

The Social Basis of the Support of a Depression Era Extremist: Father Coughlin.
By Gary Trade Marx. (Berkeley, California: Survey Research Center, University of California, 1962. Pp ix 131. \$2.50.)

This study is concerned with political extremism and its possible relation to anti-Semitism particularly as exemplified by Father Coughlin. He was but one of a succession of national demagogues since the Civil War, often spurred by agrarian populist reform, intolerance, parochial jealousy, intellectual inferiority, urban and anti-alien prejudices and “paranoid fear of subversion.”

Here is an analysis of the social basis of Coughlin’s “extremist right movement.” The data are derived from pertinent Gallup Polls involving 5000 respondents and done in April and December, 1938. Coughlin was then the leading fascist, anti-Semite, and Nazi propagandist in the United States. The wildest super-patriots then had nothing over Coughlin. Some Jews and half the Negroes supported Coughlin, the latter as virtually the disinherited.

Considered ethnically Irish-Americans supported Coughlin as one of their own and consequently he was strong among New England urban population. His most intense support came from the poor such as the W.P.A. workers and the unemployed and the poorer the respondent the more intense his loyalty to Coughlin. However, the small farmers’ support was no stronger than that of the large-scale farmers.

Fundamentalist Protestants, largely anti-Catholic, were usually indifferent to the movement. But not far behind the Catholics with 42% pro-Coughlin were the Lutherans 29% pro, but this latter adherence was due to the Father’s pro-Germanism. Catholics and Lutherans were the only church groups more pro- than anti-Coughlin and the unchurched were just as pro-Coughlin as the churched.

Father Coughlin “was allowed to rant and rave through 31 years of anti-Semitic, racist, seditious tirades before his church silenced him in 1942.” Until then he expressed only personal opinions. His church disavowed him when he became the spokesman of an organized group. When he launched the New Union Party he called President Roosevelt a “liar,” and cast his clerical collar to the ground. As his frustrations multiplied he grew more free swinging, attacking “communism,” “imported radicals,” international Jews and bankers and was praising isolationism, Americanism, Hitler, Mussolini and Franco and his program increasingly resembled the later “McCarthyism.”

Sixty tables based on the Gallup Polls are presented to support conclusions and scholars are indebted to the author for the results of his prodigious labor. However, this reviewer felt that the subject was sometimes belabored and repetitious with respect to the data used and conclusions even a bit speculative in spots.—WILFRED E. BINKLEY, *Ohio Northern University*.