
Book Review

Irony Will Stop World War III

by Spencer Cross,
LaRouche Youth Movement

It Can't Happen Here

by Sinclair Lewis
New York: Signet Classics,
2005 reprint of 1935 edition
400 pages, paperbound, \$7.95

When the LaRouche Youth Movement recently confronted a member of the U.S. Congress on his support for a suicidal ethanol policy, he said, "I know ethanol is worse for the nation, but it's popular." And another Congressman said, regarding the current Administration: "I know they're fascist, but . . ."

In light of the chaos in Southwest Asia, the coming tear-down of the world financial system, and the moral cowardice of the U.S. Democratic Party to address the current crisis, it is necessary to befriend great figures from the past who recognized, and fought, the same fascist menace which now threatens the world. Sinclair Lewis is just one such friend, who launched a crucial cultural intervention during the 1930s to stop the threat of fascism worldwide, seeing clearly the threat posed by movements taking hold in Europe, and acted to educate the populace to avert the threat from the United States.

A key collaborator of Lewis's was George Seldes, a correspondent in Italy during the Mussolini takeover. Seldes's 1943 book *Facts and Fascism*¹ illustrates their knowledge of the real movements at work behind Fascism: "I call these elements Fascist . . . whose efforts and objectives parallel those of the Liga Industriale which bought out Mussolini in 1920, and the Thyssen-Krupp-Voegeler-Flick Rhineland industry and banking system which subsidized Hitler when Nazism was about to collapse. . . . And in America one similar organization has already made the following historical record: . . . 4. Signed a pact with Nazi agents for political and economic (cartel) penetration of U.S. . . . 8. Sabotage the U.S. defense plan in 1940 by *refusing to convert the auto plants*

1. [www.thirdworldtraveler.com/George_Seldes/Facts and Fascism.html](http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/George_Seldes/Facts_and_Fascism.html)

and by a sit-down of capital against plant expansion; sabotage the oil, aluminum and rubber expansion programs. (From the Bone Committee reports,² and Thurman Arnold's report³ . . .)" (emphasis added).

Lewis Intervenes

While Seldes was in Europe, Lewis corresponded with him about the reactions of the citizenry there to the outbreak of fascism. These on-the-ground reports helped Lewis to understand (and communicate to others), that international finance gave birth to fascism in Europe, but that it continued to survive on the complacency of the population. Lewis's novel *It Can't Happen Here*, written in 1935, tells of the hypothetical election of the fascist Buzz Windrip to the Presidency in 1936; the storyline will make a modern reader cringe. Economic depression, an ignorant and demoralized population, Armageddon-style religious fervor, and manipulative ideologues running a puppet President with the emotional capacities of a toddler.⁴ The book provides not only an historical case study, but also psychological insight into the types of thinking that allowed fascism to emerge.

Most Americans in the 1920s dogmatically repeated the irony conveyed by the title of the book: "I know things are bad over there, but it can't happen here." A character who sees the threat posed by the election of Windrip remarks: "Oh nuts, let's quit talking politics. Windrip's going to be elected, so why waste time yodeling when we could drive down to the river and have a swim?" Some citizens were unclear who their real enemy was: "Why are you so afraid of the word 'Fascism' . . . might not be so bad, with all the lazy bums we got panhandling relief nowadays, and living on my income tax and yours—not worse to have a real Strong Man, like Hitler or Mussolini—like Napoleon or Bismarck in the good old days." Others were confused on how to fight—e.g., two socialists who argue endlessly about the fine points of Marx and socialism, instead of fighting what they know to be evil.

A sudden shift in the nation occurs, when: "On a day in late October, . . . the Corps ended all crime in America forever. . . . Seventy thousand selected Minute Men . . . arrested every known or faintly suspected criminal in the country. They were tried under court-martial procedure; one in ten was shot immediately, four in ten were given prison sentences, three in ten released as innocent . . . and two in ten taken into the Minute Men as inspectors. There were protests that at least six in ten had been innocent, but this was adequately answered by Windrip's courageous statement: 'The way to stop crime is to stop it!'" When Fascism comes to town, a different type of pessimistic maxim emerges: "Under a tyr-

2. Allen Douglas, "U.S. Senators Once Did Fight Fascism," *EIR*, Aug. 11, 2006.

3. *Ibid.*

4. See Justin Frank, M.D., *Bush on the Couch—Inside the Mind of the President* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004); see review in *EIR*, Aug. 20, 2004, or at www.larouche.com/other/2004/book_reviews/3133bush_on_couch.html

anny, most friends are a liability. One quarter of them turn 'reasonable' and become your enemies, one quarter are afraid to stop and speak and one quarter are killed and you die with them. But the blessed final quarter keep you alive."

Lewis's profound intervention showed how a demoralized population reacts to a crisis, latching onto insane religious beliefs (like Tim Lahaye and the Armageddonists today), or are so desperate that they succumb to popular opinion and a demagogue they believe speaks the truth.

LaRouche Intervenes

To stop world wars or fascist movements today is not to fight militarily or be duped into fighting amongst ourselves. Intervening into the current crisis demands that you look to the great minds of history, to show people the folly that dominates their society. Cervantes showed how the Spanish *machismo* under the Hapsburgs would prevent them from developing a nation-state, as Shakespeare showed how the mob culture of Rome could *only* lead to perpetual chaos and the murder of Julius Caesar. With our movement making *fun* of Baby-Boomer ideology, and instilling real *ideas* in Congress and campuses, we expose sophistry to the light of human creativity. A scene from Lewis makes the point. The main character, Doremus, discusses "political reality" with his son, who had just returned after an extended absence.

Doremus: "The only thing you ought to think of Windrip is that his gangsters murdered your Brother-in-law! . . . Do you condone such murders?"

Son: "No! Certainly not! . . . No one abhors violence more than I do. Still, you can't make an omelet without breaking eggs."

Doremus: "If I ever hear that 'can't make an omelet' phrase again, I'll start doing a little murder myself! It's used to justify every atrocity under every despotism, Fascist or Nazi or Communist or American labor war. Omelet! Eggs! By God, sir, men's souls and blood are not eggshells for tyrants to break!"

Son: "Oh, sorry, sir. I guess maybe the phrase is a little shopworn! I just mean to say—I'm just trying to figure this situation out *realistically!*"

The real cultural history of the United States in World War II involved the massive economic mobilization of our idle industry, not only to stop a fascist threat, but to improve the living standard of the nation, and—if FDR's plan had been followed—the whole world. On Buzz Windrip's nomination at the Democratic National Convention, outgoing, fictional President FDR said that Senator Windrip had been chosen, "not by the brains and hearts of genuine Democrats but by their temporarily crazed emotions."

In 1932, we had an FDR who beat the Democratic Party bosses and militarily defeated Nazism to save civilization. Today, we have Lyndon LaRouche, his youth movement and a Democratic Party that can't seem to find the courage to tell the truth.

So: Can it happen here again?