

# THE RISE OF FASCISM IN AMERICA



ROGER HAYES

BY GARY ALAN SCOTT

*Fascism in America won't come with jackboots, book burnings, mass rallies, and fevered harangues, nor will it come with black helicopters or tanks in the street. It won't come like a storm — but as a break in the weather, that sudden change of season you might feel when the wind shifts on an October evening: Everything is the same, but everything has changed. Something has gone, departed from the world, and a new reality will have taken its place. All the old forms will still be there: legislatures, elections, campaigns — plenty of bread and circuses. But "consent of the governed" will no longer apply; actual control of the state will have passed to a small and privileged group who rule for the benefit of their wealthy peers and corporate patrons.*

*To be sure, there will be factional conflicts among the elite, and a degree of debate will be permitted; but no one outside the privileged circle will be allowed to influence state policy. Dissidents will be marginalized — usually by "the people" themselves. Deprived of historical knowledge by a thoroughly impoverished educational system designed to produce complacent consumers, left ignorant of current events by a corporate media devoted solely to profit, many will internalize the force-fed values of the ruling elite, and act accordingly. There will be little need for overt methods of control.*

*The rulers will act in secret, for reasons of "national security," and the people will not be permitted to know what goes on in their name. Actions once unthinkable will be accepted as routine: government by executive fiat, state murder of "enemies" selected by the leader, undeclared wars, torture, mass detentions without charge, the looting of the national treasury, the creation of huge new "security structures" targeted at the populace. In time, this will be seen as "normal," as the chill of autumn feels when summer is gone. It will all seem normal.*

~CHRIS FLOYD, 11/10/2001  
Moscow Times (English edition)

Since the 1970s, American businesses have grown larger and more monopolistic, helped along by deregulation, the repeal of anti-trust laws, and a steady transformation from manufacturing to capital management (dare I say, "capital manipulation"?). As Paul Bigioni puts it in his excellent essay entitled *The Real Threat of Fascism*: "If we are to protect ourselves from the growing influence of Big Business, then our anti-trust laws must be reconceived in a way which recognizes the political danger of monopolistic conditions."

Bigioni continues by emphasizing that "Anti-trust laws do not just protect the marketplace, they protect democracy." It is well to remember that conditions like these led to fascism in both Germany and Italy in the 1930s, and Bigioni points out that the transformation toward fascism occurred in both countries while they were still liberal democracies. In America, since at least 1971, the rich have gotten much, much richer and the poor have become poorer and far more numerous, largely because our government now sees its primary function as serving the interests of Big Business and its Big Money. As of 2003, according to a Congressional Budget Office report, the top 1% of households in America accounted for 57.5% of America's wealth, up from 38.7% only twelve years earlier. And this does not take into account the last three years of the Bush tax-cuts. In the U.S. today, there are 374 billionaires, approximately 25,000 deca-millionaires (\$10 million to \$999 million) and 2.5 million millionaires; and this does not even take into account the wealth of corporations! Under such conditions, competition is minimized or thwarted, and capital is exalted over labor, the consummation of Marx's contention that "Capital is dead labor."

In every industry, huge monopolistic cartels dominate the playing field, following the spate of mergers and acquisitions throughout the 1980s and 1990s. To cite just two examples: Four media giants (AOL-Time Warner, Viacom, Disney, and Rupert Murdoch's News Group) control nearly everything we read, view, listen to, see at movie houses, and do at entertainment parks.

Just four conglomerates, which have oh so much in common with one another, produce (for profit) virtually every newspaper, magazine, major internet site, movie, television program, CD, DVD, and so on. The pressure to stay within fairly narrow bounds of covering and the fear of losing one's job should one "think outside the box" is detailed succinctly in Danny Schecter's March 27, 2006 column, the title of which is taken from a line Edward R. Morrow mutters in the movie *Good Night and Good Luck*: "The Fear is in the Room: Inside Our Unbrave Media World"; Robert Fisk's March 19 column, "The Farical End of the American Dream"; and Bill Gallagher's March 28 column, "There is No 'Good News' in Iraq."

To note one other example: If Wal-Mart were a country it would have the 19th largest economy in the world!

Do not be hoodwinked by labels here: there was nothing "socialist" about Hitler's National Socialist Party, despite his clever employment of terms such as "volk" (the people or the folks), "heimat" (homeland), or the solidarity sounding "ein land" (one country)! Likewise, there is no genuinely human freedom in the free market, despite the intoxicating rhetoric of neoliberals. Bigioni quotes Thurman Arnold, head of the Anti-Trust section of the Justice Department in 1939:

*"Germany, of course, has developed within 15 years from an industrial autocracy into a dictatorship. Most people are under the impression that the power of Hitler was the result of his demagogic blandishments and appeals to the mob... Actually, Hitler holds his power through the final and inevitable development of the uncontrolled tendency to combine in restraint of trade." And in another address, Arnold told the American Bar Association that "Germany presents the logical end of the process of cartelization."*

And, of course, every cartel needs a strong leader, a commander-in-chief with an iron fist. Arnold says that Hitler filled that role, but that if it had not been Hitler, it would have been someone else. (Americans today might draw an analogy: if it were not George W. Bush, the first MBA President, who would serve as the front-man for Big Business, it would be someone else.) Bigioni writes, "Compulsory slave labor was the crowning achievement of Nazi labor relations." By analogy, Employment-at-Will, the outsourcing of manufacturing and even service jobs, and the rejection of a living wage, is the crowning achievement of American labor relations. (See for example Harold Meyerson's article, "Three Ideas to Radically Reorder Economy," *Providence Journal*, March 24, 2006, and Princeton University Professor Alan Binder's article in the March-April issue of *Foreign Affairs*.) The disappearance of union jobs, outsourcing and downsizing has been the crowning achievement of American business relations over the past thirty years or so. The other factors contributing to what Bigioni calls "the fascist trajectory" includes low taxes, various forms of corporate welfare, the decimation of small businesses, and the ability of corporations to discharge obligations to employees, to the environment, and to the country as a whole.

In short, the United States is suffocating from the deleterious effects of Big Money interests in virtually every arena, from public political processes to the privatization of much of what belongs to all of us. Corporate advertising secures the pernicious effects. From time to time, one hears a call for public financing of elections, for truth in advertising, and for more regulation and oversight of lobbying activities, but on the whole, Americans seem glib about the way things are, supposing that this is the only way they can be.

The status quo breeds resignation in the citizenry, and this resignation, too, is in large part an effect of Big Business and its Big Money. It keeps ordinary folks and their common sense away from the political arena, which might otherwise force a change in the way things are done. Big Money does everything it can to sour people on political participation, so that the little guys (and 'gals') who just don't know what's best for them or the country will leave matters of governance to the professional ruling class. To formalize this relatively recent reality, it would seem necessary to reword our Constitution to reflect those entities called "corporations," which have now been deemed "persons" and whose capital is now regarded as a form of "speech." (See, for example, Jeffrey Kaplan, *Uncivil Liberties: ACLU Defense of Money=Speech Undermines Democracy*.) The United States has become a country "of the corporation, by the corporation, and for the corporation."

Public financing of elections and campaign expenditure limits are shouted down as communism or socialism in a manner very similar to Big Money's cries of "class warfare" when the population at large objects to additional giveaways to the richest few Americans. Big Money (representing a small, elite class) does everything in its power to prevent the American people from awakening to the fact that what it is seeing really is class warfare: warfare that is being waged from the top down, against the poor and what we used to call the "middle class," which are now (involuntarily) subsidizing Big Money interests that control the political agenda and its legislative processes.

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