

JUST HOW CLOSE HAVE WE COME TO FACISM?

In his talk to the Uptown Progressives March 27, Gene Holland, Professor of French and Comparative Studies at OSU, described the growth of fascism in Europe as the National Socialist (Nazi) Party was gaining power, and contrasted that with trends in America from 1866 on.

European fascism was populist (having popular support), palingenetic (calling for a rebirth of former greatness), and ultranationalist (seeking a super strong state with a strong leader, with its resulting “squashed individualism”).

Fascism began in America around 1866, and was different in some respects (Prof. Holland recommended the discussion of this in the book by John Dean, “Conservatives without Conscience”). Fascism in Europe began with a military defeat (which some military refused to accept) coupled with economic and political collapse and the threat of Russian communism, and its proponents blamed much of this on weakness and decadence, and were intent of restoring pride in the culture and the state.

In America after the Civil War, some officers refused to accept defeat and founded the Ku Klux Klan, whose power peaked in the 1920's, when many people felt defeated by cultural and economic changes. But more importantly, the Scopes trial (on teaching evolution) aided the rise of Christian fundamentalism, and after World War II, this movement began its efforts to take back America, calling for eliminating sins and weaknesses. They would ally themselves with American supremacists, those who believe that America is the one legitimate power in the world.

For this group, the resignation of Nixon, the end of the war in Vietnam, and defeat of the first President Bush, and the Clinton administration were all part of a string of defeats. The growing power of the military-industrial-fossil fuel complex that President Eisenhower had warned of became still more evident with the second Bush presidency, and after 9/11 the combination of these forces helped to create the current huge imbalance of power in the executive branch.

In America's case, the crisis is (as yet) not as deep as it was in 1930's Europe, and the result has not so far created a revolution or a dictatorship; the government doesn't use assassinations or militias [though last October President Bush signed into law a revision of the Insurrection Act (HR 5122) that allows the President to declare a public emergency and station troops anywhere in the country and take control of state-based National Guard units without the consent of local authorities, to “suppress public disorder.” – Ed.]

What can be done about this trend? Professor Holland suggested: 1) redress the congressional balance, and return to a multi-party system; 2) rein in the power of the executive branch; and 3) end corporatism, the hand-in-glove relationship between corporations and government. He also spoke of the need to learn more about worldwide fundamentalisms, both Muslim and Christian, and the way in which the actions of each help the other to expand and maintain its power base.

SOME KEY REFERENCES

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See also: <<http://dneiwert.blogspot.com/>>

BACKGROUND REFERENCES

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