

Christian Herald

F E B R U A R Y • 1 9 5 0

Huckster of HATRED



*Gerald L.K. Smith, mounting a new and noisy vehicle called "**The Christian Nationalists**," rides forth again to "kick the kikes and the Negroes out of America." Sounds almost as silly as it does unChristian. But let's not underestimate the power of a rabble-rouser!*

By **THORP McCLUSKY**

FOR the past few years we almost lost sight and sound of him. During World War II he seemed to disappear into a comparatively silent limbo. Understandably so, for his almost pathological hatred of the Jews, plus a passionate admiration for any kind of dictatorial "strong man," had led him into some pretty unsavory company. He had become a super-nationalist, strongly savoring of Hitlerian doctrines. And public opinion, unable to abide him at a time when American boys were dying to rid the world of the Hitler poison, pressured him down to a mutter.

We had hoped that, during his relatively silent years, he had meditated upon the Gospel whose phrases he used so freely to bolster his rantings, and that this meditation had taught him how spiritually subversive a thing it is to turn Christ's message of love and brotherhood into a gospel of hatred and disunion.

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Then, the other day, there fell into my hands a little pamphlet. Reeking with Jew-hate, it called upon me to join a great crusade to "kick the kikes out of America!" The leaflet comprised a cartoon strip, crudely drawn, which depicted Uncle Sam booting the Redskin off a precipice and finally being himself kicked into the abyss by a triumphantly leering Jew. There was no street address, just a post-office box number in St. Louis; the name of the sending agency: The Patriotic Tract Society. The tract invited me to order and help distribute this "and other literature on the same subject" which would be immediately forthcoming upon my investment of \$2. Because it was so reminiscent of the anti-Semitic cartoons published in pre-war Germany by *Der Stuermer*, Julius Streicher's newspaper of hate, I was curious to know what type of twisted mind could be behind such a "crusade." I invested.

In a few days the postman dumped at my door a packet of the rawest, most vicious, most virulent diatribes against Jews and Negroes which I've ever seen—and I've seen some bad ones. It was labeled as from "The Christian Nationalist Crusade"—and, lo and behold, here was Gerald L. K. Smith again!

I entrained for St. Louis to have a look at this newest hate factory.

GERALD L. K. Smith has always been a man in search of a bandwagon, and the noisier the better. Back in 1933 he left his Protestant pastorate in Shreveport, La., and an encouraging future in the ministry to join Silver-Shirt Stormtrooper William Dudley Pelley in Pelley's campaign to become America's first fuehrer. On August 15th of that year, he enthusiastically wrote Pelley: "By the time you receive this letter I shall be on the road with a uniformed squad of young men composing what I believe will be the first Silver Shirt troop in America!"

When Pelley's grab for power failed, Smith switched over to Huey P. Long as an organizer of the Kingfish's national drive for the White House; his salary was \$650 a week, and he was worth it to any power-seeker in need of a persuasive orator aiming his stuff at the bottom strata of human emotions.

For Huey Long, Smith talked so persuasively that he even convinced himself he was a man of destiny. He openly admitted that he was the third most powerful man in the nation, exceeded only by F. D. Roosevelt and Long. He probably considered it a providential elimination of competition when an assassin shot down the Louisiana dictator in a corridor of the Louisiana state capitol. Smith delivered Long's funeral oration of September 10, 1935, his rich voice winding up with "Invictus" and bearing down with impressive emphasis on the line, "My head is bloody but unbowed!"

Next he went after President Roosevelt, promising to "drive that cripple out of the White House." For a time he attached himself to Dr. Francis E. Townsend, holding out the hope of \$200-a-month pensions for the aged, until Townsend, sensing that Smith was more of a nationalist revolutionary than a social reformer, "invited him out."

Then Smith climbed aboard the Father Coughlin bandwagon. Though formerly he had made noises like a Catholic-hater, his admiration for Coughlin's style and ideas overcame any latent religious prejudice, and the two became buddies in a virulent hate-the-Jews campaign. As war swept

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Three of Smith's aides study a new booklet turned out by the "hate factory." L. to r.: Editor Don Lohbeck, Opal M. Tanner and John W. Hamilton.

over Europe, he adopted the isolationist line, pleading for a better understanding of Hitler and denouncing Britain, the President, the Lend-Lease Bill, the draft. He was the darling of the Bunds.

Our entry into the war put a quietus on his pro-Nazi program; he toned down his public utterances just enough to keep from running afoul of the anti-sedition laws. But he spent the time well in consorting, mostly in private, with others of like ilk holding to the Jew-baiting, Negro-hating line and conserved his strength for the day when fascism would be overshadowed by some great threat.

Early in 1942, Smith founded his magazine *The Cross and the Flag*, which he still publishes, and in which it is difficult to find anything even faintly resembling either the Cross' gospel or the Flag's ideals.

Reviving the discredited "America First Committee" under the thinly disguised pseudonym "America First Party," he ran for U. S. Senator from Michigan in 1944 and received 1700 votes. It is out of this much-suspected organization that he has developed the present Christian Nationalist Party, which frankly hopes to use its "crusade" to put Gerald L. K. Smith in the White House.

Though the Christian Nationalists are headquartered at St. Louis, Smith himself directs things from his home in Tulsa—"for strategic purposes." In neither place is his name in the phone book, nor does the St. Louis directory list the Christian Nationalist Party, the Crusade, the Patriotic Tract Society, *The Cross and the Flag*, its editor Don Lohbeck, or any of the other Smith enterprises. The publications carry only box numbers.

All this made it a little difficult for me to find the Smith's hate mill in St. Louis. But eventually I located it at 1533 S. Grand Avenue. There was no legend on walls or windows to indicate the character of the place, not even a name over the doorbell. But, once in-

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side, you find the entrance hall plastered with a large display of publications which scream at you with such words as: "White Man, Awaken!" . . . "The Jew Plot to Change the Gospel!" . . . "My Fight for the Right" (Smith's own *Mein Kampf*) . . . "Judge George W. Armstrong, Patriot Extraordinary" . . . "Christian Blood for Jewish Schemes" . . . "The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion," etc., etc.

To the left is a small assembly hall, with the American and Christian flags prominently displayed. To the rear and on the two upper floors are offices, shipping and billing rooms, excellently equipped with modern furniture and appliances. Many of those feverishly at work opening mail, sorting donations, wrapping bundles of literature and stuffing envelopes are volunteers—pinch-faced, poorly clad, defiant-eyed "little people" who trust Smith to lead them into a promised land where they will be politically, socially and economically supreme. Trucks bearing freshly printed publications, and automobile-loads of "crusaders" come and go. In half-a-dozen printing plants in the St. Louis area, the presses are kept busy grinding out the multitudinous Smith publications.

At the present time, the Smith movement distributes about one million pieces of literature a month. Six post-office boxes are required to handle the incoming mail. The circulation of *The Cross and the Flag* is not revealed, but in 1946 Smith testified before the House Un-American Activities Committee that it was "something around 90,000." That was before the formation in 1948 of the Christian Nationalist Party, which claims now to have an organization in every state of the Union. And that was before Smith, according to Editor Lohbeck, got control of "about 140 different organizations, bearing no connection in name with the Crusade, which are in fact directed by Gerald L. K. Smith." Smith himself claims that his followers exceed three million.

Smith has powerful financial backing. During a recent 7-month period, his Christian Nationalist Crusade alone received \$75,124.75 in donations. One of the most liberal contributors was George W. Armstrong, the Texas oilman whom Smith dubbed "Patriot Extraordinary" in an editorial encomium and who recently offered Jefferson Military College a fat fifty-million-dollar endowment if it would teach "white Christian supremacy." Moreover, the gifts from humble little people across the country, duped by Smith into believing he is a great Christian leader, must mount into really big money.

At the St. Louis headquarters, Smith's two chief lieutenants are Editor Lohbeck and John W. Hamilton.

The labors of these two, like those of Smith himself, are heavy. Besides

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getting out Smith's voluminous outpourings, they both are on tap for speaking engagements, and are instantly ready to take on anything which gives them a chance to understudy the old master himself. But between times, they manage to work in a bit of missionary enterprise on St. Louis itself. They are currently directing forces who, since January 1949, have been circulating a petition designed to force St. Louisans to vote on "Separation of the Races." Calling themselves the city's "Racial Purity Committee," Lohbeck and Hamilton are plugging for an ordinance which would forbid the intermingling of whites and blacks in any public place whatsoever. The ordinance, if passed, would be "upheld by the power and strength of the police." Signatures are being obtained by a house-to-house canvass carried on by volunteer workers. Given such zeal, and the always existing body of people who fall victim to any "white supremacy" sales-talk, it would not be at all surprising if enough signatures are eventually obtained to force the issue on the ballot. How it will be voted, if it ever attains the ballot, is something else again.

BUT what of Smith himself? How is it that a man with his unquestioned talents, devout upbringing and early promise can develop into America's foremost huckster of hatred? Is he a power-mad psychopath, who has actually talked himself into believing the wild stuff he propounds? Or is he a charlatan, cleverly fostering those under-the-surface prejudices that lie just beneath the skins of most of us and trading upon them to promote his own advantage?

It's hard to say. But it's equally hard to believe that any man, year in and year out, can pour forth his kind of unChristian and undemocratic venom, all the while posing as "a great Christian leader," and at the same time be either wholly rational or even partly sincere.

Gerald L. K. Smith has an almost limitless vocabulary of vilifying terms for those who don't agree with him. Eleanor Roosevelt is "the world's most evil influence, the old hatchet gal, the villainess of American history." Drew Pearson is "a low-grade, highly paid renegade, hypocrite, liar, blackmailer, character assassin working for the Jewish Anti-Defamation League." Ike Eisenhower is "a phoney who can fool only the stupid."

Yet, while Smith hurls slander with a very free hand indeed, he is abnormally sensitive to criticism of himself. He combs carefully every article written about him, and leaps into court when he thinks he has a chance to win either publicity and/or a judgment. Occasionally he catches a publisher in the use of a legally libelous phrase. As, for example, when the *Wichita Beacon*, in condemning

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Smith's demagoguery in 1948, branded him as "a paid agent of a foreign government," associating him with "notorious Red leaders," Smith promptly sued; the *Beacon* printed a retraction. But he hadn't milked the error for all he saw it to be worth, and eventually the paper settled out of court—for \$10,000. Smith rushed delightedly into print with a story headed in big black type: "WICHITA JEWS PAY OFF!"

The mistake, as a matter of fact, was a bad one. For Smith is no Communist. Communism has long been one of his whipping-boys—not so much because of its brutal totalitarianism, but because "it was started by a dirty Jew, Karl Marx." The *Beacon* would have been on safer ground had it noted his partiality for fascism. For seldom indeed does he ever speak ill of fascism, either domestic or foreign. He admires Dictator Franco and plumps for recognition of Franco's Spain, and he cannot down his pre-war fondness for Hitler. Only last year, poring over the printed addresses of the Nazi leader, he came with obvious delight upon a bundle of phrases in which Hitler used the name of "our Lord and Saviour" in putting across one of his diatribes against the Jews. Smith stopped the presses to print the whole speech, and editorialized: "What good Christian American can find any fault with the above quotations? Could it be that the same Jew-controlled newspapers that lied to us about Father Coughlin and Gerald Smith failed to tell us the truth about Hitler?"

He fancies himself surrounded by enemies, hounded by highly paid "traitors and saboteurs" hired to do him in. "They poisoned me in Denver . . . They planned to assassinate me in Los Angeles . . . A mob set my big tent afire in Kansas City . . . Not since the screaming mob that stood in Pilate's court have the enemies of Jesus Christ been more hysterical and blind in their satanic determination!"

He feeds his ego with the notion that vast conspiratorial forces, backed by millions of dollars, are at work for no other purpose than to silence him. And behind it all, pulling the strings, is "the HIDDEN HAND, the Elders of Zion, the Jewish money-changers, the disciples of Judas Iscariot!"

And speaking of Judas Iscariot, the Betrayer, according to Smith's original exegesis, is the only one of the twelve disciples who was a Jew; all the others were "Galileans." The notion that Jesus was Himself a Jew is, in Smith's view, just one of those rather amazing ignorances he must dispel. Jesus, he affirms, was a blue- or grey-eyed blond, with honey-colored hair—with no semblance of Hebraic facial or other characteristics as we know them.

It's in the name of Christ that he would "kick the Christ-hating Jews out of America"—or, failing that, find some other way of liquidating them. While the platform of his Christian Nationalist Party rings in a few other

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objectives for the sake of snaring the unwary (such as his insistence upon "a Christian America" and the war on Communism), it is his fulminations against Jews and Negroes—and anyone who has anything to do with them—that occupies the overwhelming amount of his speeches and writings.

Yet he piously denies that he hates the Jews. He has tried to be a friend to them, he says. But they just won't believe him!

As for Negroes, any effort toward race equality, or pleading for a better break for them, throws him into a tantrum of name-calling. All such he regards as attempts to "mongrelize" the white race.

His plan for settling the Negro problem: "Establish an area in Africa. Pay for it with the debt the French and British owe us. Give every Negro \$5000 if he will move to Africa. . . . This is Christian Nationalism's constructive solution!"

When he cannot get away with denying his hates, he seeks to justify them. "There is not one word in the Bible which condemns hate in itself," he declares. "Hate can be evil; hate can be righteous. It all depends upon the *object* hated."

Jews and Negroes—and all who tolerate them—seem to fall into his category of subjects biblically approved as objects for righteous hatred. "'Love thy neighbor as thyself,'" he goes on, "does not mean that a Christian citizen should love vile, profane, obscene individuals" such as those who picket his rallies.

All this would be funny—if it weren't so tragically dangerous. We cannot with impunity ignore such danger. During my hunt for the Smith headquarters in St. Louis, I called upon several church and civic leaders. None had a good word for him; all seemed to be reluctant to mention his name. Their attitude seemed to say: "We won't dignify him by acknowledging his presence. Maybe if we pretend he doesn't exist, he'll go away."

That is reminiscent of the attitude of millions of good people when a little rabble-rouser with a trick mustache and a gift for inflammable oratory appeared on the German scene. He was ignored all right; but he didn't go away.

Like Hitler, Gerald L. K. Smith plays upon prejudices and out of inflamed hatreds he recruits his followers. We have no doubt that many good people, listening to his employment of Christian phrases and his assumption that he is divinely called to "save America for Christ," are fooled into believing him at least sincere. They should know that sincerity—even if we grant him that—is a dangerous thing when applied to something de-

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structive. They need to be reminded that no good thing can come out of a gospel of hatred, only evil, only disunity, only chaos.

Again and again Gerald L. K. Smith has stated: "*When chaos comes*"—and he seems to be certain it is coming—"*I'll be the leader!*" Don't laugh at that. He, or somebody like him, may well be—if you and I just shut our eyes and try to pretend he isn't here!

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