Feb. 1936: 142; United States, Cong. Special Committee on

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Un-American Activities House of Representatives, *Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States: Report on the Axis Front Movement in the United States: First Section-Nazi Activities*, 78th Cong., 1st sess. App.-Pt. VII. (Washington: GPO, 1943): 61.

[19] Franklin Roosevelt, Press Conference #452-A, Apr. 20, 1938, *Complete Presidential Press Conferences of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, vols. 11-12, 1938; J. Edgar Hoover, "Confidential Memo," Nov. 7, 1938, reprinted in *From the Secret Files of J. Edgar Hoover*; Powers, *Secrecy and Power* 231.

[20] Franklin Roosevelt, Press Conference #514, Jan. 4, 1939, Press Conference #515, Jan. 6, 1939 *Complete Presidential Press Conferences of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, vols. 13-14, 1939 (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972).

[21] Powers, *Broken* 171.

[22] Murphy became associated with the specter of communism during the automobile workers' sit-down strikes that plagued Michigan as governor in 1937. Clarence Hathaway, editor of the *Daily Worker,* and the Michigan State Committee of the Communist Party, supported Murphy, even though he was characterized as a defender of capitalism. Hathaway wrote it was essential for labor to defeat Ford Motors, General Motors, and their gubernatorial candidate Frank Fitzgerald, in the election of 1938. The Republicans immediately seized on this point, and went straight to HUAC. Governor Murphy responded hastily to the Republican charges, and the inaccurate and misleading testimony given before the Dies Committee concerning the situation. In October 1938, Murphy contradicted the critical Dies Committee testimony against him and denounced the Committee's spread of "untruths" and being "un-American and vicious." He prepared a letter addressed to the Committee on October 23 containing the "inaccurate and misleading testimony" of Judge Paul Gadola, a Republican office holder (GM had transferred the proceedings for the evacuation of its two Flint plants to Gadola's Genesee County Circuit Court). When FDR was informed of the letter he interceded and personally responded to Chairman Martin Dies, stating it was unfair that such a committee should put itself in a position to be used to influence an election in such a flagrant manner. Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes' opinion was that the Dies attack on Murphy probably cost him the 1938 re-election bid for the governorship of Michigan. Fine 502-505; J. Woodford Howard, Jr., *Mr. Justice Murphy* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1968) 185-189; Harold Ickes, *The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes: Volume III, the Lowering Clouds, 1939-1941* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1954) 54; Richard D. Lunt, *The High Ministry of Government* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1965) 212.

[23] Franklin Roosevelt, letter to Martin Dies, Washington, DC, June 5, 1940, HUACFBI, Roll 1; Report on the Activities of the Department of Justice, App. 3309, qtd. in Howard 211; Powers, *Broken* 171.

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[24] J. Edgar Hoover, "Press Release to All Law Enforcement Officials," Sept. 6, 1939, *From the Secret Files of J. Edgar Hoover*.

[25] Franklin Roosevelt, Press Conference #577, Sept. 8, 1939, *Complete Presidential Press Conferences of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, vols. 13-14, 1939.

[26] Ribuffo 184-187.

[27] Lunt 214; Frank Murphy, "In Defense of Democracy," Washington, D.C.: American Association for Economic Freedom, 1940, reprinted in Harold Norris, *Mr. Justice Murphy and the Bill of Rights* (Dobbs Ferry, NY: Oceana Publications, Inc., 1965).

[28] *Ibid.*

[29] *Ibid.*; Frank Murphy, "Intolerance," *Christian Social Action*, Feb. 1940: 42.

[30] *New York Times*, Jan. 16, 1940: 3; *New York Times*, Jan. 19, 1940: 20.

[31] *Social Justice*, Jan. 1, 1940: 6; Jan. 15, 1940: 4.

[32] Accusations against the Minsky brothers were made by Fronter John Geis on July 20, 1939. Det. Mario J. Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Squad, July 21, 1939; Report of Meeting, Lt. Stauffer, 105th Pct., July 20, 1939, OCF.

[33] One of the eighteen arrested was released for lack of evidence before the indictment and trial. Bayor 102; Bill of Particulars, George Kelly, Feb. 19, 1940; Bill of Particulars, John Prout, Jr., Feb. 24, 1940; Grand Jury Indictment, box 610, USAJP-CCF; Father Charles E. Coughlin Report, Mar. 17, 1942, FBI file (Detroit) 100-4716, 4-5, CCFBI.

[34] *Social Justice*, Jan. 22, 1940: 3.

[35] Martin Dies, letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, William Bankhead, Alben Barkley, and Sam Rayburn, June 1, 1940, HUACFBI, Roll 1.

[36] William Gerald Bishop, box 613, vol. VIII, 5030, 5051; Macklin Boettger, box 615, vol. VI, 3010; John Prout, Jr., box 611, vol. V, 2358; Peter J. Wacks, box 610, vol. III, 1004, USAJP-CCF; United States. Cong. House. Special Committee on Un-American Activities House of Representatives, *Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States: Hearings*, 76th Cong., 1st Sess. Vol. 12 (Washington: GPO, 1940): 7523-25.

[37] Beirne, "Special Orders, No. 22; par. 4"; Prout, "National Guard Efficiency Ratings, Feb. 1, 1931-Dec. 31, 1939", USAJP-AF; Michael Beirne, box 614, vol. VII, 3820; 3883-87, 3919; Macklin Boettger, box 615, vol. VI, 2833-37; Andrew Buckley, box 614, vol. VII, 3929; 4073; LaRoy Keegan, box 615, vol. VI, 3300-01, 3309; John Prout, Jr.,

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box 611, vol. V, 2281-82, 2285-86, 2289-91; Alfred Quinlan, box 613, vol. VIII, 4119, USAJP-CCF.

[38] *Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States: Hearings* 3766, 3869, 3885; *Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States: German-American Bund* 1466-67.

[39] *Ibid.*; John Graf, box 615, vol. VI, 3242; Denis Healy, box 612, vol. I, 43, 113; John Viebrock, box 611, vol. V, 2504; Michael Vill, box 614, vol. VII, 3742; Peter J. Wacks, box 612, vol. II, 935, box 610, vol. III, 993, 1087, USAJP-CCF; Government's Trial Brief, USAJP-AF.

[40] Macklin Boettger, box 615, vol. VI, 3125; Denis Healy, box 612, vol. I, 77; Michael Vill, box 614, vol. VII, 3657, 3726-27, 3746; Peter J. Wacks, box 610, vol. III, 964, USAJP-CCF; MacDonnell 42-43.

[41] The relationship between the IRA and the Action Committee was an interesting and sketchy one. In the summer of 1939 bombs exploded in two of London's largest railway stations. London police arrested "Liam Walsh" for questioning. The name reached Scotland Yard from the British Consulate in New York, after the Consulate received information from men investigating the Christian Front. The name Liam Walsh was originally discovered by US undercover agents in a message to Christian Front headquarters in New York from the Ministry of Propaganda in Berlin. The Action Committee was also described as using IRA techniques, including similar methods of manufacturing explosives. This uncorroborated story appeared as the opening paragraph of Theodore Irwin's "Inside the 'Christian Front'." Charles Gannon, box 612, vol. III, 1250, 1284; Denis Healy, box 612, vol. I, 93; William Gerald Bishop, box 613, vol. VIII, 4566; Macklin Boettger, box 615, vol. VI, 3091; Peter J. Wacks, box 610, vol. III, 994; 1190-91, USAJP-CCF.

[42] *New York Times*, Jan. 16, 1940: 1.

[43] Statement of Attorney General Robert H. Jackson, Jan. 21, 1940, GJP.

[44] One of the eighteen arrested was released for lack of evidence before the indictment and trial. The defendants were: Michael Beirne, William Bishop, Macklin Boettger Andrew Buckley, William Bushnell, John Cassidy, John Cook, John Graf, Nicholas (Claus) Gunther Ernecke, La Roy Keegan, George Kelly, Francis Malone, John Prout, Jr., Alfred Quinlan, John Viebrock, Michael Vill, and Edward Walsh. On May 10, 1940, the charges against Walsh and Kelly were dismissed. Box 611, vol. V, 2280; Charge of Jury, box 610, 5764, USAJP-CCF.

[45] The exact violations were of 18 US Code. Sec. 6, 99, 100, 101. Charge of Jury, box 610, 5711-14; Summation of Harold Kennedy, box 610, 5708; Peter J. Wacks, box 612, vol. II, 992, USAJP-CCF.

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[46] Memorandum for the Attorney General, Jan. 26, 1940, OF3893; Robert Daru, letter to Harold Kennedy, January 17, 1940; Harold Kennedy, letter to James E. Donnelly, February 13, 1940; Sally Kenney, letter to Harold Kennedy, March 1, 1940, box 8, USAJP-AF.

[47] The "Subversive Activity, Seditious Conspiracy, Theft of Government Property" no longer exists. However, excerpts and reports from this file are contained in the Charles Coughlin FBI file. Father Charles E. Coughlin Report, Mar. 17, 1942, FBI file (Detroit) 100-4716, 4-10, CCFBI.

[48] *Ibid.*

[49] Cassidy's name is blacked-out in the FBI memorandum, but it is obvious that he is the letter writer. *Ibid.*

[50] *Ibid.*

[51] Powers, *Not Without Honor* 166.

[52] Harold C. Urey, et al., telegram to Attorney General, January 18, 1940, box 8, USAJP-AF.

[53] Stone attempted to make these connections by: citing Cassidy's resolution calling for the Dies Committee to investigate WMCA for discontinuing Coughlin's broadcasts (Prospect Hall, December 1, 1938); that the picketing of WMCA was first urged at a Christian Front meeting where John Cassidy, Allen Zoll, Fr. Curran, and George U. Harvey were all speakers and John T. Prout was an usher, and that the picketing began under their supervision three days later (Manhattan Opera House, December 15, 1938); Cassidy's announcement that the CF Flatbush Unit was going to fight communism by force if necessary (December 29, 1938); Cassidy twice sharing a stage with Herbert Lewis, a prominent member of the German-American Bund, when reiterating his fight against communism (Erasmus Hall, January 1939); Cassidy calling to support the "principles of Social Justice were exemplified by General Franco in Spain" (Prospect Hall, January 25, 1939); Bernard D'Arcy endorsing the picketing of WMCA and their advertisers (February 5, 1939); Coughlin addressing a meeting of WMCA protestors via direct wire, at which D'Arcy presided (Donovan's, June 25, 1939); Coughlin praising the heroism of the CF via direct wire at a mass meeting at which 6,000 people were present, including D'Arcy and Cassidy, where Cassidy allegedly stated that there was no law in the Constitution preventing a man from owning a gun or a law preventing him from joining a defensive organization, "We must not wait until the Communists act. We ourselves must take the initial step" (Metropolitan Opera House, Philadelphia, July 14, 1939); Cassidy visiting Coughlin (July 18, 1939); and Cassidy's explanation of the connection between the sixteen principles of social justice, the right to bear arms and building a Christian Front (Erasmus Hall, September 11, 1939). It should be noted that

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none of these meetings appear in the NYPD police reports. Thomas Stone, letter to Attorney General, January 19, 1940, box 8, USAJP-AF.

[54] *Ibid.* O. John Rogge, letter to Harold Kennedy, January 20, 1940; Harold Kennedy, letter to O. John Rogge, January 22, 1940; O. John Rogge, letter to Thomas Stone, January 23, 1940, box 8, USAJP-AF.

[55] Rand was president of the Remington-Rand Company, DuPont was president of E.I. DuPont de Nemours & Company, Sloan was president of General Motors, and Alstyne was president of the Otis Elevator Company. Carlson 458.

[56] American Union for Nationalist Spain stationary; Bernard D'Arcy, letter to All Distributors of *Social Justice* Magazine, Feb. 15, 1939; James Wechsler, letter to Gardner Jackson, Jan. 19, 1940, GJP.

[57] *Ibid.*

[58] *New York Times*, Jan. 23, 1940: 1. Powers, *Not Without Honor* 160-161.

[59] Hook's speech was expunged from the Congressional Record, with an apology, on February 6, 1940 because it was based on fallacious documents.
James Wechsler was a mainstay of Gardner Jackson. The two had previously worked together in similar investigations. Wechsler's brother, Herb, was a friend of Gardner's wife. Gardner Jackson, letter to O. John Rogge, Jan. 22, 1940; Gardner Jackson, letter to James Wechsler, Jan. 22, 1940; Frank Hook, Speech, Jan, 22, 1940, GJP.

[60] *Ibid.*

[61] Coordinating Committee for Democratic Action, draft letter to Attorney General Robert Jackson, January 1940; Signatories of Letter to Attorney General Jackson, GJP.

[62] *New York Times*, Jan. 31, 1940: 10. Powers, *Not Without Honor* 162.

[63] Congressmen Cox of Georgia and Keefe of Wisconsin made the request that Hook expunge his statements. Gardner Jackson, letter to O. John Rogge, Feb. 8, 1940, GJP; *New York Times*, Feb. 1, 1940: 10; Feb. 7, 1940: 1.

[64] Hennessey was accused of stealing money from the Seaman's Union in 1936 and of being an anti-labor red-baiting spy who was expelled from several unions, including the National Maritime Union. An Australian, he was also accused of entering the US illegally with forged citizenship papers, described by Gardner Jackson as a "Bootleg citizen." Gardner Jackson, letter to Gordon Dean, Department of Justice, Feb. 8, 1940, GJP.

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[65] Corby Paxton was editor of the *Pilot*, the official magazine of the National Maritime Union. Paxton became suspicious at his Sheridan Square Tavern meeting with Hennessey and ended the interview because Hennessey "literally begged" Paxton to move the meeting to another location. Rosenblatt witnessed the second meeting the next morning at a location where he believed it was have been impossible to plant a Dictaphone or conceal witnesses. Rosenblatt did not believe Hennessey and Paxton met anywhere else, although they may have spoken on the phone. Economic Council Letter 73, Feb. 1, 1940; Maurice Rosenblatt, Coordinating Committee for Democratic Action, letter to Gardner Jackson, Feb. 3, 1940; Gardner Jackson, letter to Gordon Dean, Department of Justice, Feb. 8, 1940, GJP.

[66] Maurice Rosenblatt, Coordinating Committee for Democratic Action, letter to Gardner Jackson, Feb. 3, 1940, GJP.

[67] The relationship between the CCDA and FBI was becoming contentious. Rosenblatt was questioned by the FBI on the background of the CCDA. All information provided to the FBI concerning the Christian Front led to the FBI agents questioning the CCDA methods, rather than the information itself. He claimed that the CCDA was just furnishing leads and if the FBI had been trying to prove a plot about New York City organizations maintaining secret investigations to "pry into the affairs of 'anticommunist' organizations, they could not have done better." *Ibid.*

[68] *Ibid.* Gardner Jackson, letter to Gordon Dean, Department of Justice, Feb. 8, 1940; Gardner Jackson, letter to O. John Rogge, Feb. 8, 1940, Gardner Jackson, letter to Maurice Rosenblatt, Coordinating Committee for Democratic Action, Feb. 9, 1940, GJP.

[69] Merwin K. Hart, letter to Robert W. Searle, Coordinating Committee for Democratic Action, Feb. 14, 1940; Maurice Rosenblatt, Coordinating Committee for Democratic Action, letter to Gardner Jackson, Feb. 20, 1940; Gardner Jackson, letter to M.I. Finkelstein, American Committee for Democracy & Intellectual Freedom, Feb. 20, 1940, GJP.

[70] Jackson claimed that Weisberg accepted the letters only after he compared them to others he had from Mayne, and after Mayne appeared before a notary to swear their authenticity. Therefore, Weisberg believed them to be authentic. As of February 20, 1940, when Jackson contacted the American Committee for Democracy and Intellectual Freedom, FBI had not made a decision on their authenticity. Jackson continued to wait for legal action against Mayne. Gardner Jackson, letter to M.I. Finkelstein, American Committee for Democracy & Intellectual Freedom, Feb. 20, 1940; Hugh Holoman, letter to Gardner Jackson, Feb. 22, 1940; James Wechsler, letter to Gardner Jackson, Feb. 23, 1940, GJP.

[71] Rep. Frank Hook, letter to Robert Searle, Chairman, Coordinating Committee for Democratic Action, Feb. 23, 1940; Gardner Jackson, letter to Robert K. Speer, Feb. 26, 1940, GJP.

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[72] Van Wyck Brooks, letter to Gardner Jackson, Feb. 27, 1940; Dorothy Kenyon, letter to Gardner Jackson, Feb. 27, 1940; John Paul Jones, letter to Gardner Jackson, Feb. 28, 1940; John Hayes Holmes, letter to Gardner Jackson, Feb. 28, 1940; Emil Lengyel, letter to Gardner Jackson, Feb. 28, 1940; Paul Kern, letter to Gardner Jackson, Mar. 1, 1940; Mary E. Woolley, letter to Gardner Jackson, Mar. 1, 1940; A. Clayton Powell, Jr., letter to Gardner Jackson, Mar. 2, 1940; Franz Boas, letter to Gardner Jackson, Mar. 4, 1940; Gardner Jackson, letter to Franz Boas, Mar. 8, 1940; A. Philip Randolph, letter to Gardner Jackson, Mar. 27, 1940; M.I. Finkelstein, letter to Gardner Jackson, Mar. 1, 1940, GJP.

[73] Police Report, Feb. 12, 1940; Report of Meeting, Det. Fitzpatrick, Alien Squad & Lt. McKeon, 42nd Pct., Feb. 11, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 17, 1940, OCF.

[74] Fiorello LaGuardia, Press Release, February 15, 1940, Christian Front file, FLP, Roll 19; Kessner 523.

[75] Fire Commissioner John McElligott was praised at a speech by Patrick Scanlan in May 1940 for not giving in to the Mayor and not distributing the survey to firefighters. It was not until three years later that Commissioner Louis Valentine took official steps to combat the problem of police laxity in the matter of dealing with anti-Semitism with a report on the subject. LaGuardia never directly answered if he directly gave the orders to Valentine for the investigation. *Brooklyn Tablet*, Feb. 17, 1940: 1, 8, 10; Feb. 24, 1940: 1; May 11, 1940: 2; Kessner 524; *New York Times*, May 24, 1940: 12; Police Report, Feb. 17, 1940, OCF; "To All Americans Who Think: This is What We Say," May 24, 1940, Christian Front file, AJCL.

[76] Police Report, Feb. 10, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 12, 1940; Report of Meeting, Det. Fitzpatrick, Alien Squad & Lt. McKeon, 42nd Pct., Feb. 11, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 19, 1940; Report of Meeting, Det. Oswianek, Alien Squad, Feb. 23, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 24, 1940; Report of Meeting, Sgt. Coughlin, 72nd Pct., Police Report, Mar. 30, 1940; Report of Meeting, Det. Oceanic, Alien Squad, Mar. 30, 1940; Police Report, May 9, 1940; May 10, 1940; Police Report, May 11, 1940, OCF.

[77] *New York Times*, Jan. 15, 1940: 3; January 17, 1940: 14; Jan. 23, 1940: 18.

[78] The January 29, 1940 front cover of *Social Justice* referred to the arrests. *Brooklyn Tablet*, Jan. 27, 1940: 1; Edward Brophy, "The Christian Front, Its Justification and Need," *Brooklyn Tablet*, Mar. 16, 1940: 13; Edward Brophy, *The Christian Front*, (n.p., 1940): 5-23; Charles Coughlin, "I Take My Stand on 'a' Christian Front," radio address, Jan. 21, 1940, box 9, USAJP-AF; *New York Times*, Jan. 22, 1940: 1; *Social Justice*, Jan. 22, 1940: 11; Jan. 22, 1940: 3, 18; Jan. 29, 1940: front cover.

[79] Coughlin, "I Take My Stand."

[80] *Social Justice*, Feb. 12, 1940: 19.

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[81] Jan. 28, 1940 radio broadcast, *Memorandum on Father Coughlin and Social Justice*, American Jewish Committee (1940), AJCL; Police Report, Feb. 3, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 17, 1940, OCF.

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Chapter 8 United States of America v. John Prout, Jr., et al.: January – July 1940

"[I feel] uneasy about standing next to the American flag, because it seems that those who stand by that flag are subject to arrest, while the communists are known for their desire to overthrow the government, but nothing is done to them."
- Angelo Langella, January 21, 1940[1]

USA v. John Prout, Jr., et al. was shaping up to be a show trial. Christian Front supporters saw the prosecution as tangible proof that communists were in control of the government's interventionist policies. New Dealers and the Left viewed the trial as confirmation that isolationism was a front for a fascist conspiracy. And from day one of the proceedings, neither the Right nor the Left expected a fair trial. By the end of the trial it was highly unlikely that anyone seriously believed lead prosecutor Harold Kennedy as he told the jury that the trial was not about liking or disliking communists, Jews, or the Spanish Civil War, but was simply about the guilt of the defendants.[2]

The Coordinating Committee for Democratic Action had no faith in the federal prosecutors, and questioned both their politics and their competence. Maurice Rosenblatt complained to Gardner Jackson in a letter that even though Kennedy was trying to prove the "exaggerated indictment," he sneered that Kennedy would rather be representing some of the Fronters.[3] The CCDA thought Kennedy's insistence on prosecuting all the defendants on the first count of seditious conspiracy to overthrow the government was a mistake and ignored the advice of the Justice Department, which believed the count applied to only four or five of the defendants. In fact Kennedy was not as pro-FDR as O. John Rogge and he resented Rogge's presence, while Rogge had no appreciation of the local ethnic situation in Brooklyn.[4]

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Maurice Rosenblatt went so far as accuse all Brooklyn juries of being fixed and called the trial itself a farce. He thought the government knew this and was so was favoring the defendants by refusing to ask for a change the venue. There was no way the case could be tried on its merits in Brooklyn, Rosenblatt felt, because a fair jury was difficult to seat in Brooklyn if the issue had religious overtones. Once the defense introduced the religious issue, the Jewish People's Committee thought it would "make an honest trial in Brooklyn dubious."[5]

Leo Healy, the defense attorney for eleven of the defendants, was also wary of the Brooklyn jury. Healy's concern echoed the anxiety expressed by the Christian Front on the streets for more than a year — distrust of the press. Healy pleaded that the case not be tried in the newspapers. In his estimation the only newspapers that respected the defendants' fundamental American rights by not prejudging the issues were the *Brooklyn Tablet, Brooklyn Eagle*, and *Social Justice*.[6]

Patrick Scanlan was more confident in the fairness of the jury. "Catholics, like everyone else, in a trial weigh the evidence as presented," he wrote Healy. Scanlan's confidence may have been based on his knowledge that Bob Irwin, the grand jury foreman who indicted the seventeen, was the brother of Scanlan's pastor. And there were other Catholics on the grand jury, and so if those Catholics could be fair and issue an indictment, then the trial jury could be fair and acquit. Scanlan may have been implying that he had inside knowledge from his pastor that there was not enough evidence to convict the boys on all of the charges, even thought there was enough evidence for an indictment.[7]

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On April 4, 1940, one hundred prospective jurors from a special panel were questioned about their military status, government employment, membership in communist or socialist parties, affiliations with the American League of Peace and Democracy, American Youth Congress, American Student Union, Abraham Lincoln Brigade, the Friends of Loyalist Spain, feelings towards the WPA, Christian Front, the Irish Republican Army, and anti-Semitism. The seated jurors included a housewife, clerk, CPA, banker, insurance employee, retiree, and several of the unemployed. Judge Campbell warned them not to read the newspapers because the trial would be conducted only inside the courtroom. Only those with special credentials were allowed into courtroom; those without direct court business were not allowed on either of the adjacent floors.[8]

* * *

The defendants were between eighteen and thirty-five years old. Some were married with children. Their education ranged from seventh grade to law school, although most did not finish high school; and most had received a formal Catholic education at some point. Most were blue collar, working or lower middle class, although the neighborhoods they lived in were in some instances middle class. Their job histories included building maintenance, sales, the phone company, a bus company, and Brooklyn Edison. John Viebrock repair elevators for Morris Blum, a Jew. William Bushnell was a former Boy Scout. William Bishop was the only defendant with an arrest record before this federal case.[9] Certainly, the seventeen who stood trial did not resemble the stereotype of the rabble-rousing Fronters who had raised havoc the previous summer. Only Frank Malone and John Cassidy were recorded by the NYPD as having spoken at

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CF meetings in 1939. Nevertheless, the defendants did live in neighborhoods that witnessed Front activity or were homes to Fronters. The Front had given them an outlet for their strong feelings against communism, especially when these were heightened by the ethnic tensions in their neighborhoods.[10]

The defendants' anticommunism was shaped by both the Catholic Church and their own desire to become "better" Americans. Their assault on the perceived enemy of Americanism and Christianity — communism —was no different from the Front street orators. Most had been introduced to the Christian Front by a family member or neighborhood acquaintance or by attending an anticommunist rally near their homes. John Prout, Jr. lived next to the subway station on 31st Street and Ditmars Boulevard in Astoria, the location of several Front rallies. William Bushnell joined the Christian Front to learn how to become a "true" American and Christian. Bushnell, who advocated buying Christian, was introduced to the CF by his Aunt Florence, herself a member of a similar organization, the American Citizens Committee. John Cook's interest in the group rose after his uncle, fellow defendant LaRoy Keegan, introduced him to the CF. Edward Walsh attended Front meetings to listen to discussions of political science at the invitation of his brother-in-law Macklin Boettger. John Graf became a member of the Christian Front because it seemed to him an organization fighting communism. Michael Vill, a member of anticommunist organizations in Germany, joined the Christian Front in May 1939 after a talk by Father Edward Lodge Curran.[11] Michael Beirne became an anticommunist after reading the *Social Justice* and *Brooklyn Tablet*'s accounts of the atrocities suffered by nuns and priests at the hands of the communists during the Spanish Civil War. Andrew Buckley, a self avowed anti-atheist, joined the Christian Front Bronx

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Unit in January 1939 because it promised to help the unemployed, as well as combating godless communism and encouraging Americanism — certainly never to plot against the United States, at least that was his claim during the trial.[12]

Francis Malone, who became a prominent Front leader in 1939, was invited to join the Christian Front while picketing the movie *Blockade*, which had been called "communist propaganda" by the protestors. Malone stated that he was taught about the communist power that confronted America as a member of the Catholic Boys' Brigade, which encouraged patriotic ideals. After meeting with Christian Front president Marcel Honore in August 1938, he joined the CF.[13]

Edward Walsh opted not to join the Christian Front (although he did join the Sports Club) because he strongly disagreed with what he heard at the meetings, "As a practical Catholic I am bound both by knowledge and the dictates of my faith to obey and protect the government." Walsh seemed to have suspected that the CF was planning something.[14]

Several of the defendants' union affiliations shaped their perspectives on communism and gave them a reason to join the Christian Front. Coughlinite attacks on the AF of L and CIO unions had resonated with some of those standing trial. Michael Vill was a BMT bus driver for the Brooklyn Bus Corporation and was bitterly disappointed when the BMT recognized Mike Quill's communist-dominated TWU in a 1937 election instead of the Independent Transit Workers Union, which was endorsed by Curran's American Association Against Communism, and was supported by Brooklyn's churches. Andrew Buckley was a shop steward in an AF of L union and LaRoy Keegan

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was a member of the International Printing Pressmen and Assistant's Union, Local No. 2.[15]

These union members testified that co-defendant William Bishop provided them with "proof" that it was no coincidence that the Communist Party's strength was in the industrial centers of Pittsburgh, Chicago, Johnstown, Pennsylvania, and Jamestown, New York, CIO towns where strikers occupied factories and sought support from communists. These CIO workers were nothing more than dupes of the communists' plan to overthrow the United States government. They had come to believe that the CIO leadership was the true enemy doing the CP's bidding, carrying out the communists' plans to cripple the transportation and communication systems, control power plants, and ultimately force labor to start a national general strike. The revolution had already begun under the noses of the American people: the CIO had imported strikers at the Martinsburg cement plant, turned off the city water supply during a strike in Colorado, and occupied a factory in Hershey, Pennsylvania with imported communist terror squads. CIO unions had rifle clubs, part of the "tactics of revolution." These defendants had concluded that the CIO and Communist Party were preparing for the same kind of revolution as in Spain. The presence of Abraham Lincoln Brigade and the George Washington Brigade veterans in Brooklyn, and the 49,000 votes cast for communists in the 1938 Brooklyn elections provided further convinced Bishop and Cassidy that a communist revolution immanent in the borough.[16]

The trial revealed that the defendants' mixture of anticommunism and anti-Semitism was shaped by the teachings of the most extreme anticommunists of the 1930s. Like their fellow Fronters, they believed communism was not merely a political

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philosophy. It originated with anti-Catholic societies during the Middle Ages and was the latest effort to enslave the human race. At their meetings, they had discussed the idea that communist principles were undermining Christianity and morality within the United States, s they had in 1917 Russia, in Mexico, and in the failed communist takeover in Spain between 1936 and 1939.[17]

The defendants had relied on the usual agents of 1930s fanaticism as the sources of their beliefs: *Social Justice*, the *Brooklyn Tablet*, and Henry Ford's *Fort Dearborn Independent*. They viewed themselves as "the ordinary American citizens" to whom Coughlin dedicated *Money! Questions and Answers*.[18] Fulton J. Sheen's and Edward Lodge Curran's writings were discussed at their meetings. Macklin Boettger shared his copy of *The Cadets of the Alcazar* with the others.[19]

Their own conspiracy thinking was fueled by the bizarre conspiracy theories found in Nesta Webster's *The Socialist Network* and Elizabeth Dilling's *The Red Network*. *The Socialist Network,* rife with "a madhouse collection of legends, lies, and scraps of fact all woven together" to prove that secret societies throughout history had caused revolutions directed by "all-powerful conspirators" and *The Red Network*'s melodrama of a red cabal running the New Deal were intellectual fodder for the defendants and the Front.[20]

William Bishop used Webster and Dilling as the sources for his own chart of the "subversive Red organization, emanating from Moscow, the 3rd Internationale" which controlled the United States and were penetrating every American political and social organization. Bishop taught the other defendants, including Boettger and Cassidy, that

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the goal of this red web was to undermine the Constitution and establish a dictatorship of the proletariat backed by international financiers bent on forming a world government.[21]

The process was well under way in the New Deal's programs and projects, which were supposedly riddled with communists. The New Deal itself was an attempt to socialize and collectivize the United State into Soviet States. The administration's coddling of communist activities in every branch of government had created an unconstitutional socialist bureaucracy. The defendants believed the Depression was man-made; created to force Americans into a desperate situation in order to accept the emergency (i.e. Socialist) powers sought by the New Dealers.[22]

Using Nesta Webster as a guide, Bishop and his co-defendants thought they had peeled back the layers of conspiracy, and had revealed that the New Deal and the transportation, business, and advertising worlds were all controlled by internationalist Jews and Free Masons. Andrew Buckley thought LaGuardia was a communist, but he had no definitive proof. William Bishop conceded that President Roosevelt was not Jewish; however, he linked him to the Masons. They made no distinction made between Masons and Jews. Both were internationalists. This meant that the New York City and federal governments were no longer "our" governments (meaning Christian governments), according to Bishop.[23]

The Fronters repeated Coughlin's theories that the Federal Reserve was a private institution controlled by twelve international Jewish financiers. Bishop's plan to end the Depression was to redistribute gold wrestled away from the Federal Reserve after the overthrow of the government, followed by cancellation of all internal government debts.

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He cited Thorkelson's "Who Owns the Money, Who Owns the Gold?" as the source for his scheme.[24]

Their religiously based anti-Semitism was influenced by the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and *Excerpts from the Talmud.* From this, in addition to their reading of Kabala, they surmised that the Jews planned to kill Gentiles out of sheer hatred. William Bushnell believed that the *Talmud* conformed to communism and, therefore, was communistic. Jewish symbols were s evil and were equated to communist symbols, especially the Russian star on Russian army uniforms which was thought to be the Star of David. The comments written in Macklin Boettger's copy of the *Protocols* were considered damaging enough by the prosecution to be entered as evidence against him at the trial. He had written on the inside cover that "strikes deteriorate status of worker … strikes in Russia means shooting, c[ourt] martial … CIO came out in favor of the Socialist-backed party," and on the back cover, "Guggenheim fund sent men to Russia, Spain … Socialist Workers Party - had been in Spain/under Mexico Trotsky … International Outlook - secrecy – Masonry … Born of internationalism must be international." The Christian Front's own solution for the Jewish threat was segregation, ghettoization, elimination from public office and business, and eventually eradication. The government was infested by Jews just as a farm was infested by locusts. On the farm one must stamp out the locusts, the same must be done with the Jews in America.[25]

The anti-Semitic literature they read was reinforced by the neighborhoods in which they lived. Their anti-internationalist and anti-Jewish preaching did not develop in a vacuum. As far as the defendants were concerned, their neighborhoods were victims of

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the Jews. They were convinced communists resided in their backyards and their Christian-American world was in danger.

All of the defendants (with the exception of John Viebrock) lived in ethnically diverse neighborhoods, where 18%-37% of the population was foreign born. Their Irish, Italian, German and Jewish neighborhoods usually suffered from ethnic tensions, often expressed by Christian Front activity.[26] Only John Cook and Andrew Buckley lived on blocks where no other Front member resided, and where there was no Front activity, but Buckley's Bronx Park residence bordered on the Fordham-University Heights section of the Bronx, which had some of the worst ethnic tensions.[27]

Other than Buckley, William Bishop and John Prout, Jr. (both of whom lived in Astoria, Queens); and Alfred Quinlan (whose address was listed in Manhattan, but was never confirmed for sure by the prosecution), the defendants were all from Brooklyn. Eleven of the defendants were Irish, five were German, one was Austrian and one was of unknown extraction. Most were first or second generation Americans and were Catholic, closely resembling the neighborhoods in which they lived.[28]

Ten of the seventeen defendants lived in middle and upper-middle class blocks of the Flatbush section of Brooklyn. Frank Malone lived on an upper middle class block bordering a high income neighborhood on the west and middle class on the north. Michael Beirne, Macklin Boettger, John Cassidy, Nicolas Ernecke, and George Kelly's blocks were all from upper middle class sections as well. John Graf, William Bushnell, and Edward Walsh lived on Flatbush middle class blocks with lower annual incomes.

The ethnic profiles of these neighborhoods were similar to those of most Front members. The defendants were facing the same ethnic conflicts as most other Fronters.

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Interestingly, several of the defendants were in the ethnic minority in their neighborhoods, which may have meant that they felt they were facing greater pressure or competition from other ethnicities. This could account for their more extreme actions.

The ethnic mixes changed nearly from block to block in Flatbush, where foreign-born families numbered between 18% and 27% of the population. Malone and Bushnell lived on blocks that were heavily Irish, but with some Germans or Jews. Graf lived on a block where Jews slightly outnumber the Irish. Irishmen Macklin Boettger and George Kelly were a distinct minority on their Flatbush blocks, which were heavily Jewish: 274 Jewish families versus only 43 Irish families. In fact, there were more German, English, Austrian, and Poles than Irish surrounding Boettger and Kelly. German Nicolas Ernecke, who lived in the same building as Boettger, probably felt slightly more at home amongst the other 80 German families. Irish immigrant Michael Beirne and John Cassidy lived on blocks where Germans outnumbered the Irish (and Italians and Jews) by a two-to-one ratio. Michael Vill, who was German, lived on a mostly Italian block where there were not many Jews. Half the foreign born population in Edward Walsh's neighborhood was Jewish, outnumbering the second most populous ethnic group, the Irish, by two-to-one.

The other three defendants, who lived in Brooklyn, LaRoy Keegan, his nephew John Cook and John Viebrock, were in the ethnic minority in their neighborhoods. Keegan lived in a low-income section of Park Slope, where Italians and Poles outnumbered the Irish three to one. His nephew lived amongst mostly Russian Jews and Italians in a middle-income section of Borough Park, which was never penetrated by the Christian Front. John Viebrock's Williamsburg neighborhood was poor and native-born

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American. Only 9.33% of the area was foreign born, slightly more of them coming from Ireland than from Viebrock's ancestral home of Germany.

The neighborhoods of the three defendants who lived outside of Brooklyn were not much ethnically or economically different from those who came from Brooklyn. William Bishop and John Prout's Astoria middle-class neighborhood was between 37% and 38% foreign born, mostly Italian. Germans were second in population, followed by Jews and the Irish. Andrew Buckley's middle-class Bronx Park neighborhood was 25% foreign born, and was heavily Italian, six times more Italians that either Irish or Germans. Buckley's immediate neighbors, however, were mostly Irish.

Despite the literature they read and discussed, despite the ethnic tensions in their neighborhoods, and despite their constant anti-Semitic bantering, each defendant stoutly denied being anti-Semitic when on the stand. This was the defense strategy. Leo Healy and his fellow attorneys were trying to avoid having their clients convicted in the press. He knew that if the jury focused on the Fronters' prejudices, it could damage their defense. Strategically, the defense attorneys wanted to maintain that the defendants did what they did to become better Americans. Therefore, statements such as John Cook's claim to have left the Christian Front because he felt it was becoming anti-Semitic or Macklin Boettger's self-assessment that he was not anti-Semitic, but rather pro-Christian and only against Jews who were communists, were seen as moves to gain the jury's sympathy. John Cassidy's claim that only *Social Justice* and the *Tablet* were sold at Front meetings, an obvious lie, was meant to deflect any association with other extremist groups such as the Bund.[29]

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However, their clients did not always cooperate. Andrew Buckley did not think that the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was derogatory toward Jews. Alfred Quinlan, who attended the School of Business at the City College of New York for one year, stated that "a large amount of Jews went to CCNY," implying that there was a large number of communists in the school, and made no distinction between Jews and communists.[30]

* * *

As far as the FBI was concerned, the ideology discussed at the Christian Front's private meetings meant only one thing — revolution. According to the Bureau, this conspiracy to overthrow the United States government began in May 1939, when the Christian Front Brooklyn Unit set up the Park Slope Rifle and Pistol Club, also known as the Sports Club, with of 100 to 200 members. William Bishop became involved in the Club soon after its formation, and suggested that it join the National Rifle Association to get rifles and engage in target matches. The matches, he said, would train Club members in the use of firearms and ready them for the coming communist revolution. Several members of the Club created a smaller group, the American Committee for Christian Action, which was led by Bishop. Eventually, this small group went to Pennsylvania and upstate New York for rifle practice and became known as the "Country Gentlemen." The Gentlemen believed they had to be ready to defend their own homes and Christian beliefs once the communist revolution began. It was within this group that the alleged conspiracy was hatched.[31]

The trial revealed that the creation of the "Country Gentlemen" signified a split within the Brooklyn Unit over tensions between Bishop and John Cassidy. The Country Gentlemen wanted a smaller, more covert organization. Ironically, Cassidy (who once

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criticized CF president Marcel Honore for being too overt) was accused by the Gentlemen of being too ostentatious in his anticommunism and anti-Semitism. Bishop argued that the Gentlemen should remain secret to prevent communist infiltration and criticism by the press. If its operations stayed under cover, then its members need not fear for their jobs and economic security.[32]

The friction between Cassidy and Bishop was related to the CF infighting during the late summer and early autumn of 1939. Fred Kemp, who fought with Cassidy over the membership lists, seems to have been associated with the American Committee for Christian Action. It was Kemp, while acting as leader of the Brooklyn Unit, who announced at a Front meeting in Queens that the Committee (described as out-of-town) had appointed the Christian Front to protect New York. Cassidy may have become annoyed at an outside Committee giving an order to his unit. It was at this same meeting that future co-defendant Frank Malone explained the procedure to follow when applying for a charter for a Sports Club. Malone, who would be in charge of the Park Slope Sports Club, was in the process of organizing a Sports Club for the CF Queens Unit. The Queens Unit was promised the use of the Brooklyn Unit's rifle range after their sports club was established. Malone insisted on one rule concerning sports clubs — their existence should be kept secret.[33]

The Queens Unit spent more than a month organizing their sports club. Queens's members attended Brooklyn meetings to learn how to run their sports club activities. By the end of September 1939, Daniel Kurtz announced that the executive of the Queens Sports Club was elected and that it was active and open for membership. The only thing they still needed was an instruction manual from the National Rifle Association.[34]

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John Cassidy and the Christian Front were planning similar sports clubs across the country. Cassidy's out-of-town trips in August and September 1939 that led to Kemp's temporary leadership of the Brooklyn Unit were most likely across the country to set up local CF units and establish sports clubs in each of the units, and to acquire rifles and manufacture explosives and bombs. According to the FBI, each of these organized rifle clubs was engaged in firearms training explicitly to prepare for the communist revolution. Cassidy indicated to Father Coughlin that the inner circle engaged in planning for the defense of America against communism was known as the "Country Gentlemen."[35]

Where were the "Country Gentlemen" going to get their rifles and explosives? The weapons were coming from the 165th Infantry of the National Guard. Captain Prout claimed to have given William Bishop left over ammunition after speaking to him at the 69th Regiment armory. Sergeant Buckley accused Prout of turning over ammunition from Buckley's locker in the armory to Bishop. Other Fronters may have been members of the 165th, including "Panama Bill," who claimed to be a reserve officer in the infantry. One of "Panama Bill's" aliases was "J. Fischer," a name that became an important link in the chain of the events that set in motion the FBI's interest in the Christian Front.[36]

The misguided patriotic fervor in the minds of the Christian Fronters that led them to the dim-witted decision to steal weapons from the National Guard gave Frank Murphy and the FBI exactly what they were looking for — a conspiracy of sabotage and espionage.

The federal government was not alone in seeking a criminal case against the Front. The NYPD's Alien Squad also wanted to move forward on their investigation of the Christian Front, whom they had been watching several months before the Bureau

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stepped in. Detectives Stanley Gwozdo and Mario Fochi visited prosecutor Harold Kennedy on February 13, 1940, told him about their strong interest in the federal case, especially the role of William Bishop and his relationship with John Cassidy. The New York detectives also wanted to know if Kennedy knew anything about a railroad worker named "Healy," a name that was brought to their attention by Bronx Fronter Albert Gunnison the previous day. During an interview, Fochi and Gwozdo spoke of a party at Healy's house that Cassidy and Bishop attended. Kennedy, not wanting to jeopardize his federal prosecution and expose his star witness, denied knowing anyone named "Healy" (other than Leo Healy) or having any knowledge of that party.[37]

Denis Healy was an Irish immigrant, junior civil engineer, and member of the 101st Cavalry in the New York National Guard (Troop A, Machine Gun Platoon). He first met Nicolas Claus Ernecke, also a member of Troop A in 1936. Ernecke, a German immigrant, was constantly speaking of returning to Germany to fight for the Third Reich. During the summer of 1939, Ernecke attempted to recruit Sergeant Henry Fischer to join an organization that supported the ideals of *Social Justice*. The organization was the Christian Front. Healy and Fischer discussed Ernecke's attempt to recruit National Guardsmen into the Christian Front. During the course of discussions, Fischer suggested to Healy that he should contact the FBI. Healy followed Fischer's advice and went to the Bureau on either August 1 or 2, 1939. Within days, Healy was meeting with Special Agent Peter Wacks to tell him about Ernecke's conversations with Fischer. By September, the FBI had placed the Christian Front in Brooklyn under surveillance and Agent Wacks was personally watching Macklin Boettger's house.[38]

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Healy became an informant for the FBI. Using his reports and other intelligence it gathered, the FBI concluded that the Christian Front (with membership estimated as high as 300,000) had penetrated the Army, Navy, National Guard and urban fire and police departments. The Bureau learned of the highly suspicious activity of the Park Slope Sports Club in training its members in military tactics and was identifying the locations of public utilities, water supplies, transportation lines, and was organized into military squads. After the arms embargo debate in Congress was settled in November 1939, Healy told the FBI that the Christian Front felt the only way they could prove to Washington that they meant business was to shoot the Congressmen who supported the lifting the embargo, including Thomas Cullen of Brooklyn because he "voted to lift the arms embargo not to avert war, but bring US into war."[39]

At the same time the FBI was taking down Healy's information, they were gathering intelligence on William Bishop. To help him recruit members, Bishop had been telling recruits the Action Committee was an Army Unit sent by the government to organize civilians against the communists. To prepare for Bishop's plan to bomb the offices of the *Daily Worker* and the American League for Peace and Democracy, William Bushnell drew sketches of the building where the offices were located. The bombs were supposedly to cause damage, but not endanger life, according to the Fronters. The sketches were so badly drawn that they were discarded.[40]

William Gerald Bishop [Appendix II], a man with a multitude of aliases, became the focal point of *USA v John Prout, et al.*[41] Bishop evidently was the mastermind of the plot for which the defendants stood accused. His personal story was almost as bizarre and fantastic as his plan to overthrow the government. A salesman by profession, he

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claimed to have been born in Salem, Massachusetts in 1900 (although there was no record of a birth certificate because of a fire in Salem) and was almost deported in 1935 because he insisted that he was born in Geneva in 1903. After the trial, his ex-wife stated she believed Bishop was born in England. He regaled people with stories of spending time in an alien concentration camp near St. Palten during World War I, fighting in the Canadian Army, and living in Mexico. He traveled under the name William Arneck, and was arrested in Antwerp in 1920 for not having a passport. The prosecution's information on the date when Bishop re-entered the United States differed by eleven years from Bishop's claim (1915 vs. 1926). He told his co-defendants that he enlisted in the Spanish Foreign Legion in December 1921 or early 1922 while in Rotterdam and between January and April 1923 was Major Franco's secretary in Morocco, where he was injured a number of times. Actually Franco was a lieutenant colonel in 1923 (not a major) and if Franco had been in Africa it was as part of Spanish evacuation forces. Bishop assured his Christian Front audiences that they had sympathizers in the Spanish government who would assist them in the battle against communists on American soil. Many of those who heard Bishop believed his tales about fighting with Franco in Spain. During his testimony, he admitted to lying at Christian Front meetings about his Iberian experiences. He also had claimed to be a captain in the New York National Guard, a member of the British Intelligence Service of the British Army, to have been in the British Army of Occupation in Vienna, to have contacts in the Department of Justice and the US Army Intelligence Service, to have fought with Lawrence of Arabia, and he told John Cassidy that his Action Committee sabotaged a Standard Oil tanker in New York Harbor. None of this was true.[42]

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William Bishop's anticommunism was rooted in his personal experience with various agencies of the New Deal. Bishop worked in the CWA, the WPA as a high school language teacher, and the CCC Library Supervisory Service. All of these agencies he felt were run by communists whom he blamed for his unemployment in 1937 after the CCC dissolved. He also applied for, and was denied, home relief from the City of New York in May 1934. At that time, he claimed to have no money in the bank and to owe his landlord rent. Seven months later he applied again, this time lying about assistance received from relatives (he said he received none, even though he had said he was receiving assistance from his brother-in-law on the original application). His reaction to all these was subsequently expressed in his venomous anticommunism.[43]

Bishop became familiar with the Christian Front at the WMCA pickets He purchased *Social Justice* weekly and came to agree with Father Coughlin's philosophy. He spoke at Christian Front meetings ten times and offered to cooperate with Cassidy to reorganize and improve the Front — the genesis of the "Country Gentlemen." His speeches at Christian Front meetings and private conversations with its members consisted of the usual ranting about the Spanish Civil War, Franco's victory over the communists, and his imaginary personal experiences in Spain with Franco. A staunch isolationist and anti-Semite, he declared he would rather die in the United States killing high-level Jewish financiers who profited from overseas wars than kill Christians in an overseas war who had done him no harm.[44]

The FBI, the Criminal Alien Squad and Brooklyn Congressman Emanuel Celler all soon became familiar with William Bishop. The FBI agents interrogating Bishop accused him of being a major in the German army. Detective Thomas Devine of the

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criminal alien squad, who arrested William Bishop in 1935 under the Sullivan Law (while Bishop was using the alias William Arneck), described Bishop as "a Nazi propagandist who admits entering the country illegally." Cellar described Bishop as "the Nazi with the long criminal record" and Fiorello LaGuardia demanded Bishop's deportation to Geneva after the arrests. The City's Criminal Alien Squad provided prosecutor Kennedy with its information on Bishop during the trial.[45]

The most damaging and discrediting information about Bishop came from his own co-defendants, specifically those represented by Leo Healy. The FBI's claim that Bishop was in the German army probably came from John Viebrock, who believed Bishop's real name was Major Wilhelm Bischoff. John Cassidy believed that Bishop was a Nazi spy and did not like him or trust his secretive manner. Bishop denied being an agent for Hitler, a German soldier, or in the Gestapo. He responded by trying to turn the tables on the others on trial. He accused Macklin Boettger of being a Nazi spy and told Special Agent Peter Wacks that Michael Vill was a Nazi stormtrooper.[46]

William Bishop and Denis Healy became the perfect scapegoats in Leo Healy's defense strategy. Leo Healy played up the rumors about Bishop, condemned him as an *agent provocateur* planted by communists or Nazis as part of the "conspiracy to smear the Christian Front" and his eleven clients — who were guilty only of fervent patriotism and braggadocio — and to discredit the Catholic Church. This government plot was motivated by the Christian Front's opposition to United States entry into the European war. Denis Healy was portrayed as an anti-Semitic liar and a drunk who could not remember any facts not written down (Healy constantly referred to a pad while on the stand). To further portray the proceeding as nothing more than a show trial and a

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government conspiracy, Leo Healy accused the informant of acting under orders from FBI Special Agent Peter Wacks to entrap the Fronters by pretending to be one of the plotters, "stir up trouble," and to offer stories to the FBI which were never checked out. The defense attorney further emphasized the ridiculousness of the proceedings by getting Healy, the prosecution's star witness, to admit that he bought the bullets for the plot with money given to him by the FBI. The *Brooklyn Tablet* referred to Healy's testimony as nonsensical and accused him of for a crime in taking money from the FBI.[47]

The pressures of the trial became overwhelming for Nicolas (Claus) Gunther Ernecke. Ernecke had been getting letters threatening his life from the start of the trial, began nervously and repeatedly muttering "somebody will get me" throughout the day of April 11. That evening he disappeared. Leo Healy, who was representing Ernecke, originally feared that his client had been kidnapped or murdered based on the threatening letters. However, the thirty-six year-old salesman had hanged himself in the basement of a building two blocks from his home sometime during that night. Assistant Medical Examiner Dr. Romeo W. Auerbach ruled the death a suicide, with no signs of violence other than hanging. For days following the discovery of the body rumors circulated that Ernecke was murdered. After several weeks of investigation, the FBI concluded there was no indication of foul play.[48]

The foul play, according to the defense attorney, was committed by Denis Healy. Denis Healy's betrayal of a friend had broken Nick Ernecke's heart. Denis Healy was to blame for the suicide — and Leo Healy suggested that Denis should seek the same remedy.[49]

* * *

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The FBI may have unwittingly paid for the bullets in the plot, but it was Patrick Scanlan and the Brooklyn Diocese who supplied Leo Healy with the "bullets" for his defense.

The Christian Front was banking on the support of the Catholic Church, especially in Brooklyn. Several Brooklyn Catholic clergymen obliged by visiting local judges, pleading that "the boys are innocent and must be acquitted." Defense attorney Edmund Wilson assured a large crowd at a pro-Front rally that Leo Healy and he were doing all possible to guarantee the defendants' constitutional rights. In a Prospect Hall speech Albert Gunnison said that the Catholic Church was behind Cassidy and "would support them to the end." Rev. Edward Lodge Curran, Rev. Joseph Curran of St. Thomas Aquinas Church, and Rev. Edward Brophy all attended Gunnison's speech. Also in attendance were ten of the seventeen defendants (out on bail), Leo Healy, and Christian Front delegations from Newark and Philadelphia. Bernard D'Arcy, Father Coughlin's *Social Justice* representative in New York, chaired the meeting.[50]

Scanlan felt he could aid in the defense three ways: by finding out and exposing those who instigated the arrests; by providing research directly to Leo Healy (including newspaper articles with his commentary); and by raising money for the defendants' families. And now the *Brooklyn Tablet* began to receive solicited and unsolicited information on those who were behind the trial.

Unsurprisingly, much of the information supplied concerning the instigators of the arrests centered on either the American Jewish Committee or Anti-Defamation League. *Tablet* readers mailed Scanlan copies of form letters sent by Leonard V. Finder announcing a meeting held at Central Synagogue, where Edmund Waterman, Chairman

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of the Advisory Council of the ADL was going to give the "inside story" about the recent arrests. The "inside" story included a confidential report on anti-Semitic activities in the city and country, and accounts of anti-Semitic speeches given on the street corners during the summer of 1939.[51]

A supposed eyewitness reported to Scanlan on a meeting of the American Protestant Defense League. The featured speaker was Judge Joseph Goldstein, introduced as the "man who sent Fritz Kuhn to Sing Sing." Goldstein allegedly accused Coughlin of threatening to murder Jews and as the man behind the seventeen defendants. He also alleged that the Catholic Church sent people into Harlem to incite "the colored people against the Jewish landlords." "We'll get Coughlin in the end yet," concluded Goldstein.[52]

These unsubstantiated claims drove Scanlan to help Healy prove that there was a government conspiracy behind the trial, possibly driven by Jewish forces. Regardless of whether or not any of this information was accurate, Scanlan hoped it would plant a seed of doubt in the minds of the jury.

Scanlan's most vigorous research was on William Bishop and his mysterious past. Various histories of Bishop were filed in the offices of the *Brooklyn Tablet* and then forwarded to Leo Healy. Most of the descriptions of Bishop gathered by Scanlan were less than flattering. Edwin Banta, a member of the WMCA protests who claimed to know (and not trust) Bishop, described him as a "mystery man and romancer … liar and bragger, [whose stories held others] spellbound by his imagination" and a "mental case" who was not a criminal or out to overthrow the government. Bishop's mental instability had brought down all the "boys." Scanlan's handwritten notes include inferences that

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Bishop was a British army intelligence officer or an intelligent officer in the 7th regiment, or that he was an "undercover man for FBI."[53]

A letter to Scanlan from James Carey outlined Bishop's role as an *agent provocateur* sent by the British to disrupt pro-American anti-war groups and patriotic organizations groups. As early as 1934, Bishop was trying to discredit these groups with his "flagrant Jew-baiting speeches" under their auspices, using several pseudonyms. According to the letter, Bishop was sent into the Christian Front by the government specifically to destroy Father Coughlin because the priest was an obstacle to the United States entering the war. In fact, the technique of framing innocent patriotic groups by creating "reports of a phony arsenal" was Bishop's *modus operandi* and he had tried the same thing several years before while living in Astoria as a member of the Order of '76. Scanlan was even sent Royal Scott Gulden's business card (leader of the Order of '76) with the note "This Bishop's own" typed on the card. Scanlan thought that this may have led to Bishop being investigated by the Department of Labor.[54]

Some of the most fantastic information Scanlan collected on Bishop concerned his association with the WPA. Most of the information was dated from 1937 and implied that Bishop was a Nazi agent who recruited people fired by the Federal Writer's Project who believed they were sacked because they were anticommunists or native-born Americans or refused membership in the communist-influenced Workers' Alliance. Scanlan sent all of these stories to Leo Healy to help raise doubt in the jury's mind that the defendants acted as a single conspiracy, but were rather provoked and entrapped by Bishop.[55]

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Ironically, at the end of 1940, when Bishop was once again threatened with deportation, he turned to the *Brooklyn Tablet* and Scanlan for assistance. Bishop contacted L.M. Heffernan in the editorial department, requesting a series of articles be published in the *Tablet* to help him with his deportation problems. Scanlan ordered Heffernan to reject the articles.[56]

Scanlan's Christian Front file (Appendix III) was filled with notes, telephone numbers, and addresses of Fronters (both those who were on trial and other members). The editor sought character references and supporters for the defendants, kept tabs on NYPD and FBI investigators, looked for innocent reasons for the Narrowsburg camp (noted as "defensive" in nature). The file also had a photograph of seven unidentified CF members, most likely the defendants. Included in his list of supporters was the name and address of Reverend Charles Coughlin. Scanlan's file suggested that Jews in general and Henry Morganthau, Sr. in particular were opposed to Catholics, Christians, and the Bible. According to Scanlan, Judaism was wrong in its principles, unsound in its discovery, fantastical in its politics, and sterile in its spiritual ideals. Jewish attacks on the Catholic Church were a justification for the CF's actions.[57]

The *Tablet's* editor was also probably advising ancillary members of the Front, anticipating that some of them might be called as witnesses. He noted that CF secretary "Miss Molloy" should "pipe in [but] don't do anything rash." Several months earlier Edward Zeltner, in his *Daily Mirror* column, reported the possibility of a sex angle in the case. Scanlan asked Leo Healy if the attorney could find confirmation on Denis Healy's adultery. Leo told Scanlan "yes." Scanlan was also happily preparing to debunk what he

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viewed as libelous and malicious articles in the *World-Telegram* about his own support for the Front.[58]

During the cross-examination of Peter Wacks by Leo Healy, it was revealed that Genevieve Long, the proprietor of Howard Studios on Lexington Avenue and 57th Street was paid $150 by the FBI to be a witness. That ended Long's role in the trial and she did not testify.[59] But Scanlan forwarded Leo Healy a letter from a Bronx reader containing material he thought was useful, if Long were put on the stand. The letter contained unsubstantiated hearsay on the notion that the government was hell-bent on attacking the Christian Front, but that did offend the *Tablet's* editor's journalistic instincts. The letter writer's sister was in the hair-dressing business in the CBS building and Long had been a customer of hers for several years. Long was described as an "educated American" who was converted a year earlier to Catholicism by the Paulist Fathers. This delighted the writer's sister because she was Irish-Catholic. Long told the hairdresser how she went to the Paulist Church in the evenings and there met young men who disliked communist Jews, which she found agreeable. This led to Long's collecting clothes for Franco's followers. At the beginning of April 1940, Long told her hairdresser that she had told her priest business was bad and that she could not pay her rent. The priest told Long to call the rectory the next day and he would give her $150. The $150 had come from the FBI. After receiving the money Long never returned to her hairdresser.[60]

The connection between the Christian Front's membership, Father Coughlin, Patrick Scanlan and Leo Healy was clear in the assistance they provided the defendants' families. Bernard D'Arcy organized the Parents Defense Fund and Scanlan turned over contributions received by *Brooklyn Tablet* from as far away as Cleveland and

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Philadelphia (as well as Brooklyn), while praising D'Arcy for his work. The Fund's leaders consisted of family and friends of the defendants, including Miss Molloy. D'Arcy, Scanlan, and Healy were all involved in organizing fundraisers with active members of the Christian Front in Brooklyn. Scanlan was in personal contact with Joseph Nolan, a CF member emerging as a leader in the Brooklyn Unit. Nolan and other Fronters were active in organizing the Prospect Hall Defense Committee meetings with Leo Healy. The Committee itself operated in Healy's law offices.[61]

Within one week of the arrests, the Bronx Unit was collecting money for the Defense Fund. A week later, a CF meeting held at John Cassidy's headquarters began raising money for the defendants. On January 26, the five hundred people entering Prospect Hall were handed cards stating:

> All persons wishing to help in the defense of these boys can contribute by mail or in person at the following address:
> PARENTS DEFENSE FUND COMMITTEE
> c/o Judge Leo Healy
> Room 2502
> 16 Court St.
> Brooklyn, NY

Along with the cards, those attending got membership applications and pamphlets quoting Cassidy's statement after his arrest that the charges were "ridiculous and preposterous … all true patriots must suffer the consequence of their zeal."[62]

The Christian Front rallied to the support of the "boys." The largest Christian Front meeting ever recorded in the police reports was the February 4, 1940, fundraiser at Prospect Hall. Nearly three thousand attended the meeting to raise money for the Parents Defense Fund. The rally had been promoted for several days at Bronx and Brooklyn Unit meetings, but those did not nearly have the attendance of the February 4 meeting.

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Bernard D'Arcy chaired the meeting and several defense lawyers spoke, including Leo Healy. After D'Arcy introduced John Cassidy's and William Bushnell's sisters (the treasurer and secretary of the Defense Fund) to the crowd he denounced the newspapers and reporters who were not telling the truth about the trial. Edmund Wilson spoke next, repeating that the newspapers were printing lies and reassuring the audience that "these Christian American boys are worth fighting for and he too is a Christian American." Finally, Leo Healy took the lectern, thanking the Defense Fund for their hard work. He praised the seventeen arrested as being "clean Christian Americans" who were telling the truth. , Healy spoke of how his love for the boys had grown after visiting them in their cells and promised he would do everything he could to get them released.[63]

On the same day as the massive Prospect Hall rally, the Bronx Unit held their own fundraiser for the Parents Defense Fund at the Star of Munster Ballroom, not far from their Tri-Boro Hall headquarters. The ten cent admission was for the benefit of the Fund, was in addition to the $250 already raised. Appeals were made to assist the wife and four children of Andrew Buckley, the lone defendant from the Bronx, who were in desperate straits.[64]

Money continued to be collected at Christian Front meetings and dances for the next several months at the usual CF spots in the Bronx and Brooklyn: Ebling's Casino, Clark's Hall, and Prospect Hall. The fundraising was moderately successful, raising several hundred dollars. Crowds, as many as one thousand and as few as twenty, paid an entrance fee of a few cents or bought buttons and literature to raise money for the defendants. Patrick Scanlan indicated that these fundraisers were signs of true Christian Unity.[65]

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* * *

The Christian Front and its supporters were horrified but not surprised by the arrests and trial. To them the trial was the ultimate tangible proof that they had been correct all along — the government was engaged in a conspiracy to destroy Christian America. "So-called patriots" sent by the government were trying to break up the Front from within to prevent Christians from organizing. Federal authorities were criticized for allowing a minority group to dictate who gets arrested, investigated and prosecuted. Deluded Fronters believed the seventeen were arrested because their enemies felt the CF was getting too powerful — more powerful than the National Guard. James O'Sullivan attempted to explain the power structure in the country through circular reasoning: not all defendants were members of the Christian Front, but most were in the National Guard; the government did not want to prosecute the National Guard, so it only prosecuted the Front. "Stool-pigeons of the alien spies and paid government spies, who were in the Front and were giving out all the information" prevented defendants out on bailed from attending CF rallies in February. It would prove the entire system was corrupt if the trial resulted in convictions, an indictment of "the type of justice we have." The government was making a concerted effort to deal injustice to Christians while ignoring the real subversive groups, so that Christians in America were more persecuted than any group in Europe. The New Dealers feared the CF and the truth they told about communism. John Geis promised that the traitors found within the Front would receive "what is due them."[66]

Christian Front flyers were distributed outside the court building protesting the arrests and advertising Prospect Hall fundraisers for the defendants. One flyer described

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the defendants as political prisoners "who have incurred the enmity of the Communistic element in the New Deal." The *Brooklyn Tablet* described the arrests as a cheap political trick and a warning to anyone daring to criticize the administration. The government's actions were calculatingly designed to increase "war fever" and justify the president's "seeing U-Boats" every time he looked out his window. Edmund Norris told residents on the streets of Queens that FDR had caused the hysteria by instilling fear of an invasion into America's consciousness. The trial was also a lesson for those who dared wonder why the CIO's rifle clubs were not investigated or why LaGuardia allowed communist teachers and propagandists in city departments. Some estimated that between 1,500 and 3,000 protested the arrests in Brooklyn and the Bronx.[67]

Pamphlets of justification began to appear for sale at Christian Front meetings and fundraisers. Proceeds from these pamphlets often went to the Parents Defense Fund. One of the more popular was written by Rev. Edward F. Brophy of Precious Blood Church in Long Island City. Brophy's *The Christian Front* was a fifty-six page argument explaining why a Christian Front organization was necessary, especially at a time when "the combined guns of non-Christian, anti-Christian and Communistic Fronts were turned upon the Christian Front." One of the major causes for the wave of anti-Christian sentiment was the aggressive behavior of elements of "the Jewish Front," specifically Rabbi Louis D. Gross, editor of the *Jewish Examiner*. Father Brophy was praised at Christian Front meetings during the trial for his public stance in favor of the organization.[68]

The Christian Front published a pamphlet (with the same title as Brophy's and promoting the sale of his booklet) in their own defense that provided brief, unflattering

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biographies of Harold Kennedy and Judge Marcus Campbell. The CF asked who would be interested in bringing the organization to trial. Did the FBI (referred to as the "Famous Bureau of Investigation") gather false information and evidence leading to the arrests sent by "certain collectivist-minded minority groups"? And did the newspapers convict the Front in the press even though the Front itself was not on trial? The answers were obvious: the American Jewish Alliance, Nathan Frankel, Samuel Dickstein, Walter Winchell, and the Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League's smear tactics had pressured on the government to strike out against Christian groups opposing communism, "while the Communists are invited to tea by the first lady of the land." Despite the government's attack, the Christian Front vowed that it would continue to combat communism, collectivism, and atheistic movements.[69]

The Christian Front's Brooklyn Unit mailed a circular letter to its followers which it also distributed at the courthouse warning Americans that the trial was an attack on Christian America. The arrests and trial were simply another front in the war to preserve Christianity and Americanism, keep the United States out of war, and destroy the Red menace within American borders. Offering no apologies for their beliefs and unconcerned if their stance was being interpreted as being "anti-something or other," they asserted that their anticommunist stance and their opposition to American involvement in Europe were why they were attacked by the capitalistic and socialistic press. "Mayor LaGuardia and the screwy crew he represents believe that the Christian Front is a subversive organization. We don't particularly care what they think …" because as long as May Day parades take place in the city, there will be a Christian Front. The Front challenged LaGuardia to put the city's communists in a concentration camp for five years

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— then they will be able to tell the mayor "how utopian it is to live in Soviet Russia under the 'Five Year Plan'."[70]

Outrage over the arrests and trial dominated Christian Front speeches during the first seven months of 1940. Of the 802 different topics covered in speeches throughout 1940, 29.93% concerned the Christian Front (the trial, their internal administration, and recruiting). Another 17.71% were anti-government diatribes. Two-hundred thirteen of the 240 speeches on the trial took place between February and July, during the grand jury deliberations and trial. Most of the meetings were held in halls, rather than on the streets, but the Queens Unit did venture outside several times, as they had promised to do immediately following the arrests.[71]

Frank Murphy, J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI were among those to feel the wrath of Fronters in speeches a week after the arrests. Fronters praised the character of the defendants and called them "defenders of the Constitution," while they assassinated the character of Frank Murphy and his "phony arrests." Murphy was a perfect example for the Front of how communists had usurped the federal government. The former attorney general was called a communist himself because he had attended an ACLU meeting (described as a communist organization) and had allowed communists to run wild in Michigan. Thankfully, "Americans of that State voted him out of office" after one term, but the New Dealers promoted him for "his fine work" and he was now set for life as a Supreme Court Justice. His Catholicism was called into question and the Front exposed him as a "pagan." The Fronters seemed reinvigorated by the trial, and with blood boiling they promised to "fight more than ever to stamp out the communists" and the evil that was ensnaring the nation. They believed that membership would now soar.[72]

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The over-zealous FBI and J. Edgar Hoover were accused of "outrageous conduct" in framing the Fronters. The FBI did a good job of arresting kidnappers, but the Bureau was going to be disappointed when they investigated innocent men in Front because there was nothing to find. Crowds were urged to write their congressmen again to complain about the "FBI plot against the Christian Front." Fronters asked that since it was lawful to own rifles, as long as they are not concealed, how the boys could possibly be arrested for doing something legal. Excuses were found for the weapons and ammunition found in the defendants' homes. The idea that there were any bombs was "laughable"; the rifle in Bushnell's home belonged to his grandfather who had fought at Gettysburg, and the sword in Cassidy's home belonged to his father who fought in the Spanish-American War. Eugene Daniel, himself a member of the National Guard and Christian Front, said he was not surprised that the FBI found materials belonging to the Guard in the homes of Fronters. Daniel offered an excuse: all Guardsmen take home "mementos" from the Guard — this was not stealing from the government. Fronter Vincent Coyne praised a 14-year-old seller of *Social Justice* for not telling the FBI anything when interrogated about the Sports Club. Fronters warned each other that they were next on the list to be questioned and arrested by the G-Men, and advised each other not be afraid and treat the agents with respect.[73]

It did not take long for the accusations against the FBI to turn into another of the Front's communist conspiracy theories. Some Fronters no longer blamed the Bureau for the arrests. The Feds must have been deceived by some "despicable politician," or the New Dealers had forced J. Edgar Hoover to accept communists into the Bureau (a truly ridiculous idea). Only communist penetration could explain why the FBI had to dropped

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its investigation of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and why communists were released after their arrests "while innocent American Christian Front boys are arrested for having firecrackers in their homes."[74]

The Front's biggest enemy, aside from the federal government, was the press — and they let anyone who listened know it. The press' reaction to the arrests and trial was exactly what the Front expected. "When they are freed there will be plenty of libel suits against the newspapers," exclaimed Albert Gunnison as he criticized the *Brooklyn Eagle* for claiming it did not know the citizenship status of his cousin, John Cassidy, even though Gunnison said the paper's reporters were well acquainted with the facts. The enemy was waiting for the Christian Front to commit "some outward act to prove the falsehood in the newspapers," but the Fronters said they were too smart for that — they were not going to do anything to hurt the defendants.[75]

During the trial, the Front accused the press of refusing to print the truth about how the defendants were being denied their Constitutional rights. But the press was quick to smear them with headlines blaring that they were Christians, and to smear other Christians as well as Catholic priests who belonged to Christian organizations like the Front (even though, it was pointed out, several of those arrested were not members of the CF). Conversely, the press never pointed out that Jews constituted the Communist Party, and ignored the religion of William Weiner, President of the Jewish Peoples Committee, a communist organization, when he was arrested.[76]

The press was part of the army of un-American communist sympathizers and was controlled by the minority. The two commanders of that press army in New York were Walter Winchell and Edward Zeltner (both columnists in the *Daily Mirror*). Winchell's

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popularity as a news broadcaster and columnist made him a powerful ally of the Brown Scare. Although by the end of 1940 his continual exaggerations of the Nazi menace in the United States was becoming irksome to the government, the arrests of the Christian Fronters provided Winchell with powerful support for his claims that a powerful Nazi Fifth Column existed inside America's borders.[77]

Walter Winchell had been after the Front since 1939 as part of his effort to connect extreme anticommunist Christian groups to the German-American Bund. He charged the police were not reacting strongly enough to the street meetings in Brooklyn and had complained to LaGuardia. The mayor assured Winchell that the CF rallies were given proper attention by the police but did not tell him about the undercover work of the Alien Squad.[78]

Throughout the trial, Winchell ridiculed the incarcerated Fronters and their followers. He referred to the "Benedict Arnolds" and wrote that "that Cassidy guy, now in federal lockup … is a member of the Brooklyn 'Behind the 8-Ball Club'." Members of the Front were referred to as "a group of gullibles" who had sacrilegiously abused the religion of the American people. He applauded the publisher of the *Brooklyn Eagle* who had been threatened with losing a $30,000 print job if he did not "treat the un-Christian Fronters sympathetically …He told them all to go to hell."[79]

In an article headlined "Debunking the War and Other Propaganda," Winchell explained that the arrests may have surprised the American public, but it did not surprise him, who had raised the alarm against the Fifth Column. If every newspaper editor, Senator and congressman had only read his book, *Secret Armies,* which was filled with

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"advanced information," these "Rip Van Winkles" would realize they had been scooped.[80]

Edward Zeltner's "Over the River" columns were equally abrasive. A few days after Nicolas Ernecke's body was found, Zeltner referred to him as "Nazi Ernecke." The gist of his columns was inside information on the "17 Foolish Fronters." Convinced that the "Christian Front crackpatriots" were guilty well before the trial began, he sarcastically wrote that he honored the presumption of innocence, which included the innocence of the people who were about to be bombed by Healy's "12 misunderstood darlings."[81]

Readers of the *Brooklyn Tablet* turned to Patrick Scanlan for his answers to Winchell's derisive comments. Scanlan said his readers were tired of the anti-Christian slurs against the defendants and Leo Healy, especially Winchell's reference to 3,500 supporters of the CF as "B.U.M.S. and yokels."[82] No supporter of the CF was more irritated with Winchell than Leo Healy. Healy told a pro-Christian Front crowd at Prospect Hall on February 4 that it was up to the people reject the newspapers' lies and their "damnable reporters," especially the "well renowned columnist, the biggest liar that was ever born on this earth [Winchell]." The attorney held Winchell directly responsible for the arrests and issued a challenge to the broadcaster to debate him on Americanism.[83]

Healy turned to his friend Patrick Scanlan for help in the war of words with Winchell. Healy mailed Scanlan a copy of his letter to Winchell, in which Healy thanked Winchell for the "free advertising" for his clients. Healy demanded Winchell retract his remark that the lawyer's family was being part of the "B.U.M.S. and yokels," and he was "sorry though that the spelling of that good Irish name, Healy, irks you."[84] As angry as

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Leo Healy was, his did not compare to the diatribes against Winchell and Zeltner by other Fronters.

Both were described as being part of the "prostituted press" the real culprits causing dissension between Christians and Jews in New York. Fronters called for a boycott of the *Daily Mirror* because of the hate stirred up by "Rat" Winchell and "Over the Sewer" Zeltner. The rest of the press, from *Life* magazine to the *Brooklyn Eagle*, was attacked for their attempts to convict the defendants outside of the courts. Fronter Edward Scanlon told crowds that at the head of the people who believed all Christians were guilty were Walter Winchell and Eleanor Roosevelt. Before the grand jury indicted the defendants, Al Lomax had said that Winchell's arrogance was such that he would continue to stir up trouble even if there was no indictment that there would always be enough "evidence" for him to attack the Christian Front.[85]

As they had throughout 1939, the Christian Front portrayed themselves as courageous victims fighting a crowd of cowards: LaGuardia, Winchell, J. Edgar Hoover, Zeltner, and the American Jewish Congress. The most courageous of their victims the seventeen defendants were true heroes. William Ryan thought they should get the Congressional Medal of Honor because they had uncovered the real Fifth Column menace: a communist conspiracy to destroy Christian America.[86]

And who would know more about the Fifth Column than the Front? Fronters warned their audiences to be careful of what was said because there were "spies" present. All CF speeches were going to be deliberately misrepresented in public. John Scanlan ridiculed the *Jewish Examiner*'s March 29 article referring to dissension within Brooklyn Unit, and told the "spies" in the audience to get their facts correct.[87]

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"Those poor stupid Christians that weren't with the Front had their eyes closed and should wake up," Thomas Varley told the five hundred people rallying to support the defendants' cause. The innocence of the seventeen was never doubted at Front meetings. Front leaders visited John Cassidy in jail. They repeated Leo Healy's theory that saboteurs had been sent into the Front to destroy it. Audiences were encouraged to pray for the boys. Some had expected the outright dismissal of charges during the grand jury hearings. Others welcomed the trial as a forum to "reveal the truth." The press' charge that the Christian Front was comprised of radical extremists looking to destroy America was turned back against the press when Fronters gathered. The Fronters persisted in their sense of victimization and rampant paranoia and portrayed themselves as the "true Americans" defending the Constitution. William Ryan told a small crowd of seventy-five in Queens that the "Christian Front is not here with rifles to kill congressmen, bombs to destroy buildings or neither to overthrow the government, but are here to bring out the true facts to the people that we cannot receive in our daily press, also to recruit new members into the organization." Regardless of the "opposition's" criticism, John Scanlan was going to continue to recite the Pledge of Allegiance by placing his right hand over his heart and then extending it forward with the palm up — a strange way of affirming Americanism by giving the fascist salute while proclaiming themselves guardians of Christian America.[88]

Jews were directly responsible for the situation the Front found itself in: Jewish prejudice against Christians and their political connections had pressured the government to make the arrests. Anti-Nazi/pro-communist groups, under the leadership of the Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League, with the help of LaGuardia, Cordell Hull (whose wife was a

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"minority") and Congress had all plotted against the Christian Front. Tolerance went both ways: if Jews were not tolerant, then neither should Christians be expected to be. And so a well known anti-Semite, Rev. Herbert W. Lewis, made an appearance at a CF meeting for the first time in a year. The CF excused its behavior by promising that any anti-Christian tactics used against them were going to be used against the enemy. An audience of 1,000 at Ebling's Casino cheered Eugene Daniel's mention of the seventeen's plan to bomb the headquarters of the Communist Party and *Daily Worker*. Daniel stopped the applause to tell the crowd that these institutions should be removed from America lawfully, in a Christian manner. He did not want Edmund Wilson, who also spoke at the rally, to get the wrong impression that the Front condoned violence. The only messages the Christian Front wanted to promote was that they would "carry on with the Cross of Christ, and will see that it is not supplanted by any hammer and sickle," and would the principles of Christianity from "the slander of the anti-Christian forces."[89]

The Christian Front used the Non-Sectarian League's own self-congratulatory propaganda as proof that a minority conspiracy between the Left and the government existed. The League had proclaimed that it alone was responsible for crushing the CF. The Front may have been the only group that actually believed the League was powerful enough to have brought about the FBI investigation. The CF believed that the FBI's arrest of communists in Detroit was only window-dressing because the Attorney General dismissed the case. Fronters fully expected the arrest of Coughlin, Curran, and other leaders of the CF after the *Jewish Examiner* demanded they all be incarcerated.[90]

The February 10 issue of the Jesuit magazine *America* scolded the press for playing-up the anti-Semitism angle in the trial rather than the sedition charges

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themselves. The editors of *America* felt that this allowed "witch-hunters" across the country to destroy any individual who was connected with the Christian Front in any way. The excesses of the Fronters were being used "for the purpose of attacking the Catholic Church and for hostility toward Catholics." Because the actions of some Fronters were an affront to Jewish Action, Jews had "swung into operation" and Jewish leaders decided that the Christian Front should be "obliterated." *America* anticipated that Father Coughlin would be the next to be arrested on fabricated charges which would not include making anti-Semitic utterances "and yet, every person in the United States will know that proceedings have been instituted against him solely because he is charged with being anti-Semitic."[91]

After the trial began, *America* continued to criticize columnists (although not specifically naming Winchell or Zeltner), "hysterical liberals," "anti-Catholic bigots," and the "broad-minded Catholics" for convicting the seventeen in public opinion because they were anti-Semitic members of the CF. The magazine suspected a plot behind the "trumped-up plot" and that the real culprits were not those arrested, but the instigators of their arrests. Deluded by Denis Healy's testimony, the FBI had taken seriously the reports of the "nit-wit amateur detective" who was supplied with money and drink and a vacation to Canada.[92]

America claimed to be against anti-Semitism but its defense of the CF differed little from the Fronters' own claim that the actions of Jewish leaders were stiffing up more dangerous anti-Semitism. The magazine asked that Jews curb those who "are helping to inflame a dangerous malady."[93]

* * *

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Fronters assumed that after the seventeen were vindicated, the Christian Front would be known from "coast to coast," taking its rightful place in at the head of those defending America's and Christianity's ideals. The defendants' families had suffered enough, and the CF promised that they were all going to be reinstated to their former jobs. If not, the Front would picket their former places of employment. William Ryan agreed with a *Brooklyn Tablet* editorial that upon their release, the seventeen should be reimbursed by the FBI and press for pain and misery. The reality was that the trial smothered Christian Front activity, except for rallies in support of the defendants. Before the trial concluded, leaders of the Front privately wondered if they would have enough members to lead a protest.[94]

The large defense rallies boosted the morale of the Christian Front for a short time, however. Former members returned to the Front specifically because of the arrests. Even though the Christian Front was for men only, women were invited to join in a separate auxiliary to run fundraisers. More speakers, speeches, street rallies, and pickets were planned for the spring and summer months, and the Front promised they would be more aggressive than ever before, and would strike fear into the opposition and turn the Front into the largest Christian organization in the country. Pamphlets were distributed to answer the "anti-Christian" forces and recruit new members.

Fronters were urged to write their City Councilmen to stop bills being proposed to prohibit street meetings. Funds were collected for publicity and stationary. Units from the tri-state area were invited to attend all New York functions.[95]

There were discussions about adding new units throughout the city. A Manhattan Unit member asked Albert Gunnison of the Bronx to send speakers to their meetings (the

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Unit was meeting in the back of a candy store at 715 9th Avenue). Notices were placed in the *Brooklyn Tablet* advertising the Manhattan meetings. Nothing worked. No Manhattan Unit meetings took place after the arrests in January. The unit's leader, a Mr. Conlon, had not been seen since the trial began.[96]

There was hope support from congressmen would recruit more members for the Front. Only Representative Thorkelson responded favorably and defended the Christian Front, and Fronters hoped to invite the congressman to their meetings.[97]

Al Lomax, leader of the Bronx Unit, was a little more cautious in his recruiting efforts. Lomax explained to his Unit that the Front was not running a membership drive and would not take just any Christian. Potential members had to be good Americans and stand for the Constitution. No talk of overthrowing the government was going to be tolerated. He threatened to resign if he heard any such nonsense. Ironically, Lomax's Unit was in desperate need of membership: his meetings usually numbered only fifteen. Sometimes Lomax had an excuse for the low attendance, such as CF meetings taking place at the same time in Prospect Hall. Eventually, the Bronx leader realized the situation he was in and planned a "stag" party in Clark's Hall to attract former members back into the organization. He hoped at least one hundred former members would attend and rebuild the unit.[98]

To solve his problem and salvage the Christian Front in the Bronx, Lomax intended to have his North East Bronx Unit and the South Bronx Unit, led by Edward Sullivan, cooperate on all Front business. He warned that future members should concentrate on domestic issues, refrain from talking about the war and from talking about Jews when denouncing some injustice to Christians, and unfair Christians must be

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criticized in the same manner as unfair Jews. Most importantly, the Front should work to convince the American people that it never had any intention of overthrowing the government. Any references to being pro-Fascist, pro-Nazi, or having an interest in any form of government other than that of the United States was not going to be tolerated. Anyone promoting such ideas was assumed to be a spy and was to be summarily dismissed from the Front.[99]

Lomax's grand plan, which he discussed with Sullivan and the previously missing Manhattan Unit leader, Conlon, was to wait until the trial was over and then to incorporate the Christian Front, with a sympathetic judge at the head of the whole organization. Other members of his unit hoped for a member of the Christian clergy to take charge. This would give the Christian Front the type of legitimacy and acceptance it never had before.[100]

The exuberance of February and March, when the Front's hopes were high that it was on the verge of being revitalized, waned as the trial began in April. The FBI seized membership records, which made it difficult for the leadership to inform the membership about meetings. Fronters called for new recruiting drives and encouraged members to bring friends. Others were disappointed in their former allies, scolding their fellow Christians for going "into hiding" once the trial began, calling them "scared." Fronters said they were ashamed of Catholics for remaining silent and allowing Father Coughlin to be silenced because of "their lack of courage to defend Christianity." In Queens only thirty-six Fronters responded to a mailing of 650 letters. Letters were planned to be sent in the Bronx to inactive members asking how they could call themselves Christians "while they sit back and allow Christianity to be destroyed." The few who gathered on

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Queens street corners were invited to attend the weekly meetings at Sangerbund Hall. Debates in the Bronx Unit as to whether or not to hold street meetings in the summer (some members found them to be degrading) was a moot point because the unit did not have enough speakers.[101]

Nevertheless, William Ryan vowed that the Queens Unit would continue to hold street meetings, regardless of the strength of the minority and the subversive influence in schools. It was the only way that the truth could be brought to Americans and was the best way to drive communists from the country. He told a crowd at Springfield Boulevard and Jamaica Avenue to "join Christian Militant Organizations, like the Christian Front and protect our Christian principles." Edmund Norris defied the FBI to investigate his unit. His parents did not share his enthusiasm after his mother received a phone call from an unknown person stating that Norris was being investigated by the Bureau.[102]

James O'Sullivan ignored the advice of his friends that he might get into trouble and joined the Front in April 1940. O'Sullivan thought the suffering of mothers and children who were undernourished because of their fathers' unemployment could be solved by the CF's principles of "Americanism, Social Justice and charity." However, most of the former members probably no longer cared about the movement or did not want anything to do with an organization associated with treason.[103]

The lack of attendance flustered and confused Front leaders. They knew that only with large numbers could they achieve the respect from other Christian groups and the authorities they so desperately desired. Fronters knew that they were strong in their convictions that they were right, so there could be only one reason for so many members

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staying away. People must have feared the Fifth Column to such a degree that they were scared to be associated with a group defending America.[104]

There was hope that as the trial was reaching an end, some of the defendants would make appearances at Christian Front meetings. The Front expected that the trial would end in favor of the defendants and there would be a large influx of new members and then the Front could reorganize and reach its lofty goals. To be sure no one did anything that could jeopardize the Front's rosy future; a moratorium was placed on all street meetings until the trial ended. Al Lomax warned that some members might seek personal gain, so they all should be wary. Lomax suggested that no new member be allowed to hold office until they proved themselves after a year's probation.[105]

* * *

The defendants never saw themselves as revolutionaries, but as saviors. They saw their Christian ideals as locked in a mortal battle with communism. The Christian Front was formed to fight the communists because if nothing was done, the evils of Russia and Spain would happen in the United States. They claimed to resort to violence only in self-defense and they were determined to defend themselves. The naïve public did not realize the extent of communist infiltration because the press buried those stories. Remembering the burning of the Reichstag in Germany, after a fire at Prospect Hall, Fronters pointed fingers at the Jews and communists as the culprits. Fronters publicly asked how would the Jews and communists react if synagogues and the *Daily Worker* were attacked? So went the testimony as each defendant took the stand. Each defendant wanted to make it clear to the jury that the Front was going to save America — not overthrow the government.[106]

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In his summation, Leo Healy restated the theory that the Brooklyn trial was nothing more than a "plot to smear and destroy the Christian Front" for the sole reason that CF opposition had prevented the United States from entering the European war in the fall of 1939. The whole trial was a farce and the prosecution was only interested in attacking the religion of the defendants, and not in the phony charges of sedition and conspiracy. Christians and supporters of the CF had been demonized by the federal government. Healy told the jurors they would be considered heroes by the communists if they convicted the "boys." He said the only unanswered question of the trial was who was behind Denis Healy? The answer was provided by the *Brooklyn Tablet* and John Cassidy's testimony. The perpetrators were Jacob Aaronson, Vice President of the New York Central Railroad and the alleged communist, Rabbi Benjamin Plotkin of Newark. Rabbi Plotkin's demands that Mayor LaGuardia investigate the Christian Front as anti-Semitic in August 1939 had started the entire absurd process.[107]

In its summation the prosecution attacked Healy's claims.. By doing so, however, they planted seed of doubt in the jury's mind. Harold Kennedy put the jury in a position of deciding the case on whether or not Healy's accusations might have had some truth to them, which implicitly conceded the existence of reasonable doubt. Only secondarily did the prosecution point to discrepancies in defendants' testimonies and that Bishop, Boettger, and Ernecke had actually set the plot in motion. The fact that the Fronters were in possession of bombs — and admitted to it (although claiming they were for the purpose of clearing land for a rifle range) did not resonate with the jury.[108]

On June 24, 1940, *USA v. John Prout, Jr., et al.* concluded. After all of the passions unleashed by the trial, it did not produce any convictions. Graf, Cook, Keegan,

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Cassidy, Vill, Beirne, Buckley, and Malone were found not guilty of both counts. Quinlan was found not guilty of the only count he was charged with conspiring to steal government property. Bushnell was found not guilty of the second count and the first count resulted in a mistrial. A mistrial was declared on both counts for Viebrock, Boettger, and Bishop. Prout was found not guilty of the first count and the second count resulted in a mistrial, but he still faced a court martial for stealing ammunition from the National Guard.[109] The government's attempts to prove a Brown Network conspiracy existed fell on deaf ears. Isolationists cheered that they were free of spurious conspiracy theories heaped upon them and were convinced that interventionists were behind the whole thing.

Father Coughlin was ecstatic at the acquittal. He told the nation that the result of the exoneration of the Christians would be "that the Christian Front movement will emerge more vigorous and potent than ever." The original complaints were "by certain interested parties who were endeavoring more to embarrass me and the Christian Front movement than they were to convict the young men." Those who initiated the complaints thought the trial would be crushing anti-Semitism. Coughlin felt that the backlash against the unjust arrests, however, would lead to resentment and more anti-Semitic feelings among Christians and all Americans. And those feelings were being fueled by Coughlin himself. The radio priest actually claimed to "deeply sympathize with Mr. J. Edgar Hoover and his officers for having been used to their disadvantage."[110]

After all the accusations and the posturing by both sides, the prosecution lost the case because it allowed the trial to become exactly what they said it was not — a trial about religion and communists. The story of the conspiracy was so fantastical it was

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generally regarded as impossible. However, it was clear that the defendants had been motivated by their battle against the communist elements within the government, and this may have been an appealing idea to the jury.[111] The prosecution allowed ideology to take charge, rather than concentrating on the fact that some defendants did have a basement filled with explosives and ammunition, and that there was little doubt that the material had been stolen from the National Guard. If Kennedy was truly interested in convictions, he should probably have concentrated only on the second charge of stealing government property, possibly dropping the conspiracy charge. But it was clear that merely winning the case was not his intention. He wanted to destroy the Christian Front, and the ideal way to do that was to convict them of the most un-American of crimes: treason. In that the government failed.

* * *

The Front rejoiced that in the neighborhoods of Brownsville and East Houston Street people were "no longer feasting and are now in tears, because of the news relating to the Christian Front trial in Brooklyn. They are now crying that the verdict was a blow to our democracy," proclaimed William Ryan at a victory rally after the verdict was announced. Ryan denounced the "minority groups" who, with the help of federal agencies, plotted the arrests because they feared the Christian Front would expose communism as a menace to American people. Fronter speakers gloated at the victory, which many had promised their followers. The acquittal proved "the truths" they had been proclaiming on the streets of New York for almost two years: that Christians must expose all subversive forces in America, until those "Pontius Pilates" who plotted the arrests were exposed and removed form public office. Only then could Christians

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continue their meetings without spies and agents snooping around. The Front had long been shouting that the federal government was interested in nothing more than destroying the Front smearing a Catholic priest, simply because it was that priest (and Patrick Scanlon) who had been exposing the communist menace for years — but no one took heed until now.[112]

Front supporters were urged to once again join together and attend benefit rallies for the recently released defendants and for other Fronters who were arrested. Father Brophy was a featured speaker at several benefits that denounced those responsible for the arrests in the most vitriolic terms. At Sangerbund Hall Ryan said he was not necessarily overjoyed at the news of the not guilty verdicts because of "the torture previously and now facing the boys, and also because of the unhappy memory of Guenther Ernecke. The wounds caused by the arrests are now scars which are visible." Edmund Norris returned to the streets of Queens calling for the arrest of Frank Murphy for homicide. Norris charged it was Murphy's persecution that led to the suicide of Claus Ernecke, which should be labeled a murder. The press was attacked for not giving as much coverage to the verdict compared to the publicity given the arrests. Joseph Nolan had only one criticism of the final day of the trial: that one supporter of the prosecution, who had had a lit cigarette extinguished on his coat by a protester at the court house, did not have it put out in his open mouth.[113]

Four hundred Front supporters gathered at Prospect Hall on June 28, 1940. John Cassidy spoke to his fellow Fronters for the first time since his acquittal. He thanked God for the outcome of trial, expressed his gratitude to all the people who contributed their time and money and praised the jury for their fair and wise decision. Cassidy

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invited representatives from the Alien Squad and FBI, with whom he had no grievance because they were only doing their jobs, to attend open CF meetings (although they would be barred from closed, members-only meetings). His hope the instigators behind the trial would suffer the same mental anguish the defendants undergone in detention. As leader of the Christian Front in New York, Cassidy promised that the organization was going to be stronger and better than ever before, and would take its message of strict neutrality to the streets of Brooklyn.[114]

At the same meeting, plans were announced for a massive July 3 Independence Day rally at Prospect Hall. Several of the defendants, including Cassidy, along with Leo Healy and Father Brophy were scheduled speakers. However, Brophy had a bombshell to release before the July 3 gathering. Brophy took the podium on June 28 and was pleased to announce that the foreman of the jury was his cousin, Helen Titus.[115]

The worst fears of the Left were being realized: that the jury was fixed. Maurice Rosenblatt's predictions had come true. One week later, not coincidentally the day after the massive benefit, the July 4th *Brooklyn Eagle* reported the Titus story, citing its source as Rev. L.M. Birkhead and the Friends of Democracy. Birkhead claimed to have attended the meeting at Prospect Hall, although he probably received the information from one of the police officers at the Prospect Hall meeting. To compound the conspiracy, the *Eagle* also reported that former defendant Macklin Boettger claimed, "I was out night before last with one of the jurors and he told me that ten members of our jury are going to apply for membership in the Christian Front."[116]

The July 3 benefit attracted between 1,400 and 2,500 people (not including the police observers). The speakers included Catholic priests, including Brophy, as well as

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Patrick Scanlon, Leo Healy, and John Cassidy. The Front announced a new Woman's Unit and that it would hold open meetings every Friday beginning in August, although it was still hesitant to return to the streets. Leo Healy thanked his fellow defense attorneys and revealed that his brother, a Catholic priest, had been in contact with Patrick Scanlon throughout the trial. Scanlon was proud of the *Tablet*'s support of the defendants and the Christian Front, which could now peacefully continue with its work. Father Brophy called for boycotts of Macy's and Lord & Taylor because the stores fired Andrew Buckley and Francis Malone during the trial, a call repeated at street rallies in Queens the following week. Brophy, who was also hawking his pamphlet for the advancement of Christianity, told the crowd that the arrests were not made because of patriotism, but because the likes of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, J. Edgar Hoover, Mayor LaGuardia, Westbrook Pegler, and Walter Winchell feared the solidarity of Christians.[117]

The Left was aghast and confused by what exactly happened. The acquittals reinvigorated conspiracy theories amongst anti-Coughlinite factions. The North Side Civil Rights Council in Chicago wrote Attorney General Robert Jackson calling on his office and the president to do all they could to overturn the jury's mistake. The Council fully expected that the evidence proving the Christian Front was a "fascist group" and nothing more than a "vigilante organization" and a "threat to our democracy" meant it was the duty of the courts to protect Americans from such gangs, not set them free. The New York City Council Youth Division of the American Jewish Congress demanded an explanation from Harold Kennedy as to why relatives of Fronters were allowed to serve on the jury.[118]

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Equality and *Friday* both asked why the Christian Front had been whitewashed. Their fear was that the Christian Front was now once again free to plot and plan violence, and move ahead with the program exposed at trial. If that were to happen, the FBI, Department of Justice, and NYPD would all be to blame for ignoring how dangerous Coughlin really was. Their long-term fear stemmed from their own conspiracy theory that the Christian Front had powerful forces behind it and the strength of those forces was the real reason the seventeen were not convicted.

Friday accused Harold Kennedy of being part of the conspiracy in an piece headlined "American Merchants of Hate" (October 4, 1940). The article asked pointedly why the "Nazi agent and Jew-baiter" Coughlin and his close ally, Edward Lodge Curran, were never investigated along with the real anti-Semitic Fifth Column. J. Edgar Hoover was accused of going out of his way to separate Coughlin from the defendants. In an ironic twist, the New York press was blamed for not presenting the true fascist character of the Christian Front during the trial. Kennedy was contacted by Gabriel Lowenstein who offered to have his associates in the Anti-Defamation League stop these attacks on Kennedy so he could focus on going after Coughlin and the Front. Lowenstein feared that Jewish attacks on Kennedy would persuade the prosecutor to forgo future investigations and indictments.[119]

But the Left, the New Dealers, and the FBI were not finished with the Christian Front in 1940. Nor was the Christian Front finished with them.

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Notes

[1] Police Report, Jan. 22, 1940, OCF.

[2] Summation of Harold Kennedy, box 615, vol. X, 5708, USAJP-CCF.

[3] Maurice Rosenblatt, Coordinating Committee for Democratic Action, letter to Gardner Jackson, Feb. 20, 1940, GJP.

[4] *Ibid.*; Maurice Rosenblatt, Coordinating Committee for Democratic Action, letter to Gardner Jackson, Feb. 3, 1940; Maurice Rosenblatt, Memorandum, Feb. 20, 1940; Maurice Rosenblatt, letter to Gardner Jackson, Feb. 23, 1940, GJP.

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] Healy represented Ernecke, Walsh, Vill, Viebrock, Malone, Keegan, Graf, Cook, Cassidy, Bushnell, and Boettger. *Brooklyn Eagle*, Feb. 5, 1940: 3, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[7] Patrick Scanlan, letter to Leo Healy, May 17, 1940, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[8] *New York Times*, Apr. 4, 1940: 11; April 5, 1940: 8.

[9] Bishop was arrested on May 3, 1935 under the Sullivan Law (possession of firearms) and was charged under the names "Bishop" and "Arneck." William Gerald Bishop, box 613, vol. VIII, 4324-26, USAJP-CCF.

[10] Macklin Boettger, box 615, vol. VI, 2833-37; Andrew Buckley, box 614, vol. VII, 3923, 3927; William Bushnell, box 611, vol. V, 2686-91, 2726; John Graf, box 615, vol. VI, 3133-37; LaRoy Keegan, box 615, vol. VI, 3300-01, 3309; Francis Malone, box 614, vol. VII, 3749; John Prout, Jr., box 611, vol. V, 2283, 2288; Alfred Quinlan, box 613, vol. VIII, 4116-18, 4123, 4133; John Viebrock, box 611, vol. V, 2490-92; Michael Vill, box 614, vol. VII, 3657, USAJP-CCF; Death Certificate and announcement of suicide of Nicholas [Claus] Gunther Ernecke, Apr. 12, 1940, box 610; Statement of William Bushnell, January 14, 1940, box 10, USAJP-AF. *New York Times*, Jan. 16, 1940: 22.

[11] Vill was a member of the Defense Organization (1920-1925 or 1926) and two of his cousins were members of White Guard fighting communists in Germany.

[12] Michael Beirne, box 614, vol. VII, 3802-03; Macklin Boettger, box 615, vol. VI, 2838, 2840, 2858-60, 3043, 3127; Andrew Buckley, box 614, vol. VII, 3931, 4001-02, 4007, 4034-35, 4073; William Bushnell, box 611, vol. V, 2686-91, 2726; John Franklin Cook, box 615, vol. VI, 3245-49; John Graf, box 615, vol. VI, 3160; LaRoy Keegan, box 615, vol. VI, 3309; John Prout, Jr., box 611, vol. V, 2454; Alfred Quinlan, box 613, vol. VIII, 4116-18; 4123; 4133; John Viebrock, box 611, vol. V, 2490-92, 2494; Michael Vill, box

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614, vol. VII, 3658-60, 3667-69, USAJP-CCF; Statement of William Bushnell, January 14, 1940, box 10, USAJP-AF; *Herald Tribune*, May 3, 1940; May 4, 1940, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[13] Francis Malone, box 614, vol. VII, 3747-48, 3751, 3753, USAJP-CCF; Statement of Francis Malone, January 14, 1940, box 10, USAJP-AF.

[14] *Herald Tribune*, May 3, 1940, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[15] Andrew Buckley, box 614, vol. VII, 4003; LaRoy Keegan, box 615, vol. VI, 3300-01, 3309; Michael Vill, box 614, vol. VII, 3657, USAJP-CCF; *New York Times*, Jan. 16, 1940; Freeman 275.

[16] Bishop spoke about the atrocities in Spain and showed pictures (from *Spain at Arms*) of ruined churches and mutilated people (including nuns and priests) slaughtered by Loyalists in Spain in Prospect Hall. Bishop then asked "who would tolerate a thing like this in New York City?."
Michael Beirne, box 614, vol. VII, 3807, 3811; William Gerald Bishop, box 613, vol. VIII, 4356, 4376-77, 4529, 4539-41, 4582, 4599, 4602; Macklin Boettger, box 615, vol. VI, 2846-47, 3014-15; Andrew Buckley, box 613, vol. VIII, 4011; John F. Cassidy, box 614, vol. VII, 3408-12, 3481-82; John Franklin Cook, box 615, vol. VI, 3258; Denis Healy, box 612, vol. I, 38, 315; John Prout, Jr., box 611, vol. V, 2314-15; John Viebrock, box 611, vol. V, 2509-10, USAJP-CCF.

[17] Michael Beirne, box 614, vol. VII, 3807, 3811; William Gerald Bishop, box 613, vol. VIII, 4356, 4376-77, 4529, 4539-41, 4582, 4599, 4602; Macklin Boettger, box 615, vol. VI, 2846-47, 3014-15; Andrew Buckley, box 613, vol. VIII, 4011; John F. Cassidy, box 614, vol. VII, 3408-12, 3481-82; John Franklin Cook, box 615, vol. VI, 3258; Denis Healy, box 612, vol. I, 38, 315; John Prout, Jr., box 611, vol. V, 2314-15; John Viebrock, box 611, vol. V, 2509-10, USAJP-CCF.

[18] Coughlin claimed *Money* was written "for the ordinary American citizen ... the author is in nowise identified with that band of political economists who have proven to be nothing more than mouthpieces for the private coiners of money." Coughlin, *Money! Questions and Answers* 7.

[19] *The Cadets of the Alcazar* described the communist attack and siege of "Spain's West Point" in Toledo, which was saved by Franco. A line on page 11 states "The Alcazar is the symbol, the epitome of the Civil War in Spain." Denis Healy, box 612, vol. I, 76, 482; John F. Cassidy, box 614, vol. VII, 3409, USAJP-CCF.

[20] Powers, *Not Without Honor* 78-79,129-131.

[21] William Gerald Bishop, box 613, vol. VIII, 4413, 4409, 4419-20, 4658; Macklin Boettger, box 615, vol. VI, 2859-2862, USAJP-CCF.

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[22] The socialist bureaucracy included: the building of the Boulder Dam, the National Recovery Act, the attempt to pack the Supreme Court, the Act of May 12, 1933 (giving the president the power to reduce the weight of the gold dollar), the Gold Reserve Act of 1934 (giving the president additional powers in matters of currency and money), and the presidential power to fix the weight of the silver dollar. William Gerald Bishop, box 613, vol. VIII, 4599, box 614, vol. IX, 4913; Macklin Boettger, box 615, vol. VI, 2860, 2886-87, 2891, 2894, 3036, USAJP-CCF.

[23] Michael Beirne, box 614, vol. VII, 3880; William Gerald Bishop, box 613, vol. VIII, 4360, 4425; 4503, box 614, vol. IX, 4647; Macklin Boettger, box 615, vol. VI, 2954-55; Vernon Criss, box 611, vol. IV, 1726; John Graf, box 615, vol. VI, 3222; Denis Healy, box 612, vol. I, 41, 75-76, 109, 357-58, 359-60, 375, 482, 738527-28, 533; John Prout, Jr., box 611, vol. V, 2304, 2356; Alfred Quinlan, box 613, vol. VIII, 4144, 4231; Michael Vill, box 614, vol. VII, 3664, 3719-20; Peter J. Wacks, box 612, vol. II, 930, 932, box 610, vol. III, 1116, USAJP-CCF; *Herald Tribune*, May 4, 1940, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[24] William Gerald Bishop, box 613, vol. VIII, 4647; Macklin Boettger, box 615, vol. VI, 2954-55; Vernon Criss, box 612, vol. VI, 1726; Denis Healy, box 612, vol. I, 527-28; 533, USAJP-CCF; Coughlin, *Money! Questions and Answers* 76; 105; Abraham Bernard Magil, *The Truth About Father Coughlin*, (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1935) 24.

[25] William Gerald Bishop, box 613, vol. VIII, 4654-55, box 614, vol. IX, 4654-55; Macklin Boettger, box 615, vol. VI, 2942; Andrew Buckley, box 613, vol. VIII, 4026; William Bushnell, box 611, vol. V, 2707-08, 2753-54, 2776; Denis Healy, box 612, vol. I, 149, 228; John Prout, Jr., box 611, vol. V, 2357, 2355; Alfred Quinlan, box 613, vol. VIII, 4155-56; Peter J. Wacks, box 610, vol. III, 949 USAJP-CCF; Prosecution's Exhibit, copy of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, box 7; Statement of William Bushnell, January 14, 1940, box 10, USAJP-AF.

[26] Defendants resided in the following census areas, based on the *Tract Data on Population and Housing, New York City: 1940*. Neighborhood incomes were determined using *New York City Market Analysis* areas.
Michael Beirne (census area 786, *New York City Market Analysis*: Flatbush, Brooklyn area 16); William Bishop (67, Astoria, Queens area 1); Macklin Boettger (796, Flatbush, Brooklyn area 16); Andrew Buckley (385, Bronx Park, Bronx area 6); William Bushnell (217, Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn area 10); John Cassidy (786, Flatbush, Brooklyn area 16); John Cook (464, Borough Park, Brooklyn area 14); Nicolas (Claus) Gunther Ernecke (796, Flatbush, Brooklyn area 16); John Graf (215, Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn area 10); LaRoy Keegan (147, Sunset Park, Brooklyn area 13); George Kelly (796, Flatbush, Brooklyn area 16); Frank Malone (207, Park Slope, Brooklyn area 9); John Prout, Jr. (115, Astoria, Queens area 1); John Viebrock (295, Stuyvesant, Brooklyn area 6); Michael Vill, (776, Flatbush, Brooklyn area 16); Edward Walsh (818, Holy Cross,

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Brooklyn area 17). Alfred Quinlan's 205 W. 142nd St. residence in Manhattan was not confirmed by the prosecution.

[27] Andrew Buckley, box 614, vol. VII, USAJP-CCF, 3982; *New York Times*, Jan. 16, 1940: 22.

[28] Bayor 102; *New York Times*, Jan. 16, 1940: 22.

[29] Michael Beirne, box 613, vol. VIII, 3802-03; Macklin Boettger, box 615, vol. VI, 2838, 2840, 2858-60, 3043, 3127; Andrew Buckley, box 614, vol. VII, 3931, 4001-02, 4007, 4073; William Bushnell, box 611, vol. V, 2686-91, 2726; John F. Cassidy, box 614, vol. VII, 3507;John Franklin Cook, box 615, vol. VI, 3245-49; John Graf, box 615, vol. VI, 3160; LaRoy Keegan, box 615, vol. VI, 3309; Francis Malone, box 614, vol. VII, 3747-48, 3751, 3753; John Prout, Jr., box 611, vol. V, 2454; Alfred Quinlan, box 613, vol. VIII, 4116-18;; 4133; John Viebrock, box 611, vol. V, 2490-92, 2494; Michael Vill, box 614, vol. VII, 3658-60, 3667-69, USAJP-CCF; Attorney Notes; Statement of William Bushnell, January 14, 1940; Statement of Francis Malone, January 14, 1940, box 10, USAJP-AF.

[30] Andrew Buckley, box 614, vol. VII, 4034-35; Alfred Quinlan, box 613, vol. VIII, 4123, USAJP-CCF.

[31] Macklin Boettger, box 615, vol. VI, 2947; Andrew Buckley, box 613, vol. VIII, 4091; John F. Cassidy, box 614, vol. VII, 3421, 3435; Vernon Criss, box 611, vol. IV, 1717-19, 1721; LaRoy Keegan, box 615, vol. VI, 3313, 3349; Francis Malone, box 614, vol. VII, 3762; Michael Vill, box 614, vol. VII, 3684, USAJP-CCF; Statement of William Bushnell, January 14, 1940; statement of Francis Malone, January 14, 1940, box 10, USAJP-AF; *Herald Tribune*, May 3, 1940, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[32] Bishop claimed to be aware that the Christian Front was being investigated by "people unknown," other than LaGuardia. Macklin Boettger, box 615, vol. VI, 2900; William Gerald Bishop, box 613, vol. VIII, 4633; William Bushnell, box 611, vol. V, 2727; John F. Cassidy, box 614, vol. VII, 3484; Denis Healy, , box 612, vol. I, 115, USAJP-CCF. Statement of William Bushnell, January 14, 1940, USAJP-AF; *New York Times*, May 1, 1940: 11.

[33] Malone's procedure for creating a sports club was to appoint an executive branch, with a president, treasurer, secretary, etc. with the secretary applying for membership in the National Rifle Association, cost of $10. Police Report, Aug. 29, 1939, OCF.

[34] Police Report, Sept. 12, 1939; Police Report, Sept. 26, 1939, OCF.

[35] Father Charles E. Coughlin Report, Mar. 17, 1942, 4-5, Charles Coughlin file, FBI file (Detroit) 100-4716, CCFBI.

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[36] Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, July 12, 1939; Det. George Ballenstadt to Commanding Officer, Alien Squad, July 27, 1939, OCF; *Herald Tribune*, May 4, 1940, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA; *New York Times*, Apr. 6, 1940: 1.

[37] Harold Kennedy, letter to Earl Connelly, Feb. 15, 1940, Box 8, USAJP-AF.

[38] The Wacks-Healy meeting took place on August 4, 1939. Henry Fischer, box 612, vol. I, 18; Denis Healy, box 612, vol. I, 29-32; Peter J. Wacks, box 612, vol. II, 910-11, 1030, 1035, USAJP-CCF; *New York Times*, Apr. 6, 1940: 1.

[39] William Gerald Bishop, box 613, vol. VIII, 4522; William Bushnell, box 611, vol. V, 2770; John F. Cassidy, box 614, vol. VII, 3415, 3495; Denis Healy, box 612, vol. I, 37, 105-06, 291, 313, 558-59; Peter J. Wacks, box 612, vol. II, 938; 948, 934; 946-47, 988, USAJP-CCF.

[40] There was a rumor that the offices were a possible storehouse for communist ammunition. *Ibid.*; William Gerald Bishop, box 613, vol. VIII, 4748; 4760; John F. Cassidy, box 614, vol. VII, 3636, USAJP-CCF; Statement of William Bushnell, box 10, January 14, 1940, USAJP-AF; *Brooklyn Tablet*, May 11, 1940: 2.

[41] William Gerald Bishop's aliases included: William Hrnecek, William Arneck, Captain William Bishop, Captain Gerald Bishop, Captain William Bishopstone, Captain Norman, William Norman Bishop, William McAndrews, and "BILL."

[42] Michael Beirne, box 614, vol. VII, 3812, 3816; William Gerald Bishop, box 613, vol. VIII, 4284-89, 4292-4309, 4345, 4347-48, 4351-52, 4363, 4986, 4692, 4832, 4838-40, 4846, 4867, 4894, 4923, 4935, 4949, 4952, 4960, box 614, vol. IX, 4986, 4995, 5000; Macklin Boettger, box 615, vol. VI, 3003; Andrew Buckley, box 614, vol. VII, 3997, box 613, vol. VIII, 4045; John F. Cassidy, box 614, vol. VII, 3393, 3416, 3494, 3497, 3515, 3517; Vernon Criss, box 611, vol. IV, 1717; John Graf, box 615, vol. VI, 3139; Denis Healy, box 612, vol. I, 532, 538; John Prout, Jr., box 611, vol. V, 2304-05; Peter J. Wacks, , box 612, vol. II, 946, USAJP-CCF; Harold M. Kennedy, Memorandum to Mr. Pittoni, June 4, 1940, box 9, USAJP-AF; Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Bureau Criminal Alien Investigation, Aug. 2, 1940, OCF.

[43] Bishop worked in Theodore Roosevelt High School in the Bronx. He spoke English, German, and Spanish fluently, and had a working knowledge of French. William Gerald Bishop, box 613, vol. VIII, 4323, 4328-33, USAJP-CCF; William Gerald Bishop, Applications to City of New York Department of Public Welfare Emergency Home Relief Bureau, May 9, 1934 and December 20, 1934, box 8, USAJP-AF; Letter to M.D. Griffith, Board of Trade, Sept. 22, 1937, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[44] Michael Beirne, box 614, vol. VII, 3816; William Gerald Bishop, box 613, vol. VIII, 4351, 4986, 4894; Macklin Boettger, box 615, vol. VI, 3003; Andrew Buckley, box 614,

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vol. VII, 3997, 4045; John F. Cassidy, box 614, vol. VII, 3416, 3494; John Graf, box 615, vol. VI, 3139; Denis Healy, box 612, vol. I, 532; 538; John Prout, Jr., box 611, vol. V, 2304, USAJP-CCF.

[45] *Cong. Rec*. Jan. 23, 1940: 569; Harold M. Kennedy, Memorandum, Feb. 7, 1940, box 6, USAJP-AF; *New York Times*, Jan. 16, 1940: 22; January 24, 1940: 9.

[46] William Gerald Bishop, box 613, vol. VIII, 4344, 4679-80, 4690, 4920, 4969; John F. Cassidy, box 614, vol. VII, 3615; Vernon Criss, box 611, vol. IV, 1723; Charles Gannon, box 610, vol. III, 1241, 1245, 1250, 1287; Peter J. Wacks, box 612, vol. II, 1018, USAJP-CCF; *New York Times*, Apr. 25, 1940: 12; May 1, 1940: 11.

[47] William Gerald Bishop, box 613, vol. VIII, 4457, box 614, vol. IX, 4606; Macklin Boettger, box 615, vol. VI, 2902-03; John F. Cassidy, box 614, vol. VII, 3535, 3594; LaRoy Keegan, , box 615, vol. VI, 3323-24, USAJP-CCF; *Brooklyn Tablet*, Apr. 13, 1940: 1; Apr. 20, 1940: 1; May 4, 1940: 1; June 22, 1940: 1; *New York Times*, Apr. 9, 1940: 1; Apr. 10, 1940: 22; Apr. 11, 1940: 24; Apr. 16, 1940: 13; Apr. 17, 1940: 10; Warren 195.

[48] Affidavit of Dr. Romeo W. Auerbach, Assistant Medical Examiner, box 610; Death Certificate and announcement of suicide of Nicholas [Claus] Gunther Ernecke, Apr. 12, 1940, box 610, USAJP-CCF; Harold Kennedy, letter to Honorable Joseph Lawrence, Director, Bond and Spirits Division, May 8, 1940, box 9, USAJP-AF; *New York Times*, Apr. 13, 1940: 8; Apr. 14, 1940: 1.

[49] *New York Times*, Apr. 14, 1940: 1.

[50] "Brooklyn Priests Visit Judges on Behalf of Frontists," *The Hour*, Mar. 9, 1940 (No. 35): 1, Charles Coughlin file, TSC-DBA; Police Report, Feb. 12, 1940; Report of Meeting, Det. Fitzpatrick, Alien Squad & Lt. McKeon, 42nd Pct., Feb. 11, 1940, OCF.

[51] Leonard V. Finder letter, February 1940, Christian Front file; Unsigned Note, Apr. 2, 1940, Charles Coughlin file, TSC-DBA.

[52] American Protestant Defense League note on meeting, undated, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[53] Banta was not the most trustworthy source. He was described as a noted informer, who was the "original stoolpigeon on the Writers project of the WPA used to good effect in the campaign to destroy or cripple the cultural projects sponsored by the government." Unidentified newspaper clipping, Dec. 8, 1940, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA; Edwin P. Banta, letter to Patrick Scanlan, May 9, 1940; Patrick Scanlan handwritten notes, undated; Letter to M.D. Griffith, Board of Trade, Sept. 22, 1937, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

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[54] The Carey letter was forwarded to Scanlon by a man named "Peter," with a request it be published in the *Brooklyn Tablet*'s "Readers Forum" and was guaranteed by the sender to be authentic. James Carey, letter to Patrick Scanlan, undated, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.
Led by Royal Scott Gulden (not associated with the mustard), there were 168 members in the Order of '76 in 1934. The red-baiting, spy-hunting, paranoid and impotent organization believed all communists were Jews and vice versa. Coughlin was also associated with Order of '76 via his friendship with Congressman Louis McFadden (PA), who was allegedly connected with Nazi agents. "Jews in America," 143; Magil 33.

[55] Emma Knight affidavit; Emma Knight, extract from letter to Clyde Shropshire, June 23, 1937; George H. Patchen, letter to Capt. W.N. Bishop, Aug. 13, 1937; H.P. Godwin, letter to Ralph Easley, July 20, 1937; Membership Committee, WPA Workers' National Committee for Honest Work Relief form letter to co-workers, undated; Memorandum, Re: Gerald Bishop, alias Captain Norman, alias Bishop-Stone, alias Arneck, alias "Bill"; Patrick Scanlan handwritten notes, undated; Statements against Lt. Oliver Gottschalk and Bronson Purdy, Affidavit, July 12, 1937; Telephone conversation between Mr. Norman and Mr. Bucek, Vice President Executive Service Corporation, New York City, Aug. 12, 1937; W.H. Hackett, letter to W.N. Bishop, Aug. 12, 1937, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[56] L.M. Heffernan, letter to William G. Bishop, Dec. 5, 1940, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[57] Patrick Scanlan handwritten notes, undated; photograph of Christian Front Group, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[58] Miss Molloy was involved in the Loewi interview. Scanlan was questioning Healy about adultery in February. *Ibid.*; *Daily Mirror*, Apr. 8, 1940, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[59] *New York Times*, Apr. 23, 1940: 7.

[60] M. Gallen, letter to Patrick Scanlan, May 3, 1940; Patrick Scanlan, letter to Leo Healy, May 4, 1940, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[61] The Parents Defense Fund Committee consisted of: Margaret Cassidy and Mr. Cassidy (sister and father of John Cassidy), Florence Bushnell and Mr. William Bushnell (aunt and father of William, Jr.), Agnes Molloy, George McCormick, and John Henihan. Bernard D'Arcy was elected chair, Margaret Cassidy, treasurer, and Florence Bushnell, secretary. Bernard D'Arcy, letter to Patrick Scanlan, June 27, 1940; Patrick Scanlan, letter to Bernard D'Arcy, February 9, 1940, Patrick Scanlan handwritten notes, undated; Christian Front file, TSC-DBA; Police Report, Feb. 5, 1940; Report of Meeting, Sgt. O'Donnell, 72nd Pct. & Det. Schmidt, Alien Squad, Feb. 4, 1940, OCF.

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[62] Police Report, Jan. 22, 1940; Report of Meeting, Sgt. Galvin, 42nd Pct, Jan. 21, 1940; Police Report, Jan. 27, 1940, OCF.

[63] Edmund Wilson, representing Buckley and Quinlan, and his friend and colleague since their days at Fordham University, James Mahon, joined Healy on the dais. Police Report, Feb. 3, 1940; Police Report (2), Feb. 3, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 5, 1940; Report of Meeting, Sgt. O'Donnell, 72nd Pct. & Det. Schmidt, Alien Squad, Feb. 4, 1940, OCF.

[64] Police Report, Feb. 5, 1940; Report of Meeting, Sgt. Gallo, 40th Pct., & Ptl. Fitzpatrick, Alien Squad, Feb. 4, 1940, OCF.

[65] Police Report, Feb. 12, 1940; Report of Meeting, Det. Fitzpatrick, Alien Squad & Lt. McKeon, 42nd Pct., Feb. 11, 1940; Police Report, Mar. 2, 1940; Police Report, Apr. 6, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Mally, 72nd Pct., Apr. 5, 1940; Police Report, Apr. 20, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Leffler, 72nd Pct. & Ptl. Rodriguez, Alien Squad, Apr. 19, 1940; Police Report, Apr. 27, 1940; Police Report, May 18, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Mally, 72nd Pct., May 17, 1940, OCF. Patrick Scanlan handwritten notes, undated, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[66] Police Report, Feb. 10, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 13, 1940; Report of Meeting, Det. Oswianek, Alien Squad, Feb. 23, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 24, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Leffler, 72nd Pct. & Ptl. Oceanic, Alien Squad, Apr. 26, 1940; Police Report, Apr. 27, 1940; Police Report, May 9, 1940; Police Report, May 25, 1940; Police Report, May 31, 1940, OCF.

[67] Report of Meeting, Lt. Beneke, 114th Pct., & Ptl. Owshianik, Alien Squad, June 19, 1940; Police Report, June 20, 1940, OCF; *Brooklyn Tablet*, Jan. 20, 1940: 1; Jan. 27, 1940: 1; May 11, 1940: 2; Christian Front flyers, box 7, USAJP-AF; *Herald Tribune*, May 3, 1940, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA; Irwin 108.

[68] Father Brophy's friendship with the Christian Front was very appreciated by the members. In June, he wrote a letter to Queens Borough president George Harvey condemning the managers of Lost Battalion Hall for not allowing the Christian Front to use the hall for a rally. They were afraid of unwanted publicity, but promised access if the Front changed their name. The CF refused and did not use the hall. Brophy 5, 32-40; Police Report, Apr. 20, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Leffler, 72nd Pct. & Ptl. Rodriguez, Alien Squad, Apr. 19, 1940; Police Report, June 18, 1940, OCF.

[69] *The Christian Front* (Brooklyn: The Christian Front of America, 1940).

[70] "To All Americans Who Think: This is What We Say," May 24, 1940, Christian Front file, AJCL.

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[71] This is in contradiction to Ronald Bayor, page 103. The Queens Unit held street rallies at some of the same locations as they did in 1939: Springfield Boulevard and Jamaica Avenue, Lefferts Boulevard and Liberty Avenue and 31st Street and Ditmars Boulevard. Police Report, Jan. 22, 1940; Report of Meeting, Sgt. Galvin, 42nd Pct, Jan. 21, 1940, OCF.

[72] *Ibid.*; Police Report, Jan. 27, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 3, 1940, OCF.

[73] Police Report, Jan. 27, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 3, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 10, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 12, 1940; Report of Meeting, Det. Fitzpatrick, Alien Squad & Lt. McKeon, 42nd Pct., Feb. 11, 1940, OCF.

[74] Police Report, Feb. 5, 1940; Police Report, Mar. 4, 1940; Report of Meeting, Sgt. O'Connor, 42nd Pct., Mar. 3, 1940, OCF.

[75] Police Report, Jan. 27, 1940; Report of Meeting, Det. Oswianek, Alien Squad, Feb. 23, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 24, 1940; Police Report, May 9, 1940, OCF.

[76] Police Report, May 25, 1940; Police Report, June 22, 1940, OCF.

[77] MacDonnell 130; Ribuffo 182.

[78] Fiorello LaGuardia, letter to Walter Winchell, Jan. 3, 1940; Fiorello LaGuardia, letter to Walter Winchell, Jan. 22, 1940, Christian Front file, FLP, Roll 19.

[79] *Daily Mirror*, Jan. 22, 1940; Jan. 23, 1940; Apr. 8, 1940, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[80] *Ibid.*

[81] *Daily Mirror*, Feb. 1, 1940; Apr. 4, 1940; Apr. 8, 1940; Apr. 15, 1940, undated clipping, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[82] J.J. Keough, letter to Patrick Scanlan, Feb. 14, 1940, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[83] Police Report, Feb. 5, 1940; Report of Meeting, Sgt. O'Donnell, 72nd Pct. & Det. Schmidt, Alien Squad, Feb. 4, 1940, OCF.

[84] Leo Healy, letter to Patrick Scanlan, Feb. 14, 1940; Leo Healy, letter to Walter Winchell, Feb. 14, 1940, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[85] Police Report, Feb. 3, 1940; Police Report (2), Feb. 3, 1940; Police Report, Mar. 30, 1940; Report of Meeting, Det. Oceanic, Alien Squad, Mar. 30, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Leffler, 72nd Pct. & Ptl. Oceanic, Alien Squad, Apr. 26, 1940; Police Report, Apr. 27, 1940; Report of Meeting, Sgt. Coughlin, 72nd Pct., May 10, 1940; Police Report, May

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11, 1940; Police Report, May 16, 1940; Police Report, June 15, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Beneke, 114th Pct., & Ptl. Owshianik, Alien Squad, June 19, 1940; Police Report, June 20, 1940, OCF.

[86] *Ibid.*

[87] Report of Meeting, Lt. Mally, 72nd Pct., Apr. 5, 1940; Police Report, Apr. 6, 1940, OCF.

[88] Police Report, Feb. 3, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 10, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 10, 1940 (2); Report of Meeting, Det. Fitzpatrick, Alien Squad & Lt. McKeon, 42nd Pct., Feb. 11, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 12, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 17, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Leffler, 72nd Pct. & Ptl. Oceanic, Alien Squad, Apr. 26, 1940; Police Report, Apr. 27, 1940; Police Report, May 9, 1940; Police Report, May 16, 1940; Police Report, June 22, 1940, OCF.

[89] Report of Meeting, Sgt. Gallo, 40th Pct., & Ptl. Fitzpatrick, Alien Squad, Feb. 4, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 5, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 10, 1940; Report of Meeting, Det. Fitzpatrick, Alien Squad & Lt. McKeon, 42nd Pct., Feb. 11, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 12, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Manley, 103rd Pct., May 11, 1940; Det. Mario Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, May 13, 1940; Report of Meeting, Ptl. Owshianick, Alien Squad, May 20, 1940; Police Report, May 21, 1940; Police Report, May 25, 1940; Police Report, May 28, 1940; Police Report, June 15, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Beneke, 114th Pct., & Ptl. Owshianik, Alien Squad, June 19, 1940; Police Report, June 20, 1940; OCF.

[90] Police Report, June 22, 1940, OCF.

[91] *America*, Feb. 10, 1940: 478.

[92] *America*, Apr. 27, 1940: 58.

[93] *America*, Feb. 10, 1940: 478.

[94] Police Report, Mar. 30, 1940; Report of Meeting, Det. Oceanic, Alien Squad, Mar. 30, 1940; Police Report, May 25, 1940; Police Report, May 28, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Connolly, 105th Pct., June 5, 1940; Police Report, June 6, 1940; Report of Meeting, Sgt. Coughlin, 72nd Pct., June 7, 1940; Police Report, June 8, 1940, OCF.

[95] $68.80 was collected at one Prospect Hall meeting, where fifteen new Front members were inducted. A fundraiser was held on June 29 at the Knights of Columbus in Brooklyn to help James Sardelis, "A brother Christian who was framed for speaking as a Christian-American." Sardelis, a Front speaker whose name appeared on seven police reports in 1939, was serving 60 days and fined $50.00. He was also known as James Sard, James Sardi, and Charles Sardi. Police Report, Feb. 3, 1940; Police Report, Feb.

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10, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 13, 1940; Report of Meeting, Det. Oswianek, Alien Squad, Feb. 23, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 24, 1940; Police Report, Mar. 30, 1940; Report of Meeting, Det. Oceanic, Alien Squad, Mar. 30, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Leffler, 72nd Pct. & Ptl. Oceanic, Alien Squad, Apr. 26, 1940; Police Report, Apr. 27, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Mally, 72nd Pct., May 17, 1940; Police Report, May 18, 1940; Police Report, June 14, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Nally, 72nd Pct., June 14, 1940, OCF.

[96] Report of Meeting, Det. Oswianek, Alien Squad, Feb. 23, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 24, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Mally, 72nd Pct., May 17, 1940; Police Report, May 18, 1940, OCF.

[97] Police Report, Feb. 10, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Leffler, 72nd Pct. & Ptl. Oceanic, Alien Squad, Apr. 26, 1940; Police Report, Apr. 27, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Mally, 72nd Pct., May 17, 1940; Police Report, May 18, 1940; Report of Meeting, Ptl. Owshianick, Alien Squad, May 20, 1940; Police Report, May 21, 1940, OCF.

[98] Police Report, Feb. 17, 1940; Police Report, Mar. 2, 1940; Police Report, Mar. 27, 1940; Police Report, Apr. 27, 1940, OCF.

[99] Police Report (2), Feb. 3, 1940; Police Report, May 25, 1940; Police Report, June 8, 1940, OCF.

[100] Lomax was concerned about joining forces with Sullivan. He did not like Sullivan's domineering style, and wanted everyone in his unit to be able to voice their opinion. *Ibid.*

[101] Police Report, Apr. 20, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Leffler, 72nd Pct. & Ptl. Rodriguez, Alien Squad, Apr. 19, 1940; Police Report, Apr. 27, 1940; Police Report, May 9, 1940; Police Report, May 31, 1940; Police Report, June 1, 1940; Report of Meeting, Sgt. Coughlin, 72nd Pct., June 7, 1940; Police Report, June 8, 1940; Police Report, June 11, 1940; Police Report, June 22, 1940, OCF.

[102] Police Report, May 31, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Seegers, 103rd Pct. & Ptl. Owshianik, Alien Squad, June 3, 1940; Police Report, June 4, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Beneke, 114th Pct., & Ptl. Owshianik, Alien Squad, June 19, 1940; Police Report, June 20, 1940, OCF.

[103] Police Report, May 9, 1940, OCF.

[104] Police Report, May 25, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Seegers, 103rd Pct. & Ptl. Owshianik, Alien Squad, June 3, 1940; Police Report, June 4, 1940, OCF.

[105] Their hopes were initially dashed as only 40 people attended a Sangerbund Hall meeting on June 17, 1940. Defendants George Kelly and Macklin Boettger both thanked the audience for their moral support and warned them about the communists' tactics.

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This was before the jury finished deliberating. Police Report, June 14, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Nally, 72nd Pct., June 14, 1940; Police Report, June 15, 1940; Police Report, June 18, 1940, OCF.

[106] Michael Beirne, box 614, vol. VII, 3805; 3813, 3913; William Gerald Bishop, box 613, vol. IX, 4747, 4755; Macklin Boettger, box 615, vol. VI, 2840, 2902, 2979, 3009; John F. Cassidy, box 614, vol. VII, 3417; Vernon Criss, box 611, vol. IV, 1719, USAJP-CCF; "What Is the Christian Front?".

[107] *Brooklyn Tablet*, June 22, 1940: 1; *New York Times*, June 14, 1940: 23. John F. Cassidy, box 614, vol. VII, 3535; 3594, USAJP-CCF; Warren 195.

[108] Summation of Harold Kennedy, box 615, vol. X, 5708, 5752-5753, USAJP-CCF; *New York Times*, June 19, 1940: 24.

[109] Those individuals whose charges resulting in a mistrial were never retried. Box 615, vol. X, 5792-96, USAJP-CCF.

[110] *New York Times*, June 26, 1940: 12.

[111] Bayor 103.

[112] Report of Meeting, Ptl. Owshianik, Alien Squad, June 24, 1940; Police Report, June 25, 1940; Police Report, June 27, 1940, OCF.

[113] *Ibid*; Report of Meeting, Sgt. Kuhn, 105th Pct., June 26, 1940; Police Report, June 27, 1940, OCF.

[114] Report of Meeting, Lt. Malley, 72nd Pct., & Det. Schmidt, Alien Squad, June 28, 1940; Police Report, June 29, 1940, OCF.

[115] *Ibid.*

[116] *Brooklyn Eagle*, July 4, 1940: 3, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[117] Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Bureau Criminal Alien Investigation, July 5, 1940; Police Report, July 5, 1940; Report of Meeting, Sgt. Mulcahy, 72nd Pct., July 3, 1940; Police Report, July 11, 1940, OCF.

[118] North Side Civil Rights Council, letter to Attorney General Jackson and President Roosevelt, July 7, 1940, OF3893; New York City Council Youth Division, American Jewish Congress to Harold Kennedy, July 9, 1940, box 7, USAJP-AF.

[119] Gabriel Lowenstein, letter to Harold Kennedy, Oct. 2, 1940, box 7, USAJP-AF; "Why the Whitewash of the Christian Front?" *Equality*, July 1940, box 7, USAJP-AF.

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Chapter 9 The Fifth Column: May 1940 – June 1944

"If the folks back home knew how well the faiths get along together here — some folks back home would be disappointed."
- Pat O'Brien as Father Francis Duffy, *The Fighting 69th* (1940)

Christian Fronters made the trial a clarion call to all Christians to step forward and defend Christianity. But the call they answered was Pearl Harbor, and after that the Front was looked upon with great suspicion, even by those the Front had hoped to attract. And the federal government's failure to disband the Front in 1940 meant that the Front might, it was feared, infiltrate the armed forces and disrupt the war effort. The FBI was not going to permit a Coughlin-led Fifth Column in the United States.

Starring James Cagney and Pat O'Brien, *The Fighting 69th*, the story of a predominately New York Irish World War I regiment, was one of many patriotic films produced by Hollywood in 1939 and 1940. The theme of most of these khaki-clad epics was a plea for tolerance in the face of a greater menace, that despite differences ethnic or religious all Americans are Americans and are united for good against evil. One of the technical advisors on Cagney's film was Captain John Prout, Sr., the father of former Christian Front defendant, John Prout, Jr.[1]

It was ironic that John Prout, Jr. and his compatriots were amongst those back home who Pat O'Brien said would have been disappointed by how well Americans of all religions got along on the front. Throughout the trial and the verdict, Christian Fronters remained convinced that Christian unity was the only real basis for patriotism in the United States. Christian unity was the second most popular topic for CF speakers in April (as the trial began) and in July, immediately following the trial. Of all the speeches

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the police recorded in 1940, 19.20% dealt with Christian unity. Only the discussions of the trial ranked higher, 29.93%.

Christian unity was the only way Americans could "follow the footsteps of Christ" and preserve a Christian America. Only through unity could Christians fight communists and other anti-Christian forces because if Christians would unite, then the "belief in Christ cannot be extinguished."[2] Daniel Kurtz, one of the few Fronters who spoke on the street in 1940, publicly allied the Front with the Mobilizers once again, assuring the crowd that the police still supported the cause and that many police were members. He announced the formation of ladies auxiliaries and urged formation of a Christian Parents group to end the "unbearable" treatment of Christians in public schools.[3]

Self-defense now became the "official" explanation for the formation of the Front. William Ryan, the new leader of the Queens Unit, told a Sangerbund Hall audience that the CF was formed because of "crooked politicians," "chiseling businessmen," "indecent literature on the newsstands" where Christian literature was banned, and unethical labor unions exploiting working people. He told crowds to expect the worst and prepare for militancy against a powerful minority. He called on Christians to "join Christian Militant Organizations, like the Christian Front, to protect our Christian principles."[4] Without such militant unity, he saw no hope for America. Father Brophy told the same audience that the need for Christian action was greater than ever and that the time had come for Christians to defend everything they held dear. Brophy said Christians were being fired from the jobs because of their faith due to the influence of the minority.[5]

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The Jewish minority took center stage as the cause of the Christian Front's troubles. There was less use of the euphemisms "communist internationalists" after the trial, and more frequently, Fronters used the terms "minority" or "Jewish" to describe their opposition. In many cases, the Front's attacks were specifically religious in nature. Desperation was making Coughlinites more militant in their preparation for what they saw as the beginning of a religious war. Twenty-three percent of Christian unity speeches topics contained religiously-based anti-Semitism. This compares to only 8.62% in 1939. Comments such as: "Christ was the first member of the Christian Front and Christians do not hate Jews, only the sins of the Jews" and the "minority is persecuting Christians and will not let them organize under name of Christianity" were prevalent in these speeches. Floyd Caridi, thinking that he was going to be arrested for his comments, quoted papal statements from the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries regarding Jewish tactics and pointed to Jewish rule over Catholics in Poland as proof of the Jewish anti-Christian conspiracy. William Ryan felt that the source of the problem with the minority was their denial of Christ.[6]

Social Justice called its nemesis, Rev. L.M. Birkhead of the Friends of Democracy, as the "Gentile Jew" and his group as one of the "fronts for big business, financial oligarchy, radical Socialism, atheistic Communism, left-wing Jewry, or they are the innocent and unwitting attackers of true Christian democracy."[7] Coughlin cited the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* to show the power of Jewish-led "grandiose government institutions" in America. The Shrine of the Little Flower offered Christians two choices in the face of Jewish domination: a "totalitarian Christianity" or a "totalitarian anti-

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Christian Marxism" to succeed a decaying democracy. Fronters told audiences that Christians could block Jewish control by not buying from "these persons."[8]

As always, religiously-based anti-Semitism was made to explain real world problems as Fronters created grand conspiracies out of coincidental associations. The modern battle between Christ and the Anti-Christ, the latter composed of communists and their sympathizers, could only be won with Christian support of all Catholic priests and Protestant ministers. The Front promised to expose all the Jewish organizations in the city. Jews were held responsible for the electoral defeats of candidates favored by the Front. Daniel Kurtz proclaimed that the minority in New York, which controlled less than 4.5% of the votes, voted in a bloc to steal elections. E.J. Sadington said the minority's financial power could be taken away by "placing Christian money in Christian hands."[9] Daniel Downing concocted a conspiracy theory that connected British Jews with American governmental officials. He claimed to have received information that the British Israel World Federation and its American counterpart, the Anglo-Saxon World Federation, were outwardly working for Christian unity but in reality were part of a worldwide Jewish plot. His "proof" consisted of Ohio Senator Robert Taft's association with the Carnegie Endowment for Peace, which was behind the World Federation organizations and the fact that that the Federation's literature was in the Jewish section of the New York Public Library.[10]

Throughout all of their attacks on Jews, Fronters still insisted they were not anti-Semitic. John Geis described his anti-Jewish remarks as merely "chastising Jews the same way a child would be chastised."[11]

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Voting Christian remained the best tangible expression of Christian unity, especially in a presidential election year. Voting became the face of Americanism for the Front after the organization was accused of trying to overthrow the government. Fronters went out of their way to explain that their desire for a change in leadership did not involve any violence or desire to overthrow the government. Changes to bring the country back to "Christian principles and ideals" must be accomplished through the ballot box. Their rhetoric derided the incumbent New Deal as "un-American" and "phony politicians" who did not care about domestic problems.[12]

During the summer, as the CF promoted its "Vote Christian" campaign, Maurice Rosenblatt of the Coordinating Committee for Democratic Action began to worry about a resurgence of the Christian Front. Rosenblatt contacted James Wechsler and Gardner Jackson, and asked them to investigate rumors that the Christian Front was making a "strong attempt" to penetrate the Democratic Party. A few days after Joseph McWilliams' announcement that he would run for the 18th Congressional district primary in Yorkville, he was held in Bellevue for ten days for mental observation. Aside from this, however, the authorities seemed to be leaving the Front alone.[13]

* * *

Not surprisingly, Fronters anti-government rants ranked next on the list of topics in 1940 at 17.71% of speech topics. Americanism defined as the beliefs of Christian Americans, was the theme for most anti-government speeches. This was followed by accusations that the government was part of a grander conspiracy against Christians, of which *John Prout, Jr., et al. v. USA* was only the latest example. Anti-government

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diatribes were most prevalent during the grand jury deliberations in February and as the trial was about to go to the jury in June.

The entire Front anti-government agenda was encapsulated in one speech by Floyd Caridi on May 10 at Prospect Hall. Somewhere between one and four hundred heard him speak about war and Christianity, and insist that Jews had no business in a Christian country. He assailed LaGuardia and the Roosevelts for being pro-Jewish, and denounced Christians for being afraid (which explained the low attendance). All "present day liberals" were the puppets of the Jews. He pointed out the hypocrisy of liberals. They were ready to denounce groups that advocated defense against the alien immigrant menace in 1938 or 1939, while in 1940 they supported America's war preparation as necessary to defend against the remote possibility of invasion, while their support for immigration had opened the door to a real invasion of British, Nazi and other Fifth Columnists to enter the United States and destroy American Christianity.[14]

LaGuardia was the worst liberal of all. The Christian Front attacked him with as much malice as in 1939. Daniel Kurtz continued to recount the false stories of LaGuardia's pro-communist activities in Hungary: "As long as I tell the truth, I am afraid of no one," The "louse" of a mayor was continually accused of being anti-Christian for denying Christians their freedom of speech and arresting Front speakers; by never speaking out against Christian persecution (although always ready to condemn the persecution of Jews in Germany and to warn Americans about Nazism); by interfering with Christian groups (specifically the Front and the Bund); by never criticizing the communist menace; and by keeping a "fever-chart" of Christians. This mythical chart was supposedly a record of the reports LaGuardia received from his Jewish "stooges."

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Never once, William Ryan claimed, did the mayor think of keeping a fever chart of anti-Christian, communist and other subversive groups in New York. The chart itself caused anti-Semitism because it targeted Christians in favor of the Jews, according to Floyd Caridi.[15]

On the day Italy declared war on Great Britain and France, June 10, 1940, Mayor LaGuardia called on Italians in New York to remain neutral. The same day, Fronter Edmund Norris, infuriated at what he considered a double standard, lashed out at the mayor for telling Italians to be neutral, but never telling the Jews to remain neutral in their hatred for Hitler. For the next few days Norris went back to speak at old Front street corners in Queens Village and Ozone Park-Richmond Hill, areas predominately German and Italian. He warned audiences of seventy-five to one hundred people that the Italians in the city would be systematically silenced the same as the city's Germans, because of their attitudes towards the war.[16]

The actions of New York's mayor were nothing compared to what the Front claimed the New Dealers were doing. As the grand jury sat in *Prout v. USA*, the Front expanded the conspiracy theories involving the Roosevelt administration in assassination and murder. One thousand people at Ebling's Casino listened as speakers set forth their own conspiratorial history of the New Deal: At the beginning of the second New Deal in 1935, there were a number of critics (or "defenses" as the CF described it) of Roosevelt's policies. Almost all were permanently silenced: in 1935 alone Huey Long was assassinated, Senator Bronson Murray Cutting of New Mexico was killed in an airplane crash, and Senator Thomas Schall of Minnesota died after being struck by an automobile. Front member Eugene Daniel, a supporter of Long, charged that the Louisiana senator's

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assassination was part of a government conspiracy to break up Long's political machine to keep him from challenging Roosevelt for the presidency. Isolationist Senator William Borah of Idaho died of natural causes in 1940. Coughlin, the only defender left against the Roosevelt conspiracy, was systematically being removed from the airwaves by government pressure. Fronters argued that all these deaths (except for Borah's) were the bloody work of the administration.[17]

As British and French fortunes faltered at the end of May 1940, President Roosevelt and Congress acted to expand America's preparedness. Isolationists derided the administration's plans as unnecessary. On a May 19 national radio broadcast, aviation hero and leading isolationist, Colonel Charles Lindbergh, disparaged the president's preparedness program, stating that a properly formulated defense plan, together with 10,000 airplanes, and the expanse of the oceans made the country virtually impervious to attack. He also argued that aid should not be sent to Britain or France since it would drag the country into the war.[18]

The administration was now becoming concerned that supporters of the communist or pro-German movements might infiltrate the government, especially the Army or Navy. Acting on the assumption that some of Lindbergh's supporters were members of a Fifth Column, Roosevelt ordered the FBI to investigate the hundreds of people who wired Lindbergh after his speech. Within days of Lindbergh's radio address, and specifically referring to isolationist groups like the Christian Front, Roosevelt warned the nation that such groups were attempting to sow the seeds of domestic discord by exploiting political or racial prejudice: America "must be eternally vigilant" against the Fifth Column.[19]

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Roosevelt was also responding to Martin Dies' charges that the FBI had not gathered enough information about subversive groups. From his position as HUAC's chairman, Dies demanded that FDR order more intensive investigation of communist and fascist organizations, hoping that his committee would be able to take advantage of such presidential orders. Instead Roosevelt turned to the FBI, rather than Dies, for the investigations.[20]

The President's statements put the CF on the defensive again. Fronters claimed that if any Nazi spies actually entered America, it was because of the New Deal's open-door policy for refugees. Communists, who had been advocating the overthrow of the government for twenty years, were never arrested. Nevertheless, every time a Fronter, Father Coughlin, Charles Lindbergh, or Henry Ford spoke, they were labeled a Fifth Columnist. Front speakers identified Roosevelt, LaGuardia, New York Governor Lehman, Harold Ickes, and any other New Dealer they could name as the "real" Fifth Column. Thomas Dewey was even accused of being a Fifth Columnist for employing three communists (an accountant and two secretaries) in his Manhattan District Attorney's office.[21]

President Roosevelt's interventionist policies made him the "biggest hypocrite in the history of the world" and "the number one Fifth Columnist."[22] The cancellation of Henry Ford's contract to build airplanes for the Army, after Ford refused to build planes for England, was further evidence of the President's treason, along with FDR's war cabinet appointments of Harry Ward, Sidney Hillman, and David Dubinsky — three men who had been accused by the Front of extorting money from their workers to send to Spanish Loyalists to fight Christians in Spain.[23]

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The acquittal of the Fronters in the Prout trial emboldened the Front in its anti-administration rhetoric. The truth was now known, and only an administration Fifth Column conspiracy could explain the attacks on Christian Americans. On a Queens street corner on July 18, Edmund Norris declared "keep an eye on those in Washington, who are raving so much about the New Deal and are also in all leading positions within our federal, state, and municipal government, those persons are the real Fifth Columnists."[24]

William Ryan sarcastically said the United States had nothing to fear now that a "rough, tough Jewish Army is being formed to protect our Northern and Southern borders, as in the south they will have to protect us from another old tough Jew by the name of Trotsky."[25] This 200,000 person army planned to follow its leader, Franklin Roosevelt, to meet the enemy, Hitler, on the banks of the Rhine. Ryan asked if the Front's rifle club was un-American, why no one in the press criticized Roosevelt's Jewish army.[26]

The government did not abandon its suspicions of the Christian Front in New York. On July 4, 1940, a bomb planted at the World's Fair British Pavilion exploded while being removed, killing two police officers and critically wounding two others. The Pavilion had been receiving threats for several days and extra police had been assigned to the area. Immediately following the blast, Chief Inspector Louis Costuma ordered that all "Bundists, Fascists, or members of the Christian Front" attending a Columbus Circle rally be rounded up by the Alien Squad.[27]

Twenty-one individuals were arrested; among them were Fronters John Scanlan and the recently exonerated John Cassidy. Scanlon claimed to be so fearful of

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government intentions that he called the Squad's headquarters after his arrest to make sure the arrest was official and that he was not being "taken for a ride." Fronters assailed LaGuardia for making the Christian Front scapegoats again and "the opposition" for persecuting Christians. Chief Costuma, however, was not grasping at straws in suspecting that the Front might have attacked such a prominent symbol of England. The CF's obsession that the government was conspiring with the British to enter the war had been running wild for months now.[28]

Reverend Edward Lodge Curran's pamphlet, *War, A Moral Analysis*, set forth the requirement that must be met for a war to be considered just. For a war to be considered just one of the following three conditions had to be met: to stop an actual menace; to resist attack; or to protect the future. Fronters argued that these requirements for America to enter this war were not met because the country was not directly threatened or invaded.[29]

In their effort to portray themselves as the true American patriots, Fronters always included the caveat that they would be the first to fight if America were invaded or if the war were truly fought to preserve "Christian ideals" and to defend "the teaching of the Savior." There was no denying that America should spend large sums of money to build up and modernize her defenses, especially in the event of the anticipated (and, in the case of Irish Fronters, hoped-for) fall of the British Empire to the Germans. But the Front would never fight on European soil. Members claimed they had to take to the streets to tell the truth about the European conflict: Hitler was using the same tactics now that England had employed to acquire its empire. Both committed countries had used un-Christian means and both should be repudiated by Christian Americans during this war of

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greed. Raymond Halloran (or O'Hanalan) told the heavily Italian and German neighborhood of Astoria that one Christian Front aim was to a pledge from one million men to refuse to fight on any foreign soil "even if it means being placed in concentration camps."[30]

* * *

Neutrality continued to be high on the Front's agenda, despite the feeling of some Fronters that they should avoid the topic of the war so as to not bring unwanted official attention on them. Neutrality represented 14.84% of all topics discussed and the focus on neutrality took a new turn in 1940: it became stridently anti-British and blamed Great Britain for the European war and for pushing the United States towards intervention.[31] The mostly Irish Fronters appealed to already existing anti-British sentiments engrained in Irish and German minds by going to the German-Irish neighborhoods of Queens Village, Hollis, Ozone Park and Richmond Hill.

The Nazi conquest of Belgium, France's fall to the Nazis and the British loss of war matériel during the evacuation from Dunkirk led British Prime Minister Winston Churchill to appeal to the American government for military supplies. The supplies were released by the War Department on June 3. Three weeks later, the first shipment,, , 500,000 rifles, 80,000 machine guns, 900 75-mm field guns, and 130 million rounds of ammunition, reached Britain. Fronters were worried that these events, in addition to Italy's declaration of war against the allies on June 10, were going to, force America's hand. They believed entrance into the war was going to occur momentarily, and that made neutrality the second most popular speech topic in May and June 1940.

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British propagandists were viewed as most powerful forces behind the movement for American intervention. Al Lomax warned his fellow Bronxites not be deceived by the English (and Nazi) propaganda being spread throughout the city. Fronters accused British propagandists of using movie newsreels to create hysteria by scaring Americans with fears that Hitler was going to invade America, which was "pure nonsense." Paraphrasing Front hero Charles Lindbergh — whom Fronters wanted to thank personally for his neutrality stances — Fronter Charles Waldron said "if America can't protect against an invasion, then we should give up." William Ryan told a gathering on the corner of Lefferts Boulevard and Liberty Avenue that the "American people [were] falling into the stage of insanity because of the war propaganda and some have even lost faith in the safety of our banks" because they believed British propaganda. Fronters took it upon themselves to form organizations to combat British war propaganda.[32]

Front speakers held Great Britain responsible not only for the war in 1940, but for World War I. They claimed that the same tactics of "destruction and trickery" used by the British in 1917 were being repeated to get America involved in another European conflict. After the United States helped England and France gain victory in 1918 America was vilified and cheated by allied statesmen. If America entered this war then we "will be suckers and it will be only because of our fear to speak against the crooked politicians, our international bankers and the forces of Jewry who seek revenge." England was quite capable of handling Hitler on its own, in the Front's opinion.[33]

Great Britain's entire history was blasted by the Fronters, especially British imperialism and colonization — two topics that fanned Irish hatred for the English. British aggression since 1700 provided themes for several speeches. This war was

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nothing more than a continuation of British empire building and power politics. Claims that this war was for "democracy" and "Christianity" were lies promulgated by British propaganda. Democracy no longer existed in Britain (or France or the United States for that matter); therefore this war could not be to save democracy. *Social Justice* actually prayed for a German victory because the Allies only "pretend[ed] to protect Christianity" — England was no longer a Christian country. English claims that they were fighting for Christianity were believed only in the "pro-British prostituted press," because the British did nothing after Catholic Poland (or Belgium or Czechoslovakia) was invaded. The British never followed the principles of Christianity when dealing with the inhabitants of its colonies. Fronters referred to the suffering of the people of India and the Boers during the nineteenth century. In fact, England had tried to sign a pact with communist Russia, but Hitler simply beat them to it — proof enough that the British, just like the communists, were trying to destroy Christianity. As far as Fronter James O'Sullivan was concerned, Germany did more religious training of its youth than England, France, or the United States combined. The true reason the British wanted America to enter the war was so that English troops could be to maintain their colonies, which meant that American soldiers were going to be used to protect the British Empire.[34]

Not surprisingly, a direct correlation was made between minority (Jewish) and British and Roosevelt's push towards war. Half of all immigration arriving in 1940 was thought to be either British propagandists or Jewish refugees. William Ryan warned that "the gates of America were opened to those who had a hooked nose and the odor of herring and were classified as refugees." The CF warned that a third term for Roosevelt made intervention inevitable and that his cabinet was holding covert meetings to involve

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the United States in the war. They urged the country to reject FDR, and to elect a president whose "heart is in the US, not Europe." Roosevelt was mockingly called the "President of England and France." Fifty thousand airplanes were being produced (meaning thirty men conscripted for each plane's crew) with no regards to cost while millions remain unemployed. Other weapons were being shipped to Britain with no regard for America's own defense. Quoting George Washington, the Front again urged audiences to write to sympathetic congressmen to keep the United States out of "foreign entanglements." Even Roosevelt's February condemnation of the USSR was called a lie to promote involvement in the war.[35]

Joseph McWilliams re-entered the Christian Front scene in Queens to declare that there were only two reasons for the present war: first, to protect the British Empire; second to protect Jewish interests. Speaking to a mostly German and Irish crowd, McWilliams warned that Jews want "German and Irish boys to fight their battle." Several days later in the same Queens Village neighborhood, other Fronters warned that if the United States entered the war it would be because "crooked politicians love English soil more than that of the US and that the anti-Christians must gain their revenge against Hitler" or "we will be suckers." Fronters repeated their old attacks on President Roosevelt for inaction during the "Christian slaughter" in Mexico which they contrasted against his protests against persecution in Germany when a "minority group was involved." The Jews were trying to involve the United States in the war as revenge against Hitler, who expelled them to solve Germany's problems. However the minority refused to fight in Europe, preferring to remain in America and "make big money in industry."[36]

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The Christian Front vowed to continue to speak on street corners to maintain America's neutrality and defeat the "so-called Liberals." Liberals were criticized for misleading the country with their speeches about democracy and masquerading as patriots while they were aiding and abetting communists. They were accused of "cuddling" communists until the Hitler-Stalin Pact, and only then decided to wave "the flag of Americanism."[37]

The Front distributed petitions and started letter-writing campaigns to isolationist congressmen. They praised their ideological allies: Fathers Coughlin, Brophy, Curran, Congressman Rush Holt, Charles Lindbergh, and Major Al Williams.[38] Echoing Lindbergh, they ridiculed the French and English for trying to get the United States into the war, mocked the idea that the country might be invaded, and blamed the "minority controlled press" and "gutter rats" like Winchell for questioning isolationists' patriotism. Hitler and Mussolini were praised for dealing with "un-Christians." Edmund Norris suggested that those who want to fight Hitler should join the Canadian army.[39]

During this period, the general danger of communism, support of Father Coughlin, and analysis of the economy were seldom discussed. Coughlin and the economy were mentioned less than 3% of the time. The dangers of communism, which so heavily dominated Front street rallies the year, before fell to 12.59% (compared to 20.23% in 1939), and most were simply vague warnings about the communist threat and onslaught from within. Father Brophy spoke to Fronters about how communism caused dissension, atheism, and led the country away from being run in a "Christian manner." There were also mentions of Christian persecution in Europe, communist control of the radio and press, the supposed funding of the Communist Party by Wall Street bankers,

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teachers suspected of being communists, boycotts of businesses financing the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, communist front "tolerance groups" attacking the CF, communist attacks on sellers of *Social Justice*. The Front kept chastising Christians who ignored the *Brooklyn Tablet* and kept up the chant that it was the duty of the Christian Front to enlighten people about the true facts about communism.[40]

The Front still harped on the connection between Jews and communists. Edmund Norris quoted a report that claimed 33% of all Jews in Massachusetts were communist. The Front advertised Father Denis Fahey's book about Jewish bankers and their control of capitalism and revolutionary Bolshevism. Fronters explained that if Jewish leaders had only followed Father Coughlin's advice and distanced themselves from communism, Einstein, Hillman, and Dubinsky would have proven to be "real Americans" and not have suffered persecution — it was their own fault.[41]

The Christian Front continually argued the communists and their fellow-travelers were the real Fifth Columnists, not the so called danger on the right. Queens borough president George U. Harvey suggested that a *Sixth Column*, meaning something like the Front, might be needed to eradicate the leftist Fifth Column. The Front fully endorsed the idea.[42]

* * *

Three days before the end of the trial, William Ryan warned 125 people on Lefferts Boulevard that if anti-Christian groups in America became as powerful as they had in Russia and Germany after the Great War, and in Spain in 1936, then it was past time for prayer and the moment had come to band together to fight the enemies of Christ

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"regardless of the consequences." Christians must march forth under the banner of Christ to protect Christian principles.[43]

Christian Front leaders hoped that the results of the trial would lead to a groundswell of support for their movement. Al Lomax in the Bronx sent letters to former members asking if they were still interested in the organization. He hoped that core members were continuing to bring the CF's message to the public, even if they were not attending meetings. Speakers at Sangerbund Hall meetings asked members to bring friends to meetings, convinced that after hearing the speeches they would join. After the huge July 3 rally, John Cassidy was convinced that the Christian Front would remain a strong force in New York. Lomax agreed, and was pleased that the clergy seemed to finally support the Front's efforts.[44]

Cassidy returned to help lead the Front, pledging that from this point on the Front would be strictly businesslike; there would be more emphasis on recruiting reliable new members in order to avoid any more "Denis Healys." Women were now considered as full members of the Christian Front, as a reward for their support during the trial. Cassidy outlined fifteen points of reorganization at the July 5 Prospect Hall meeting mostly designed to protect the CF from infiltrators [Appendix IV].[45]

The optimistic outlook did not last long. Front stalwart Floyd Caridi temporarily resigned from the group in early July because he was leaving town. Then during a dinner of a Jewish Committee at the Half Moon Hotel, Brooklyn District Attorney William O'Dwyer announced that he intended to prohibit all future street meetings in his borough, especially at especially East 17th Street and Kings Highway (the original location of Front street meetings). Cassidy promised that the CF would be back on the streets within two

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weeks. However, despite branding O'Dwyer's decision "Christian and economic persecution," Cassidy relented and suspended street meetings in Brooklyn, fearing that his speakers would not be able to pay the fines if arrested.[46]

One week after Cassidy announced the reorganization, the management of Prospect Hall received a foreclosure notice from Fulton Savings Bank. The building was going to be demolished and so the Christian Front was removed itself from the Hall and halt its Friday meetings immediately. This was a minor setback compared poor attendance at the Front's meetings. Cassidy still hoped to keep the Front viable during the autumn after removing all the "deadwood and stooges" from the membership list, which he had recently gotten back from the FBI. Meetings would be announced by mail or in the *Brooklyn Tablet*, and would concentrate on pressuring Christian politicians and clergy to preserve "Christian ideals." In a final act of defiance, Cassidy told his followers not to blame police for asking for the names and addresses of speakers because they were following the orders of an "alien minded Christian" (meaning O'Dwyer). He promised that when the Front reconvened in the fall, the police would need more than one sergeant to gather all the speakers' names and addresses — there would be Front units in all the boroughs. Cassidy closed the July meeting by thanking the one hundred in attendance, asking them to continue to read *Brooklyn Tablet* and *Social Justice* and to spread the word about Christian ideals. He finished, "See you in the fall."[47]

John Cassidy resigned as leader of the Brooklyn Unit on August 9, 1940. He remained in the Front, but no longer as an officer. There was not much left to be an officer of — the Unit suspended all future meetings. William Ryan dissolved the Queens Unit for lack of attendance; they could not even raise fifty dollars for a defense fund in

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the event of a Fronter's arrest. Insolent to the end, Ryan claimed that suspending the unit was "not because of cowardice, but for the safety of its members."[48]

The Chairman of the Executive Committee wrote Patrick Scanlan on August 13, 1940, asking that the letter announcing the end of Christian Front meetings be printed in the *Brooklyn Tablet*. The letter made one last swipe at communists, the press, Mayor LaGuardia, and the Left, and said once again that a conspiracy existed to destroy the Christian Front.[49]

The Chairman explained that before the arrests in January, a high percentage of members had attended Front meetings. But many members worked for the federal, state and city governments in agencies influenced by communists and other un-Americans. These members were understandably hesitant to be seen at meetings. They feared their supervisors, who used repressive means to obstruct Christian programs. For this reason, many members seemed to have defected, but everyone knew "once they enlisted, they became permanently affected by the crusader's spirit in the cause of Christ and Country."[50]

He continued: communist enemies had tried to label the entire movement as seditious, but had failed. The Christian Front, though smeared, had been cleared and "after its crucifixion it arose gloriously to continue its noble crusade." Fronters had survived the unjustified arrests for the World's Fair bombing; they had survived the "fever charts" and blame for the aborted August 1939 parade (the chairman denied the Front's involvement). Only after the Brooklyn District Attorney halted street meetings did the Front decide that "wisdom was the better part of valor" and so it had refused to sacrifice its members' economic security or jeopardize their futures with arrests when

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exercising their Constitutional rights. The chairman also did not pass up the opportunity for a last swipe at the enemy:

> When a left-wing dictatorship is thrust upon them, when the Clergy are dragged form their rectories and butchered, when the bodies of sanctified nuns are criminally assaulted in the prisons that they still call convents, when Christian Churches are razed to the ground, maybe then, and only then, will the rank and file of the American people realize what the Christian Front was formed to combat.[51]

Street and weekly meetings were no longer conducted under Christian Front auspices. No further applications for membership were accepted. The current chairman and remaining members stated they took no responsibility for any further actions by those using the name of the Christian Front.[52]

There were only two more recorded gatherings of Fronters in New York in 1940, on September 28 and October 9. Both were on the streets of Ozone Park, Queens. Both were led by Daniel Kurtz.[53]

* * *

As the street battles ended, former Front defendants still faced civilian and military legal battles. In November, a court martial acquitted John Prout, Jr. of charges that he had stolen ammunition from the National Guard and had engaged in conduct unbecoming an officer. Prout charged that the case had been concocted by certain individuals who wanted their "pound of flesh" from him. His Brooklyn supporters contrasted Prout's tribulations with Earl Browder's, who was allowed to speak at college campuses and on the radio, spreading his "subversive" ideas, while Prout was in court for a year unable to make a living. The *Brooklyn Tablet* hailed the acquittal as a "Christian Victory" after a "campaign of persecution." One month after his court martial, Prout

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failed his army physical exam and was found unfit for service. His eyesight did not satisfy officers and he was three pounds under the weight requirement.[54]

On January 3, 1941, after several months of delays, the sedition charges against the five defendants that had ended in a mistrial were dismissed. William Bishop, William Bushnell, John Prout, Jr., John Viebrock, and Macklin Boettger were cleared of the original charges, but not all of them were freed. Viebrock was arraigned later that day on a misdemeanor Sullivan Law violation for possessing an unregistered pistol during his arrest by the FBI a year earlier. William Bishop was immediately taken into custody by immigration inspectors, beginning a six year deportation ordeal.[55]

Bishop got in trouble during his internment at Ellis Island in July 1940. Soltan Czako, a Paris correspondent for several European publications, was being held at the same time as Bishop. He reported to Attorney General Francis Biddle that many of the guards at Ellis Island were members of the Christian Front and claimed to have overheard a conversation by Bishop concerning a plot to discredit FDR and the New Deal. Roosevelt agreed with Attorney General Biddle that there should be an investigation at Ellis Island, but Bishop was bailed out before it could take place.[56]

Bishop remained free for two years, escaping deportation because of the unstable international situation, until he was arrested by the FBI as an enemy alien in 1942. The arrest of this alleged native of Vienna was orchestrated by Biddle to deflect criticism that he was only interning Japanese, Germans and Italians during the war. Bishop tried to gain release from Ellis Island for a year, arguing he was born in Salem, Massachusetts and so was not an enemy alien from Austria. He claimed that he did not remember the varying statements he made about his origins over the years. A judge determined there

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was no real proof that Bishop was a native of the United States and so his plea was dismissed. His deportation as an undesirable alien was ordered in 1945, and he continued to appeal for two more years. He lost the last of his appeals on October 19, 1947, and was deported to Austria three days later.[57]

* * *

In 1941 the Christian Front reorganized and returned to the public eye. After announcing the event, the *Brooklyn Tablet* received letters of praise from as far away as St. Louis, Missouri for the newspaper's "courageous" support of the Christian Front.[58] The Tablet continued to involve itself in the revival of Front activity. Bernard D'Arcy and Father Curran organized a fundraiser for the former defendants on February 2, 1941, and 1,200 people responded with "resounding applause" as each of the "boys" was introduced. John Cassidy announced the support of his new ally in the anti-interventionist movement, America First, a nation-wide coalition of isolationists. The trial was still ballyhooed as a vindication of the CF and proof that the fight must continue to "save American Democracy and Christian freedom."[59]

A second rally at Acme Hall in Brooklyn on April 2 marked the return of regular meetings of the Christian Front. Flyers focused exclusively on neutrality, describing it as a moral issue in the manner of Curran's *War, A Moral Analysis*. The flyers proclaimed, "ALL MEN are our Brothers-in-Christ"; national differences did not justify warfare, and "we will not murder them on any pretense that Internationalism may invent." The Front's goal was to "assist Christian people to maintain their interest in Christian ideals and American traditions." Father Brophy and William Ryan were the featured speakers. Other Front leaders, Joseph Nolan and John Henihan also attended, according to Patrick

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Scanlan's notes.[60] Coughlinite isolationists again turned to their ideological leader in Detroit to be their national voice.

* * *

Back in Detroit, Archbishop Edward Mooney was being pressured by both sides to do something about Coughlin. Pro-Coughlin factions turned to Mooney to allow Coughlin to speak to out to stop America from the horrible decision to go to war. The anti-Coughlin forces, which included the federal government, began to push harder for Coughlin to be permanently silenced.

Patrick Scanlan obtained letters appealing to Detroit Archbishop Edward Mooney to allow Father Coughlin help defeat the Lend-Lease Bill during the congressional debates concerning in February and March 1941. Scanlan's role is not completely clear, but it can be assumed that Scanlan used the information in them for articles in the *Brooklyn Tablet* which he knew would be read by Fronters. A conference of Catholic and non-Catholic laity meeting in Washington, D.C. was convinced that if Coughlin were allowed to speak out against the "anti-American" bill, just as others had, it would be defeated. George Sullivan, a Washington lawyer who attended the conference, wrote Mooney he feared that passage of the bill, which was designed to "grant dictatorial powers to the president, just as Hitler and Mussolini gained," would result in a civil war, much like 1936 Spain. If Mooney did not restore Coughlin's freedom, blood would be on the hands of the Catholic hierarchy because it had silenced Coughlin.[61]

The first sign of an official church decision to silence Coughlin was a statement by Mooney's secretary, John A. Donovan that all priests in his diocese who were keeping out of the lend-lease debate were doing so of their own accord. Those opposed to lend-

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lease were doing so on political, not religious grounds. And Mooney commended the priests who stayed out of such debates.[62]

Fighting a loosing battle, Sullivan attempted to persuade Donovan that the Archbishop was going to have the "grave responsibility for the ensuing consequences" of Coughlin's silence. Priests with an "international bent" were not being silenced, and so a decision against Coughlin thereby aiding "war-mongering forces of the anti-Christ."[63]

The May 7, 1941 issue of *PM* magazine reprinted a purported National Catholic Welfare Conference letter that called Coughlin a "faker." Some Catholics, including some who did not support Coughlin or Curran, questioned the letter's authenticity because they did not think the NCWC would ever characterize Catholic priests as "fakers." Patrick Scanlan was asked to be relay the concerns of his pro-Front readership to Mooney asking if such sentiments were sanctioned by the NCWC.[64]

The resurgence of the Christian Front in 1941 served notice to oppositionist enemies that the government was not stopping subversive activity so they had better revive their own efforts. Reverend L.M. Birkhead accused the No Foreign War Committee chairman, Verne Marshall, of being anti-Semitic and anti-Democratic for accepting a speaking engagement at a Keep America Out of War Committee meeting at Lost Battalion Hall in Queens. Birkhead said the organizers of the meeting were former leaders of the Christian Front and associates of Coughlin. As far as Birkhead was concerned, those associations meant Marshall's committee "can be properly classed with the haters of England, the defeatists, and the anti-Semites."[65]

The Left's campaign against the Front infused itself into the 1941 mayoral campaign between LaGuardia and William O'Dwyer. The *Daily Worker* called candidate

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William O'Dwyer an anti-Semitic candidate who must be defeated, claiming he had an association with the Christian Front. O'Dwyer lashed back at what he referred to as a "whispering campaign" that he was associated with the CF and blamed LaGuardia for injecting racial prejudice into the campaign. He vowed that he would clear the rest of the city of soapbox orators, just as he had done in Brooklyn as district attorney. O'Dwyer also charged that the mayor and police department had done nothing to clear Brooklyn's streets of anti-Semitic meetings, and had issued secret orders to leave the group alone. None of this was true. LaGuardia and his police commissioner, Louis Valentine, responded by pointing out that clearing of the streets of speakers was strictly a police action and no district attorney in any borough played any role in the operation. O'Dwyer probably had a right to feel aggrieved, since when the Front ended its street activities in 1940, O'Dwyer's actions were their reason.[66]

On October 24, 1941 the American Citizen's Committee sponsored a birthday ball in honor of Father Charles Coughlin. The celebration in Brooklyn was one of the last public gatherings of the Christian Front's legions. The party's boosters included Bernard D'Arcy, John Henihan, Jr., Agnes Molloy, and former defendants William Bishop and William Bushnell. John Cassidy was in attendance as well and, along with Henihan, was listed as an assistant distributor for *Social Justice* in New York. Coughlin received praise as a stalwart defender of Americanism from Patrick Scanlan, listed as an organizer on the event's Honorary Committee, and from the Crown Heights School of Catholic Workmen. Edward Lodge Curran, the driving force behind the festivities, wrote the greetings to Coughlin's supporters in the ball's program.[67]

* * *

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Less than two months later, the attack on Pearl Harbor began the final chapter of the Christian Front and Coughlin's organized support.

J. Edgar Hoover's FBI played two roles on the American home front during World War II. First, the Bureau was tasked with investigating and preventing sabotage or foreign espionage. Second, Hoover and the FBI were to reassure the American people to prevent the hysteria and vigilante law enforcement Hoover witnessed when he worked in the Justice Department during World War I.[68]

Post-Pearl Harbor America was in important ways a different country. No longer were Fronters going to be able to present themselves as protectors of America against a possible *coup d'etat*, as they had two years earlier. There would be no sympathy for any group tinged even a hint of subversion. The penalties for departing from what the mainstream considered patriotism would be much higher now the United States was at war.

The FBI began receiving letters from the public in the months following Pearl Harbor demanding it investigate and arrest Father Coughlin as a seditionist. "[I] urge you to investigate this creature who hides behind the dress of a priest; but who talks the talk of a devil," a resident from Jamaica, Queens wrote to J. Edgar Hoover, saying that he feared Coughlin's goal was to destroy democracy.[69]

Other letters, several which came from Queens, described Coughlin as a "traitor," a "fascist and supporter of Japan, Italy, and Germany," and a "dangerous Fifth Columnist" who was causing "more injury to America's cause than an elite division of Nazi soldiers." One letter writer from Forest Hills asked the Bureau why Coughlin's supporters were still permitted to "write their trash and publish an issue as despicable as

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that '*Social Justice*'." Another described *Social Justice* as a "vicious publication" filled with "traitorous ideas."[70]

Letters to the Bureau worried that Coughlin's influence was extremely dangerous because "he espouses only lies." One letter addressed to President Roosevelt asked, "Is it fair to gullible, weak-minded people to leave them at the mercy of Fifth Columnists like Father Coughlin and the rest? … Have not the people a right to protection from moral-destroying lies?"[71]

Coughlin was becoming more and more embarrassing to the church. He grudging wrote after the attack on Pearl Harbor, "we will submit to the will of the government." Nevertheless, he continued to write about the superior strength of the Axis powers and the dangers to America of the alliance with the British.[72]

Archbishop Mooney attempted to keep Coughlin under control, but the Royal Oak priest would not stop. *Social Justice* was barred from military bases since March 1941. Shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Reverend Dr. Maurice S. Sheehy of Catholic University told Harold Ickes that Coughlin was a burden on the Catholic Church. Sheehy, like many of Coughlin's enemies, suspected that Coughlin was receiving Nazi propaganda and financing directly from Germany. He relayed his suspicions to Ickes. Privately, Sheehy hoped that the radio priest would simply leave the church.[73]

The leftist opposition to Coughlin mobilized for its final effort to silence the priest in January 1942. According to *The Hour*, an anti-fascist newsletter published in New York, Christian Fronters were acting under Coughlin's instructions to sabotage the civil defense program. *The Hour* alleged that Coughlin had counseled members of the Christian Front to join Civilian Defense groups to take over those organizations. *The*

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Hour pointed to the January 12, 1942, issue of *Social Justice*, which urged readers to join the Office of Civilian Defense because "if Moscow-misfits seek responsible offices in organizations at home while your sons, brothers, husbands, and sweethearts are dying abroad, overwhelm them by your numbers and capture every office. Get out and get busy. You are the majority. Do not let the minority hog-tie and dominate you."[74]

This article caught the attention of Adolf A. Berle, Jr., Assistant Secretary of State, who in turn contacted J. Edgar Hoover. The State Department's official opinion was that the FBI should investigate the activities of Coughlin and his direction of the Christian Front via the pages of *Social Justice*. The FBI's Detroit field office was already aware of communists taking an active interest in joining the civil defense forces. Knowing that Coughlin and his supporters were aggressive anticommunists, the Bureau worried about a complete breakdown of morale or even partisan conflict within the civil defense agencies.[75] Moreover, the FBI concluded that *The Hour*'s warnings that a number of civil defense organizations in Brooklyn were already in danger of being taken over by the CF stormtroopers, "notorious in the past for their collaboration with the German-American Bund and other Nazi agencies" to be based on reliable sources.[76]

By the end of January, Hoover asked for and received permission from the Attorney General to investigate the allegations by *The Hour*. *Social Justice*'s publisher, E. Perrin Schwartz, was already under an investigation ordered by Attorney General Biddle in September 1940. The State Department and the Bureau were most concerned about Coughlin's orders to members of the Christian Front to join Brooklyn's civil defense organizations. Hoover ordered his agents to scrutinize Coughlin for any violations of wartime sedition statutes, especially since the priest continued to criticize

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the Federal Reserve System in the pages of *Social Justice*. Agents compiled synopses of *Social Justice* dating from December 15, 1941 (the first issue after Pearl Harbor) through February 9, 1942, as evidence of Coughlin's anti-American sentiment and possible sedition.[77]

Both the Detroit and New York field offices got involved in the Coughlin/Front investigation. The Detroit office was in charge of determining if Coughlin's followers were organized and if they were under the control of Coughlin to the extent that he could direct policies detrimental to the security of the country. The New York office, using intelligence gathered in its previous investigation of the CF, was doing the same. New York's focus was on whether Fronters joining civil defense organizations in large numbers constituted a danger to the internal security of the United States.[78]

The New York City Police Department and Mayor LaGuardia aided the FBI's investigation. Air raid wardens were questioned by police detectives to determine if they were members of the Christian Front, the German American Bund, a combination of the two, or any other Fifth Column organizations. Fifteen cases of suspected associations with subversive organizations were forwarded to the Bureau. The questioning upset many wardens, with the greatest indignation coming from Ozone Park — one of the last strongholds of CF activity. Nearly five hundred wardens from all five boroughs signed a petition to protest being investigated. Police Commissioner Valentine countered by characterizing the petition as "a vicious attempt to create dissension, to break morale, and to undermine constituted authority."[79]

The Left intensified of its attacks on Coughlin during the investigation. The American Jewish Congress urged the Brooklyn Catholic community to repudiate Father

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Edward Lodge Curran, whom they held responsible for the Christian Front in Brooklyn. In *New Masses*, John Spivak called Coughlin a Nazi agent and said he had met with Nazi propagandists. Spivak also reminded readers of Coughlin's communications with William Dudley Pelley and of a 1938 *Social Justice* column, "Background for Persecution," in which he repeated a speech by Josef Goebbels nearly word-for-word.[80]

Coughlin was infuriated, and his rage worked to his detriment and the benefit of his enemies. He lashed out at *The Hour,* accusing it of being the communist source for all of John Spivak's and. Birkhead's anti-Coughlin material. According to Coughlin, Spivak was sent to Pittsburgh by the Pittsburgh Committee, which consisted of Jewish organizations — a plan masterminded by Morris Marsten who was connected with the Red Jewish Peoples Committee. Albert E. Kahn, *The Hour*'s publisher, was charged by Coughlin with being in constant communication with the Communist Party and writing for the communist magazine, *Friday*. Coughlin claimed Kahn knew the identities of saboteurs who wrecked a Pennsylvania railroad train, having received the information from Kahn's communist contacts. Coughlin stated, "We protest Nazism as do all real Americans. We detest Stalinism as do all Americans. Are Albert E. Kahn and those whom he represents more pro-Marxist than they are pro-American?" *The Hour* jumped on the chance to smear Coughlin using his own words. They claimed that Coughlin's article, "Riled Reds Rant About 'Treason at Royal Oak'" was itself treasonous and libelous.[81]

At the end of March, CBS broadcast a report on Fifth Column activity in the United States, and credited research the newspaper *PM* in exposing Coughlin. Jack Warner of Warner Studios praised the effectiveness of *PM's* anti-Coughlin articles.

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Warner wrote Hoover praising *PM*'s investigation and hoping that the FBI, aided by the media's reporting, was on the verge of eliminating "one of the worst irresponsible groups who are hamstringing our war effort … [to] nail Coughlin on a sedition charge and thus avoid the pitfalls of religious charges and counter charges." Another writer felt that it was his duty to inform the FBI that it was "very obvious treason now being practiced by Fr. Coughlin — *Social Justice* & his tribe."[82]

Only one letter filed in Coughlin's FBI file supported him during this period. It was addressed to the editor of *PM*, and expressed his indignation that the magazine's articles led to an FBI investigation of Coughlin. It claimed that Coughlin was not anti-Semitic and that in fact he supported anticommunist Jews. The writer blamed Jews for starting the mud-slinging and said FBI would make better use of its time if it investigated those making accusations against the priest.[83]

As its investigation proceeded, the FBI concluded that Coughlin's following was "not of an organized nature, but rather the support of individuals as such who are convinced in their own individual minds of the soundness of the Coughlin philosophy." Nevertheless, Hoover was determined to prevent any possibility of sabotage or espionage, especially if the potential perpetrator was unpopular with the Roosevelt administration, and so the efforts of powerful anti-Coughlin factions (who were also pro-FDR) meant that the Bureau was not going to drop the matter. The FBI planned to continue the investigation of Coughlin and the CF with the help of "confidential sources."[84]

By April, Attorney General Francis Biddle was poised to take action against Coughlin. A grand jury was convened and presented with evidence for a case tying

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Coughlin to Nazi Germany and to Axis propaganda, the same material O. John Rogge had worked on since 1939. The FBI seized the records of the Shrine of the Little Flower, the corporations Coughlin established, and the priest's personal papers. Biddle wrote Postmaster General Frank Walker on April 14, 1942, seeking to revoke *Social Justice*'s second-class mailing privileges on the grounds that the paper violated Section 3, Title I of the Espionage Act of 1917, which called for penalties for obstructing the United States war effort by conveying false information, thereby aiding enemies of the United States. Section 1, Title XII of the Act barred such material from the mail.[85]

Walker scheduled a hearing on April 29 for *Social Justice* publisher, E. Perrin Schwartz to show just cause why his second-class privilege should not be revoked. In the meantime, Royal Oak's postmaster was ordered to halt distribution of any further issues of *Social Justice*. Coughlin accused Jews, New Dealers, and communists for being responsible for the government's actions and said he accepted full responsibility for the editorial control of *Social Justice*. Nevertheless, he sent a letter to Mooney that as of May 27, 1940, he would no longer be associated with the newspaper. Neither the April 27 nor May 4 issues of *Social Justice* were published.[86]

Biddle was still worried about having Coughlin indicted because he did not want to give Coughlin's supporters a martyr. Instead, he contacted Leo T. Crowley, a friend of both the president and Archbishop Mooney. Crowley, a Catholic and chairman of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, discussed the history of the case with Biddle. The Attorney General explained that a grand jury indictment would cause further divisions and quite possibly could hurt the war effort.[87]

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Crowley then flew to Detroit to meet with Mooney. He told the Archbishop that the government was willing to deal with Coughlin quietly. The postmaster's hearing on *Social Justice* was delayed until May 4 to allow time for the meeting between Mooney and Crowley. Coughlin's promise to disassociate himself from *Social Justice* on May 27 did not come soon enough for Mooney. On May 1, 1942, Mooney, who had already contacted the Vatican for advice as to how to deal with the rogue priest, ordered Coughlin to cease all his writings and nonreligious activities or be defrocked.[88]

Coughlin bowed to the will of his church superiors, ceased his political activity, and permanently severed his ties with *Social Justice*. The second-class mailing privilege was revoked. *Social Justice* was out of business.[89]

The FBI was now able to use the fact that *Social Justice* had now been legal determined to be subversive, the fact that most *Social Justice* vendors were members of the Christian Front, and that many Coughlinites continued to associate with the CF, as legal justification for their continued their investigation of the CF and other Coughlinite organizations even after the official silencing of Coughlin.[90]

The next target of the FBI's investigations was the American Citizens' Committee, a new combination of former Coughlinites and American-Firsters. This new manifestation of the Christian Front, which had gone underground after Pearl Harbor, was meeting beginning in April in some of the former Front halls in the Bronx. FBI informants indicated that the former Christian Front, led by Father Edward Lodge Curran, planned to unite all the old CF organizations into the newly constituted American Citizens' Committee and penetrate the Knights of Columbus, using "communist tactics of infiltration and forcing from within."[91]

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The Bureau began receiving reports that the Christian Front, still preaching anti-Semitism and pro-Nazism, was still selling the banned *Social Justice*. Using informants and information from *PM*, agents were confident that they could establish connections between Curran, Father Edward Brophy, and Bernard D'Arcy. However, they were never able to definitively link Father Coughlin to the Christian Front in a form they could be confident would hold up in court. The FBI finally ended its investigation in July 1942 concluding that there was no indication the Christian Front operated as an organized group, nor was it dominated by Coughlin to the extent that he dictated its policies or directed its members in civil defense organizations. In fact, the FBI report indicated that the statement appearing in *The Hour* concerning CF stormtroopers in Brooklyn Civil Defense groups — the impetus for the investigation — was false.[92]

* * *

The federal government did not abandon the idea that Coughlinites were a threat to national security. The FBI's confidential, anti-Christian Front informants continued their reports to the Bureau, hoping to rid the city of its remaining Christian Front adherents. The FBI issued a new report in October 1942 that a confidential informant was reporting that "onslaughts are again occurring against Jewish people" in the South Bronx. Jews were reportedly banding together to protect themselves from attacks with clubs and from having the windows of their stores marked with swastikas. This new outbreak of ethnic violence was cause for concern locally, but the FBI did not choose to act at that time.[93]

Nevertheless, the Bureau was still concerned with Coughlin's influence on enlisted personnel. According to John Spivak, in the months preceding the cessation of

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Social Justice's publication, the priest had established an honorary society for Coughlinites in the United States Army, known as the St. Sebastian Brigade. Spivak estimated that Royal Oak had obtained the names of 160,000 service personnel and received an average of three dollars per donation, which were usually accompanied with requests for prayers.[94]

In 1943 Spivak questioned Monsignor Edward Hickey, the chancellor of the Detroit Archdiocese, about the program. Hickey, who had already been questioned by the FBI in December 1942 concerning Coughlin's activities, denied any knowledge that the St. Sebastian Brigade had originally started as a gimmick for advertising *Social Justice* subscriptions. Spivak believed, of course, that the St. Sebastian Brigade's goals went much farther and were more sinister.[95]

The Bureau was concerned that the St. Sebastian organization was simply a front used by Coughlin to communicate with his followers in uniform. The focus of the FBI investigation in this matter was Christian Fronter John J. Henihan, Jr. Henihan had remained active in the remnants of New York's Christian Front until he joined the army. He had been the former chief aide to Bernard D'Arcy, was also familiar with Patrick Scanlan, and was a booster at Coughlin's 1941 birthday ball. He had spoken at Edward Lodge Curran's May 17, 1942 "I am an American Day" rally in Brooklyn.[96]

An important concern for the Bureau was dissension at the Philadelphia Navy Yard which could potentially lead to racial violence and disrupt the war effort. Coughlinites at the Yard were not happy with the hiring of African-Americans. There were rumblings that the Coughlinites, led by Henihan, were preparing to make "an issue" of the situation.[97]

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Henihan was thought to be the link between Coughlin and his followers in the armed forces. Since 1942 the Bureau monitored Henihan's travels to New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Chicago to visit Christian Front units in those cities. As an army private stationed in the Philadelphia area, Henihan was observed associating with known Coughlinites. In New York, between January 8 and January 10, 1943, Henihan met with Reverend James Keeling, a well-known supporter and friend of Coughlin who had just returned from a visit to Royal Oak. After the Keeling meeting, Henihan got together with former Fronter John Sheehan, a member of the New York National Guard. This was an obvious concern for the Bureau. Fearing that Coughlin's Front was again attempting to organize itself within the armed forces, agents questioned Henihan.[98]

Henihan reported that Sheehan told him there were a great many Fronters in the National Guard. He continued that they supported the Guard's policy of not allowing any Jews to join and were in a position to be useful in the coming "trouble" with the Jews. Henihan then repeated anti-Semitic and anti-British theories stories of their control of the Army and the government to the FBI agent.[99]

Fearing the political consequences of prosecuting Coughlin, the FBI preferred to let the church discipline Coughlin internally. Hoover wanted to avoid any possibility of a public outcry from Coughlin's supporters or any public hysteria over fears that the military had somehow been infiltrated by subversives like the CF. He ordered the St. Sebastian Brigade investigation closed in January 1944 without ever making it public. Spivak chose not to publish his article containing the Hickey interview and the allegations of a St. Sebastian conspiracy. Nor were any of the other supposed subversive plots involving Coughlin in the records of federal agencies ever made public.[100]

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Jews in New York still had to deal with the problem of anti-Semitic violence and vandalism. At the beginning of 1944 the Anti-Defamation League reported that children were attacked and there was vandalism in Washington Heights. Most of the attacks were by individuals under the age of 16. The ADL demanded to know the origin of their anti-Semitism, and if their parents were members of anti-Semitic groups. One police officer noted that a recent reappearance of the Christian Front may have been responsible. The Christian Front was blamed for swastikas painted on subway posters. In wake of accusations leveled against patrolman James Drew, accused in January 1944 of involvement in anti-Semitic activities, the New York State division of the American Youth for Democracy charged that hundreds of police officers were members of the Christian Front, and that this had permitted city-wide outbreaks of anti-Semitism.[101]

Police Commissioner Valentine assured the city that he was taking measures to end vandalism and the anti-Semitic desecration of synagogues. The commissioner ordered an investigation to see if the vandalism was linked to any organized subversive groups and secretly stationed sabotage squads near religious buildings to curb the attacks.[102]

A few days later, investigations commissioner William Herlands released an "Investigative Report on Anti-Semitism in New York City," admitting that the police were lax in a number of instances when dealing with anti-Semitism. Herlands did directly attribute some cases of recent anti-Semitic attacks to scattered adherents of the Front, the Mobilizers and Joe McWilliams. The report concluded, however, that most acts of vandalism could not traced to any specific organization. The ADL supported

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Herlands' report and applauded its frankness. One month later, Herlands, one of the most loyal supporters of LaGuardia, resigned, outraged at the mayor's acceptance of Commissioner Valentine's exoneration of James Drew.[103]

* * *

O. John Rogge continued his fight against the far right and Nazi sympathizers into 1944. He extended the life of a Washington D.C, grand jury, which first met in 1942 to deal with Nazi propagandists in the isolationist movement; to strengthen his case against thirty individuals who he believed had direct ties to Nazi Germany. The 1944 Sedition Case included Bundists, Nazi agents, William Dudley Pelley, Lawrence Dennis, Elizabeth Dilling, and former Christian Fronter and leader of the Christian Mobilizers, Joseph McWilliams. McWilliams was considered one of the leaders of the conspiracy. Ernest Elmhurst, a speaker at countless fascist meetings since 1934 (including Christian Mobilizer meetings at Innisfail Hall) and the author of *The World Hoax*, a tirade against the internationalist Jewish conspiracy which was published by Pelley, was also indicted. As an associate of Joseph McWilliams, Elmhurst was responsible for getting German audiences to come to Christian Mobilizer meetings in 1939. He was also a member of the American Nationalist Party and Citizens' Protective League, and had known and spoken with William Bishop since 1935. After World War II, Elmhurst was involved in trying to reorganize a new Christian Front.[104]

Conspicuously absent from the list of thirty defendants was Charles Coughlin. Rogge no longer considered Coughlin a threat in 1944, after being silenced by the Church in 1942.[105]

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The indictment postulated that there was an international Nazi conspiracy dedicated to "'Hitler's publicly' announced program to destroy democracy" and replace it with National Socialism. The thirty defendants named allegedly conspired with one another and Nazi Germany to systematically disseminate propaganda to "impair the loyalty of the armed forces."[106]

Rogge was leading the government's its most ambitious prosecution related to the Brown scare, *USA v. McWilliams*. Rogge's presentation of evidence was spotty and incomprehensible. He read statements out of context, quickly showed the jury exhibits, and presented evidence in German that was not understood by the jury or the defendants. Rogge insisted that the *McWilliams* case was different from the other failed attempts at connecting pro-Nazi organizations to the entire isolationist movement, such as *USA v. John Prout, Jr., el. al.*, because of the alleged direct ties to Hitler. However, in a repeat of the 1940 proceedings, *USA v. McWilliams* amounted to nothing more than a show trial and ended in a farce.[107]

* * *

World War II destroyed not only the Christian Front but the entire right-wing, anticommunist movement. The social, cultural, and economic crisis that had supported the rise of extremist Catholic anticommunism was over, or at least had been fundamentally altered by the war and the wartime alliance with the Soviet Union. Only fanatics could fail to realize, that for the duration at least, fascism was a far greater threat than communism, and those who refused to recognize that reality isolated themselves as fanatics. The Christian Front and its supporters faded into irrelevance, but did not fade away, their resentments smoldering beneath the surface of wartime unity against the

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fascist threat, until it was rekindled by the cold war and then fanned into raging flames by a demagogue far more lethal than Coughlin, Senator Joseph McCarthy, who played on much the same hopes and fears that had made Coughlin the great Christian hope in the thirties. The Christian Front and its conspiracy theories were products of their times, as were their leftist enemies with their corresponding conspiracy theories. The government's efforts to turn the Christian Front to its own uses failed in their objectives, but the war did to the Christian front what the FBI and the left-wing and liberal attack groups failed to do – to turn the Christian Front into a dramatic symbol of what American did not want to be, what it was not fighting for. Because once the war began, Americans – Protestant, Catholics, and Jews – surprised even themselves at how well they could get along.

In the end, the drive to national unity was successful, but not in the way Christian Fronters hoped: Christian anticommunism was how the nation was to achieve unity. Catholics, Protestants, and Jews did become unified in a new sense of Americanism. They united to defeat the evil "isms" so feared during the 1930s and 1940s, fascism, and then communism. It was the good war, and not the Christian Front, that defined what it was to be an American.

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Notes

[1] Unidentified newspaper, Apr. 14, 1940, newspaper clippings, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[2] Police Report, July 18, 1940, OCF.

[3] Report of Meeting, Sgt. Galvin, 42nd Pct, Jan. 21, 1940; Police Report, Jan. 22, 1940; Report of Meeting, Sgt. Gallo, 40th Pct., & Ptl. Fitzpatrick, Alien Squad, Feb. 4, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 5, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Leffler, 72nd Pct. & Ptl. Rodriguez, Alien Squad, Apr. 19, 1940; Police Report, Apr. 20, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Manley, 103rd Pct., Report of Meeting, Lt. Leffler, 72nd Pct. & Ptl. Oceanic, Alien Squad, Apr. 26, 1940; Police Report, Apr. 27, 1940; May 11, 1940; Det. Mario Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, May 13, 1940; Police Report, June 27, 1940, OCF.

[4] Police Report, May 31, 1940, OCF.

[5] Father Brophy's story was of a Fronter who came to him because he lost his job and held two members of the Anti-Nazi League responsible. The Fronter was a Special Patrolman at the 42nd Street branch of the Corn Exchange Bank. The patrolman claimed to have received good references by bank officials (proof in his mind he was not lax in his duties) at the time of the dismissal. Fr. Brophy told those gathered at Sangerbund Hall the he personally investigated the story and was treated coldly by bank officials. However, the officials changed their attitude after Brophy stated he was a depositor at the bank. Brophy went to his own branch for more definite action, but officials refused to give him any reason for the firing. The priest threatened that he and all Christians would withdraw their accounts if an answer was not provided. His conclusion was that if the minority can dictate to an institution as large as the Corn Exchange, he does not wish to have dealings with such a business. Police Report, May 16, 1940; Police Report, May 25, 1940; Police Report, May 28, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Connolly, 105th Pct., June 5, 1940; Police Report, June 6, 1940, OCF.

[6] Caridi quoted Pope Innocent IV (1243-1254) and Pope Benedict XIV (1740-1758). Report of Meeting, Det. Fitzpatrick, Alien Squad & Lt. McKeon, 42nd Pct., Feb. 11, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 12, 1940; Report of Meeting, Det. Oswianek, Alien Squad, Mar. 8, 1940; Police Report, Mar. 30, 1940; Report of Meeting, Det. Oceanic, Alien Squad, Mar. 30, 1940; Police Report, June 8, 1940, OCF.

[7] *Social Justice*, Feb. 5, 1940: 11-13.

[8] Bernard Baruch, Alfred Sloan, Jr., Matthew Woll, Alfred Smith, Cardinal O'Connell, Cardinal Mundelein, Bishop Lucey, Bishop Sheil, Monsignor John A. Ryan, Dr. Harry Ward, Rev. Walton Cole, Norman Thomas, Earl Browder, Dorothy Thompson, Westbrook Pegler, and Frank Murphy were also characterized as being part these fronts.

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Louis Ward, Editorial Director of *Social Justice* wrote a retraction and apology for those in the Catholic Church mentioned in the article on March 4, 1940. *Social Justice*, Feb. 12, 1940: 7; Feb. 19, 1940: 10; June 17, 1940: 6-7.

[9] Police Report, Feb. 3, 1940, OCF.

[10] Police Report, Feb. 5, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Mally, 72nd Pct., Apr. 5, 1940; Police Report, Apr. 6, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Manley, 103rd Pct., May 11, 1940; Det. Mario Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, May 13, 1940; Police Report, June 13, 1940, OCF.

[11] Report of Meeting, Det. Fitzpatrick, Alien Squad & Lt. McKeon, 42nd Pct., Feb. 11, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 12, 1940; Report of Meeting, Sgt. O'Connor, 42nd Pct., Mar. 3, 1940; Police Report, Mar. 4, 1940; Police Report, July 11, 1940, OCF.

[12] Report of Meeting, Sgt. Gallo, 40th Pct., & Ptl. Fitzpatrick, Alien Squad, Feb. 4, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 5, 1940; Report of Meeting, Det. Oswianek, Alien Squad, Feb. 23, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 24, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Mally, 72nd Pct., Apr. 5, 1940; Police Report, Apr. 6, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Leffler, 72nd Pct. & Ptl. Oceanic, Alien Squad, Apr. 26, 1940; Police Report, Apr. 27, 1940; Report of Meeting, Sgt. Coughlin, 72nd Pct., May 10, 1940; Police Report, May 11, 1940; Report of Meeting, Ptl. Oceanic, Alien Squad, May 13, 1940; Police Report, May 14, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Beneke, 114th Pct., & Ptl. Owshianik, Alien Squad, June 19, 1940; Police Report, June 20, 1940; Police Report, June 29, 1940, OCF.

[13] Rosenblatt was specifically concerned with rumors that Leo Healy was planning to campaign against Judge Leibowitz for a Kings County judgeship, John Cassidy was running for State Senator in the 4th District, James Downey in the 18th State Assembly District, James Stewart in the 20th Congressional District, and Joseph McWilliams' unsuccessful bid in the 18th Congressional District. McWilliams was held after his arrest for disorderly conduct. A complaint was made against McWilliams for his rant that he wanted to be the American version of Hitler. M.R., New York City Coordinating Committee, letter to James Wechsler, July 29, 1940, GJP; *New York Times*, Sept. 19, 1940: 22.

[14] Report of Meeting, Sgt. Coughlin, 72nd Pct., May 10, 1940; Police Report, May 11, 1940; Police Report, May 28, 1940; OCF.

[15] Report of Meeting, Sgt. Galvin, 42nd Pct, Jan. 21, 1940; Police Report, Jan. 22, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 13, 1940; Police Report, Mar. 30, 1940; Report of Meeting, Det. Oceanic, Alien Squad, Mar. 30, 1940; Police Report, May 28, 1940; Police Report, May 31, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Connolly, 105th Pct., June 5, 1940; Police Report, June 6, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Beneke, 114th Pct., & Ptl. Owshianik, Alien Squad, June 19, 1940; Police Report, June 20, 1940; Police Report, July 20, 1940, OCF.

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[16] Police Report, June 11, 1940; Police Report, June 13, 1940; Police Report, June 15, 1940, OCF.

[17] Report of Meeting, Det. Fitzpatrick, Alien Squad & Lt. McKeon, 42nd Pct., Feb. 11, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 12, 1940; Report of Meeting, Sgt. O'Connor, 42nd Pct., Mar. 3, 1940; Police Report, Mar. 4, 1940, OCF.

[18] Dallek 223-226.

[19] *Ibid.*; Franklin Roosevelt, Press Conference #647-A, May 30, 1940, Press Conference #649-A, June 5, 1940, *Complete Presidential Press Conferences of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, Vols. 15-16, 1940 (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972).

[20] Martin Dies, letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, William Bankhead, Alben Barkley, and Sam Rayburn, June 1, 1940, HUACFBI, Roll 1.

[21] Police Report, May 31, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Nally, 72nd Pct., May 31, 1940; Police Report, June 1, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Seegers, 103rd Pct. & Ptl. Owshianik, Alien Squad, June 3, 1940; Police Report, June 4, 1940; Police Report, June 14, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Nally, 72nd Pct., June 14, 1940; Police Report, June 15, 1940; Report of Meeting, Sgt. Kuhn, 105th Pct., June 26, 1940; Police Report, June 27, 1940, OCF.

[22] *Ibid.*

[23] *Ibid.*

[24] Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, July 19, 1940, OCF.

[25] Police Report, June 27, 1940, OCF.

[26] Police Report, July 20, 1940; Police Report, Aug. 10, 1940, OCF.

[27] *New York Times*, July 5, 1940: 2.

[28] Report of Meeting, Sgt. Mulcahey and Ptl. Rodriguez, 72nd Pct., July 5, 1940; Police Report, July 6, 1940; Det. William F. Schmitt to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, July 6, 1940; Report of Meeting, Ptl. Owshianik, Alien Squad, 103rd Pct., July 8, 1940; Police Report, July 20, 1940, OCF.

[29] Edward Lodge Curran, *War, A Moral Analysis*, (Brooklyn, NY: International Catholic Truth Society, 1940): 39.

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[30] Report of Meeting, Lt. Connolly, 105th Pct., June 5, 1940; Police Report, June 6, 1940; Police Report, June 13, 1940; Police Report, June 14, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Nally, 72nd Pct., June 14, 1940; Police Report (2), June 15, 1940; Police Report, June 18, 1940; Police Report, June 27, 1940; Police Report, July 16, 1940; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, July 19, 1940, OCF.

[31] Report of Meeting, Sgt. Coughlin, 72nd Pct. & Det. Oswianek, Alien Squad, Apr. 12, 1940; Police Report, June 15, 1940; Police Report, July 11, 1940, OCF.

[32] Police Report, May 31, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Connolly, 105th Pct., June 5, 1940; Police Report, June 6, 1940; Police Report, June 14, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Nally, 72nd Pct., June 14, 1940; Police Report, June 15, 1940; Police Report, June 27, 1940; Police Report, July 18, 1940, OCF.

[33] Report of Meeting, Ptl. Oceanic, Alien Squad, May 13, 1940; Police Report, May 14, 1940; Police Report, June 15, 1940 Police Report, June 15 (2), 1940, OCF.

[34] Police Report, May 9, 1940; Police Report, May 16, 1940; Police Report, June 8, 1940; Police Report, June 13, 1940; Police Report (2), June 15, 1940; Police Report, June 18, 1940; Police Report, June 22, 1940; Police Report, June 27, 1940; Police Report, July 16, 1940; Ptl. Fred G. Graumann to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Investigation Bureau, July 19, 1940; Police Report, Aug. 10, 1940, OCF. *Social Justice*, June 10, 1940.

[35] Report of Meeting, Det. Fitzpatrick, Alien Squad & Lt. McKeon, 42nd Pct., Feb. 11, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 12, 1940; Report of Meeting, Det. Oswianek, Alien Squad, Feb. 23, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 24, 1940; Report of Meeting, Sgt. O'Connor, 42nd Pct., Mar. 3, 1940; Police Report, Mar. 4, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Mally, 72nd Pct., Apr. 5, 1940; Police Report, Apr. 6, 1940; Report of Meeting, Sgt. Coughlin, 72nd Pct., May 10, 1940; Police Report, May 11, 1940; Report of Meeting, Ptl. Oceanic, Alien Squad, May 13, 1940; Report, May 14, 1940; Police Report, May 25, 1940; Police Report, June 8, 1940; Police Report, June 11, 1940; Police Report, June 13, 1940; Police Report, June 14, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Nally, 72nd Pct., June 14, 1940; Police Report, June 27, 1940; Police Report, July 6, 1940; Police Report, Aug. 10, 1940, OCF.

[36] Report of Meeting, Lt. Leffler, 72nd Pct. & Ptl. Oceanic, Alien Squad, Apr. 26, 1940; Police Report, Apr. 27, 1940; Det. Mario Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, May 13, 1940; Police Report, May 16, 1940; Police Report, June 8, 1940, OCF.

[37] Report of Meeting, Lt. Seegers, 103rd Pct. & Ptl. Owshianik, Alien Squad, June 3, 1940; Police Report, June 4, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Connolly, 105th Pct., June 5, 1940; Police Report, June 6, 1940; Police Report, June 11, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Beneke, 114th Pct., & Ptl. Owshianik, Alien Squad, June 19, 1940; Police Report, June 20, 1940; Police Report, June 27, 1940, OCF.

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[38] Williams' speech at the Washington Aviation Dinner was considered even better than Lindbergh's by the Front because Williams specifically named FDR as the single protagonist forcing the United States into war against the wishes of Americans.

[39] Report of Meeting, Ptl. Owshianick, Alien Squad, May 20, 1940; Police Report, May 21, 1940; Police Report, May 28, 1940; Police Report, May 31, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Nally, 72nd Pct., May 31, 1940; Police Report, June 1, 1940; Police Report (2), June 1, 1940; Report of Meeting, Sgt. Coughlin, 72nd Pct., June 7, 1940; Police Report, June 8, 1940; Police Report, June 11, 1940; Police Report, June 14, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Nally, 72nd Pct., June 14, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Beneke, 114th Pct., & Ptl. Owshianik, Alien Squad, June 19, 1940; Police Report, June 20, 1940; Police Report, June 22, 1940; Police Report (2), June 22, 1940; Police Report, June 27, 1940; Police Report, July 11, 1940, OCF.

[40] Floyd Caridi read a *Herald Tribune* report that communists and Jews were destroying private homes, burning churches, and overpowering prison guards to free agitators in Bessarabia, Romania.
An article in *New Masses* (January 23, 1940) advocated patronizing the New Yorker Soda Company because it financed the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. Al Lomax suggested that A&P supermarkets be advised of this because the company carried the soda.
Report of Meeting, Sgt. Gallo, 40th Pct., & Ptl. Fitzpatrick, Alien Squad, Feb. 4, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 5, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 10, 1940 (2); Police Report, Feb. 19, 1940; Report of Meeting, Det. Oswianek, Alien Squad, Feb. 23, 1940; Report of Meeting, Ptl. Fitzpatrick, Alien Squad, Feb. 23, 1940; Police Report, Feb. 24, 1940; Report of Meeting, Sgt. O'Connor, 42nd Pct., Mar. 3, 1940; Police Report, Mar. 4, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Mally, 72nd Pct., Apr. 5, 1940; Police Report, Apr. 6, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Leffler, 72nd Pct. & Ptl. Oceanic, Alien Squad, Apr. 26, 1940; Police Report, Apr. 27, 1940; Police Report, May 9, 1940; Report of Meeting, Sgt. Coughlin, 72nd Pct., May 10, 1940; Police Report, May 11, 1940; Police Report, May 25, 1940; Police Report, June 15, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Beneke, 114th Pct., & Ptl. Owshianik, Alien Squad, June 19, 1940; Police Report, June 20, 1940; Police Report, June 27, 1940; Police Report, July 2, 1940;Report of Meeting, Sgt. Mulcahy, 72nd Pct., July 3, 1940; Police Report, July 5, 1940; Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Bureau Criminal Alien Investigation, July 5, 1940; Police Report, Aug. 3, 1940, OCF.

[41] Det. Mario Fochi to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, May 13, 1940; Police Report, June 1, 1940; Police Report, June 13, 1940; Report of Meeting, Ptl. Owshianik, Alien Squad, June 24, 1940; Police Report, June 25, 1940, OCF.

[42] Police Report, May 25, 1940; Police Report, June 1, 1940; Police Report, June 13, 1940, OCF.

[43] Police Report, June 22, 1940, OCF.

[44] Police Report, June 29, 1940; Police Report, July 2, 1940; Police Report, July 6, 1940

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OCF.

[45] Report of Meeting, Sgt. Mulcahey and Ptl. Rodriguez, 72nd Pct., July 5, 1940; Police Report, July 6, 1940; Det. William F. Schmitt to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, July 6, 1940, OCF.

[46] Police Report, July 2, 1940; Report of Meeting, Sgt. Mulcahey and Ptl. Rodriguez, 72nd Pct., July 5, 1940; Police Report, July 6, 1940; Det. William F. Schmitt to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, July 6, 1940; Police Report, July 13, 1940, OCF.

[47] Police Report, July 13, 1940, OCF.

[48] Police Report, July 23, 1940; Police Report, Aug. 10, 1940, OCF.

[49] Chairman, Executive Committee, The Christian Front of Brooklyn, letter to Patrick Scanlan, Aug. 13, 1940, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[50] *Ibid.*

[51] *Ibid.*

[52] *Ibid.*

[53] Report of Meeting, Sgt. Fisher, 106th Pct., Sept. 28, 1940; Report of Meeting, Lt. Rogers, 106th Pct., Oct. 9, 1940, OCF.

[54] *Brooklyn Tablet*, Dec. 7, 1940: 8; *New York Times*, Nov. 30, 1940: 19; Jan. 3, 1941: 21.

[55] *New York Times*, Oct. 3, 1940: 20; Jan. 3, 1941: 21.

[56] Memorandum for Hon. Francis Biddle, July 30, 1940, PSF; Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Bureau Criminal Alien Investigation, Aug. 3, 1940, OCF.

[57] *New York Times*, Feb. 28, 1942: 8; June 11, 1942: 12; Jan. 7, 1943: 21; Oct. 19, 1947: 10; Oct. 22, 1947: 14.

[58] Louis Becker, letter to Patrick Scanlan, Jan. 11, 1941, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[59] Meeting of the Christian Front (for the benefit of the defense fund of the 17 boys and their families), Christian Front file, AJCL.

[60] Christian Front Open Letter; Christian Front Monster Rally flyer; Patrick Scanlan handwritten notes, undated, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

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[61] George E. Sullivan, letter to Patrick Scanlan, Mar. 5, 1941; George E. Sullivan, letter to Most Rev. Edward Mooney, Feb. 19, 1941, Charles Coughlin file, TSC-DBA.

[62] John A. Donovan, letter to George Sullivan, Feb. 20, 1941, Charles Coughlin file, TSC-DBA.

[63] George E. Sullivan, letter to John A. Donovan, Feb. 22, 1941; John A. Donovan, letter to George Sullivan, Feb. 24, 1941; George E. Sullivan, letter to John A. Donovan, Mar. 5, 1941, Charles Coughlin file, TSC-DBA.

[64] Letter to Most Rev. Edward Mooney, D.D., May 8, 1941; Edmund Reilly, letter to Patrick Scanlan, June 10, 1941, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[65] *New York Times*, Jan. 12, 1941: 14.

[66] *New York Times*, Oct. 20, 1941: 20; Oct. 23, 1941: 1; Nov. 2, 1941: 47. A detailed examination of the 1941 mayoral campaign relating to ethnic tensions and anti-Semitism can be found in Bayor 139-145.

[67] "Birthday Ball in Honor of Rev. Father Charles E. Coughlin" pamphlet, Charles Coughlin file, TSC-DBA.

[68] For a detailed account of the FBI in World War II America, see Richard Gid Powers, *Broken*, chapter 5.

[69] CENSORED, Letter to J. Edgar Hoover, Mar. 30, 1942, CCFBI.

[70] CENSORED, Letter to President Roosevelt, Feb. 1942; CENSORED, Letter to Federal Bureau of Investigation, Mar. 23, 1942; CENSORED, Letter to J. Edgar Hoover, July 15, 1942, CCFBI.

[71] CENSORED, Letter to President Roosevelt, undated, CCFBI.

[72] Brinkley 267.

[73] Ickes 382; Warren 245.

[74] Father Charles E. Coughlin Report, Mar. 17, 1942, 15, Charles Coughlin file, FBI file (Detroit) 100-4716, CCFBI.

[75] *Ibid.*; Adolf A. Berle, Jr., Assistant Secretary of State, letter to J. Edgar Hoover, Jan. 22, 1942, CCFBI.

[76] Father Charles E. Coughlin Report, Mar. 17, 1942, p. 23, FBI file (Detroit) 100-4716, CCFBI.

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[77] J. Edgar Hoover, Memorandum for the Attorney General, Jan. 29, 1942; Father Charles Edward Coughlin Memorandum, Feb. 14, 1942; J. Edgar Hoover, Memorandum for the Attorney General, Feb. 16, 1942, CCFBI; Warren 245.

[78] Father Charles E. Coughlin Report, Mar. 17, 1942, p. 23, FBI file (Detroit) 100-4716, CCFBI.

[79] *New York Times*, Feb. 20, 1942: 19; Feb. 21, 1942: 10; Feb. 22, 1942: 20.

[80] Donald Strong provided column to column comparison of Goebbels' speech and Coughlin's December 5, 1938 *Social Justice* article. Donald Strong, *Organized Anti-Semitism in America*, (Washington D.C.: American Council On Public Affairs, 1941): 61; Father Charles E. Coughlin Report, Mar. 17, 1942, 13-15, FBI file (Detroit) 100-4716, CCFBI; *New York Times*, May 4, 1942: 9.

[81] *Ibid.*; *Social Justice,* Mar. 2, 1942.

[82] Jack Warner, letter to J. Edgar Hoover, Mar. 31, 1942; CENSORED, Letter to Federal Bureau of Investigation, Mar. 31, 1942, CCFBI.

[83] CENSORED, Letter to editor of *PM*, Apr. 4, 1942, CCFBI.

[84] Father Charles E. Coughlin Report, Mar. 17, 1942, p. 17, FBI file (Detroit) 100-4716, CCFBI; Powers, *Broken* 176-177.

[85] Marcus 208-211.

[86] Marcus 214-217; *New York Times*, Apr. 21, 1942: 18.

[87] *Ibid.*

[88] *Ibid.*

[89] *Ibid.*; Brinkley 268.

[90] Father Charles E. Coughlin Report, July 18, 1942, 11, FBI file (Detroit) 100-22759, CCFBI.

[91] *Ibid.*, 4, 11.

[92] *Ibid.*, 1, 11-14.

[93] Summary of Suspected Coughlinite Activity, Oct. 3, 1942, CCFBI.

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[94] Warren 271-273.

[95] *Ibid.*

[96] Father Charles E. Coughlin Report, July 18, 1942, 11, FBI file (Detroit) 100-22759; Father Coughlin Activity in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Feb. 10, 1943, CCFBI.

[97] "An issue" was the words used in during an FBI interview of John Henihan. The obvious implication was the violence would ensue. *Ibid.*

[98] *Ibid.*

[99] *Ibid.*

[100] Warren 273.

[101] Anonymous, letter to Department of Justice, May 16, 1944, CCFBI; *New York Times*, Jan. 3, 1944: 23; Jan. 7, 1944: 19.

[102] *New York Times*, Jan. 3, 1944: 23.

[103] Kessner 524, 566; *New York Times*, Jan. 11, 1944: 1; Jan. 12, 1944: 15.

[104] *PM*, May 28, 1944; Ernest F. Elmhurst biography, Christian Front Meeting file, AJCL; Ribuffo 188-89.

[105] *Ibid.*

[106] Ribuffo xiii, 196-197.

[107] *Ibid.* 196-207.

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Aftermath & Conclusion: 1944 - 1951

Isolationism had a grip on the soul of the Christian Front, and not even World War II would relax its hold. Many would not let go throughout the war, and as victory grew near, Coughlin's old supporters warned against the United States trying to play a leading role in world affairs after the war, and while the war was still being wage, a few hard-line Christian Fronters kept trying to revive the ghost of isolationism.

As late as 1944, while pledging to do whatever was necessary to win the war, Edward Lodge Curran called for an immediate negotiated peace. On George Washington's Birthday in a Chicago speech before the Citizens USA Committee, Curran said that George Washington's Americanism was identical to the isolationist policies of the by-now defunct America First Committee.[1] Curran's speech took subtle shots at Roosevelt. The freedoms for which Americans were dying in Europe and the Pacific "may be dead in Moscow" and "they may have been anaesthetized or ignored in Teheran" — referring to the Tehran Conference in November and December 1943 — but they were still alive in America. George Washington was the measure by which to judge any president's Americanism, so Curran told his audience how Washington had refused to seek a third term "lest the perpetuation of the same President in office bring about the establishment of an American Dynasty and an American Dictatorship," an obvious reference to Roosevelt, then seeking an unprecedented fourth term. Washington was also a man who refused to give in to propaganda that would have carried the United States into European wars and he was a Protestant who had denounced anti-Catholicism. And so Curran maintained that the only worthy successor to the grand tradition of Washington's Americanism was Douglas MacArthur.[2] Curran hoped that after the war

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was over, in "the spirit of Washingtonian Americanism," the country would remain free of foreign entanglements or alliances with European or Asiatic powers and avoid any political union with foreign nations: "our brave boys abroad are living and dying for America First."

To help bring back America First, Curran sponsored a meeting in New York on May 1 calling for Coughlin's return to the radio. Roosevelt, Dewey, and Wilkie were all denounced at the meeting.[3]

Curran's attempts to re-establish the isolationist bloc was favorably received only by a few Irish-Americans. During the war, both Curran and Coughlin's popularity remained strong only in New York's Irish and Boston's neighborhoods. Curran was now sometimes called the "Father Coughlin of Brooklyn." His front page column in the *Gaelic American* announced Coughlin's 1943 birthday dinner at Boston's New England Hall. Boston's Christian Front (founded in 1939) actually reached its greatest strength during the winter of 1943-44 [Appendix V].[4]

Curran's March 16, 1942, visit to Boston on the 166th anniversary of Evacuation Day, a Boston holiday commemorating the departure of British troops in 1776, displayed the convergence of Irish American patriotism and ethnic identity. Curran was applauded as a spokesman for the Irish perspective on the war and communism. His forty-five minute speech before 5,000 people at South Boston High School reviewed the history of Boston during the Revolution. He never addressed the war in Europe.[5]

The South Boston Citizens Committee's invitation to Curran to address to the Evacuation Day celebration sparked predictable opposition. Liberals and Jews in Boston still saw Curran as a vicious anti-Semite who reveled in the defeat of the British Army,

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an inappropriate emotion in 1942 while America was allied with England to fight Hitler. A self-appointed committee tried to keep Curran out of South Boston and demanded that state officials boycott the ceremonies. The Citizens Committee replied by calling the opposition communists.[6]

Curran was invited back again in 1943, but local newspapers did not cover the event. He greeted the crowd of "Christian Fronters" and warned them that civilian defense was a communist conspiracy, as he tried to revive the fears that had once stirred New York.[7]

* * *

The atrocities of the Holocaust had a marked effect on relations between gentiles and Jews in the United States. In a December 1944 poll asking if Jews should have the same chances as other people to settle in other countries after the war, 76% of the respondents said yes. Sixty-one percent of those who responded affirmatively felt Jews should have the same chance as non-Jews to settle in America.[8]

Perhaps responding to the same shift in ethnic sensibilities, the anticommunism that emerged in America after the war lacked the strong anti-Semitic tinge that had colored it before. In New York, the Irish were no longer resenting Jewish political influence as much as before. After all, they now had a new Irish mayor, William O'Dwyer. In this new atmosphere, Daniel Kurtz's attempts to revive the Christian Front failed miserably.[9]

Kurtz, still living in St. Albans, Queens in 1945, had called on former Christian Front supporter Father Edward Brophy to help him reorganize the Front. Brophy gave Kurtz the brush-off and declined to attend the meeting Kurtz was organizing in

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September, saying he was scheduled to be in the confessional. Brophy did approve of the idea of a new Christian Front, but without the "serious defects in leadership" that plagued it before and which had given anti-Christian forces an opportunity to attack. He undoubtedly regarded Kurtz as part of that defective leadership. Kurtz also attempted to recruit speakers, but failed because he was too broke to pay them. Nevertheless, Kurtz did manage to round up enough support, including from the pastor of the Queens Baptist Church in Queens Village and from as far away as New Orleans, to proceed with his plans.[10]

To lay the groundwork for his new Christian Front, Kurtz wrote a pamphlet, *My Country*. In it he outlined his version of America's history. Much of it was a rehash of the original Front rhetoric: Fronters were true Americans who never wanted war and were again the new minutemen to save America from foreign wars. The Christian Front had told the truth in 1939, 1940, and 1941 — it had tried to arouse Americans from "their drugged stupor and induced safety; and rivers of blood and tears have flowed since then."[11]

The first post-war Christian Front meeting in New York was held on October 5, 1945. The fifty-five year old Daniel Kurtz, whose real name now turned out to be Casimir Kudelski, stood on a soap box at the Queens Village Railroad Station with one hand tightly gripping a flag-staff topped by a cross. He yelled at the two hundred people gathered that "Under this cross we shall make this a Christian America" and as he pointed to the cross it toppled to the ground. Somewhat unnerved, he continued to hold Roosevelt responsible for betraying America at Pearl Harbor and he claimed no veterans' graves were marked with Stars of David. It was time he concluded, to break "the

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stranglehold of all truth by this mongrel minority by means of their vicious and almost absolute control of all means of communications; politics, judiciary, money and credit of this nation." The two dozen police and a crowd of Jews quickly silenced Kurtz.[12]

Catherine V. Brown, organizer of the National Blue Star Mothers of America, was the next speaker, and claimed that informed patriots were silenced during the war. Brown repeated Kurtz's accusations that Pearl Harbor was a government conspiracy to force America into a war no one wanted. As a result, Americans "permit enslavement on the grand scale — we acquiesce in it, in an attempt to placate the Talmudists at home and the little band of slave owners at Moscow." In their quest for world ascendancy, the racial minority was displacing Arabs in Palestine, who had been there for two thousand years. She concluded with a call for Father Coughlin to return to the radio.[13]

Several more speakers followed. Kurt Mertig (of the Citizens' Protective League of New York) spoke of the unequal justice enjoyed by the minority. Frederick Kister (Leader of the Christian War Veterans) offered General Patton command of his organization. Homer Maertz, editor of the anti-Semitic *Dispatch*, talked of Jewish ritual murder. The final speaker was former sedition defendant Ernest Elmhurst, who called for Christians and Aryans to unite to preserve Christian civilization.[14]

A few blocks away, a large group under the leadership of Rev. L.M. Birkhead and John Roy Carlson were protesting the Christian Front meeting. Isidore Ginsberg, state commander of the Jewish War Veterans, who was responsible for Kurtz's arrest and sanity evaluation in 1941,[15] now tried to get Maertz arrested for distributing inflammatory literature. Initially, the police refused, but when the rather rotund Ginsburg

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attempted a citizen's arrest the police took Maertz into custody, and in the confrontation that followed Mertig and Elmhurst were charged with inciting to riot.[16]

The Fronters immediately blamed the "Jew-instigated" altercation on "one thousand communists" led by Birkhead and Carlson. They also accused the press of its old tricks. Press photographers made sure to take pictures of the three Fronters as they were arrested to "put the finishing touches on every frame-up story concocted by Jewry."[17]

The rally of the new Christian Front was a poorly attended flop and the organizers were unprepared for the size and rage of the opposition. Most of those in attendance, in fact, were hecklers, and there were only about twenty supporters. The appearance of speakers and their henchmen also seemed ridiculous. Leo Lowenthal described the scene as:

> "Almost every one of them was so-to-say a biological stepchild. Kurtz and his chief aide obese; Kister somehow crippled; the women speakers and their female audience were ugly, most of them wearing glasses; among the male followers a one-armed old man, several short-sighted younger people. It was a 'radical elite' in reverse"[18]

The Fronters were literally "Nazified" by their critics. Lowenthal compared Kurtz to Goering, describing him as a psychotic "stocky, brutal, manic depressive type." Maertz, like Hitler, was "a schizoid demagogue" and Kister, "a boyish looking man," was a miniature version of Rudolf Hess.[19]

Complaints to Queens District Attorney Charles P. Sullivan alleged that the organizers of the meeting were members of the Nazi Party who were associated with Nazi leaders who had fled Germany to Argentina. However, the Front's opponents did

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not try to organize the same kind of fear campaign they had before the war. Those arrested this time were considered a pathetic joke.[20]

Daniel Kurtz's efforts in 1947 and again in 1951 to revive the Christian Front were even more ridiculous. Kurtz remained in contact with Kurt Mertig and Ernest Elmhurst. At a meeting organized by Mertig on June 18, 1947, Kurtz announced his plans to hold a Christian Front street rally on June 28 at the same location as in 1945. Mertig and Elmhurst decided not to appear. Kurtz warned Homer Maertz not attend because "he ruined my last meeting and if he should dare to show up I will tie a rope around his neck and throw him in the river."[21]

As soon as Kurtz began distributing his flyers advertising the rally at 217th Street and Jamaica Avenue in Queens Village for the purpose of supporting Douglas MacArthur for president, the community took action.[22] More than twenty community leaders petitioned Mayor O'Dwyer to take steps to stop the Christian Front meeting to avoid a repeat of the 1945 riot. The *Daily Worker* recalled the violent, subversive record of the Christian Front, reminded its readers of John Cassidy's attempt to organize armed units to take the law into their own hands, and warned against allowing the Front to hold any future meetings.[23]

The Jewish War Veterans, the American Jewish Committee and the ADL held a joint meeting to discuss the resurgence of the Christian Front. All voiced disappointment that *PM*, the *Daily Worker*, and the *New York Post* had seen fit to publicize the Front gathering. Countermeasures were prepared and the groups agreed to meet at Veterans Square on Springfield Boulevard and Jamaica Avenue, a few blocks from the planned Front rally. They got a promise from J. Irwin Shapiro of the Queens District Attorney's

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office to have a police stenographer record everything the Fronters said. Additionally, five Jewish war veterans were going to be present to observe Kurtz and his associates. As soon as either Elmhurst or Mertig (the Jewish organizations assumed they would be present) opened their mouths, the protesters would demand their arrests for disorderly conduct, based on their prior convictions.[24]

Radical journalist I.F. Stone, writing for *PM*, took a different approach to the ensuing CF meeting. Stone defended the Christian Front's "right to speak their nonsense" in Queens Village in his article "Let the Screwballs Speak." He feared that if the CF was driven underground they would be seen as martyrs by the extremist elements, and if was Jews who prevented the Front's right to speak it would be used against them. The Front's ludicrous oratory would be enough to marginalize them and make them fade away.[25]

The second attempt to revive the Christian Front was indeed held on June 28, 1947. Nothing new was heard from the speakers. "We were here in 1939, 1940, 1941 warning people that they were going to push us into war — then Pearl Harbor and now we know the truth!" the rally began. They blamed the small minority in this country who had tried to destroy Christianity over the past fifty years, the Oriental and Asiatic communists silenced Coughlin in 1939, and the minority who owned the courthouses. They claimed that Christians made the Constitution and it could be subverted by any international laws. Vilifying President Truman as they previously treated Roosevelt, Kurtz's group said the "invisible hand again controls the designation of those for whom the American people are to vote as the next president" and that they want to put an American in the White House — but the minority wants chaos.[26]

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The 1947 meeting did not end in a riot and did receive some attention from the extreme Right. *The Broom*, a neo-Nazi publication masquerading as fundamental Christian, celebrated Kurtz's efforts in Queens Village in the face of organized opposition. The *Broom* made excuses for the crowd's lack of exuberance, claiming press photographers took pictures every time someone applauded — which limited the applause out of the fear that their pictures would be in the newspaper. This was Jewish "terrorism". Agreeing with Kurtz, *The Broom* blamed the "Hidden Hand" for ruining the United States under Truman, just as it did under FDR.[27]

Momentum was seemingly building for the new Front. In July, Gerald L.K. Smith, the anti-Semitic pastor and former right-hand man of Huey Long, arrived in New York specifically to help the Christian Front's revival. He met with several former CF leaders to discuss the organization.[28]

Nothing happened during the summer of 1947, but by October Kurtz was back. He planned a rally on Columbus Day to inform the city about the "Pitiful condition of this once great Christian Country … No America without Jesus Christ."[29] The rally was to be at Joseph McWilliams' old stomping grounds: Second Avenue and East 85th Street in Yorkville. It was the first attempt to hold a meeting in the neighborhood since the war. Kurtz and Mertig were scheduled to speak but the police refused to issue a permit and twenty police officers were stationed on the corner to prevent the meeting. When asked "why" by newspaper reporters, Deputy Inspector Edmund P. Hennelly responded, "Because they're rabble rousers." It would be another four years before Kurtz tried again.[30]

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But Daniel Kurtz was nothing if not persistent. For the final time, on Friday, May 25, 1951, at the corner of Jamaica Avenue and 217th Street in Queens Village, he tried to revive the Christian Front. Sponsored by the New York Anti-Communist League on what he called "General MacArthur Night," Kurtz invited every local anti-Semite to attend the rally. Only one, a man named Peter Xavier, accepted. Kurtz and Xavier recited their warnings of internationalism, which were nothing more than thinly veiled anti-Semitism. The New York Police Department advised Jewish groups to stay away and let them handle any disorderly conduct. Officers moved the meeting to a side street and warned Kurtz that if he or any speaker used inflammatory language they would face the consequences of the law. The police (fifteen detectives, eighteen plainclothesmen, and twenty-five uniformed officers) far outnumbered the twenty individuals in attendance. It was the last time Daniel Kurtz and the Christian Front ever made a public appearance. Neither was ever heard from again.[31]

* * *

Father Coughlin represented a larger concern for the Roosevelt administration when it came to FDR's critics. The key reason for New Dealer interventionists wanting to figure out a way to silence the isolationist Coughlin was that the priest had a nationwide following and could legitimately hamper Roosevelt's diplomatic maneuverability.

Network radio had already thrown its weight behind hegemony of the political culture that both spawned and sustained it by replacing Coughlin with *Church of the Air*. This helped foster a culture of "good taste" acceptable to the majority of their audience.[32] Monsignor Joseph Patrick Hurley, the Vatican administrator in charge of the Coughlin

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case was an intense anti-Semite and expunged any mention of Coughlin's anti-Semitism from reports he prepared for his superiors. He effectively short-circuited FDR's attempts to have the Holy See deal with Coughlin.[33]

In the end, the Christian Front movement was discredited and Father Charles Edward Coughlin's reputation was ruined. Father Coughlin, whose investments in silver netted him a $900,000 bank account in Barclay's Bank in England by May 1942, remained at the Shrine of the Little Flower for twenty-four more years after he was silenced in 1942. Occasionally, he sent circulars to his parishioners warning them about the dangers of communism, and his Sunday sermons sometimes touched on warnings against subversion.

Between 1942 and the 1960s, he made only one public speech, in December 1953.[34] In the wake of Vatican II and the desegregation of Detroit's schools in the early 1960s, Coughlin's two decades long silence came to an end. Archbishop (later Cardinal) John Dearden was to implement Vatican II and reduce racial tensions in Detroit. Bitter strife engulfed the Shrine of the Little Flower parish, as Coughlin fomented the disruptive and sometimes violent reactions to both the religious and racial reforms. Accusations of racism were made against Coughlin and his parish. The *New York Times* reported on May 26, 1966, that the Shrine parish was "anti-Negro". One witness claimed that Coughlin would count the number of Blacks attending his services while sitting in the rear pews. Many of the school's parents were tired of and opposed to Coughlin's racist attitudes. One meeting at the Shrine High School ended with ardent Coughlinites pelting the Archbishop with eggs and tomatoes. That was the end. Three days after his twenty-fifth years of mandated silence, Father Coughlin officially, albeit reluctantly, retired. He

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finally bowed to pressure from diocesan leaders and left the Shrine of the Little Flower for the last time, heading to the wealthy Detroit suburb of Birmingham, Michigan, where he said mass every day in a small, private chapel.[35]

After suffering several heart attacks, Father Coughlin died on Saturday, October 27, 1979. In his declining years, he offered less than truthful interviews to scholars and journalists, often contradicting the historical record. Media coverage of his death was more forgiving that would have been expected. His old nemesis, the *Detroit Free Press*, called him a loyal son of the church, but warned against repeating or forgetting his activities in the 1930s.[36]

* * *

Immediately after World War II, Patrick Scanlan wrote an impassioned letter supporting the viewpoint of the Vatican denouncing Nazi atrocities. One reader from Virginia, impressed with the "true Catholicity" of the Vatican perspective, asked Scanlan if it was true that the *Brooklyn Tablet*, on the question of anti-Semitism, gave a voice to the ideas of Coughlinism and served as the "ideological home for the notorious Christian Front?"[37]

Scanlan's response was circumspect. He admitted printing many of Coughlin's speeches, "but never, to our knowledge, a single sentence which, in context, could be construed as 'anti-' any racial or religious group." He stated that it was the official policy of the *Brooklyn Tablet* to oppose anti-Semitism. With respect to the Christian Front, he wrote, "The Christian Front, as far as we know, was a nebulous movement, without leadership and without headquarters. The name has been used, however, as a bogyman by professional mongers of religious and racial hatred until it has assumed a certain

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reality in the minds of those uninformed of the facts." Patrick Scanlan was, of course, lying.[38]

Scanlan continued to defend Father Coughlin into the 1950s. He could not believe that the former radio priest's name was still dragged through the mud, ten years after he had been retired from public life. Scanlan continued to excuse the anti-Semitism of Coughlin and *Social Justice*, claiming that Coughlin only criticized Jews twice in radio addresses, which cost him his radio program. Scanlan did admit that *Social Justice* criticized Jews. What was his explanation for the criticism? Most of those articles were contributed and not written by Coughlin. Scanlan remained the apologist.[39]

* * *

Father Edward Lodge Curran maintained his anticommunism throughout his long ecclesiastical career. In 1947 he opposed the United Nations' being built in New York, calling it "unconstitutionally surrendering American soil to an organization which amusingly calls itself the 'United Nations' … [a] sounding board for the Soviet Union to insult, slander and abuse the United States." Curran told American troops fighting the Korean War to throw down their arms if China was admitted to the UN. He was a staunch supporter of Joseph McCarthy during the 1950s red scare.[40]

In church matters, Curran was no less conservative. He remained president of the International Catholic Truth Society for 40 years. As pastor of three different parishes in Brooklyn and Queens between 1933 and 1973, he insisted on traditional Catholic teachings, regardless of any official reforms. In 1971, after nine years as pastor of St. Sebastian's Parish in Woodside, Queens, Father Curran was wearing out his welcome. Nearly five years after Vatican II, he still conducted the old Latin mass and refused to

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adopt liturgical changes promulgated by the diocese in 1968. His simply ignored regulations distributed by the diocese's leaders. One layman complained that in Curran's mind Vatican II never took place and he looked forward to Curran's seventy-fifth birthday, when all priests must offer their resignation. "It would take a visit from Christ himself to get him to change his ways and conform to the regulations of this Diocese," concluded the upset parishioner.[41]

Edward Lodge Curran suffered a heart attack and died at age seventy-five on February 14, 1974. His obituary in *The Tablet* described him as a scholar, professor, lawyer, musician, orator, apologist, and activist. One line stood out, an unconscious nod to his old Christian Front days: Curran was "an outspoken crusader for God and country."[42]

* * *

On January 21, 1942, two years after his trial, John Cassidy was still considered a public nuisance. New York Assemblyman Patrick Sullivan introduced legislation to prevent Cassidy from entering the New York State Bar. Two months later, Cassidy was inducted into the army under the Selective Service act. The Friends of Democracy and four other similar organizations requested that Secretary of War Henry Stimson immediately investigate Cassidy. Democracy could not be defended by an enemy of the country, they said, "We cannot afford to arm the Fifth Column."[43]

John Cassidy was officially barred from practicing law in 1944. The court held he was still going to attempt to overthrow the government. The reason for his disbarment was given as his deliberate attempt to organized armed units to be used against what he called "subversion groups"; and if the government did not act, Cassidy had said he would

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take the law into his own hands. For four years a bar committee held fitness meetings about Cassidy, and twenty-six individuals testified against the former Fronter. Most of the hearings took place while Cassidy was overseas in the army. A 1947 Court of Appeals upheld the disbarment decision. John Cassidy was brokenhearted.[44]

Cassidy was denied the right to practice law for the next fifty years. He became a field accountant for Brooklyn construction companies and became involved in his local parish. During the Lindsay administration he received an award for volunteer work. Still upset over his disbarment in the mid-1950s he recalled taking his St. John's Law degree down from his wall and burying it in his closet — until his wife put it back up and bought him a St. John's class ring with the inscription "1933, LL.B." His daughter married a Jewish lawyer named Greenberg.

Cassidy's son-in-law's law partner, a Sikh convert raised in 1960s sensibilities, felt Cassidy's civil rights were violated during the 1940s disbarment hearings. In 1994, he was able to obtain an interview with the Bar Committee for Cassidy. The Bar Committee listen too, waived the mandated ethics exam, and then approved John Cassidy's petition to be reinstated to the New York State Bar at age 85.[45]

John Cassidy, Fordham University and St. John's University graduate, former leader of the Brooklyn Unit of the Christian Front still stood behind his beliefs. In 1995, he said he regretted nothing that happened so long ago in Brooklyn. He still claimed that William Bishop was "wild-eyed" and a possible communist plant, and that both he and Father Coughlin were never anti-Semitic.[46]

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The Christian Front was a significant and important example of anti-Semitic anticommunism in the 1930s. But much of the danger posed by the Christian Front existed only in the imagination of its enemies. The Christian Front is really a case study of partisan political irrationality. In a two-party system, evidence that the enemy is extremist is a valuable weapon in political debate. Perception becomes much more important than the truth — perception becomes the truth. This is especially true when fear of real enemies inflames the national debate.

In the 1930s and 1940s such fears were legitimate. People were afraid that fascists were poised to infiltrate America. There was no reason not to be afraid considering the world situation. Nor should the fear of communism be dismissed. The fear was real and precautions had to be taken.

The Christian Front and its members helped create this fear, whether they admitted it or not. There is no doubt that many were indeed anti-Semites. There is no doubt that they believed in what they preached. Many were not nice people. They became victims of their own paranoia, but they also became useful tools in the hands of their enemies. As each side smeared the other, each provided the other with fuel for their respective conspiracy theories, which were the mirror opposites of each other.

The Christian Front screamed about Jewish conspiracies. Liberal and Jewish groups took notice. The CF was so loud that their opposition, which needed an enemy to help rally America to the anti-fascist cause, now had the enemy it needed. And the general silence about the Front by the Catholic hierarchy, especially in Brooklyn, coupled with favorable coverage in publications such as the *Brooklyn Tablet* and public support by Catholic clergy such as Father Curran gave the impression that the Christian Front

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group spoke for the Catholic Church.[47] The Left had their "proof" that a dangerous Fifth Column fascism had taken hold in America.

The reality hardly supported the perception. The more people listened to Father Coughlin in 1938 and 1939, the less likely they were to approve of what he said. In April 1938, 83% of all his listeners approved of Coughlin's speeches. Just more than a year later, in July 1939, only 15% approved [Appendix VI].

The Christian Front became an important factor in the broader isolationist versus interventionist debate. The Front represented the most irresponsible face of the opposition to Roosevelt's interventionist policies, and by painting the Front as typical of the opposition; the entire isolationist position could more easily be discredited.

The Left's accusations against Coughlin and the Christian Front would have gone nowhere unless there were those in power who believed the accusations; or wanted to believe them; or found the accusations useful. This was the case in the 1930s. Legitimate or not, they found what they needed in the Christian Front. New Dealers were determined to discredit isolationism. J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI were going to let Americans know there was a danger of subversion and the FBI was there to protect them.[48]

What of the ideology of the Christian Front? Everything they believed — their anticommunism, their anti-Semitism, their isolationism — were in their minds all means to their goal of Christian unity. They wanted the Christian America they thought the founding fathers had created. Predominately immigrants or first generation Americans, they accepted and reformulated the nativism that had kept them outside the American mainstream into something that would let them display themselves as better Americans

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than their old stock competitors. That was what they were all about. But what they thought were the old traditions of Americanism turned out to clash with a new emerging set of traditions defining a new, more tolerant, multi-cultural America, and so they found themselves branded, or branded themselves, as un-American, disloyal to American ideals and values. Ethnicity does not exist in a political vacuum. Nor does politics exist in an ethnic vacuum.

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Notes

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[1] Bayor 125; Edward Lodge Curran, *Washingtonian Americanism: Address by Rev. Edward Lodge Curran before Citizens USA Committee, Chicago, Illinois, February 22, 1944* (Chicago: Citizens USA Committee, 1944).

[2] Curran, *Washingtonian Americanism.*

[3] *Ibid.*; CENSORED, letter to J. Edgar Hoover, May 3, 1944, CCFBI.

[4] Bayor 125; *Daily Worker*, Oct. 23, 1943, CCFBI; Holmes 118.

[5] Holmes 127-28.

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] *Ibid.* 130.

[8] Cantril 385.

[9] Bayor 165-66.

[10] Daniel Kurtz, letter to Mr. Marlin, American Peace Mobilization, Sept. 2, 1945; Rev. Edward Brophy, letter to Daniel Kurtz, Sept. 21, 1945; J. Earle Edwards, letter to Daniel Kurtz, Sept. 21, 1945; T.A. Plaisance, letter to Daniel Kurtz, Sept. 26, 1945, Christian Front Meeting file, AJCL.

[11] Daniel Kurtz, "My Country" (1945), Christian Front Meeting file, AJCL.

[12] "The Latest Jewish Frame-Up in New York as told by A Christian Fronter"; *New York Post*, Oct. 8, 1945, Christian Front Meeting file, AJCL.

[13] Catherine V. Brown address, Oct. 6, 1945, Christian Front Meeting file, AJCL.

[14] "The Latest Jewish Frame-Up in New York as told by A Christian Fronter."

[15] On October 29, 1941, Isidore Ginsburg, then senior vice commander of the Queens Jewish War Veterans, accused Kurtz of referring to LaGuardia and FDR as Jews in derogatory terms. Kurtz was sent to the hospital for observation after disorderly conduct arrest. *New York Times*, Oct. 30, 1941: 21.

[16] *Ibid.*; *New York Post*, Oct. 8, 1945, Christian Front Meeting file, AJCL; *New York Times*, Oct. 7, 1945: 5; Oct. 8, 1945: 14.

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[17] "The Latest Jewish Frame-Up in New York as told by A Christian Fronter."

[18] Leo Lowenthal, letter to Dr. Max Horkheimer, Oct. 9, 1945, Christian Front Meeting file, AJCL.

[19] *Ibid.*

[20] Kenneth Ellis, letter to Charles P. Sullivan, Oct. 20, 1945, Christian Front Meeting file, AJCL.

[21] Phone report form A.S., June 19, 1947, Christian Front Meeting (June 28, 1947) file, AJCL.

[22] When asked by *PM* if he had ever heard of the Christian Front, General MacArthur said he knew nothing of them or why they were using his name. *PM*, June 26, 1947, Christian Front Meeting (June 28, 1947) file, AJCL.

[23] Christian Front flyer, June 28, 1947, Christian Front Meeting file, AJCL; *PM*, June 25, 1947; *Daily Worker*, June 25, 1947, Christian Front Meeting (June 28, 1947) file, AJCL.

[24] Minutes of Meeting of Representatives of the AJC, Jewish War Veterans, and ADL on Christian Front Meeting in Queens, June 25, 1947, Christian Front Meeting (June 28, 1947) file, AJCL.

[25] I.F. Stone, "Let the Screwballs Speak," *PM*, June 27, 1947, Christian Front Meeting (June 28, 1947) file, AJCL.

[26] Report of Meeting Held on June 28, 1947, Christian Front Meeting (June 28, 1947) file, AJCL.

[27] The only point with which *The Broom* disagreed with Kurtz was Kurtz's endorsement of General MacArthur for the presidency. *The Broom* did not consider MacArthur a Christian because of the blood on his hands from WWII, a war the editors did not think the United States should have been fighting. *The Broom*, July 21, 1947, Christian Front Meeting (June 28, 1947) file, AJCL.

[28] *New York Times*, July 19, 1947: 11.

[29] Christian Front flyer, Oct. 12, 1947, Christian Front Meeting file, AJCL.

[30] Louis Lempel, letter to George Mintzer, Oct. 14, 1947; *New York Daily News*, Oct. 13, 1947; *New York Tribune*, Oct. 13, 1947, Christian Front Meeting file, AJCL.

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[31] George Kellman, Memorandum to John Slawson, Ed Lukas, Dave Danzig, George Trosk, Sol Fineberg, May 24, 1951; George Kellman, Memorandum to John Slawson, Ed Lukas, Dave Danzig, Sol Fineberg, Isaiah Terman, May 24, 1951, Christian Front Meeting (June 28, 1947) file, AJCL.

[32] Craig 276-77.

[33] Charles R. Gallagher, "A Peculiar Brand of Patriotism," *FDR, The Vatican and the Roman Catholic* Church in America, 1933-1945, David B. Woolner and Richard G. Kurial, eds. (New York: Macmillan, 2003): 270.

[34] Brinkley 268; Warren 291, 294.

[35] *Ibid.*; Warren 297-298, 347*n*22.

[36] *Ibid.* 301.

[37] Samuel Newman, letter to Patrick Scanlan, Sept. 21, 1945, Charles Coughlin file, TSC-DBA.

[38] Patrick Scanlan, letter to Samuel Newman, Oct. 9, 1945, Charles Coughlin file, TSC-DBA.

[39] Patrick Scanlan, letter to Dr. Edward Fenlon, May 23, 1950, Charles Coughlin file, TSC-DBA.

[40] *The Tablet*, Feb. 21, 1974, Edward Lodge Curran file, TSC-DBA.

[41] Curran was pastor at St. Stephen's, 1933-41 (Brooklyn); St. Joseph's, 1941-62 (Brooklyn); and St. Sebastian's, 1962-1973 (Queens). *Ibid.*; Denis J. Donohue, letter to Reader's Forum, *The Tablet*, January 23, 1971, Edward Lodge Curran file, TSC-DBA.

[42] *The Tablet*, Feb. 21, 1974, Edward Lodge Curran file, TSC-DBA.

[43] *New York Times*, Jan. 21, 1942: 25; Mar. 28, 1942: 8.

[44] *New York Times*, Nov. 15, 1944: 29; May 31, 1995: B1.

[45] *New York Times*, May 31, 1995: B2.

[46] *Ibid.*

[47] McCarthy 8.

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[48] CENSORED, letter to J. Edgar Hoover, Mar. 14, 1961; J. Edgar Hoover, letter to Mr. Simpson, Jan. 18, 1962, CCFBI.

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Appendix I: Father Charles Coughlin's Background

Father Charles Coughlin began his climb to prominence in the fight against anti-Catholic prejudice in the growing suburbs of Detroit, Michigan. In early 1926, Detroit Bishop Michael Gallagher attended the canonization rites of St. Thérèse, the Little Flower of Jesus, in Rome. When he returned to Detroit, Gallagher decided to honor the new saint by building a church in her name twelve miles north of Detroit in the small suburb of Royal Oak. There were only thirty-two Catholic families in Royal Oak, but Gallagher believed that Catholics would be attracted to Detroit by the growing automobile industry and they would settle there. The new church had seats for six hundred.[1]

In 1926 Royal Oak was less than hospitable for a new Catholic Church. The town was rural and isolated until Detroit expanded during the first two decades of twentieth century. Residents of the community feared change and the encroachment of immigrants and Catholics. As was the case in many fundamental Protestant communities during the 1920s, a significant percentage of the town's older residents joined the Ku Klux Klan.[2]

Bishop Gallagher knew that for his new parish to be successful he would have to find a young, aggressive pastor. He called upon an obscure, 34-year-old Detroit priest, Father Charles Edward Coughlin. The Canadian-born Coughlin, who was inspired by Thomas Aquinas' and Pope Leo XIII's teachings on social justice, met the challenge head-on.[3]

Just two weeks after the church's completion, Coughlin was summoned to his church by a late night telephone call. The July night was lit by a cross the KKK had set afire on the church's lawn.[4]

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Coughlin knew that he had to address the Klan. He had a second problem: the weekly collections from his tiny parish were not enough to pay back the diocesan loan for the church's construction. He needed a way to solve both problems. His solution came in the form of Leo Fitzpatrick, a devout Catholic and manager of the WJR radio station. Coughlin went to Fitzpatrick with his difficulties and explained that he wanted to do something to fight bigotry, and strengthen his church. Fitzpatrick suggested preaching over the airwaves. On October 17, 1926 Father Coughlin delivered his first radio sermon with a special microphone set on his pulpit in Royal Oak. Both the young priest and WJR received complimentary letters. Coughlin and Fitzpatrick decided to continue the experiment. By the summer of 1930, the radio priest was broadcasting over the CBS network, and his voice had the potential of being heard by more than 40 million people.[5]

Father Coughlin became the nation's most effective radio politician. His attacks on President Hoover for Hoover's poor handling of the depression led to Coughlin being removed from the air, the first of many such instances. CBS decided to drop the popular Coughlin after intense pressure from the Hoover administration. This did not silence the him. He continued to broadcast over a network of unaffiliated stations and became more popular than ever. After a February 1932 broadcast he received 1.25 million letters. In 1936 listeners sent in more than $324,000 in money orders.[6]

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Appendix II: The Story of William Bishop

There is no definitive proof William Bishop was a Nazi agent. Perhaps the man who spun so many fantastic stories was able to hide the most fantastic story of all. Maybe the other stories were a cover for his espionage, or maybe he was a pathological liar who needed attention. In any event, the FBI believed that Bishop was a German agent.

Between 1935 and 1940 William Bishop was questioned many times the Criminal Alien Bureau of the NYPD and federal agents. His stories were often contradictory. Patrick Scanlan had informants who sent him "biographies" on the man they thought was William Bishop. The following is Bishop's story based on those sources, and cannot be taken as complete accurate or true, but it demonstrates how completely fantastic all the claims surrounding Bishop were when strung together in a single narrative.

* * *

William Bishop claimed to be born in Salem, Massachusetts on June 27, 1900. He did not know his father. His mother's maiden name was Elizabeth Howard. Her background was Scotch, but she was an American, living in Brownsville, Texas, where she ran a boarding house under the name Elizabeth Bishop with man William never knew. As far as William knew, he had no other relatives in the United States and one aunt in Toronto named Kopel, with whom he lived for a while after he left Salem to attend school. In 1935 he told immigration officials that he never had a birth certificate or documentary evidence of citizenship. He did not even know if his mother was still alive because he had not seen her since 1915.[7]

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In the years preceding World War I, William attended the Victoria School in Toronto while living with his aunt. At the outbreak of the war he went returned to Salem, Massachusetts, with his mother, where she met a man named Williams. Williams was a driller in the oil business and his work took the family to Brownsville. From there William Bishop entered Mexico in 1915 at the age of fifteen.

Bishop claimed to have participated in the Mexican Revolution and in 1919 he was in a hospital in Monterey as a political prisoner after being shot in the leg. It was not until March 1923 that William Bishop decided to return to the United States, which he entered from Mexico at Eagle Pass, Texas.[8]

By 1925, William Bishop was living in New York City on 22nd Street, across the street from the Cornish Arms Hotel. At first Bishop was employed by interior decorator named Alfred Hogg, but Hogg went out of business. He then was employed by Funk and Wagnalls Publishing before getting a job at as a janitor the Bible House. A year after he moved into the 22nd Street boarding house, he met Alice Lockie, a Scottish girl who was living in Queens.[9]

Alice had arrived from Scotland in the autumn of 1926 and was introduced to William by her brother, James Lockie who had come to America from Glasgow in August aboard the *SS California* and was living in the same boarding house as William. William told James he was born in Salem. Four years later William and Alice were married and had one son, Gerald Edward Bishop. Alice believed William's story and never knew if he had any relatives.[10]

William and Alice were no longer together by 1934. Alice was forced onto relief that November, and remained on it until April 1935, when she got a job as a lunch room

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worker in the CWA for twelve dollars a week. At the time, as far as she knew, William was employed as a salesman for the Lemao Company — or maybe not. William Bishop neither accepted nor denied the story, and gave no information other than his birthday, name, and place of birth, when he was being questioned in 1940.[11]

William and Alice's marriage began to crumble after William met Ida Warnke of Passaic, New Jersey in January 1931. William and Ida both were working at the Bible House and conversed frequently. William told Ida that he was born in England and that two of his brothers had been killed during World War I while fighting in the British Army and he still had a sister in England. He told her his parents passed away in England shortly after the war.[12]

During their conversations, William gave Ida a picture of himself in a seaman's uniform, telling her that he attended the British equivalent of Annapolis. The picture was supposedly taken in China when Bishop was an officer on the *SS Pennland*. William never revealed to Ida that he was married, nor did he ever tell her how he entered the United States. Ida Warnke never saw William Bishop on a ship and only heard him speak of the *SS Pennland*. Nor did Bishop tell her the names of his siblings.[13]

The only thing William Bishop ever told Ida Warnke was to get a divorce. At the time the two met Ida was separated from her husband and William wanted to marry her. Beginning on February 10, 1931, they decided to have an "understanding of marriage," after she loaned him one hundred dollars. After William met her parents at a March 1931 dinner, he disappeared. Ida Warnke received only five payments on the loan, none after April, and was contacted by William only twice after May 1931. She never collected the balance because she did not know his address or where to find him. At the 1940

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questioning, Warnke produced a promissory note made out to Ida Baus (her maiden name) and signed by both her mother, Maria Baus and Bishop. Warnke never divorced her husband before she came face-to-face with Bishop again, although she was in divorce court in 1940.[14]

Ida Warnke read about William Bishop in the newspaper after his 1940 arrest. She immediately contacted Police Chief in Secaucus and supplied them with the photograph from the *Pennland*. The FBI contacted her in February 1940.[15]

William Bishop denied everything at his 1940 immigration hearing. He claimed to never to have had a "marriage understanding" and denied ever having served on the *SS Pennland*, or ever being in China. He did not recall giving her any photographs, but did admit to borrowing seventy-five dollars. Naturally, he claimed the money was repaid in full. He did admit to telling Warnke that he had one brother who was killed in World War I and that his parents were born in England, but he said he was lying to her.[16]

Inspector King confronted William Bishop. King presented Bishop with **Form #505F Certificate of Arrival of Alien Seaman, *SS Pennland*, on October 5, 1927, Port of New York**. The form was made out to William Arneck, one of Bishop's many known aliases. The form contained the following information:

- Crew List 10 – Line 8, SS Pennland, Red Star Line, Port of New York, 9/5/27 from Antwerp left 8/26/27.
- WILLIAM ARNECK, 24, male, British nationality, English race, tourist waiter, two years service on ship, engaged 8/22/27 at Antwerp.
- Height 5-9, Weight 160, reported on Form 689, dated 9/7/27 as deserting.

Bishop glanced at it and said it was correct.[17]

* * *

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Was William Bishop from England? Certainly Patrick Scanlan's information on the mystery man indicated he was. The US Board of Trade received information on "William Norman Bishop" in 1937, which exactly paralleled the story told to immigration officials in 1935, with a few exceptions. This version of his biography claimed Bishop was in England during World War I and was involved in the occupation of Cologne, before returning to the United States in 1920. It did mention Bishop's involvement in a failed business with James Lockie in 1933.[18]

Front supporters and non-interventionists were looking to blame Great Britain for pushing the United States into the European conflict. William Bishop's story was adapted to fit this theory by James Carey in a letter sent to Scanlan. Carey was convinced that beginning in 1933 the British were determined that war was inevitable. To prevent the United States from remaining neutral, the British sent Secret Service agents to the United States to found Jew-baiting groups to discredit all who criticized "international war mongers and their Jewish allies."[19]

In Carey's version of, the story, Bishop was one of the British agents sent to New York in 1934 to execute the British plan. His real name was Captain William Bishopstone, a fluent speaker of French and German. Bishopstone's objective in the United States was to disrupt isolationist organizations from within. In 1934, using a German name and speaking German, he disrupted several German organizations. Two years later, under the assumed name Reverend William Brown, he lectured and sought to disrupt pro-American anticommunist groups.[20]

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In a final version of Bishop's life, Scanlan collected information that alluded to him being a Nazi agent disrupting the WPA. This information was used to make Bishop the scapegoat during the trial and implied that he became associated the Christian Front specifically to disrupt the group.

Controversy surrounded the WPA with the perception that Americans were being fired and in favor of aliens and foreigners. People who seemingly did not need WPA work were receiving it because of connections. Scanlan felt that the WPA was meant for re-employing needy Americans to bring back their self-respect. They were loosing their jobs as supervisors retained their jobs. One such individual was Lilas Byrne, a supervising clerk in the Federal Theater, who also owned a farm which rented rooms Bethel, New York. William Bishop was rumored to be a representative of the National Civic Federation sent to investigate the Byrne matter.[21]

Bishop was also thought to be the investigator in the matter of Bronson Purdy. Purdy was accused of paying the Executive Service Corporation, a private employment agency that re-supplied the WPA of New York City, to obtain his position as the Finance Official of the Citywide Division (WPA) Project. A "Mr. Norman" investigated Lt. Oliver Gottschalk, Assistant Administrator of Finance of the WPA of New York, the man responsible for hiring Purdy. "Mr. Norman" was thought to be William Bishop.[22]

Scanlan received information that WPA supervisors were not following the rules in a wave of dismissals that took place in 1937. Apparently, preference for jobs was based on friendship, political allegiances, union affiliation, and personal reasons, rather than handed out to the Americans entitled to WPA government relief jobs. This led to

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the formation of the WPA Workers' National Committee for Honest Work Relief, and Bishop was allegedly involved in this group.[23]

Ralph Easley of the anticommunist National Civic Federation decided to "clean up what is not only a festering sore, but which could be a very fine venture in clean and experienced hands." His campaign to clean up the WPA was publicized in the *Herald-Tribune* in July 1937. WPA employees protested that they were placed "unhappily in the midst of a hot-bed of subversive thought, action and discrimination" and sent Easley information which made its way to Scanlan. H.P. Godwin, an employee of the *Living Newspaper*, a branch of the Federal Theatre Project, wrote Easley, "I have seen the Red element take hold in the WPA and profane a glorious profession, requiring talent and experience, with inexperience, inefficiency and amateurish efforts to ape Moscow ad nauseum."[24] Scanlan thought Easley may have been involved with William Bishop.

After an employee, only identified as "The Party" was dismissed by the Federal Arts Project, he was approached by a civic group representing dismissed WPA workers not in the Workers' Alliance. They were members of the National Committee for Honest Work Relief. "The Party" accepted a job for sixteen dollars a week after he was introduced to Ralph Easley and Colonel Lucas; however he did not join organization. The office manager at his new job was Captain Norman, a man whose aliases included Gerald Bishop, Bishop-Stone, Arneck, and Bill. Captain Norman was William Bishop.[25]

"The Party's" job was to bring affidavits to dismissed WPA workers and record their complaints. Norman approached "The Party," and told him that he and Lucas were suspicious of a certain individual and wanted "The Party" to watch him.[26]

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Norman and "The Party" went to an Italian restaurant in Yorkville and then went to a shooting gallery to discuss the new assignment. Norman turned out to be a "crack shot." After they finished at the gallery, both went to the apartment of Norman's friend on Park Avenue named Miss Murdock, to which Norman had a key. The apartment seemed quite odd for a woman supposedly employed by – the story varies – the *Ladies Home Journal* or *Woman's Home Companion*. Everything in the apartment was under lock-and-key, including the large number of rifles with ammunition. When questioned, Norman claimed they were for hunting. The walls were covered with pictures of men in uniform; one had an inscription, "To Jerry." It was a picture of Gerald Bishop.[27]

Norman gave "The Party" his copy of *The Red Network* to read, which came originally from a CCC library. Norman claimed that at one time he was in charge of a CCC camp, but "The Party" assumed all of the books in Norman's library were stolen from the CCC.[28]

While "The Party" was skimming through the book, a Mr. Westervelt, who spoke with a German accent, entered the room. Westervelt was surprised that Norman had company, but nevertheless passed him some papers wrapped in newspapers. For no apparent reason, Westervelt mentioned that he was born in Salem, Massachusetts. Then "The Party" and Norman left to deliver the papers to Arthur Richards of General Foods.[29]

Norman's and "The Party's" salaries were paid for the two weeks by Ralph Easley and then the money stopped. Norman attempted to get cash from Senator Copeland, who knew him well, but failed. "The Party" threatened to quit because he was not being paid. Fearing that he would lose him, Norman was able to get $100 and then $150 the next two days from Miss Murdock. However, the money flow stopped and

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there were not enough funds to pay the salaries of the National Committee for Honest Work Relief employees.[30]

"The Party" threatened to sue. Easley and Lucas abandoned the office; and the employees, including Norman, conducted a sit-down strike. The building superintendent ordered them out, but Norman and others refused to leave. The super called the police and they entered the office. As the super and police entered, Miss Beatrice Palmer, a close associate of Norman's, ransacked Norman's office, putting some papers into her handbag. Norman ordered all the papers in the office to be collected and sent to his residence on 36th Street and a room at the Hotel Allerton.[31]

At the Hotel Allerton, "The Party" asked for his papers and information concerning his pay. He was told to return the next day. Not satisfied with the response, "The Party" went to Norman's apartment, where he witnessed several men in uniform burning papers. Not wanting to be involved any longer, he left to go see his lawyer to discuss recovering his salary.[32]

As Norman was leaving the apartment building, he was accosted by a reporter from the *Daily Worker* who called him "Jerry Bishop." Norman responded, "Who are you?" The reporter replied, "I'm from the Daily Worker – you will be seeing more of us." Norman responded by punching the reporter.[33]

"The Party" and the Committee settled their dispute out of court. On the day "The Party" was supposed to receive his last salary payment, Norman walked into "The Party's" lawyer's office with Beatrice Palmer. He explained the bruises that covered his face by saying he had been in an auto accident.[34]

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"He is a Nazi," said "The Party," pointing to Norman. Obviously agitated at the accusation, Norman leapt from his seat, putting his hand on his hip and said, "Did you call me a Nazi?" "The Party" responded sarcastically, "Did I?"[35]

Several days later, Norman asked for the papers "The Party" had helped move out of Easley's offices. "The Party" responded, "we burned them down in your apartment." That was the last time "The Party" saw Norman.[36]

"The Party" later was interviewed by special agents of the FBI who questioned him about Norman, Easley, communists, Nazis, and fascist movements in New York.[37]

The final piece of the WPA puzzle Scanlan was trying to put together involved an Emma Knight. Knight was a member of the Writer's Project who complained about losing valuable data on American singers in 1936 she collected while employed by the WPA. In 1937 she complained to WPA official Paul Konecky and was assured that her material would be returned to her. Konecky tried to get the materials for her, but he could not find it. The work was lost. On the surface, this had nothing to do with William Bishop, except the affidavit describing Knight's work was signed by B.H. Palmer — Beatrice Palmer, the same "close associate" of Captain Norman.[38]

The investigation went beyond the Brooklyn Diocese. The FBI was anxious to interview Miss Palmer in reference to Bishop. However, Harold Kennedy dissuaded the Bureau because he felt questioning her would not be productive.[39]

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Appendix III: Patrick Scanlan's Christian Front File

Patrick Scanlan's notes indicate whether individuals were friends or foes. Joseph McCarthy, a neighbor, was said to have sympathy for the cause. Other supporters (besides Coughlin) included Rev. Ralph E. Davis of St. Mark's Methodist Church (Ocean Avenue and Beverley Road), Dr. Charles D. Sawyer of 34 Prospect Park West (Brooklyn), Rev. J. McCohell, and John S. Whitaker of 57 East 11th Street in Manhattan.

He had notes on the trial defendants: John Cassidy was twice invited into the Union for Social Justice in 1932; the business telephone of Cassidy's sister at Henry Kelly & Sons Wholesale Liquor; notes on William Bushnell's schooling and on the fact that he was unemployed; and Francis Malone's telephone numbers.

Other notes listed individuals were might attack the Christian Front. Unemployed John W. Kurz of 1683 East 53rd Street, Brooklyn, was described as a plant facing charges. Prosecutor Vincent Quinn was described as a "disgraceful man" even though he was a war veteran.

Miscellaneous notes included that an individual named Higgins had a distasteful job in school; the addresses of John P. Shaughnesy (a refugee and Knights of Columbus member?), Michael Kennedy, Frank McCormack, I. Hayden, and Mrs. Sloane (a convert); notes on books *The Worlds Work* (July 1921) and Pittsburgh stalwart Reverend Father John Maria Lenhart, OMC's *Pre-Reformation Printed Books*.

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Appendix IV: Reorganization of the Christian Front, July 5, 1940

John Cassidy announced the Front's reorganization to prevent government spies from becoming members. The meeting took place at Prospect Hall, 266 Prospect Avenue, Brooklyn, and was attended by 115 people. The fifteen points of discussion were recorded by Sgt. Mulcahey and Ptl. Rodriguez of the 72nd Precinct and Det. William F. Schmitt of the Criminal Alien Bureau.

The points were as follows:[40]

1. Secretaries will be in attendance to record data and other important work at meetings.
2. Women will be selected to the post of secretary.

   Helen Nee was selected after Cassidy personally vouched for her. She belonged to the Graft Clan.
3. Women will become full members of the Front; there will be no auxiliary.
4. Beginning in two weeks hence, women will have their own meetings.
5. There will be more emphasis on recruiting new members to avoid any more "Denis Healys" from joining the Christian Front.
6. No new candidates will be allowed into closed meetings. They will have to bring two photos and initiation fee and stay outside at the desk.
7. The first Friday of every month will be an open meeting. Every other Friday will be a closed meeting.
8. Organization of a Social Committee.
9. Organization of Welfare Committee to take care of needs of members, including jobs where possible.
10. Organization of Speakers Committee to train street speakers.
11. Organization of Complaint & Conduct Committee to take care of suspicious members and those who cause trouble.
12. The Organization Committee established for recruiting and investigating new members.
13. Women will be members of the committees.
14. Chairmen of the different committees will be members of the Executive Board. The Executive Board will be the governing body of the Christian Front.
15. Each member will be on a committee and will report any other member who acts suspiciously or were in the company of suspicious people.

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Appendix V: The Christian Front in Boston

On April 4, 1939, under the auspices of the Economic Security League, Communist Party member Granville Hicks debated Father Edward Lodge Curran in Boston's Mechanics Building on the merits of communism. Topics included the struggle for American democracy, the progress of the Soviet Union, Catholics and democracy, and the dangers of fascism. The debate did not contain anything unusual or surprising. Despite claims that each misrepresented the other, the debate featured just the normal rhetoric one would expect when two such divergent individuals clashed verbally.[41]

The significance of the debate was that it laid the groundwork for the Christian Front in Boston. In May 1940, John Joseph Murphy, a former employee of Father Coughlin in Detroit, moderated an enormous meeting of the American Mother's Neutrality League. Nearly 5,000 packed the Boston Common to hear Martin Dies denounce the "Trojan Horse" of internationalists leading America into war. After the meeting, Murphy became the principal organizer of the CF in Boston.[42]

The Boston Unit's activities were similar to those in New York. Rallies included anti-Semitic and inflammatory speeches. The principle leader of Boston's CF, Francis P. Moran, began as an organizer for the Committee for Defense of American Constitutional Rights, formed to protest Coughlin's ban from radio. Like his New York counterparts, Moran attacked Roosevelt and Churchill. He accused Roosevelt of plotting to establish a dictatorship in Washington and to put 1,500 "non-Christians" in the federal government. In 1939, the Boston leader attended a New York meeting at Ebling's Casino in the Bronx to talk about uniting Christian organizations to help defend democracy and Christianity against Communism, and he urged Christians to buy only from Christians. A June 1941

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showing of the Nazi film, *Victory in the West*, at the Hibernian Hall in Roxbury was organized by the Christian Front.[43]

Not only were Boston's actions and rhetoric similar, so too were the reactions. Boston Police Commissioner Joseph F. Timilty questioned Moran concerning the activities of the CF. A few days after the January 1940 FBI arrests of Fronters in New York, the Boston Christian Front was raided. The Boston CF was closely monitored by Boston police after Pearl Harbor.[44]

In the autumn of 1943, the Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts reported a wave of anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitic propaganda was being distributed at war plants and the Bethlehem Steel plant in Hingham. One leaflet said, "Pay your dues and pay the Jews." Similar leaflets were distributed at the Fore River shipyard in Quincy. A whistle-blower at the steel plant reported the flyers to the FBI and was subsequently laid-off.[45]

An anti-Semitic incident in Boston gained national attention. A gang of Irish thugs jumped two Jewish boys, Jacob Hodas and Harvey Blaustein, and beat them severely. The police who arrived on the scene let the attackers get away without taking their names or making arrests. Hodas and Blaustein protested the police's lack of action and were arrested. While in custody at the police station, an officer beat Blaustein with a hose and called him a "yellow Jew." To add insult to serious physical injury, a judge found the two boys guilty of participating in an "affray" and fined them $10 each.[46]

The *Christian Science Monitor* was the first to report on violent anti-Semitism in Boston, forcing Governor Saltonstall to conduct an independent investigation of the Boston police. At the end of the investigation Police Commissioner Timilty was sacked.

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Until the beating incident, local politicians, police and press had ignored Jewish complaints about the Christian Front.[47]

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Appendix VI: AIPO Surveys of Father Coughlin's Listenership

All surveys on Coughlin were conducted by the AIPO in 1938 and 1939. They can be found in Hadley Cantril, ed. *Public Opinion, 1935-1946* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1951): 147-148.

Have you listened recently to Father Coughlin's radio talks? (Apr. 6, 1938).

Yes = 24%
No = 76%

Do you listen to Father Coughlin regularly?

Date	Yes	No or no answer	Only occasionally or used to listen regularly
April 6, 1938	9%	91%	-
July 17, 1939	6%	56%	38%

1938 Results by Politics

Party	Yes	No or no answer
Democrat	55%	45%
Republican	23%	77%
Lemke voters & others	22%	78%

Did you listen to Father Coughlin regularly before the 1936 election? (Apr. 6, 1938).

Yes = 30%
No = 70%

In general, do you approve or disapprove of what Father Coughlin says? (Asked of those who listened to the programs).

Date	Approve	Disapprove	Don't know or no answer
All listeners April 6, 1938	83%	17%	
Regular listeners Dec. 16, 1938	67%	33%	
Occasional listeners Dec. 16, 1938	51%	49%	
All listeners July 17, 1939	15%	31%	54%

Have you listened to any of Father Coughlin's radio talks in the last month? (Dec. 16, 1938).

Regularly = 5%
Occasionally = 17%
Not at all = 78%

In general, do you approve or disapprove of Father Coughlin's ideas (July 17. 1939).

Approve = 15%
Disapprove = 38%
Don't know or no answer = 47%

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Notes

[1] Brinkley 89-90; Marcus 12.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Aquinas believed in the economic rights of an individual, but those rights were qualified by the needs of one's neighbor. Leo XIII (Papacy, 1878-1903) believed that social justice required a system of private ownership which was tempered by recognition of the individual's responsibilities and obligations to their respective community.

[4] Brinkley 82, 89-90; Marcus 22.

[5] Brinkley 82, 89-92.

[6] Craig 159, 276-77.

[7] This information was from a June 22, 1935 interview with immigration Inspector V.I. Pyknen. The 1935 stenographic record was supplied to the Bureau Criminal Alien Investigation during their 1940 questioning of Bishop. Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Bureau Criminal Alien Investigation, Aug. 2, 1940, OCF.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] This information was from the July 23, 1940 questioning of Bishop at Ellis Island by immigration inspectors Eiselgroth and King during his deportation hearing. Bishop's lawyer, Emmanuel Trotta was present. Det. Stanley Gwozdo to Commanding Officer, Bureau Criminal Alien Investigation, Aug. 2, 1940, OCF.

[13] *Ibid.*

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] *Ibid.*

[17] *Ibid.*

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[18] Letter to M.D. Griffith, Board of Trade, Sept. 22, 1937, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[19] James Carey, letter to Patrick Scanlan, undated, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[20] *Ibid.*

[21] W.H. Hackett, letter to W.N. Bishop, Aug. 12, 1937; George H. Patchen, letter to Capt. W.N. Bishop, Aug. 13, 1937; Patrick Scanlan notes, undated, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[22] Statements against Lt. Oliver Gottschalk and Bronson Purdy, Affidavit, July 12, 1937; Telephone conversation between Mr. Norman and Mr. Bucek, Vice President Executive Service Corporation, New York City, Aug. 12, 1937, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[23] Membership Committee, WPA Workers' National Committee for Honest Work Relief form letter to co-workers, undated, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[24] H.P. Godwin, letter to Ralph Easley, July 20, 1937, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[25] Memorandum, Re: Gerald Bishop, alias Captain Norman, alias Bishop-Stone, alias Arneck, alias "Bill", Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[26] *Ibid.*

[27] *Ibid.*

[28] *Ibid.*

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] *Ibid.*

[31] *Ibid.*

[32] *Ibid.*

[33] *Ibid.*

[34] *Ibid.*

[35] *Ibid.*

[36] *Ibid.*

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[37] *Ibid.*

[38] Emma Knight affidavit; Emma Knight, extract from letter to Clyde Shropshire, June 23, 1937; Patrick Scanlan handwritten notes, undated, Christian Front file, TSC-DBA.

[39] Harold Kennedy, letter to Earl Connelly, Feb. 15, 1940, box 8, USAJP-AF.

[40] Report of Meeting, Sgt. Mulcahey and Ptl. Rodriguez, 72nd Pct., July 5, 1940; Police Report, July 6, 1940; Det. William F. Schmitt to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, July 6, 1940, OCF.

[41] Granville Hicks, *Catholics, Communists, and Democracy: Address by Granville Hicks in Debate with Father Edward Lodge Curran* (Boston: Communist Party of Massachusetts, 1939).

[42] Holmes 120, 124-26, 130.

[43] *Ibid.*, 126-27; Det. William F. Schmitt to Commanding Officer, Criminal Alien Bureau, Dec. 4, 1939; Report of Meeting, Sgt. O'Connor, 42nd Pct., & Det. Schmitt, Alien Squad, December 4, 1939, OCF.

[44] Statement of Francis P. Moran, Jan. 7, 1942, Christian Front file, AJCL; *New York Times*, Jan. 16, 1940: 3; Jan. 19, 1940: 15.

[45] Holmes 130-32.

[46] *Ibid.*

[47] *Ibid.*

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Abbreviations for Archival Collections

AJC	American Jewish Committee, New York City.
ASE-AJC	Anti-Semitism & Extremism Papers, American Jewish Committee, New York City.
AJCL	American Jewish Committee Library, New York City.
CCFBI	Charles Coughlin file, FOIA Reading Room, FBI.
FLP	Fiorello LaGuardia Papers, New York City Municipal Archives.
GJP	Gardner Jackson Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.
HUACFBI	House Committee on Un-American Activities FBI File, New York Public Library.
JOC-DBA	Rev. John J. O'Connor Collection, Pamphlets, 1900-1959, Diocese of Brooklyn Archives.
OF3893	Official File 3893, Franklin D. Roosevelt papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.
OCF	Organization-Christian Front file, Fiorello LaGuardia Papers, microfilm roll 149, New York City Municipal Archives.
PSF	President's Secretary's File, Justice Department, Franklin D. Roosevelt papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.
SHSW	State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.
TSC-DBA	Tablet Subject Collection, Diocese of Brooklyn Archives, Brooklyn, New York.
USAJP-AF	*United States of America v. John Prout, Jr., et. al.* United States Attorney's Files. File 10500. Case Number 38022. National Archives and Records Administration, Northeast Division, New York.
USAJP-CCF	*United States of America v. John Prout, Jr., et. al.* Criminal Case Files. Case Number 38022. National Archives and Records Administration, Northeast Division, New York.

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