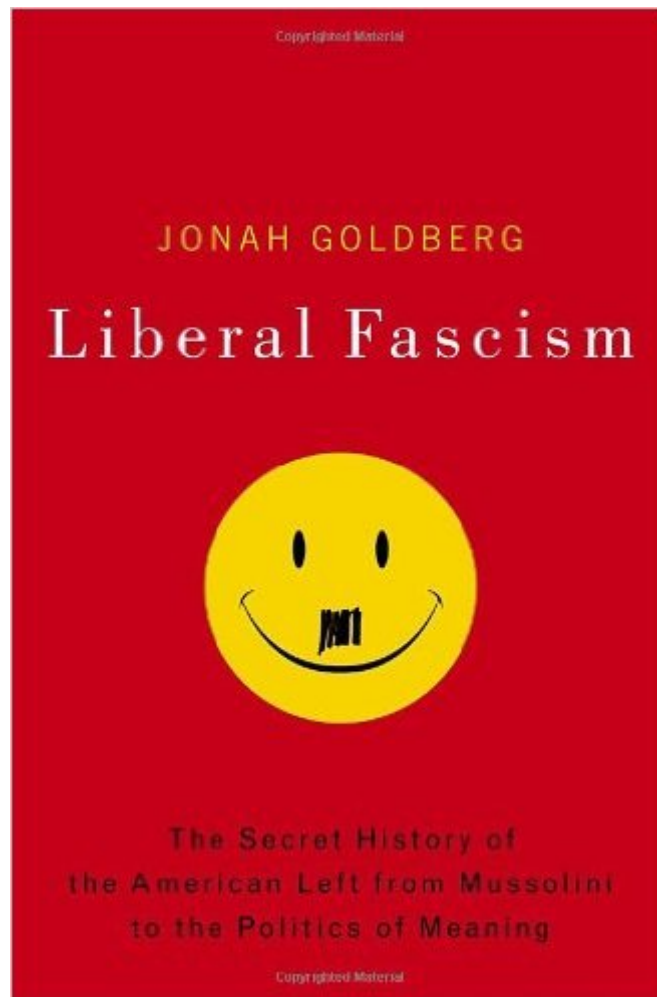


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Liberal Fascism: The Secret History Of The American Left, From Mussolini To The Politics Of Meaning



Synopsis

“Fascists, Brownshirts, jackbooted stormtroopers” such are the insults typically hurled at conservatives by their liberal opponents. Calling someone a fascist is the fastest way to shut them up, defining their views as beyond the political pale. But who are the real fascists in our midst? Liberal Fascism offers a startling new perspective on the theories and practices that define fascist politics. Replacing conveniently manufactured myths with surprising and enlightening research, Jonah Goldberg reminds us that the original fascists were really on the left, and that liberals from Woodrow Wilson to FDR to Hillary Clinton have advocated policies and principles remarkably similar to those of Hitler’s National Socialism and Mussolini’s Fascism. Contrary to what most people think, the Nazis were ardent socialists (hence the term “National socialism”). They believed in free health care and guaranteed jobs. They confiscated inherited wealth and spent vast sums on public education. They purged the church from public policy, promoted a new form of pagan spirituality, and inserted the authority of the state into every nook and cranny of daily life. The Nazis declared war on smoking, supported abortion, euthanasia, and gun control. They loathed the free market, provided generous pensions for the elderly, and maintained a strict racial quota system in their universities where campus speech codes were all the rage. The Nazis led the world in organic farming and alternative medicine. Hitler was a strict vegetarian, and Himmler was an animal rights activist. Do these striking parallels mean that today’s liberals are genocidal maniacs, intent on conquering the world and imposing a new racial order? Not at all. Yet it is hard to deny that modern progressivism and classical fascism shared the same intellectual roots. We often forget, for example, that Mussolini and Hitler had many admirers in the United States. W.E.B. Du Bois was inspired by Hitler’s Germany, and Irving Berlin praised Mussolini in song. Many fascist tenets were espoused by American progressives like John Dewey and Woodrow Wilson, and FDR incorporated fascist policies in the New Deal. Fascism was an international movement that appeared in different forms in different countries, depending on the vagaries of national culture and temperament. In Germany, fascism appeared as genocidal racist nationalism. In America, it took a “friendlier, more liberal form. The modern heirs of this “friendly fascist” tradition include the New York Times, the Democratic Party, the Ivy League professoriate, and the liberals of Hollywood. The quintessential Liberal Fascist isn’t an SS storm trooper; it is a female grade school teacher with an education degree from Brown or Swarthmore. These assertions may sound strange to modern ears, but that is because we have forgotten what fascism is. In this angry, funny, smart, contentious book, Jonah Goldberg turns our preconceptions inside out and shows us the true meaning of Liberal Fascism.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

And boy, does Jonah Goldberg have himself some enemies. It was inevitable that the review section for Goldberg's "Liberal Fascism" would degenerate into the Mother of all Flame Wars. The advance dislike for this book simmered for months, and now the floodgates for negative reviews are open. I'd advise all potential readers of this book to bear in mind how few of the negative reviews appear to reflect a reading of the book. For those willing to give Goldberg the chance, he offers the following thesis: that the label fascist has its roots in the governing philosophies of Italy's National Fascist Party and Germany's National Socialist (Nazi) Party. He argues that there has been a false duality created between the Soviet Socialists of the USSR and the socialists united under the fascists in Italy and Germany. He argues that the totalitarian impulse, the philosophy of state control of decisions taking priority over individual freedoms, is the core uniting principle behind these movements, and he argues that the ongoing home of such statism is in what has come to be known as the "liberal" politics of the modern progressive movement. As you can imagine, that doesn't sit very well with the targets of his argument (hence the rain of 1-star reviews). I'd encourage open minded readers of all backgrounds to read Goldberg's book and address his arguments. I find his conversational and somewhat informal style to be witty and readable. That said, longtime Goldberg fans should know that this is not a book-length "G-File" (the hip and irreverent column he wrote for

National Review Online). This is a serious scholarly work, and it deserves to be read and judged as such. Goldberg is attempting to right a historical injustice.

First of all, allow me to say that I have purchased and read this book -- something I believe few, if any, of the negative reviewers have done. This is an important work, tracing the intellectual development of the idea that the all-powerful people's State should always trump the individual and be in firm control of all aspects of the population's culture, education, defense or military expansion, information, health and economy, from its modern beginnings under Wilson to the currently epoused nanny state. One could go further back to the French Revolution or further to Thomas More, of course, but given the deplorable state of history knowledge in the US, this might well be counter-productive. Monarchies need not be considered as they are not states that derive their legitimacy from the people -- but rather from God and inheritance. The most negative aspect of this book is its title, "Liberal Fascism." A careful reader will learn what is meant by the author, but the vast majority will simply see the juxtaposition of the two words, "Liberal" and "Fascism" and read into this anything their pre-conceived ideas suggest. Actually, the author meant to describe something like "Benevolent Fascism", "Soft Fascism", "Smiley-Face Fascism", or my favorite, "Fuzzy Fascism" (e.g. Fascism that will not hurt you.) The word "Liberal" is used to put a more moderate or liberal face on Fascism, something more appropriate to nanny-state fascism. If the reader misinterprets the title, then little rational discussion can ensue. The strengths of the book are in its rediscovery of the truly disturbing policies of the Wilson administration in 1917 and 1918 whereby opponents of his administration and policies were brutally suppressed.

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