

14

BATTLING THE NEW WORLD ORDER

Patriots and Armed Militias

When President Bush announced that his new foreign policy would help build a “new world order,” his words surged through the Christian and secular Hard Right like an electric shock. Conspiracists had used the phrase for decades to represent the dreaded collectivist One World Government. A few Christians saw Bush as signaling the End Times betrayal by a world leader. Secular anticommunists saw a bold attempt to smash U.S. sovereignty and impose a tyrannical collectivist system run by the United Nations. Out of this came a resurgence of populist vigilante organizing—the Patriot movement and its armed wing, the citizens militias.¹

The old feud between business multinationalists and business nationalists was part of the context, building on preexisting antiglobalist sentiments within the Right.² So, too, was the paleoconservative attack on neoconservatives, and paleocon Patrick Buchanan’s 1992 campaign against George Bush in the Republican presidential primaries. In the December 1991 speech announcing his candidacy, Buchanan trumpeted neoisolationist and xenophobic themes that would soon be embraced by the Patriot movement. Denouncing Bush’s New World Order doctrine, Buchanan championed nationalism as “the dynamic force shaping [the post-Cold War] world.” “All the institutions of the Cold War,” he declared, “from vast permanent U.S. armies on foreign soil, to old alliances against Communist enemies that no longer exist, to billions in foreign aid, must be re-examined.” He denounced “the predatory traders of Europe or Asia who have targeted this or that American industry for dumping or destruction,” and warned that U.S. sovereignty was threatened “by the rise of a European superstate and a dynamic Asia led by Japan.”³

Buchanan’s portrayal of Bush as a symbol of the sinister Eastern elite added producerist conspiracism to the Patriot backlash against globalization and foreign competition. Buchanan’s calls for limiting immigration of Blacks,

Latinos, and Asians continued through 1994 as the Patriot Movement was growing, adding a racist subtext to much of the antiglobalism on the right.⁴

In the early 1990s there were other signs of right wing populist revolt. The dominionist Coalition on Revival (COR) urged the formation of "county militias" and a system of "Christian" courts, and called for abolishing the public schools, the Internal Revenue Service, and the Federal Reserve. In 1992 Conservative Caucus leader Howard Phillips helped launch the U.S. Taxpayers Party (USTP), whose antiglobalism and hostility to the federal government attracted Birchite conspiracists, remnants of George Wallace's American Independent Party, and militant abortion-rights opponents such as Randall Terry.⁵

Populism in the electoral arena clearly heralded its revival in Ross Perot's 1992 third-party candidacy against Republican George Bush and Democrat Bill Clinton. The candidacy began slowly. Jack Gargan, a quintessential angry populist, had an abiding disgust for elected politicians, so he founded the anti-incumbent group, Throw the Hypocritical Rascals Out (THRO). Gargan met with Perot because he thought the wealthy businessman was "the only person who can turn this country around." Perot was equivocal but hinted at interest, which Gargan saw as a signal to launch a full-blown grassroots campaign that eventually pulled Perot onto Larry King's CNN television interview show, and then into the race. Todd Mason captured the dichotomies in Perot the man when he described him as an "Antigovernment patriot, antiunion populist, antimanagement capitalist, loyal boss who sold out twice to GM, [and] billionaire defender of the underdog." Perot's gadfly persona worked in tandem with his populist rhetoric pitting "the people" against the entrenched elites. He also encouraged, in a mild, often implicit, way, the early stirrings of nationalist xenophobia as an antidote to globalization by multinational corporations. Perot racked up close to 20 million votes in the three-way race where he garnered almost 19 percent of the total. But columnist Michael Kelly nailed down the troubling aspects of the candidate when he called Perot "an example of the melding of populism and the paranoid style, of legitimate critic and crackpot, of giving voice to valid grievances and hysterical fears."⁶

PATRIOTS AND MILITIAS

It was in this context of resurgent isolationism and unilateralism that a self-conscious Patriot movement coalesced. It involved some 5 million persons who suspected—to varying degrees—that the government was manipulated by secret elites and planned the imminent imposition of some form of tyranny.⁷ This suspicion has been the basic theme of the John Birch Society since the late 1950s.

The Patriot movement was bracketed on the reformist side by the Birch Society and the conspiracist segment of the Christian Right, and on

the insurgent side by the Liberty Lobby and groups promoting themes historically associated with White supremacy and antisemitism. A variety of preexisting far-right vigilante groups (including Christian Identity adherents and outright neonazi groups) were influential in helping to organize the broader Patriot movement.⁸ The Patriot movement, however, drew recruits from several preexisting movements and networks:

- Militant right-wing gun rights advocates, antitax protesters, survivalists, and far-right libertarians.
- Christian Patriots, and other persons promoting a variety of pseudo-legal "constitutionalist" theories.
- Advocates of "sovereign" citizenship, "freeman" status, and other arguments rooted in a distorted analysis of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth Amendments, including those persons who argue that a different or second-class form of citizenship is granted to African Americans through these amendments.
- White racist, antisemitic, or neonazi movement, such as the Posse Comitatus, Aryan Nations, and Christian Identity.
- The confrontational wing of the antiabortion movement.
- Apocalyptic millennialists, including those Christians who believed the period of the "End Times" had arrived and they were facing the Mark of the Beast, which could be hidden in supermarket bar codes, proposed paper currency designs, implantable computer microchips, Internet websites, or e-mail.
- The dominion theology sector of the Christian evangelical right, especially its most militant and doctrinaire branch, Christian Reconstructionism.
- The most militant wings of the antienvironmentalist "Wise Use" movement, county supremacy movement, state sovereignty movement, states' rights movement, and Tenth Amendment movement.

Multiple themes intersected in the Patriot movement: government abuse of power; fears about globalism and sovereignty; economic distress (real, relative, and anticipated); apocalyptic fears of conspiracy and tyranny from above; male identity crisis, backlash against the social liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and more.

Patriot movement adherents who formed armed units became known as armed citizens militias.⁹ During the mid-1990s, armed militias were sporadically active in all fifty states, with total membership estimated at between 20,000 and 60,000. Both the Patriot and armed militia movements grew rapidly, relying on computer networks, fax trees, short-wave radio, AM talk radio, and videotape and audiotape distribution. The Patriot and militia movements were arguably the first major U.S. social movements to be organized primarily through overlapping, horizontal, nontraditional electronic media.

The Patriot movement, using conspiracist and producerist rhetoric, identified numerous scapegoats. Each unit, and in some cases each member, could pick and choose from the following list:

- Federal officials and law enforcement officers;
- Jewish institutions;
- Abortion providers and pro-choice supporters;
- Environmentalists and conservation activists;
- Gay and lesbian rights organizers; and
- People of color, immigrants, and welfare recipients.

The movement began to emerge during the Bush administration and continued to grow under Clinton. Both presidents were seen as liberal globalists in the eyes of the Patriot movement. When Clinton cited his old professor Carroll Quigley during the 1992 campaign and in his convention speech, the Patriot movement circulated stories about how Quigley's 1966 book *Tragedy and Hope* and 1981 book *The Anglo-American Establishment: From Rhodes to Cliveden* were really *exposés* about global rule by secret elites. This was seen as proof that Clinton was *part* of the conspiracy allegedly described by Quigley. Coupling Clinton's role in the Anglo-American conspiracy with Bush's previous celebration of a New World Order, the Patriots crafted a conspiracist narrative that the government was planning to impose a globalist UN police state in the near future.

In anticipation of attack by government agents, a small yet significant segment of the Patriot movement embraced survivalism. As a protective maneuver, a number of survivalists withdrew to remote, usually rural, locations or formed small communities for mutual self-defense. This is what led the Weaver family to Ruby Ridge, a remote region of Idaho. Randy Weaver and his wife were survivalists as well as Christian Identity adherents. Had the federal marshals who surrounded their house in 1992 factored these beliefs into their plan for arresting Randy Weaver, the subsequent deadly shoot-out might have been avoided. Federal Marshal William Degan and Weaver's wife Vicki and son Samuel died. Randy Weaver and his friend Kevin Harris were wounded.¹⁰ News of the shoot-out fueled the growth of militias from adherents of the Patriot movement and the Far Right.

In 1993 the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas was functioning as a low-key survivalist retreat. Davidian leader David Koresh was decoding elements of the biblical book of Revelation as an End Times script and preparing for the Tribulations. Some members of the group started attending gun shows to buy and sell arms and survivalist gear, and most likely intersected with the Patriot movement and the early armed militia movement. The government's failure to comprehend the Davidian's apocalyptic millennialist worldview set the stage for the deadly miscalculations by government agents, which cost the lives of 80 Branch Davidians (including 21

children) and four federal agents in April 1993.¹¹ Television coverage of this incident sent images of fiery apocalypse cascading throughout the society, further inflaming the apocalyptic paradigm within right-wing antigovernment groups, who saw the Weaver family and Branch Davidians as martyrs.¹²

A pattern of legal indictments and abusive government repression against right-wing dissidents had begun in the 1980s. Violent confrontations during standoffs sometimes involved gross misjudgments and the excessive use of force and resulted in deaths including that of Gordon Kahl, a rightist tax protester who became a *Posse Comitatus* organizer, killed in 1983; and Robert Mathews, a leader of the violent White supremacist group The Order, killed in 1984.¹³

There was also the use of questionable legal tactics, such as the 1988 prosecution on charges of seditious conspiracy of White supremacist leaders in Ft. Smith, Arkansas. The witnesses who testified about the alleged conspiracy were so dubious that the case was rejected by jurors, who found the defendants not guilty.¹⁴ During the McCarthy period charges of criminal seditious conspiracy were also used in the political witch-hunt against communism.

When the government announced the sedition trial of White supremacists in Fort Smith, one person to object was Arthur Kinoy, a well-known leftist civil rights attorney and respected constitutional scholar who has argued cases before the U.S. Supreme Court. Kinoy, who had defended persons charged with communist sedition in the 1950s, said the views of the White supremacists in the Ft. Smith case were "disgusting," but, he said, "I'm worried about the charge of sedition against anyone." He noted the historic use of the sedition charge by the government to attack all dissent, especially on the left.¹⁵

Civil liberties attorney Harvey A. Silverglate agreed,

I know it is a tricky and emotional issue, but sedition is a very serious charge, and to bring it in the Aryan Nations case at Fort Smith was patently absurd. You can't be cheering when the government brings a charge of sedition against the Aryan Nations crowd and then be complaining when they bring it against your friends.¹⁶

The fear of government repression prevalent in the Patriot movement and Far Right was not just paranoia. These events shaped new strategies for the Far Right, which began to rely on "leaderless resistance," whereby armed underground cells or individuals took self-directed action against the demonized enemies named by above-ground leaders. This strategy was promoted in a 1983 essay by neonazi leader Louis Beam.¹⁷ This was an adaptation of classic theories of guerrilla struggle and anarchist action. The resulting criminality and violence, in turn, brought about more government raids

and confrontations in a cycle that eventually led to the Ruby Ridge and Waco incidents. Awareness of this history shaped the development of the militia movement out of the Patriot movement.¹⁸ While many in the Patriot movement did not see themselves as part of the Far Right, they *could* see themselves as potential victims of government abuse of power.

Mobilizing gun owners was the first step in building the militia movement out of the Patriot movement. The Ruby Ridge and Waco incidents served as trigger events to galvanize a mobilization in 1993 and 1994 around stopping the Brady Bill and gun control provisions of the Crime Control Act.¹⁹ Some grafted apocalyptic conspiracist fears onto the gun rights campaign, arguing that, if gun rights were restricted, a brutal and repressive government crackdown on gun owners would quickly follow. This interpretation not only existed in the Patriot movement itself but also was promoted by groups such as the National Rifle Association and rightist political leaders such as Pat Buchanan.²⁰

The suppression of gun rights was seen by some as merely the opening act in a broader plan of tyranny, with the ultimate goal being UN control of the United States to benefit the global conspiracy of secret elites. While for many this was a secular narrative, an apocalyptic and millennialist End Times overlay was easily added by Christian fundamentalist elements in the movement. Another overlay was overt anti-Jewish conspiracism. The common solution, given these narratives, was to create independent armed defensive units to resist the expected wave of government violence—thus, the armed citizens militias.

The militias were a vigilante force and, like many before them throughout U.S. history, militia members saw themselves as heroes—defending God and country, kith and kin, hearth and home, family and faith. That these were clichés only made the force of the narrative more familiar and powerful. They compared themselves to the brave Minutemen holding the line at Lexington Green and Concord Bridge. They spoke of betrayal in high places and of traitors walking the sacred halls of Congress. They feared plots, so they made plans.

A key early figure in organizing the militia movement (using short-wave radio and the Internet) was Linda Thompson, whose elaborate apocalyptic warnings and conspiracist assertions of government plots were widely believed within the militia movement. In 1994 she called for an armed march on Washington, DC, to punish traitorous elected officials.²¹ Her plan was widely criticized as dangerous, probably illegal, and possibly part of a government conspiracy to entrap militia members. Mark Koernke, aka Mark of Michigan, quickly replaced her as the most-favored militia intelligence analyst. Both used secular apocalyptic rhetoric.

Throughout the late 1990s the Patriot and armed militia movements overlapped with a resurgent states' rights movement and a new "county supremacy" movement. There was rapid growth of illegal so-called constitu-

tionalist common-law courts, set up by persons claiming a nonexistent “sovereign” citizenship. These courts claimed jurisdiction over legal matters on the county or state level and dismissed the U.S. judicial system as corrupt and unconstitutional.²² Constitutionalist legal theory created a two-tiered concept of citizenship in which White people have a superior “natural law” or “sovereign” citizenship. The most doctrinaire constitutionalists argue that only the original U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights (the first ten amendments) are valid and legally binding, all later amendments are not. Put into effect, this would relegalize slavery, abolish women’s right to vote, rescind the right of citizenship now guaranteed to all persons born in the United States, and allow *state* governments to ignore the Bill of Rights itself. Amazingly, many supporters of constitutionalism seem oblivious to the racism and sexism inherent in this construct.

The most publicized incident involving common-law ideology was the 1996 standoff involving the Montana Freemen, who combined Christian Identity, bogus common law legal theories, “debt-money” theories that reject the legality of the Federal Reserve system, and apocalyptic expectation.²³ In another incident, three men suspected of shooting a law enforcement officer while attempting to steal a water truck in Colorado in 1998 had talked to friends about the coming collapse of society, using Patriot-style rhetoric. Two of them reportedly attended meetings of a local Patriot group.²⁴ Many of the fears over declining sovereignty and imminent tyranny were linked to the idea that “the UN is a critical cornerstone of the New World Order,” as one Birch Society publication put it.²⁵ Opposing the collectivist menace of global government, militia groups invoked metaphors from libertarianism, conspiracist anticommunism, and apocalyptic millennialism.

INSIDE A PATRIOT MEETING

Patriot rhetoric is easy to caricature and dismiss as paranoid ravings, but within the subculture—given certain basic (and flawed) assumptions of the worldview—there is an internal logic and consistency that allows for substantial debate and dialogue. A typical Patriot meeting was held in November 1994 at the high school auditorium in Burlington, Massachusetts, a few miles north of Boston.²⁶ The seventy-five people who attended the public meeting heard speakers decry the failure of government to meet the needs of average Americans. Several speakers argued that this failure was driven by a vast and even satanic conspiracy. Attendees ranged in age from the early 20s to the late 60s, and they came from Massachusetts and several surrounding states including New Hampshire and Rhode Island.

Leading antiabortion organizer Dr. Mildred Jefferson, an African American woman, began by speaking about problems with the elite medical pro-

fession she witnessed as a surgeon. She soon linked the elite medical establishment to what she saw as elite liberal groups such as the National Organization for Women (NOW) and Planned Parenthood, and then she tied them all to proponents of secular humanism dating back to the 1800s. Jefferson was a founder and former officer of the National Right to Life committee and a board member of Massachusetts Citizens for Life. A longtime activist, she appeared in the 1979 antiabortion film by Francis A. Schaeffer and C. Everett Koop that blamed secular humanism for the collapse of morality in America.²⁷

Speakers such as Jefferson and Sandra Martinez of the ultraconservative Christian group Concerned Women for America were concerned primarily with the collapse of morality caused by godless secular humanism. Mining the same vein, John Birch Society stalwart Samuel L. Blumenfeld described how public schools did not adequately educate children due to a conspiracy that started with the rise of modern public education curricula.

Others, however, warned about government repression against dissidents. Bruce Chessly of Jews for the Preservation of Firearms Ownership spoke about government violations of civil liberties relating to gun ownership that reminded him of the Nazi era. Ed Brown of the Constitution Defense Militia of New Hampshire passed out brochures offering "Firearms Training, Combat Leadership, Close Combat, and Intelligence Measures."

Scott Stevens from New Hampshire urged those assembled to fight the growing government tyranny he saw resulting from the efforts of the political ruling elite and the financial elite to control the world. Stevens explained how he applied the "dialectic of Hegel" to unravel how the two major parties work together to erode civil liberties. "Liberal Democrats set up a social order that impoverishes people and creates an underclass that becomes criminalized," said Stevens. "Then Republicans get into office and pass laws that put all these people in jail. So then we need more police and more jails, and soon people see police in the streets enforcing laws they don't want to obey."

During the meeting, attendees could browse among three tables of literature brought by Den's Gun Shop in Lakeville, Massachusetts. There were instruction manuals for the conversion to automatic firing for several rifles favored by the militia and survivalist movements. Other books contained diagrams on how to build bombs and incendiary devices. One title was *Improvised Weapons of the American Underground*.

You could even purchase the book *Hunter* by neonazi William Pierce, leader of the National Alliance. *Hunter* is a book that describes parasitic Jews destroying America and extols the virtues of armed civilians who carry out political assassinations of Jews and homosexuals to preserve the White race. Pierce's earlier book, *The Turner Diaries*, was the primary sourcebook of racist underground terror organizations such as The Order during the 1980s.

The featured afternoon speaker was Robert K. Spear, a key figure in

training armed citizens militias. Spear is the author of *Surviving Global Slavery: Living Under the New World Order*. According to Spear, we are living in the End Times predicted in the book of Revelation. Spear cited Revelation 13, warning that Christians will be asked to accept the satanic "Mark of the Beast" and reject Christ. True Christians, Spear said, must defend their faith and prepare the way for the return of Christ. Spear believed the formation of armed Christian communities was necessary to prepare for the End Times. The book is dedicated to "those who will have to face the Tribulations."

The rhetoric at the Burlington Patriot meeting was typical of the Patriot genre. What the Weaver family, the Branch Davidians, and the Montana Freemen had in common was the confluence of right-wing populism, conspiracist scapegoating, and apocalyptic End Times millennialism. While these beliefs are often carried in a single package, they can be unbundled. Each person who attended the Burlington Patriot meeting could pick and choose from among various complementary narratives. For instance, Spear made it clear to the audience that, while he was concerned with the End Times and the Tribulations, his advice was equally useful for someone who feared secular forms of economic collapse, social unrest, or government repression.

RACISM AND ANTISEMITISM

The issue of racism and antisemitism in the Patriot and militia movements is complex. Clearly, the narratives of the movement drew from historic antisemitic conspiracy theories, but they also drew from generic claims of secret elites as well, and mingled with accurate assessments of global corporate power and concentration of wealth. The claim of sovereign citizenship derived from the Fourteenth Amendment implicitly regarded Black people as second-class citizens, and there were echoes of segregationist states' rights rhetoric in attacks on the power of the federal government.

Ed Brown, who attended the Burlington Patriot meeting, later assisted a regional speaking tour by Militia of Montana leader John Trochmann, including a speech at Yale University and an appearance at a Patriot meeting outside Sturbridge, Massachusetts. Trochmann frequently interlaced his conspiracy theories with bits and pieces from historic antisemitic conspiracy theories and Christian Identity lore. At the Sturbridge meeting, Brown insisted in a private conversation that the converted Khazar Jews run the banks and the media, but he argued that, since the Khazars were converts, not the covenant Jews of the Bible, his statements were not truly antisemitic. Brown believed he was not being antisemitic while spreading a classic antisemitic story. Yet, this is different from someone who is overtly and consciously bigoted, or someone who hides his bigotry for tactical or strategic reasons, such as easing the tasks of recruitment.

The host of the Sturbridge meeting was Leroy Crenshaw, an African American. Crenshaw, a hunter since he was a child, was primarily concerned with defending gun ownership rights and other aspects of what he saw as increasing government tyranny. Crenshaw introduced Trochmann by acknowledging that there were differences of opinion in the room about racism and antisemitism. He said he was personally uncomfortable with some of Trochmann's views, but he was more uncomfortable with the views and actions of the government. Crenshaw noted that there were members of the Posse Comitatus present and that he had problems with some of their views, but he welcomed them to hear Trochmann as a matter of courtesy, since Trochmann was being attacked by the same liberal government and media they all opposed. In a private conversation, Crenshaw was asked about his participation in a movement where there was racism and antisemitism that made him uncomfortable. "There is racism and antisemitism wherever I look in our society," replied Crenshaw, "it's no different in this group."²⁸

At the Burlington meeting, however, it was made clear from the podium by several speakers that any discussion of racist views or Jewish influence in the conspiracy was unacceptable. Brown accepted those principles of unity for the meeting and remained silent while in the group, only hinting at his views after being pressed during a smoking break.

The principles of unity were different for the two meetings. At Sturbridge, the circle was opened to include those with racist and antisemitic views, although the leader personally distanced himself from those views. At Burlington, racist and antisemitic views were placed outside the circle by the leaders. Although persons with those views were in attendance, they were essentially told to keep silent, although books with racist and antisemitic contents were tolerated at a private display table.

Sometimes people change their views over time. After Scott Stevens was told about the racist roots of the reliance on Fourteenth Amendment claims of sovereign citizenship, he researched the subject. Within several months after the Burlington meeting, he had modified his beliefs about the Fourteenth Amendment basis for sovereign citizenship and had raised the issue of racism among other Patriots.

Activists in the Northwest reported that racism and antisemitism were more pronounced among the militias they encountered. In the Midwest, some militias split into two factions over the issue of racism and antisemitism. Sometimes members with bigoted views were asked to leave by the majority faction. Racism and antisemitism were woven into the Patriot narrative, but in many cases this was unconscious and unintentional. In other cases far-right activists hid their overt racist and antisemitic views to recruit from, or take over, Patriot and militia groups. This complexity led some to indict all militia members as closet neonazis, while others, out of ignorance or expediency, sanitized the movement by trivializing evidence of racism and antisemitism.

Several authors use the idea of “bridging organizations” that ideologically and organizationally serve as links between conservatism and the Far Right.²⁹ The Patriot and armed citizens militia movements functioned in this manner, as have other right-wing populist groups for generations. After the Oklahoma City bombing, less militant and more reform-oriented members left the militia movement and faded back into the broader Patriot movement. Meanwhile, racists and antisemites, many of them revolutionary rather than reformist, remained active in many militias and even intensified their recruitment and co-optation efforts. As the militia movement began to shrink in size, the proportion of its constituent base that openly espoused bigotry and insurgency rose.

JOHN SALVI: GOD’S PATRIOT

Apocalyptic conspiracy theories intertwined with Patriot mobilization played a role in two recent criminal cases: that of John C. Salvi, III, convicted in the December 1994 murder of two reproductive health center workers and the wounding of five others; and that of Francisco Martin Duran, who sprayed the White House with bullets. Duran listened to a Colorado-based radio talk show hosted by Chuck Baker, who promoted Patriot themes.³⁰ Both Duran and Salvi showed signs of psychological disturbance. Salvi committed suicide in jail after his conviction.

In the spring of 1994, Salvi joined with 300 antiabortion demonstrators outside the same Planned Parenthood clinic in Brookline, Massachusetts, that he would later attack. Pamphlets circulated at the site by Operation Rescue claimed (falsely) that 18,000 abortions were performed annually at the facility.

Salvi met with a local parish priest and demanded access to the parishioners in church so he could distribute lurid photographs (obtained from Human Life International) of aborted fetuses. Salvi charged that the Catholic Church was not doing enough to stop abortions. He confronted his parish on Christmas Eve 1994 for failing to live up to his interpretation of the Catholic faith and its obligations. He quoted the biblical book of Revelations and told his parents of wanting to confront Satan.

Shortly after his arrest he released a rambling handwritten note alleging conspiracies of Freemasons, conspiracies to manipulate paper currency, and conspiracies against Catholics. He told the court he supported the welfare state, Catholic labor unions, and opposed abortion. He talked about the Vatican printing its own currency and a specific conspiracy of the Ku Klux Klan, the Freemasons, and the Mob. Far from being unique or necessarily symptomatic of mental illness, all of these ideas appeared in apocalyptic right-wing Catholic, Protestant, and secular political publications available in the Boston area.³¹ Much of John Salvi’s rhetoric about the corrupt money

system, for example, echoed themes in the *Michael Journal*, which was distributed by a small group of apocalyptic Catholics in Massachusetts.

Salvi patronized a gun store he may have seen as friendly to the Patriot movement, and generally intersected with the same coalition that were represented at the Burlington meeting. The gun used by Salvi was modified in a way favored by some militia members. Detailed instructions for these modifications were for sale at the Burlington Patriot meeting, as well as in Massachusetts gun stores and gun shows, where Patriot material was easily obtained. According to an article by Sarah Tippit of Reuters,

While living in Florida in 1992, Salvi talked to a friend about joining a militia and once expressed interest in a particular camping trip with a militia from the Everglades, said his former employer, Mark Roberts of Naples, Florida. "Salvi had mentioned being affiliated with some bivouac thing in the Everglades. They were camping and he wanted to go," said Roberts, who employed Salvi for maintenance work. Shortly before moving to New England in 1992, Salvi stopped at Roberts' house and showed his gun. He had sawed off its barrel and installed a silencer, Roberts said. "He said he was going to shoot cans in the woods, but he didn't want to make any noise," Roberts said. "That worried me."³²

Magazines found in Salvi's residence included *The New American* and *The Fatima Crusader*, both published by right-wing groups promoting conspiracist theories and vociferously opposing abortion and homosexuality.³³ One issue of *The New American* found in John Salvi's possession contained an article by Charles E. Rice exploring the idea that killing an abortion provider might be morally justified.³⁴ One does not find issues of *The New American* or *The Fatima Crusader*, or material from Human Life International, at the corner newsstand. They are circulated mainly within a distinctly right-wing conspiracist subculture. This is a subculture where apocalyptic demonization, scapegoating, and conspiracism are rampant. Karen Branan and Frederick Clarkson described the thirteenth annual Human Life International (HLI) conference, held in Irvine, California, in April 1994,

Attended by 2,000 anti-abortion activists from around the globe, the conference's high point came during Randall Terry's banquet speech when he challenged the crowd to rise up and make America a "Christian Nation" under "Biblical Law," abolish contraception and abortion, take their children out of public schools, and make "dads [the] Godly leaders" of the family, with "the women in submission, raising kids for the glory of God."

Amidst pictures of a weeping Virgin Mary holding a fetus, and banners quoting Pope John Paul II, most of the workshops presented a paranoid message of black-and-white thinking: there's always a plot, a shadow force systematically subverting God's creation. Some mentioned Lucifer or Satan, others gave Lucifer a human form—Bill and Hillary Clinton are popular em-

bodiments this year, as is Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood. For others, the archenemies in this pageant are Freemasons or Jews.³⁵

The authors warned that, as HLI's "hate-filled rhetoric" increased, the "impact of this organization . . . will likely be felt in frightening ways."

Some people with a mental illness who carry out acts of violence cannot successfully control their fears and anger and act them out against real targets. Salvi's psychological condition was not demonstrated by his claims about a banking conspiracy, which were commonplace in the Catholic apocalyptic Right, nor was his choice of targets random.³⁶ Certainly a person like Salvi did not represent the mainstream of Catholicism, the antiabortion movement, or the U.S. political Right, but he expressed the views of a durable subculture with conspiracist views that consciously resorts to scapegoating.

This dynamic of rhetoric triggering violence functions more easily among the mentally ill. But those who are scapegoated can be injured or killed by people—whatever their mental state—who act out their conspiracist beliefs in a zealous manner. The failure of political and religious leaders to take strong public stands against groups and individuals that demagogically spread conspiracist scapegoating theories encourages this dangerous dynamic. Yet, when President Clinton spoke out against the rhetoric of demonization following the Oklahoma City bombing, he was criticized by numerous pundits spanning the whole political spectrum.³⁷

Many questions need more study. When does demonizing rhetoric by demagogues motivate action among followers who are not mentally ill? Why and when do sane followers of ideological leaders begin to act out their beliefs through violence? When and how does apocalyptic violence become a mass movement? How and when can it become state policy?

THE FAR RIGHT AND THE OKLAHOMA CITY BOMBING

The conspiracist scapegoating characteristic of right-wing populism, including the Patriot and armed militia movements, creates not only individual acts of violence but also a dynamic where conspiracy theories and scapegoating become routine and seemingly banal. It also provides a handy recruitment device for the Far Right, readily attracting those who need to feel politically superior to others.

Non-Christian neonazis, such as in the pagan Church of the Creator, are sometimes able to work in coalitions with Christian Patriots because of their shared antigovernment sentiments and conspiracism rooted in historic forms of antisemitism. In fact, some conspiracist rhetoric in the Christian Right is virtually indistinguishable from far-right rhetoric. Susan DeCamp found some dozen quotes from Pat Robertson and Christian Identity

preacher Pete Peters that when arranged together read like one continuous tract “promoting white nationalism.”³⁸ So, conspiracist antigovernment themes can cross boundaries promiscuously while the various movements and groups working in parallel remain ideologically monogamous.

Thematic similarity, however, does not imply organizational or ideological congruence. The most significant worldview in the Christian Patriot movement was Christian Identity. Yet, Ken Stern makes some important distinctions concerning the Christian Patriot movement:

Some commentators do not distinguish between Christian Identity and Christian Patriotism because, on the American far right, most who are Identity adherents are also Christian Patriots.

But it is important to distinguish the two. Identity comes from a 19th century belief called “British Israelism.” One can be an Identity adherent in Australia, Canada, et cetera. Christian Patriots, on the other hand, only exist in America, and one can be a Christian Patriot without subscribing to Identity religion. For example, James Nichols, brother of accused Oklahoma City-bomber Terry Nichols, is a Christian Patriot who flirted with, but was talked out of, Identity theology by a Methodist friend.³⁹

The Gulf War encouraged the Identity adherents in Christian Patriot groups to peddle antisemitic conspiracist theories about Jewish power behind U.S. military involvement. An example was the forty-page newsprint tabloid booklet by Nord Davis, Jr., *Desert Shield and the New World Order*, published in 1990 by his Northpoint Tactical Teams.⁴⁰

Other preexisting Christian Patriot groups quickly reached out to the emerging militia movement with similar propaganda materials. For instance, the Tennessee-based Christian Civil Liberties Association published *The Militia News*, ostensibly a newspaper but actually a catalog of books and other educational resources including guides on how to evade government tracking and surveillance. The opening article, “U.S. Government Initiates Open Warfare Against American People,” was a good example of antisemitic Christian Patriot dogma:

Following the turn of the 20th century, Communism (the Judeo-Bolsheviks of Russia) and other diabolical movements and philosophies—Fabian socialism, materialism, atheism, and secular humanism—would, like malignant parasites, establish themselves in America. Even our presidents, beginning with Franklin Roosevelt, would begin using the resources of this nation to finance and support our foreign enemies, particularly the Communist and Zionist movements.⁴¹

The article railed against what the author saw as the unconstitutional attack on states’ rights by “Court mandated integration and forced busing” in the 1960s and the “systematic de-Christianization of the nation.”⁴² Warn-

ing that this was part of a "satanic conspiracy," the author advised that, for the government to succeed, "the globalists must outlaw and confiscate" firearms.

Every gun owner who is the least bit informed knows that those who are behind this conspiracy—who now have their people well placed in political office, in the courts, in the media, and in the schools, are working for the total disarming of the American people and the surrender of our nation and its sovereignty. . . . The time is at hand when men and women must decide whether they are on the side of freedom and justice, the American republic, and Almighty God; or if they are on the side of tyranny and oppression, the New World Order, and Satan.⁴³

Timothy McVeigh, who had moved from conspiracist antigovernment beliefs into militant neonazi ideology, blew up the Oklahoma City federal building on April 19, 1995—the anniversary of the Waco conflagration—to protest government abuse of power that he, and others, believed was but the prelude to a tyrannical New World Order.⁴⁴ It is likely that McVeigh hoped that his act of terrorism might push the more defensive and less ideological militias into a more racialized and militant insurgency. Instead, many militia members were shocked by the carnage.

McVeigh's act of terrorism mirrored a similar scenario in William Pierce's *The Turner Diaries*, which McVeigh distributed to friends. Pierce at one point in the novel describes in detail the bombing of a federal building. The novel invokes as its central apocalyptic theme the cleansing nature of ritual violence—a theme reminiscent of German Nazi ideology, which also sought a millenarian Thousand Year Reich.⁴⁵

McVeigh's apparently secular concern that during the Gulf War the government had implanted a microchip into his body echoes familiar repeated concerns among fundamentalist Christians over the years that the Mark of the Beast might be hidden in electronic devices.

RIPPLES ON THE POND

By 1994 there were local, state, and federal election races where candidates for public office sought to attract voters from the ranks of the Patriot movement.⁴⁶ On the national level, Mark Pitcavage singled out "Steve Stockman of Texas and Helen Chenoweth of Idaho, freshmen Republicans who in 1994 had no qualms about currying to the militia movement."

Pitcavage noted that, by the 1996 election campaign, "Stockman's close ties to Gun Owners of America leader Larry Pratt, and Chenoweth's videotape hawked by militia members at rallies are just some of the more well-known weaknesses being exploited by their opponents." Still, Pit-

cavage found that in fifteen state and federal races in 1996, most of the candidates who "courted" the Patriot movement won the election despite public awareness of the connection.⁴⁷

On the state level, the best-known elected officials who articulated Patriot themes were Republican California State Senator Don Rogers and Republican State Senator Charles Duke of Colorado.

In 1996, Rogers was involved in a controversy over his having filed legal documents claiming sovereign citizen status, which is often a prelude to claiming no tax liability.⁴⁸ Rogers also spoke at meetings of Jubilee, a Christian Identity group, even after he was told of their bigoted views. Rogers argued that Jubilee was simply a "group of patriotic Americans looking to restore their individual freedoms,"⁴⁹ when a more accurate description would be antisemitic and White supremacist conspiracy mongers.

Colorado State Senator Charles Duke claimed taxes were a form of slavery, and defended the Patriot movement. A Duke campaign policy memo issued during his 1996 Republican primary race for the U.S. Senate is revealing:

The current national interest in restoring power to the states began with a resolution sponsored by Senator Duke when he was a member of the Colorado House of Representatives. Since then [1994], 20 additional states have adopted similar resolutions and laws are being crafted in many state legislatures to further the national movement to restore state sovereignty. Having a grass roots constitutionist, like Senator Duke, in the United States Senate will further the restoration of individual liberty.⁵⁰

Duke lost the 1996 primary election that selected the Republican U.S. Senate candidate for Colorado. Still, in a four-way race he garnered 18 percent of the vote. In 1998, with a year left on his term in office, he resigned his state Senate seat, claiming God had directed him to do so. The next year he announced his interest in returning to politics.

In Montana, human rights activist Christine Kaufmann chronicled how several state legislators pushed the Patriot agenda. She also noted that rightist ideas including "ending affirmative action, asserting states' rights, restricting the rights of non-white immigrants, and making English the official language, are now part of the political mainstream."⁵¹

Activism on the state level also came from the grassroots of the Patriot movement. The *Spotlight* featured a cover story on how right-wing populists in New Jersey had distributed flyers and faxes opposing a proposed state environmental law. According to the *Spotlight*, "Virtually overnight hundreds of thousands of copies of the flier appeared as if by magic on bulletin boards, store windows and fax machines throughout the state." The flyer was circulated in part through a fax hotline.⁵²

There were national campaigns as well.⁵³ In 1995 several conservative groups and Patriot networks successfully mobilized opposition to a planned

"Conference of the States" that had been supported by the Council of State Governments and National Governors' Association. A conspiracist theory arose that the conference was a secret plot to rewrite the Constitution and specifically eliminate the Second Amendment.

According to *The Right Guide*, there was "strong grassroots opposition from conservative and populist organizations, particularly firearms owners' groups." The *Guide* named the groups most responsible for the campaign: American Pistol and Rifle Association, Conservative Caucus, Constitutionalists United Against a Constitutional Convention, Council on Domestic Relations, Eagle Forum, John Birch Society, and the National Association to Keep and Bear Arms. They also credited Charles Duke, who the *Wall Street Journal* said "spearheaded the opposition."⁵⁴ National radio talk show host Michael Reagan also urged listeners to oppose the conference because it was part of the One World Government conspiracy, along with promoting other conspiracist theories.⁵⁵

In 1997 U.S. Rep. Helen Chenoweth of Idaho introduced a bill cosponsored by 43 House members to block a federal plan to designate certain historic waterways "heritage rivers." The primarily symbolic gesture had been attacked by the Patriot movement and the overlapping antienvironmentalist "Wise Use" movement as a federal land grab. Some claimed it was part of a UN-backed New World Order initiative. Conspiracy theories about environmental activists created an atmosphere where confrontations accelerated in rate and intensity.⁵⁶

On the international level, the Biodiversity Treaty was blocked, with a key role being played by a coalition of Patriot, Wise Use and LaRouche network activists who spread misinformation and conspiracist theories.⁵⁷

CONCLUSION

Many commentators have portrayed the Patriot and militia movements as fascist. We believe it is more accurate to describe them as right-wing populist movements with important fascistic tendencies—thus they are quasifascist or protofascist. Like the America First movement of the early 1940s, the Patriot movement and the militias represented a large-scale convergence of committed fascists with nonfascist activists. Such coalitions enable fascists to gain new recruits, increase their legitimacy among millions of people, and repackage their doctrines for mass consumption.

Mary Rupert dubbed the Patriot movement "A Seedbed for Fascism" and suggested that the "major missing piece in looking at the Patriot Movement in relation to fascism is that it does not overtly advance an authoritarian scheme of government. In fact, its emphasis seems to be on protecting individual rights." According to Rupert, there are two "portents of possibility" that could shift this situation: "First is the below-the-surface disposi-

tion of the Patriot Movement towards authoritarianism, and second is the way in which Patrick Buchanan . . . picked up and played out the Patriots' grievances."⁵⁸ We would add that "individual rights," like states' rights, can also be a cover for the sort of decentralized social totalitarianism promoted by the neofascists of the Posse Comitatus and Christian Reconstructionism—both of which helped lay the groundwork for the Patriot movement itself.

Jim Robinson of the web-based organization Free Republic echoed the basic position of the Patriot movement as it reconstituted itself after the Oklahoma City bombing:

The federal government has overstepped its Constitutional limits and the complicit media is acting in concert to continue the illegal government expansion and to strengthen its own stranglehold on truth and to continue its agenda of projecting the socialist government propaganda slant on the news.

The government and the corporate media have created, through regulation and policy a liberal propaganda machine whose goal is to continue the expansion of a collective state and to control every aspect of our lives and fortunes.

We, the People, are exercising our Constitutional right to freedom of speech and peaceable assembly to demand that our elected representatives fulfill their Constitutional duty.⁵⁹

The similarity between Patriot movement rhetoric and rhetoric from the right wing of the Republican Party is striking.