

Mary McIntyre

From: Mary McIntyre <sarendel@yahoo.com>
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Subject: Electronic records secrecy

Appalled at the limiting of access to electronic communication. Do we want to continue on the path to fascism?

Mary McIntyre
3801 W. Highland Rd., Mequon, WI 53092

12 warning signs of fascism

1. Exuberant nationalism

Fascist regimes tend to make constant use of patriotic images, slogans and symbols - National flags are seen everywhere in public display. Territorial aggression is explained to be mere destiny -- an unbidden greatness thrust upon the nation by history. It is this burden of unique responsibility that now raises the fascist state above all previous constraint, no longer bound by international obligations, treaties or law.

2. Enemies Identified

This national cause is identified as unity against enemies - The people are rallied around a unifying patriotism directed against some common threat: communists, liberals, a racial, ethnic or religious minority, intellectuals, homosexuals, terrorists, etc.

The state's message is sometimes couched in an easily recognized religious theme. Amazingly, this language is used even when the full context of the teaching shows the meaning to be diametrically opposed. Any dissent is "siding with the enemy", and therefore treasonous.

3. Rights Disappear

Disdain for human and political rights - Fascist regimes foster an artificial climate of fear by intentionally amplifying stress and anxiety. Citizens naturally feel a strong need for security and are easily persuaded to ignore abuses in the name of safety. The few still willing to question are met with bullying and smear campaigns of intimidation.

Legislative bodies, if still in existence at all, are cowed into rubber-stamp submission with occasional ceremonial opposition. The judiciary tends to become activist in support of state views. The public often looks away, or even enthusiastically approves as rights are stripped away.

The concept of the individual inevitably yields ground, exchanged for the promised safety of the all-powerful state.

4. Secrecy Demanded

Obsession with secrecy and national security - The workings of government become increasingly hidden. Questioning of authority is discouraged at all levels of society. From office talk at the water cooler up through the entire apparatus of rule, guarded speech and secrecy become ends in themselves. Troubling questions are muted and entire areas of scrutiny are placed out of bounds by simply invoking "national security".

5. Military Glorified

Supremacy of the military - The military establishment receives a disproportionate share of government resources, even as pressing domestic needs are neglected. Individual soldiers and military culture are glamorized and made constantly visible.

This provides both an object for public glorification, as well as sharp warning to possibly restless citizens that the power of the state stands close at hand, ready to use its great potential for violence.

6. Corporations Shielded

Corporate power is protected - Typically, a segment of the business elite plays a major role in bringing fascists to national leadership, often from an unsavory obscurity. This marriage of big money and raw violence is often considered by historians to be the hallmark and backbone of fascism.

As these business-government-military interests meld, the significant threat of organized labor is clearly recognized. Labor unions and their support organizations are either co-opted successfully or ruthlessly suppressed and eliminated as soon as possible.

7. Corruption Unchecked

Rampant cronyism and corruption - Fascist states maintain power through this relatively small group of associates, mutually appointing each other to interlocking and rotating positions in government, business and the military. With this degree of control, they make full use of both official secrecy and the ready threat of state violence to insulate themselves from any meaningful criticism. They are not accountable and are shielded from scrutiny in a way unthinkable in a democratic society.

8. Media Controlled

Mass media - Sometimes the media are controlled directly by clumsy government functionaries. At other times, sympathetic corporate media insiders shape the themes indirectly, and therefore more skillfully. Image regularly trumps content as the "news" is presented breathlessly and with flashy stage effects.

A practiced formula of tenacious repetition brings even the most absurd lie into acceptance over time. By design, the very language itself and the coloration employed will push alternate views "out of the mainstream".

The terms of any remaining debate are narrowly defined to the state's advantage, making it easy to marginalize a truly differing perspective. Censorship and "self-censorship", especially in wartime, is common.

9. Rampant Sexism

Rampant sexism - Governments of fascist states tend to be almost exclusively male-dominated. Traditional gender roles are made even more rigid and exaggerated. Virulent homophobia is commonly built into broad policy.

10. Intellectual Bullying

Disdain for intellectuals - Fascist society tends to create an environment of extreme hostility to critical thought in general, and to academics in particular. Ideologically driven "science" is elevated and lavishly funded, while any expression not in line with the state view is at first ignored, then challenged, then ridiculed and finally stamped out.

It is not uncommon for academics to be pressured to attack the work of their insufficiently patriotic peers. Writings are censored; teachers are fired and arrested. Free artistic expression in new works is openly attacked, and existing works deemed unpatriotic are often publicly destroyed.

11. Militarized Police

Obsession with crime and punishment - Fascist society is often willing to overlook police abuses and forego civil liberties in the name of patriotism. Long jail sentences for clearly political offenses, torture and then assassination are at first uncomfortably tolerated, and then start to pile up to become the norm. Often a national police force is given virtually unlimited power to snoop through the civilian population. Networks of surveillance and informers are employed, both for actual intelligence gathering and also as a means to keep neighbors and co-workers isolated and mistrustful of each other.

12. Elections Stolen

Fraudulent elections - In the disordered time as fascists are rising to power, the electoral arena becomes increasingly confusing, corrupted, and manipulated. There is rising public cynicism and distrust over what are widely believed to be phony elections manipulated by moneyed influence, obvious media bias, smear campaigns, ballot tampering, judicial interference, intimidation, or outright assassination of potential opposition. Fascists in power have been known to use this disorder as the rationale to delay elections indefinitely.