

Gallagher, Charles R. *Nazis of Copley Square: The Forgotten History of the Christian Front*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021. viii + 313 pages. Hardcover, \$29.95.

In 1939, Father Charles E. Coughlin, the Roman Catholic radio broadcasting priest who attracted one of the first devoted mass audiences on U.S. airwaves, called for the creation of a Christian Front to thwart atheistic Communism. Historian Charles R. Gallagher relays the troubling tale of the American Catholics who responded to Father Coughlin's call to form the Christian Front. In *Nazis of Copley Square: The Forgotten History of the Christian Front*, Gallagher reveals the many dreadful origins of the Christian Front's activism and paramilitarism, including "the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism, clerical anti-Semitism, religious anti-Judaism, Mystical Body of Christ theology, Catholic Action, and priestly shadow leadership" (p. 70). Emphasizing the importance of the theology of the Mystical Body of Christ and the doctrine of Catholic Action, Gallagher argues that rather than altering the era's universal Catholic teaching, the Christian Front merely harnessed it for their own nefarious ends.

Gallagher begins by explaining the peculiar source of the idea of a Christian Front. Born in India while his medical doctor father was serving as a Methodist missionary, the British athlete Arnold Lunn was knighted for his service to British skiing and Anglo-Swiss relations. Lunn converted to Roman Catholicism before heading to Spain to report on the Spanish Civil War, which he portrayed as a holy war being fought by his Roman Catholic coreligionists under General Francisco Franco against Spain's leftist Popular Front government. Lunn conceived the idea of the Christian Front to counteract the Popular Front. After adapting Lunn's ideas in America, Charles Coughlin inspired John F. Cassidy to head the Christian Front in New York and Francis P. Moran to head the Christian Front in Boston. The predominant features of the Christian Front were anti-Communism and anti-Semitism, stirred by the myth of Judeo-

Bolshevism, the idea that Communism was a Jewish machination, and that Jews were thereby guilty for the exploits of communist organizations and governments.

John F. Cassidy earned an LLB from St. John's University Law School, but he failed the bar examination. Unable to find work during the Great Depression, he devoted his days to anti-Communism and anti-Semitism. Gallagher adeptly describes how two priests, Father Edward Lodge Curran of Brooklyn and Father Edward F. Brophy of Queens, assisted Cassidy in the Christian Front. In January 1940, Federal Bureau of Investigation agents raided the homes and offices of the New York Christian Front members, confiscating guns, ammunition, and bombs. FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, whose Christian Front investigation was one of the largest in the bureau's history, knew seventeen members intended to instigate an insurrection and establish a provisional dictatorship that would halt supposed Communist and Jewish encroachment in the United States of America. From a jail cell at the Federal House of Detention in Lower Manhattan, Cassidy told a reporter, "All I can say is—long live Christ the King! Down with Communism!" (p. 60). Gallagher provides a fascinating and adroit analysis of the sensational trial of the New York Christian Front members. With the prosecution and the defense both downplaying the issue of religious motivation, no one was convicted of any crime.

Gallagher does a masterful job comparing the Christian Front in New York and Boston. The Christian Front opposed U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's pro-British policy during the Second World War and sought to prevent the United States from entering the conflict. Meanwhile, the British Security Coordination, the umbrella organization of the British Secret Intelligence Service, commonly referred to as MI6, worked to manipulate U.S. public opinion in favor of joining in combat. Cassidy and Moran's supporters were largely pious, working class Irish-Americans, who were not inclined to sympathize with Great Britain as it pursued U.S.

assistance against Germany before the United States finally entered the war late in 1941.

Francis P. Moran, the first of eleven children of his Irish-immigrant parents, failed to complete his studies for the priesthood at St. Joseph's Seraphic Seminary. He lost his job selling insurance for John Hancock Life Insurance Company before setting up headquarters on Copley Square in Boston. Gallagher explains how Moran broke the Foreign Agents Registration Act, which was passed in 1938 for the purpose of quashing American Nazis, by becoming an agent of Herbert Wilhelm Scholz, the German consul in Boston who was in fact on assignment from the Schutzstaffel. The Roosevelt administration ordered all German consulates closed in the summer of 1941. Yet Moran continued delivering Scholz's pro-German message, seeking to undermine U.S. morale and U.S. military recruitment efforts even after Scholz left the country. Moran strove to thwart the work of the Irish American Defense Association, a creation of British intelligence that sought to support the Roosevelt administration's war effort. The Irish American Defense Association was headed by the journalist and activist Frances Sweeney. Moran knew he was an unregistered foreign agent of the Germans. Conversely, Sweeney did not know that she was an unregistered foreign agent of the British. Ironically, Moran eventually joined the U.S. army. He never engaged in battle, but rather served in the army's 620th Engineer General Service Company, a labor battalion of men suspected of subversion or disloyalty.

Utilizing numerous historical archives with material collected by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, several U.S. law enforcement agencies, various Jewish organizations, and multiple journalists, Gallagher presents a riveting yet disturbing story of the Christian Front. *Nazis of Copley Square: The Forgotten History of the Christian Front* will be indispensable for those

desiring to understand anti-Semitism, American Catholic history, wartime foreign intelligence operations in the United States, and right-wing extremism.

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