

## Background

Monday, November 1, 2021 5:22 PM

The **Murphy Ranch** is a ranch built in **Rustic Canyon, Los Angeles** in the 1930s by Winona and Norman Stephens, who were sympathizers of the **anti-semitic, white supremacist Silver Legion of America**. The owner of record in 1933 was Jessie M. Murphy. Designed as a base for **Nazi** activities in the U.S., it was intended to be capable of being self-sustaining for long periods. The compound had a water storage tank, a fuel tank, a bomb shelter, and various outbuildings and bunkers. The estate's main gate was designed by **Paul Williams**, a well-known African-American architect in the Southern California area. On Monday, December 8, 1941, the day after the **Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor**, local police occupied the compound and detained members of the 50-strong caretaker force.

From <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murphy\\_Ranch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murphy_Ranch)>

This secluded 55 acre stretch of Rustic Canyon in the Santa Monica Mountains has a storied (and admittedly historically hazy) past. This **old article from the LA Times** does a good job of piecing together the facts that could be verified – in 1933 a Jesse Murphy purchased the land and began to develop it. The property eventually had 3000 fruit and nut trees, a complicated irrigation and water storage system, a functioning power house, machine room, and bomb shelter. Plans were underway to further develop the land, adding a four-story mansion and several libraries. Oh, and it was also completely surrounded by barbed wire fences and supposedly patrolled by members of the **Silver Shirts** – a pro-Hitler American fascist organization.

Much of the legend around Murphy Ranch is based in oral history, but supposedly Ms. Murphy was a pseudonym – or someone who never even existed. The Ranch was under the control of a mysterious man known only as “Herr Schmidt,” who claimed a psychic vision told him America would lose World War II and that once the dust settled over the ruins of Los Angeles he and his band of sympathizers would emerge from Rustic Canyon to help usher in the new fascist state in America. Well, those plans went sour after Pearl Harbor, when FBI agents swept in and arrested most of the Ranch’s residents. The land was sold to the **Hartford Artists’ Colony** in 1948 and then to the City of Los Angeles in 1973 – and now it sits wedged between Will Rogers and Topanga Canyon State Parks. Much of the ranch has succumbed to age or brush fires, but several structures still remain, and the trail is a great place for hikers interested in history, architecture or just plain WTF stuff.

From <<https://modernhiker.com/hike/hiking-murphy-ranch/>>

## Rustic Canyon Ruin May Be a Former Nazi Compound

BY CECILIA RASMUSSEN

SEPT. 4, 2005 12 AM PT

TIMES STAFF WRITER

Southern California has been the cradle to many odd cults, credos, utopias and dystopias. Among the most mysterious are the ruins of a Rustic Canyon enclave once known as Murphy Ranch.

The mansions of Hollywood elite -- Whoopi Goldberg, Bill Cosby, Steven Spielberg -- sit in splendor atop the ridges of the canyon in the Santa Monica Mountains. But far below, on its secluded and woody floor, stand the eerily burned-out and graffiti-scarred remains of concrete and steel structures, underground tunnels and stairways leading from the top of the canyon to the bottom.

Wrapped in canyon lore, the remnants are believed by one local historian to be those of a small, short-lived colony of Nazis. Although no one can say with certainty who lived there or what they did, Randy Young, a former commercial photographer turned book publisher, said his research indicates that it could have been home to up to 40 local Nazis from about 1933 to 1945.

From <<https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2005-sep-04-me-thend-story.html>>

## Inside the luxurious LA ranch that could have been Hitler's Californian bunker

- **Murphy Ranch is in Los Angeles' Santa Monica Mountain**
- **Ranch was owned by Winona and Norman Stephens, from Chicago**
- **The Nazi sympathizers constructed compound in 1930s for Hitler's 'arrival'**
- **Persuaded to buy ranch for \$4million (\$66 million today) by German man**
- **Site was abandoned in the 1990s and is now covered in graffiti**
- **Now architect plans have revealed the plans the couple had for compound**

From <<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2775090/Hitler-s-66-million-deluxe-LA-bunker-way-self-sustaining-Nazi-utopia-police-not-carried-raid-Pearl-Harbour.html>>

Murphy Ranch, now owned by the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks. By PG/Bauer-Griffin/GC Images FILED UNDER:

• **SANTA MONICA**

## What really happened at Rustic Canyon's rumored Nazi ranch?

Rumors abound about the ruins in Pacific Palisades. Here's the true history

By **Hadley Meares** Updated May 2, 2019, 9:05am PDT

For decades, **hikers**, ghost hunters, taggers, writers, and amateur historians have explored the ruins of Murphy Ranch in **Rustic Canyon**. Many have developed their own theories about what happened in this valley in the decade before World War II. Rumor has it that, throughout the 1930s, neighbors in the canyon spied men patrolling the hills on weekends, in uniforms similar to those of the **Silver Shirts**, an American fascist group. Another rumor hints at an attempt to build a “Nazi White House” on the property in preparation for the Third Reich’s arrival. But what really happened at Murphy Ranch? A treasure trove of curling, seemingly forgotten plans, including those for and by the firm of the legendary **Paul R. Williams**, suggest that the owners of Murphy Ranch dreamed of a complex, self-sustaining “utopia” with a mansion fit for a world leader. But the plans never went further than architectural drawings and the construction of some now twisted and rusted infrastructure.

The legend of Murphy Ranch springs almost exclusively from a one-page affidavit that offers the only available first person account of life at Murphy Ranch. Its author was Dr. John Vincent, a professor at UCLA and the director of the Huntington Hartford Foundation, an esteemed artist’s retreat that occupied the property from 1950 to 1965. Vincent’s story (propagated by local historians Betty Lou and Randy Young) starts in 1948, in the waning days of Murphy Ranch:

When I first visited... Winona and Norman Stephens were living in the steel garage, employing a caretaker to help maintain the extensive plantings. A guard was also employed who unlocked the gate to admit me. The entire property was surrounded with a chain link fence topped by barbed wire. A few people were present on the grounds. Goats, sheep and cows were kept on the flatlands at the bottom of the canyon...

The couple were eager to sell the money-sucking 50-acre property to the Hartford Foundation and to tell Vincent their tale. They claimed to be a wealthy couple originally from the East, Norman a mining engineer and Winona a **Chicago** heiress with a deep interest in “metaphysical and supernatural phenomena.” This passion led her to a persuasive man identified only as “Herr Schmidt,” who she came to believe possessed “supernatural powers.” Herr Schmidt warned that Germany would soon defeat the United States and that the end of the world was at hand. Whether Schmidt foresaw this outcome with his “mystical powers” or by his association with the fascist, increasingly bellicose government in Germany is unclear. Schmidt urged Norman and Winona to build a “self-sufficient farm based on National Socialist ideals.” So on August 28, 1933, the couple allegedly bought land in **Pacific Palisades** using the pseudonym “Jessie M. Murphy, widow.” According to Vincent, a building program was quickly underway, some of it under the supervision of **Welton Becket** of the respected firm Plummer, Wurdeman, and Becket.

From <<https://la.curbed.com/2014/9/24/10043624/murphy-ranch-trail-pacific-palisades-history>>

## Murphy Ranch and the Nazis



In 1933, a supposed mining heiress named Jessie M. Murphy purchased a 50-acre property in Rustic Canyon in the Pacific Palisades of Los Angeles. The property came to be known as **Murphy Ranch**. However, because there was no other record or sighting of Jessie Murphy, some historians believe the name was likely an alias used by a mysterious “Herr Schmidt,” believed to be an agent for Nazi Germany. Soon after, Norman and Winona Stephens, a wealthy Los Angeles couple, took up residence on the property. Winona Stephens was interested in the supernatural and believed Schmidt to have supernatural powers. The Stephens were low-profile Nazi sympathizers. They believed Schmidt’s predictions that Europe and America would ultimately be defeated by the Nazis and a period of anarchy in America would follow. Murphy Ranch would become a safe haven for American pro-Nazis until Hitler could take over, after which they would emerge to help to transform the country into a Nazi society. With that end in view, the Stephens opened their bank account to developing the property. They commissioned notable architects to design an elaborate, four-story neoclassical palatial mansion, detached servants’ quarters, supporting infrastructure, including a 395,000-gallon water tank and local water source, a 20,000-gallon fuel tank, a power station, a machine shed, gardens for growing food and storage facilities for a long-term self-sustaining complex. The Stephens reportedly spent \$4 million on the property, constructing some of the infrastructure and a few living quarters. An entry gate for the mansion (incidentally designed by noted **African American architect Paul Williams**) was built. A number of other Nazi sympathizers and American Nazi “Silver Shirts” joined the Stephens to assist with upkeep and security. The compound was regularly visited by anti-Semitic Hollywood types, according to locals.

From <<http://www.laalmanac.com/history/h107n.php>>

## Jessie M. Murphy/Herr Schmidt

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In 1933, a supposed mining heiress named Jessie M. Murphy purchased a 50-acre property in Rustic Canyon in the Pacific Palisades of Los Angeles. The property came to be known as **Murphy Ranch**. However, because there was no other record or sighting of Jessie Murphy, some historians believe the name was likely an alias used by a mysterious "Herr Schmidt," believed to be an agent for Nazi Germany.

From <<http://www.laalmamac.com/history/h07n.php>>

And what of the mysterious "Schmidt," the man supposedly behind the Stevenses and the dream of Murphy Ranch? No proof of his existence has ever been found. But a *Los Angeles Times* article titled "Trouble for Traitors," from June 30, 1940, may offer the only known contemporary mention of the elusive "Schmidt":

Out in Santa Monica, only a few days ago, a man who is a veteran of the World War... answered the doorbell one night. "Vere is dot Herr Schmidt lives?" the caller asked in broken English. The former flyer appraised the man quickly, then smiled and directed him to Herr Schmidt's residence nearby. Within 10 minutes, the [man] had informed US Navy intelligence... and within 20 minutes the investigation was on. An operative who lived in the neighborhood was assigned to the case. You may be sure that when he finishes, Naval intelligence will know all about Herr Schmidt and his mysterious visitors, but whether they are right or wrong, no one but Naval intelligence knows.

The article warned that as soon as war was declared, traitors would be rounded up and dealt with. Legend (backed by no proof) has it that the day after Pearl Harbor, Schmidt was arrested at Murphy Ranch and the colony scattered. The mansion was never built. By 1948, the Stevenses were living above a steel garage, instead of the grand mansion of their dreams.

From <<https://la.curbed.com/2014/9/24/10043624/murphy-ranch-trail-pacific-palisades-history>>

Much of the legend around Murphy Ranch is based in oral history, but supposedly Ms. Murphy was a pseudonym – or someone who never even existed. The Ranch was under the control of a mysterious man known only as "Herr Schmidt," who claimed a psychic vision told him America would lose World War II and that once the dust settled over the ruins of Los Angeles he and his band of sympathizers would emerge from Rustic Canyon to help usher in the new fascist state in America. Well, those plans went sour after Pearl Harbor, when FBI agents swept in and arrested most of the Ranch's residents. The land was sold to the [Hartford Artists' Colony](#) in 1948 and then to the City of Los Angeles in 1973 – and now it sits wedged between Will Rogers and Topanga Canyon State Parks.

From <<https://modernhiker.com/hike/hiking-murphy-ranch/>>

According to Los Angeles County records, a Jessie M. Murphy purchased the 50-acre parcel in Rustic Canyon in 1933. That's how the place came to be known as Murphy Ranch.

Young suspects that Murphy was a front name used by the Nazi group to buy the property. There are no other records of Murphy, nor does the name surface in stories passed along by old-time canyon residents, Young said.

A man known through oral histories only as "Herr Schmidt" supposedly ruled the place and claimed to possess metaphysical powers. He purportedly used the ranch to introduce his Nazi-inspired political philosophy.

The man known as Herr Schmidt apparently attracted a wealthy couple to his colony. The couple lived at Murphy Ranch and bankrolled its construction, paying millions for architectural plans, buildings and landscaping.

From <<https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2005-sep-04-me-then4-story.html>>

Winona and Norman Stephens, the wealthy owners of the property, turned their land into a self-sustaining Nazi community for the dictator after being told by a German man named Herr Schmidt that his country would soon defeat the US.

Although details about Schmidt are scant, he was known to be a prominent member of the Silver Legion of America, a fascist, anti-Semitic, white supremacist group.

Unconfirmed reports suggest that Schmidt was Hitler's agent in America.

Schmidt warned the couple that Germany would soon defeat the United States and that the end of the world was at hand.

He persuaded them to invest \$4million (\$66 million today) to transform the property into a Nazi stronghold fit for Hitler.

They bought the 55-acre ranch, under the name pseudonym 'Jessie M. Murphy, widow' in 1933.

From <<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2775090/Hitler-s-66-million-deluxe-LA-bunker-way-self-sustaining-Nazi-utopia-police-not-carried-raid-Pearl-Harbour.html>>

# Winona and Norman Stephens

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On December 8, 1941, the day after the on Pearl Harbor attack and America's entry into World War II, the FBI raided the property and took about 50 residents into custody, including the Stephens and the mysterious Schmidt. Who Schmidt was, who he worked for, and what happened to him remains shrouded in mystery.

From <http://www.laalmanc.com/history/hi07n.php>

They claimed to be a wealthy couple originally from the East, Norman a mining engineer and Winona a [Chicago](#) heiress with a deep interest in "metaphysical and supernatural phenomena." This passion led her to a persuasive man identified only as "Herr Schmidt," who she came to believe possessed "supernatural powers." Herr Schmidt warned that Germany would soon defeat the United States and that the end of the world was at hand. Whether Schmidt foresaw this outcome with his "mystical powers" or by his association with the fascist, increasingly bellicose government in Germany is unclear.

Schmidt urged Norman and Winona to build a "self-sufficient farm based on National Socialist ideals." So on August 28, 1933, the couple allegedly bought land in [Pacific Palisades](#) using the pseudonym "Jessie M. Murphy, widow." According to Vincent, a building program was quickly underway, some of it under the supervision of [Welton Becket](#) of the respected firm Plummer, Wurdeman, and Becket.

From <https://la.curbed.com/2014/9/24/10043624/murphy-ranch-trail-pacific-palisades-history>

According to reports Norman Stephens was an engineer and apparently financed the operation while his wife, the daughter of a wealthy industrialist, believed Schmidt when he claimed to have supernatural powers.

From <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2775090/Hitler-s-66-million-deluxe-LA-bunker-way-self-sustaining-Nazi-utopia-police-not-carried-raid-Pearl-Harbour.html>

# The Compound

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the compound was equipped with a diesel power plant, 375,000 gallon concrete water tank, giant meat locker, 22 bedrooms and even a bomb shelter.

The heavily guarded became a home to a community of Hollywood fascists who hoped to ride out the war there and there began further plans to build five libraries, a swimming pool, several dining rooms and a gymnasium with money from Germany.

From <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2775090/Hitler-s-66-million-deluxe-LA-bunker-way-self-sustaining-Nazi-utopia-police-not-carried-raid-Pearl-Harbour.html>

A virtual Utopia was begun, with its own water supply from springs, a double-generator power station, and a 20,000 gallon fuel oil tank. Terraces were leveled and planted with trees, all supplied with copper pipes and a watering outlet for each tree. A culvert was built for the stream and a cold storage locker for storing food. The estimated cost of the improvements was \$4 million. Herr Schmidt and his followers had grand plans for their "self-sustaining farm." They began hiring architects to dream up a mansion for the property. Many of the drawings, dating from 1934 to 1941, are now housed in the Lloyd Wright collection at UCLA's Young Research Library. Though drawn in different hands, they have certain common features: a four-story mansion with a basement devoted to recreation, mechanical, servants' work, and usually an indoor pool; a main "public floor" centered on a grand central hall, featuring multiple libraries, social rooms, and sometimes grand bedrooms; and upper floors with a plethora of bedroom suites and private rooms of various sizes.

Architect Eric Lloyd Wright believes his father Lloyd Wright was given these plans by the property's "former owners" when he became the principal architect for the Huntington Hartford Foundation. (Lloyd Wright does not appear to have worked on any projects for the owners of Murphy Ranch.) And who were these former owners? Official documentation of Norman and Winona *Stephens* could not be found. But census records from both 1930 and 1940 show engineer Norman F. and Chicago native Winona B. *Stevens* living in Pasadena and Hermosa Beach during that time. Most telling of all are sets of architectural plans in the Wright collection from March 1935, which appear to have been signed, and possibly drawn, by an NF Stevens.

From <https://la.curbed.com/2014/9/24/10043624/murphy-ranch-trail-pacific-palisades-history>

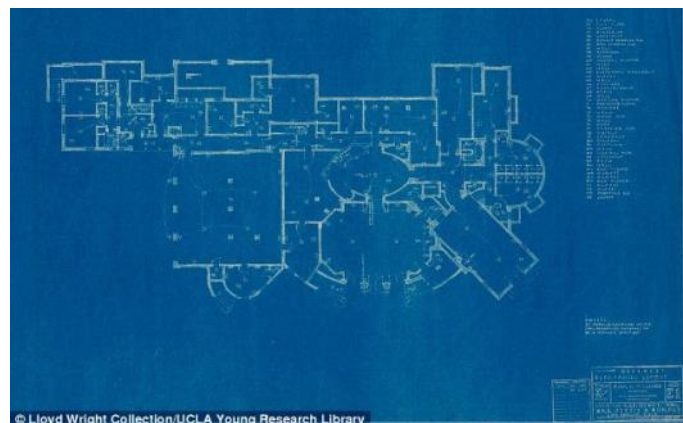
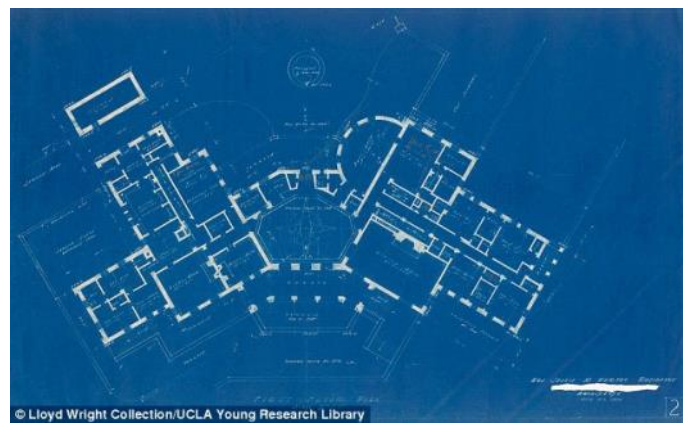
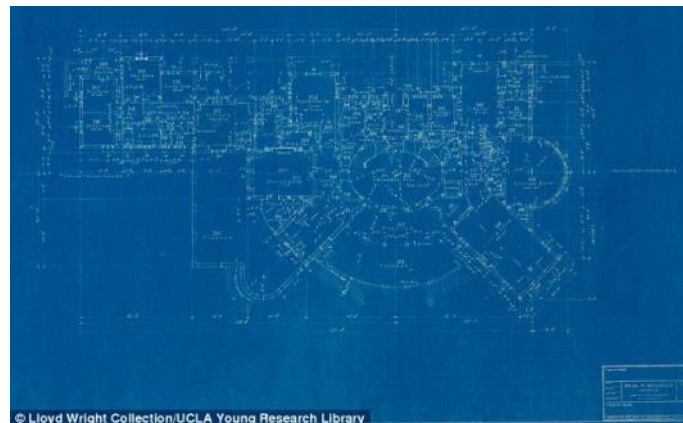
This secluded 55 acre stretch of Rustic Canyon in the Santa Monica Mountains has a storied (and admittedly historically hazy) past. This [old article from the LA Times](#) does a good job of piecing together the facts that could be verified – in 1933 a Jesse Murphy purchased the land and began to develop it. The property eventually had 3000 fruit and nut trees, a complicated irrigation and water storage system, a functioning power house, machine room, and bomb shelter. Plans were underway to further develop the land, adding a four-story mansion and several libraries. Oh, and it was also completely surrounded by barbed wire fences and supposedly patrolled by members of the [Silver Shirts](#) – a pro-Hitler American fascist organization.

From <https://modernhiker.com/hike/hiking-murphy-ranch/>

Behind the locked and rusted wrought-iron entrance gates and flagstone wall stand the traces of a small community that had the capacity to grow its own food, generate its own electricity and dam its own water to cut itself off from the rest of California.

A debris-filled concrete water tank, twice as big as a typical swimming pool, was used to store water from a creek that runs through the canyon. A dirt roadway from the entrance leads down the canyon to the charred and twisted steel remains of a garage and workshop with second-story living quarters. A power station with foot-thick walls shared space with a bomb shelter. Up and down the length of the canyon rise eight crumbling, narrow stairways of at least 500 steps each.

From <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2005-sep-04-me-then4-story.html>



# Silver Legion

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The **Silver Legion of America**, commonly known as the **Silver Shirts**, was an underground American **fascist** organization founded by **William Dudley Pelley** that was headquartered in **Asheville, North Carolina**.<sup>[2]</sup>

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A **nationalist**, **fascist** group<sup>[2]</sup> modeled after Benito Mussolini's **blackshirts**, the paramilitary Silver Legion wore a **silver** shirt with a blue tie, along with a **campaign hat** and blue **corduroy** trousers with **leggings**. The uniform shirts bore a **scarlet** letter L over the heart: an emblem meant to symbolize Loyalty to the United States, Liberation from materialism, and the Silver Legion itself. The blocky **slab serif** L-emblem was in a **typeface** similar to the present-day **Rockwell Extra Bold**. The organizational flag was a plain silver field with such a red L in the **canton** at the upper left. By 1934, the Legion claimed to have about 15,000 members.<sup>[2]</sup>

Legion leader Pelley called for a "Christian Commonwealth" in America that would combine the principles of racism, nationalism, and theocracy, while excluding Jews and non-whites.<sup>[2]</sup> He claimed he would save America from Jewish communists just as "Mussolini and his Black Shirts saved Italy and as Hitler and his Brown Shirts saved Germany."<sup>[2]</sup> Pelley ran for president of the United States in the **1936 election** on a third-party ticket under the Christian Party banner. Pelley hoped to seize power in a "silver revolution" and set himself as dictator of the United States. He would be called "the Chief" just like other fascist world leaders who had similar titles such "Der Führer" for **Adolf Hitler** and "Il Duce" for **Benito Mussolini**.<sup>[2]</sup> However, the **Democratic President Franklin D. Roosevelt** handily won the reelection, and Pelley failed to figure among the top four. By around 1938, the Silver Legion's membership was down to about 5,000.<sup>[2]</sup>

On January 20, 1942, Pelley was sentenced to serve two to three years in prison by Superior Court Judge F. Don Phillips, in Asheville, North Carolina, for violating terms of probation of a 1935 conviction for violating North Carolina security laws. The same sentence had been suspended pending good behavior, but the court found that during that period Pelley had published false and libelous statements, published inaccurate reports and advertising, and supported a secret military organization.<sup>[2]</sup>

From <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silver\\_Legion\\_of\\_America](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silver_Legion_of_America)>

## The Screenwriting Mystic Who Wanted to Be the American Führer

William Dudley Pelley and his Silver Shirts were just one of many Nazi-sympathizers operating in the United States in the 1930s



William Dudley Pelley, Silver Shirt leader, pictured as he appeared before Congress. Bettmann

When Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany in January 1933, an American named William Dudley Pelley believed the Führer's rise was the fulfillment of a prophecy revealed to him by the spirit world in 1929. It was a sign, he thought, ushering in his own ascent to power, and he announced the creation of the Silver Legion, a Christian militia dedicated to the spiritual and political renewal of the United States. Jesus, Pelley reported, even dropped a line to say he approved of the plan.

That was the beginning of the group that a Congressional committee would later characterize as "probably the largest, best financed and best publicized" Nazi-copycats in the United States (Nazi Germany chose to keep Pelley and his spirits at arm's length). A former novelist and Hollywood screenwriter who had begun publishing mystical and spiritual writings in the 1920s, Pelley dubbed himself "The Chief" of the group that became known as the Silver Shirts, due to the shimmering gray-and-blue uniforms with giant red "L"s embroidered over the heart that Pelley, a student of Hollywood pizzazz, designed himself.

Pelley's goal was to eventually take power and implement a plan he called "Christian Economics in the United States," a scheme he claimed was neither communist, fascist or capitalist, in which all property was owned by the state and where white citizens received "shares" based on their loyalty that guaranteed an income. African-Americans would be re-enslaved and Jews would be excluded from the nation. At the top would be "The Chief," in emulation of Pelley's idol Adolf Hitler.

While his ideas, steeped in spiritualism and racial theory, were never that popular—historians estimate the Silver Shirts maxed out at a membership of 15,000—Pelley wasn't alone in admiring Hitler or the economic turnaround of 1930s Germany. The decade running up to the war found members of both the Democrats and Republicans arguing against involvement in the festering conflict in Europe. American isolationists feared a repeat of the mass casualties of World War I. Many in the business community sought to protect their investments in the European markets. And some Americans even spread German propaganda, actively spied for the Third Reich, and went so far as to advocate fascism and anti-Semitism in the United States.

Those Americans are the subject that Fresno State University historian Bradley W. Hart explores in his new book, *Hitler's American Friends: The Third Reich's Supporters in the United States*.

The Silver Shirts were just one organization that thought Nazism could translate to American politics. The German American Bund was the largest pro-Nazi organization, tallying about 30,000 members at one point. The group supported the Nazi regime and practiced its own version of American Nazism, including fielding paramilitary units armed with clubs and costuming its members in uniforms and swastika armbands. It was large enough to run several summer camps for American Nazi youth and even sent its best and brightest to Germany for indoctrination. In 1939, the organization held a 20,000-person rally at Madison Square Garden under a giant banner of George Washington flanked by swastikas, and roughed up a Jewish protestor who rushed the stage, manhandling him and ripping off his pants. Soon after, however, corruption scandals took down the Bund.

One of the most influential Nazi defenders didn't start out as a champion of the Third Reich. When Father Charles Coughlin, a Canadian Catholic priest based in the Detroit suburb of Royal Oaks, began his local radio show in 1926, its focus was on religion and fighting the growing influence of the Ku Klux Klan. But over the course of the Great Depression, Coughlin grew more and more political—and popular, advocating economic and political schemes straight from Hitler's playbook, including the boycott of Jewish businesses. He directly praised the Führer to millions of American listeners before church authorities shut him down. "There are few forces more powerful than religion, and [Coughlin and other right-wing preachers] used their authority to convert Americans to a prejudicial and hateful ideology," Hart writes. "It is telling that the German government viewed these men as key propaganda assets in the United States and were reluctant to give them direct aid only because it might make them less effective in spreading pro-Nazi ideas."

Hart details others who knowingly or unknowingly aided Hitler, including two isolationist senators (Ernest Lundeen of Minnesota and Burton Wheeler of Montana) who fell under the sway of a propagandist on the German payroll, an American businessman who made millions funneling oil from Mexico to the Germans, and American students groomed to spread pro-German ideas on college campuses.

While most pro-Nazi groups were on the fringes of public life, they created an atmosphere of uncertainty in a country where the Depression had called into question the virtues of capitalism and democracy. "Most Americans would have been aware of these groups simply because of the amount of newspaper reporting done on them," Hart says. "Not a lot were joining these groups, but there was certainly a great deal of public debate about them and what we could or should do about them."

None of these sympathizers, however, were quite as curious as Pelley's Silver Shirts. Born in 1890 and the son of Methodist minister in Massachusetts, Pelley was a voracious reader and writer and began publishing his own journal at the age of 19, developing ideas about how Christianity would have to morph if it were to survive in the modern world. He went on to become a fiction writer and journalist, spending time in Siberia covering the Bolshevik revolution, where he developed strong opinions about Communists and Jews. In the 1920s, he enjoyed some success in Hollywood, working on two dozen movie scripts and saving a little money. At just 37, he retired from the film business, believing a Jewish conspiracy had targeted him.

The following year, he began having his mystical visions, in which he spoke with spirits and communicated with Jesus Christ. Pelley wrote books and journals about his experiences, and, by 1931, had enough of a following that he moved to Asheville, North Carolina, and opened his own college and publishing company. Hart says it's difficult to tell how seriously Pelley took his own New Age ideas, but thousands of people did trust his visions.

After incorporating the Silver Shirts in 1933, he ran into trouble in North Carolina, where he was convicted of defrauding shareholders of his press the following year, landing himself on parole, a problem that would come to haunt him. His movement grew in popularity, especially in the Pacific Northwest, and in 1936, he ran for president. Though he was only successful on getting on the ballot in Washington state and drew just a handful of votes, he continued to attract followers. "He had this element of Hollywood theatricality. He was an incredibly striking figure, with the well-manicured graying goatee and the perfect Hollywood hair, smoking a pipe when he was on Capitol Hill," says Hart. "This is a guy who knows how to cut a very powerful public image."

In 1938, the Legion began a big membership push and started showing signs that it was moving towards violence. Pelley reportedly began traveling with 40 armed bodyguards, and members were advised to keep sawed-off shotguns and 2,000 rounds of ammunition in their homes to protect "white, Christian America." His followers even began constructing a self-sustaining compound called Murphy Ranch in present day Will Rogers State Park outside Los Angeles that would serve as the base of pro-Nazi operations in the U.S.

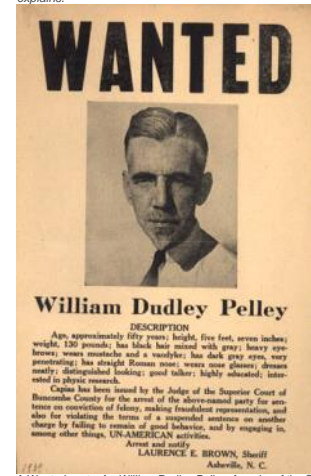
"He's a particularly scary figure for most Americans because he openly seems to be embracing violence," Hart says. "In interviews, his followers are advising member to carry guns, and he walks around with armed bodyguards. Even if this guy is a lunatic he's putting on the impression that he's someone not to be messed with, which makes him uniquely resonant."

<b>Silver Legion of America</b>	
<span><b>L</b></span>	
<b>Other name</b>	Silver Shirts
<b>Leader</b>	<b>William Dudley Pelley</b> : <sup>[2]</sup>
<b>Founded</b>	<b>January 31, 1933</b> : <sup>[2]</sup>
<b>Dissolved</b>	<b>December 8, 1941</b> : <sup>[2]</sup>
<b>Headquarters</b>	<b>Asheville, North Carolina</b> : <sup>[2]</sup>
<b>Publications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>Liberation</i></li><li><i>Pelley's Silvershirt Weekly</i></li><li><i>The Gallian</i></li><li><i>The New Liberator</i></li></ul>
<b>Political wing</b>	<b>Christian Party</b> : <sup>[2]</sup>
<b>Membership</b>	<b>15,000 (c. 1934)</b> : <sup>[2]</sup> <b>100,000 (claimed)</b> : <sup>[2]</sup>
<b>Ideology</b>	<b>Clerical fascism</b> : <sup>[2]</sup> <b>Racial segregation</b> : <sup>[2]</sup> <b>White nationalism</b> : <sup>[2]</sup> <b>Non-interventionism</b> : <sup>[2]</sup>
<b>Political position</b>	<b>Radical right</b> : <sup>[2]</sup>
<b>Religion</b>	<b>Christianity</b>
<b>Active regions</b>	<b>Small communities in the Midwest</b> and <b>in the Pacific Northwest</b> : <sup>[2]</sup>
<b>Colors</b>	<b>Silver</b> , <b>Scarlet</b> and <b>Blue</b>
<b>Slogan</b>	<b>"Loyalty, Liberation, and Legion"</b>
<b>Anthem</b>	<b>"Battle Hymn of the Republic"</b>

From <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silver\\_Legion\\_of\\_America](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silver_Legion_of_America)>

## Fascism in 1930s America: The Silver Shirts

*The Silver Shirts, or Silver Legion of America, was a fascist political movement in America from 1933 to 1941. Founded by William Dudley Pelley, a screenwriter, the group had some notoriety and wealthy supporters. James Zills explains.*



A Wanted poster for William Dudley Pelley, founder of the Silver Shirts. The end of World War One saw the reshaping of boundaries in Europe, insurmountable war debt, the collapse of the German economy, and a growing distrust in democracy. This gave rise to the age of dictators, who through the help of their paramilitary forces grew to power—with their success being most notable in Germany and Italy. A key element in the militias utilized to gain control was the differentiating of the colors worn by these organizations. The Germans sported the Brown Shirts, Italian Black Shirts, and Spain with Blue Shirts. History barely recognizes similar movements in other countries with their own fashionable shirts. Bulgaria with red, Brazil green, Mexico with opposing gold and red, and finally the United States of America and the fashionable Silver Shirts. With the exception of the red shirts who leaned toward communism in Mexico, all were similar in the fact that they shared a distrust and hatred for Jews. The Silver Shirts, like many novel ideas in America, had their roots in Hollywood. William Dudley Pelley, a screenwriter in the great intellectual desert, formed the Silver Legion (Silver Shirts) in January 1933 shortly after Hitler seized power in Germany. Pelley, an ardent admirer of Hitler believed that he could achieve similar success, openly declaring, "the time has come for an American Hitler" (Murphy 2018). Like most screenwriters in 'Hollywood', originality was not his strong suit. Once the movement began to pick-up momentum, Pelley moved his operation to Asheville, North Carolina. His move to North Carolina was motivated by the need for funding and he found that piggy bank from a wealthy individual in Asheville. With funding established it was time to establish goals - any organization worth its weight in silver has to have goals.

### Goals of a Presidential Hopeful

The overarching goal of the Silver Shirts was to bring religion back to the forefront of American Society. The legion also aspired to revert private owned lands back to the state, re-institute slavery for African Americans, and begin the deportation of Jews. Those who were loyal to the cause would enjoy the bounty of sharing the properties seized by the legion. Lifting a move from Joseph Smith, Pelley claimed to have been visited by none other than Jesus himself. In this celestial vision, Pelley claimed that Jesus gave him the stamp of approval for his quest. Knowing that the Silver Shirts lacked the membership numbers for a hostile takeover, Pelley did the next best thing. Founding the Christian Party in 1935, he used it as a means to run as a third party candidate in the 1936 presidential election. "For Christ and the Constitution" (Finklestein 1938) was the rallying call for the party, but it would do little to gain the necessary momentum. Pelley was only able to get on the ballot in Washington State and solely running his candidacy from Asheville presented problems with persuading voters. The newly formed Christian Party and its leader failed at the long-shot presidential run, garnering just 1,598 votes. To put it into perspective, almost 700,000 people voted in the presidential election in Washington State in 1936. As for the legion itself, its membership peaked at 15,000. Interestingly, there seemed to be no attempt to use its membership numbers for voter fraud in Washington, especially with most of its members residing on the West Coast. The most the Silver Shirts amounted to was the ability to secure a cache of weapons and ammunition and be mildly intimidating. These achievements would gain the attention of the FBI and after the attack on Pearl Harbor there was probable cause to put an end to the Silver Shirts. The Dies Committee

with 40 armed bodyguards, and members were advised to keep sawed-off shotguns and 2,000 rounds of ammunition in their homes to protect "white, Christian America." His followers even began constructing a self-sustaining compound called Murphy Ranch in present day Will Rogers State Park outside Los Angeles that would serve as the base of pro-Nazi operations in the U.S.

"He's a particularly scary figure for most Americans because he openly seems to be embracing violence," Hart says. "In interviews, his followers are advising member to carry guns, and he walks around with armed bodyguards. Even if this guy is a lunatic he's putting on the impression that he's someone not to be messed with, which makes him uniquely resonant."

The increasing prominence of the Silver Shirts, in the press of the day if not in membership numbers, eventually caught the eye of the federal government, and even Roosevelt began asking what could be done about Pelley. In 1939, the Dies Committee, a congressional body that investigated communist agitators and Nazi sympathizers (including the Bund), turned its attention to Pelley's group. A violation of the terms of his parole in North Carolina served as the pretext to investigate the group's headquarters; Pelley hid out with the Klan in Indiana to avoid facing possible prison time. A government infiltrator also testified to the Dies Committee that she had heard Pelley claiming that he would eventually be "dictator of the United States," and that he wanted to implement the "Hitler program." Pelley felt the walls closing in on him.

In his typical slick style, instead of having his organization broken up by the government, Pelley told his followers that the Dies Committee was doing such a great job rounding up communists and other elements of the "alien menace" that the Silver Legion no longer needed to exist. He disbanded the group, but when the war began, he was still put on trial in North Carolina for publishing a seditious magazine and sentenced to 15 years in prison. He secured an early release from prison in 1950 and started publishing about spiritualism and the occult again, espousing a philosophy called SoulCraft and writing theories about U.F.O.s, all of which still have followers today.

Hart believes that the United States was lucky that its political parties at the time policed the extremists within their ranks and that the advent of war more or less shut down any pro-Hitler rhetoric, but that wasn't inevitable. If the Depression had dragged on or if the United States sat out the war, the extremism bubbling beneath the surface may have become more organized and powerful. By 1940, many Coughlinites, Bundists along with more mainstream isolationists, anti-war activists and others coalesced into the [America First!](#) movement, which had a burst of popularity before it went down in flames when its most famous member, aviator Charles Lindbergh, gave a brazenly anti-Semitic speech in September 1941, just a few months before Pearl Harbor.

"We need to take a new perspective on this period. It was much more ideologically divided than we remember," says Hart. "The outcome that happened in 1945 was in no way preordained. Had Pearl Harbor not happened, [American Nazism] would have gone on for quite some time. We have to realize we're not immune to political extremism or extremist pressure groups."

From <<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/meet-screenwriting-mystic-who-wanted-be-american-fuhrer-180970449/>>

FROM THE PRODUCTION NOTES BY SCREENWRITER GUY TOLSON  
As for the legion itself, its membership peaked at 15,000. Interestingly, there seemed to be no attempt to use its membership numbers for voter fraud in Washington, especially with most of its members residing on the West Coast. The most the Silver Shirts amounted to was the ability to secure a cache of weapons and ammunition and be mildly intimidating. These achievements would gain the attention of the FBI and after the attack on Pearl Harbor there was probable cause to put an end to the Silver Shirts. The Dies Committee started paying closer attention to the organization as well as the extra-curricular activities of its leader.

Pelley needed funds to support his lifestyle and, like many heads of organizations or cults, he skimmed off the top; in Pelley's case, he defrauded shareholders (Daly 2018). The ever-watchful eye of big brother, and his run-ins with the authorities forced Pelley into hiding. He spent some time hiding out with likeminded folks, such as the Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, before ultimately disbanding the Silver Shirts after the attack on Pearl Harbor to alleviate the pressure put on him by the FBI. Pelley would eventually spend some time in prison for securities fraud and the publication of treasonable material. After serving his time, he kept up with all things silver and began a fascination with aliens.

#### The Casting Couch

Aside from the man-crush he had on Hitler, Pelley acquired some interesting reasons for his dislike of Jewish people. His mistrust for Jewish people began in Hollywood. His experience in Hollywood led him to believe that Jews controlled the movie industry, which impeded his creativity. He constantly complained that Jewish directors routinely made changes to his writing that were adapted for film. Furthermore, Pelley mentions the infamous casting couch as another reason for his contempt of Jews in movie city. In *Arthuriana Vol. 26 No. 2* Pelley, is quoted as saying  
*Do you think of me unduly incensed about them? I've seen too many Gentle Women ravished and been unable to do anything about it. They have a conspicuous slogan in screendom. Don't hire till you see the whites of their thighs!* (68)

On the surface the Silver Legion, headed by the ambitious Pelley, was just a small blip on the government radar. While they failed to mass number like the [American Bund Movement](#), they gained a wealthy following that allowed a flow of funds to the actual Nazi Party. The brainchild of a Hollywood insider failed to gain enough traction to bring Nazi policy to America and like so many other pro-Nazi organizations, folded under pressure when World War Two began.

From <<http://www.historyisnowmagazine.com/blog/2020/11/22/fascism-in-1930s-america-the-silver-shirts/#:~:text=YYBoxJ7MKUk=>>>

## William Dudley Pelley

Monday, November 1, 2021 6:32 PM

### William Dudley Pelley (1885-1965)

Written by [Will Schultz](#)

[Click Images for Full Size](#)



William Pelley 1885. Image courtesy of the North Carolina Office of Archives and History, Raleigh, NC.

William Dudley Pelley (1885-1965) was a notorious American fascist who lived for a decade in Asheville, North Carolina. As leader of the Silver Shirts, Pelley preached a toxic brew of anti-Semitism, nationalism, and mysticism.

Pelley was born April 12, 1885, in Lynn, Massachusetts, the son of William and Grace Goodale Pelley. At the age of nineteen he began publishing *The Philosopher*, the first of his many publications. After a stint editing a Vermont newspaper, Pelley went abroad to work as a journalist. He covered the Russian Civil War as a correspondent for the *Saturday Evening Post*. After returning to the United States, Pelley moved to California and worked as a novelist, screenwriter, and magazine publisher. In 1928, however, he underwent a startling spiritual transformation. He claimed to have had an-of-body experience and to have spent "seven minutes in eternity." His retelling of the event, published in *America Magazine*, won him national fame.

Pelley then moved to Asheville, where he oversaw an ever-expanding empire dedicated to his "Liberation Theology" (Not to be confused with the theology that motivated civil rights protestors in the 1950s and 1960s). To spread his peculiar mix of Christianity and mysticism, Pelley founded Galahad Press and used it to publish the *New Liberator* magazine. Galahad Press was soon complemented by Galahad College. The college offered courses in Ethical History, Spiritual Eugenics, and Cosmic Mathematics.

But Pelley was concerned with more than religion. He called for a "Christian Commonwealth," a new kind of government that blended elements of fascism, socialism, and theocracy. In the Christian Commonwealth there would be no paper money, no bankers, and no big cities. Jews were also excluded. Pelley, a rabid anti-Semite, believed that Jews should be isolated in walled-off cities.

Adolf Hitler's rise to power had an electric effect on Pelley. On January 31, 1933, the day after Hitler took control in Germany, Pelley founded the Silver Legion of America, better known as the Silver Shirts. The Silver Shirts were deliberately modeled on the Nazi Brown Shirts. Its members wore a military-style uniform of corduroy trousers, a blue tie, and a silver shirt with a red "L" over the heart. Chapters of the Silver Shirts sprang up in twenty-two different states. Although Pelley claimed to have as many as 100,000 followers, the actual number was closer to 15,000.

In 1936 Pelley ran for president as the candidate of the Christian Party. His platform mimicked the program of the Nazi Party. It called for the registration and persecution of all American Jews. The Christian Party got on the ballot in only one state, Washington, where it received a mere 1,598 votes.

Early in the 1940s, Pelley moved from Asheville to Noblesville, Indiana after being convicted of fraud in a North Carolina court. By then his public career was nearing its end. The Special House Congressional Subcommittee on Un-American Activities had begun to investigate the Silver Shirts. Witnesses testified that the Shirts were plotting to overthrow the government. When subpoenaed, Pelley initially refused to testify. In 1940, however, he made a surprise appearance before the committee and professed his desire to become "America's Hitler."

Eventually, President Franklin D. Roosevelt stopped Pelley's increasingly disturbing rhetoric. Roosevelt asked Attorney General Francis Biddle to investigate Pelley on charges of sedition and insurrection. Pelley was arrested in April 1942, tried, and found guilty on eleven charges. He was sentenced to fifteen years in a federal penitentiary in Terre Haute, Indiana. After being released in 1952, Pelley spent the rest of his life in Noblesville. There, he developed an elaborate religious philosophy called "Soulcraft," based on his belief in UFOs and extraterrestrials. He died June 30, 1965.

From <<https://northcarolinahistory.org/encyclopedia/william-dudley-pelley-1885-1965/>>

William Dudley Pelley	
<span></span> <div>Pelley circa 1940</div>	
Born	March 12, 1890 <div>Lynn, Massachusetts</div>
Died	June 30, 1965 (aged 75) <div>Noblesville, Indiana</div>
Resting place	Crownsville Cemetery Noblesville, Indiana
Nationality	American
Citizenship	United States
Occupation	Journalist Screenwriter Political leader
Known <span> </span> for	Founding the <a href="#">Silver Legion of America</a> and the Christian Party
Criminal status	Paroled in 1950 after serving 8 years in prison
Conviction(s)	11 counts of violating the <a href="#">Sedition Act of 1918</a> and 1 count of Obstructing military recruiting (1942)
Criminal charge	<a href="#">High treason</a> <a href="#">Threatening an elected official</a> (1939) Violating the <a href="#">Sedition Act of 1918</a> (1939) Obstructing military recruiting (1939) Interfering with the operation of the military (1939) Conspiring to overthrow the government of the United States (1939) Obstructing military recruiting during wartime (1942) Fomenting <a href="#">insurrection</a> within the military (1942) Interfering with the operation of the military during wartime (1942) Conspiring to violate federal law (1942) Conspiring to aid an enemy of the United States (1942) Engaging in <a href="#">Un-American Activities</a> (1937, 1939 and 1942) Engaging in <a href="#">High treason</a> (1942) <a href="#">Securities fraud</a> (1951)
Penalty	15 years in prison
Capture status	captured
Wanted by	Asheville Police Department Buncombe County Sheriff's Department <a href="#">United States Military Police</a> <a href="#">United States Department of Justice</a>
Writing career	
Language	English
Genres	Fiction <a href="#">Political journalism</a>
Notable works	<i>The Continental Angle</i> <i>The Face in the Window</i> <i>Seven Minutes in Eternity</i>
Notable awards	<a href="#">2 O. Henry Awards</a>
Chairman of the <a href="#">Christian Party</a>	
In office	January 30, 1935 – December 7, 1941
Preceded by	<i>position established</i>
Succeeded by	<i>position abolished</i>
Personal details	
Political party	<a href="#">Christian Party</a>
Spouse(s)	Agnes Marion Henderson-Pelley
Notes	

From <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Dudley\\_Pelley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Dudley_Pelley)>

**William Dudley Pelley** (March 12, 1890 – June 30, 1965) was an American writer, [occultist](#), [spiritualist](#) and [fascist](#) political activist.

He came to prominence as a writer, winning two [O. Henry Awards](#) and penning screenplays for Hollywood films. His 1929 essay "Seven Minutes in Eternity" marked a turning point in Pelley's career, earning a major response in *The American Magazine* where it was published as a popular example of what would later be called a [near-death experience](#). His experiences with [mysticism](#) and [occultism](#) drifted towards the political, and in 1933 Pelley founded the [Silver Legion of America](#), a [fascist](#) paramilitary league. He ran for president of the United States in 1936 as the candidate for the [Christian Party](#).

He was sentenced to 15 years in prison for [sedition](#) in 1942, and released in 1950.<sup>[a]</sup> Upon his death, *The New York Times* assessed him as "an agitator without a significant following".<sup>[a]</sup>

### Political activism[edit]

When the [Great Depression](#) struck America in 1929, Pelley became active in politics. After moving to Asheville, Pelley founded Galahad College in 1932. The college specialized in [correspondence courses](#) on "Social Metaphysics" and "Christian Economics." He also founded Galahad Press, which he used to publish various political and metaphysical magazines, newspapers, and books. On January 30, 1933, [Adolf Hitler](#) became [chancellor of Germany](#). Pelley, an admirer of Hitler,<sup>[a]</sup> founded the [Silver Legion](#), an [antisemitic](#) organization whose members, known as Silver Shirts and Christian Patriots, wore Nazi-style silver uniform shirts. Their insignia was a scarlet L, emblazoned on their flags and uniforms. Biographer Scott Beekman noted that Pelley was "one of the first Americans to create an organization celebrating the work of Adolf Hitler."<sup>[a]</sup>

Pelley traveled throughout the United States, holding recruitment rallies, lectures, and public speeches. He founded Silver Legion chapters in almost every state in the country.<sup>[a]</sup> Membership peaked at 15,000 in 1935, dropping to below 5,000 by 1938.<sup>[a]</sup> His political ideology consisted of [anti-Communism](#), [antisemitism](#), [patriotism](#), [white supremacy](#), [corporatism](#), [isolationism](#), and [British Israelism](#), themes which were the primary focus of his numerous magazines and newspapers which included *Liberation*, *Pelley's Silvershirt Weekly*, *The Galilee*, and *The New Liberator*. He became fairly well known as the 1930s went on.<sup>[a]</sup> [Sinclair Lewis](#) mentioned him by name in his novel *It Can't Happen Here* (1935) about a fascist takeover in the U.S. Pelley is praised by the leader of the fictional movement as an important precursor.

Pelley opposed [Franklin Delano Roosevelt](#) and the [New Deal](#). He founded the [Christian Party](#) in 1935, and ran an unsuccessful campaign [as candidate for president in 1936](#), [winning only 1,600 votes](#).<sup>[a]</sup> He engaged in a long dispute with the [United States House of Representatives' Dies Committee](#), predecessor to the [House Un-American Activities Committee](#). In 1940, federal marshals conducted a raid on Pelley's headquarters in Asheville, and they arrested his followers and seized his property.<sup>[a]</sup>

Despite serious financial and material setbacks within his organization which resulted from lengthy court battles, Pelley continued to oppose Roosevelt, especially as diplomatic relations between the United States and the [Empire of Japan](#) and [Nazi Germany](#) became strained in the early 1940s. Pelley accused Roosevelt of being a [warmonger](#) and advocated [isolationism](#). Roosevelt enlisted [J. Edgar Hoover](#) and the [FBI](#) to investigate Pelley. Subsequently, [the FBI interviewed subscribers to Pelley's newspapers and magazines](#).<sup>[a]</sup>

Although the [attack on Pearl Harbor](#) in December 1941 led Pelley to disband the Silver Legion, he continued to attack the government in his magazine, *Roll Call*,<sup>[a]</sup> which alarmed Roosevelt, Attorney General [Francis Biddle](#), and the [House Un-American Activities Committee](#). After stating in one issue of *Roll Call* that the [devastation of the Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor was worse than the government claimed](#), Pelley was arrested at his new base of operations in [Noblesville, Indiana](#), and in April 1942, [he was charged with 12 counts of high treason and sedition](#). One charge was dropped, but he was tried in Indiana and convicted of the other 11 charges, mostly for making seditious statements and for obstructing military recruiting and fomenting [insurrection](#) within the military. Pelley was sentenced to 15 years in prison. After serving eight years, he was paroled and released in 1950.<sup>[a]</sup> While still incarcerated, he was one of 30 defendants in the "Mass Sedition Trial" of Nazi sympathizers which culminated in a mistrial after the death of the judge, [Edward C. Eicher](#), in November 1944.<sup>[a]</sup>

From <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Dudley\\_Pelley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Dudley_Pelley)>

## 5th Columnist

Monday, November 1, 2021 5:44 PM

By the late 1930s, as American involvement in the war in Europe became more likely, the term "fifth column" was commonly used to warn of potential [sedition](#) and disloyalty within the borders of the United States. The fear of betrayal was heightened by the rapid [fall of France](#) in 1940, which some blamed on internal weakness and a pro-German "fifth column". A series of photos run in the June 1940 issue of *Life* magazine warned of "signs of Nazi Fifth Column Everywhere". In a speech to the [House of Commons](#) that same month, [Winston Churchill](#) reassured [MPs](#) that "Parliament has given us the powers to put down Fifth Column activities with a strong hand."<sup>[a]</sup> In July 1940, *Time* magazine referred to talk of a fifth column as a "national phenomenon".<sup>[a]</sup>

In August 1940, *The New York Times* mentioned "the first spasm of fear engendered by the success of fifth columns in less fortunate countries"<sup>[a]</sup> One report identified participants in Nazi "fifth columns" as "partisans of authoritarian government everywhere", citing [Poland](#),<sup>[a]</sup> [Czechoslovakia](#), [Norway](#), and the [Netherlands](#). During the [Nazi invasion of Norway](#), the head of the Norwegian fascist party, [Vidkun Quisling](#), proclaimed the formation of a new fascist government in control of Norway, with himself as Prime Minister, by the end of the first day of fighting. The word "quisling" soon became a byword for "collaborator" or "traitor".<sup>[a]</sup>

*The New York Times* on August 11, 1940 featured three editorial cartoons using the term.<sup>[a]</sup> [John Langdon-Davies](#), a British journalist who covered the Spanish Civil War, wrote an account called *The Fifth Column* which was published the same year. In November 1940, Ralph Thomson, reviewing Harold Lavine's *Fifth Column in America*, a study of Communist and fascist groups in the U.S., in *The New York Times*, questioned his choice of that title: "the phrase has been worked so hard that it no longer means much of anything."<sup>[a]</sup>



[Dr. Seuss](#) cartoon in *PM* dated February 13, 1942, with the caption 'Waiting for the Signal from Home'

Immediately following the Japanese [attack on Pearl Harbor](#), U.S. Secretary of the Navy [Frank Knox](#) issued a statement that "the most effective Fifth Column work of the entire war was done in Hawaii with the exception of Norway."<sup>[a]</sup> In a column published in *The Washington Post*, dated 12 February 1942, the columnist [Walter Lippmann](#) wrote of imminent danger from actions that might be taken by [Japanese Americans](#). Titled "The Fifth Column on the Coast", he wrote of possible attacks that could be made along the [West Coast of the United States](#) that would amplify damage inflicted by a potential attack by Japanese naval and air forces.<sup>[a]</sup> Suspicion about an active fifth column on the coast led eventually to the [internment of Japanese Americans](#).

During the [Japanese invasion of the Philippines](#), an article in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* in December 1941 said the indigenous [Moro Muslims](#) were "capable of dealing with Japanese fifth columnists and invaders alike"<sup>[a]</sup>. Another in the *Vancouver Sun* the following month described how the large population of Japanese immigrants in [Davao](#) in the Philippines welcomed the invasion: "the first assault on Davao was aided by numbers of Fifth Columnists—residents of the town"<sup>[a]</sup>

From [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fifth\\_column](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fifth_column)

## fifth column

clandestine group or faction

**fifth column**, [clandestine](#) group or faction of subversive agents who attempt to undermine a nation's solidarity by any means at their disposal. The term is conventionally credited to Emilio Mola Vidal, a Nationalist general during the [Spanish Civil War](#) (1936–39). As four of his army columns moved on Madrid, the general referred to his militant supporters within the capital as his "fifth column," intent on undermining the loyalist government from within.

A cardinal technique of the fifth column is the infiltration of sympathizers into the entire fabric of the nation under attack and, particularly, into positions of policy decision and national defense. From such key posts, fifth-column activists exploit the fears of a people by spreading rumours and misinformation, as well as by employing the more standard techniques of [espionage](#) and [sabotage](#).

From <https://www.britannica.com/topic/fifth-column>

## fifth columnist

**Word forms:** plural **fifth columnists**

**COUNTABLE NOUN**

A [fifth columnist](#) is someone who secretly [supports](#) and [helps](#) the [enemies](#) of the country or [organization](#) they are in.

From <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/fifth-columnist>