FACING TERROR

The Government's Response to Contemporary Extremists in America

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To my mother, Rosemary, who instilled in me a desire to search and to understand others.
—T.K.

To Ana, my daughter; Ethel, my paternal grandmother; Joseph W. Jackson, my maternal grandfather; and Stuart Miller, my friend. Their voices have opposed violence and chaos and supported reason.
—J.R.
Chapter Discussion Questions

1. Describe how beliefs in millennialism by religions groups have affected their view of the world and of political trends in America and abroad.

2. Describe and discuss the general impact of British Israelism (Christian Identity faith) in American Protestant thought and practice and on "extremist" political and social attitudes.

3. Discuss his sentiments against democratic capitalism and the rise to prominence of Father Coughlin; what events or ideas were significant in his rise and fall?

Suggestions for Further Reading


CHAPTER III

Recent Terrorist Events

"The anatomy of patriotism is complex. But surely intolerance and public irresponsibility cannot be cloaked in the shining armor of rectitude and righteousness."


Having analyzed the sociopolitical environment of hate and fear in America in the 1990s, we now turn to a more pointed investigation of recent, dramatic terrorist actions in the U.S. and an assessment of where these events figure in the milieu described above. We will illustrate that these recent events fit within the category of ideological—spasmodic terrorism and spring from a climate of social and political fear and hatred and the general decline in political efficacy. Organized extremist groups—militia, neo-Nazis, white supremists, Klansmen, Freemen and survivalists—reflect a number of the problems of large, complex systems headed toward overall dysfunction. Furthermore, acts such as the bombing of the Murrah Building in Oklahoma City illustrate the manifestation of social/political system problems in the extreme. Before we turn to an examination of recent domestic terrorist-type actions, we will summarize the sociopolitical climate within which these violent and/or threatening acts exist in contemporary America.
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Those problems which seem to fit with current times and the anti-government groups:

1) Inability of individuals to understand or comprehend the nature of change in the nation and the world.

2) Persistent feelings of racism and racial distrust in many parts of the country.

3) Resurgent American nationalism that is often exhibited in defensive or hostile ways toward those who are non-Anglo and/or non-Christian.

4) Decline in public approval and public faith in the institutions of government and in traditional American political processes, (i.e., decline in political efficacy—general belief that involvement in the political process will make a beneficial difference to the citizenry).

5) Increasingly bureaucratic solutions and bureaucratic rule-making as the sociopolitical system tries to respond to change, problems, and threats.

6) Persistent tendency for splits and division within American Protestantism, producing often more extreme, rigid, and uncompromising groups.

7) Increasing ability of anti-government groups to recruit, to communicate, and to coordinate their public responses to events via the Internet.

8) Increasing difficulty for the sociopolitical system to predict, prevent, or effectively respond to attacks and violence directed against major institutions.

The inability of many in modern American society to understand or deal constructively with social change is reflected, in the political sense, by the organized groups which have emerged since the 1970s devoted to fearful reaction to international, national and regional events which seem to have spun beyond their control.

As an example, consider the evolution in the politics of hatred and resentment by Lyndon LaRouche and his followers. Born into a prominent Quaker family in 1922, LaRouche originally gravitated to the politics of the radical left. A Marxist for nearly two decades, LaRouche later became a leader in the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in opposition to the Vietnam War (Coates 1987, 200).

In 1973 LaRouche reached a turning point, as his politics moved from that of resentment and radicalism to conspiracy theories and the political theater of the bizarre. Becoming convinced that the Soviet KGB had put out a “hit” on him, LaRouche began to see international conspiracies everywhere. Jewish bankers ran the drug trade with the supervision of the British royal family. Communists controlled a succession of presidents starting with Carter. Nuclear war was seen as imminent and the only salvation was to speedily colonize Mars. All of these warped theories were put forward by LaRouche and his followers (Coates, 201).

LaRouche in the 1980s caused a major stir in California and in Illinois. During the 1986 elections in California, LaRoucheans were able to get 700,000 voters to sign a referendum petition on the state ballot that would have formally stigmatized those with the AIDS virus. Those affected would be declared “infectious” and reported to the police—a Hitler-like tactic for isolating and scapegoating AIDS patients (Coates, 203).

Also in 1986, Illinois Democratic primary voters were lulled into voting for LaRouche candidates for secretary of state and lieutenant governor, forcing the head of the ticket Adlai Stevenson III to abandon the Democratic ticket to run officially as a third party candidate for governor instead. The LaRouche “capture” of the Democratic nominations resulted in the defeat of the unwitting Stevenson and the two LaRoucheans (Coates, 204).

While LaRouche’s organization suffered massive blows due to federal court orders seizing the group’s assets in order to pay for outstanding fines in the nature of $16 million (Coates, 202) and due to LaRouche’s subsequent prosecution and imprisonment, the anti-Semitic, conspiratorial politics of LaRouche is echoed today in the extremist work of Willis Carto and the Liberty Lobby. Carto, long a defender of LaRouche, reaches out to the believers in conspiracies through the publication the Spotlight and, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center’s (SPLC) Intelligence Report, Summer 1998, with the radio work of Tom Valentine, host of “Radio Free America” for Liberty Lobby.

Perhaps equal in concern to the attention given once to LaRouche and now more so to Liberty Lobby, is the belief held by
substantial numbers of farmers in the Midwest that sinister Jewish
and Trilateral Commission forces were responsible for farm prob-
lems. A major 1986 poll conducted by Lou Harris for the Anti-
Defamation League found that 75% polled in Iowa and Nebraska
agreed that both Reagan and the "big international bankers" were
responsible for the farmers' troubles. Further, the Trilateral
Commission and "Jewish bankers" were found to have culpability
in the farm crisis for many. Twenty-seven percent expressed the
thought that "farmers have always been exploited by international
Jewish bankers . . ." Moreover, 45% of those over sixty-five
accepted that Jewish bankers were behind their troubles! Forty-
four percent of those polled who never finished high school
accepted this anti-Semitic view as to the collapse of family farms
(Coates, 195).

The substantial resentment over and fear about who's control-
ing major economic and political events is today continually tapped
into and perhaps reinforced by the barrage of conspiracies and hate
politics disseminated by talk radio programs like that of Tom
Valentine and the Liberty Lobby as mentioned above. For example,
through the Officer Jack McLamb Show, Mr. McLamb, a retired
Phoenix, AZ, police officer, warns of a coming civil war in the
U.S. and seeks the help of law enforcement officials, military peo-
ple and participants in the Patriot movement on his shortwave broad-
cast. Also, the well known William Pierce of the neo-Nazi National
Alliance pushes his ideology of racial distrust, anti-Semitism, anti-
gay and anti-government politics via radio broadcasts on American
Dissident Voices. These and other broadcasters are monitored and
chronicled by the Southern Poverty Law Center in that organiza-
tion's Intelligence Report. According to an SPLC article, broad-
casts by Patriot and hate groups have been put out on 366 AM and
40 FM and shortwave stations. Air time and extremism in the qual-
ity of broadcasts has increased and flourished since modest begin-
nings in 1990 (Carla Brooks Johnston, "Radical Radio Redux," In-

Fear and resentment in contemporary American politics are a
definite option it sadly seems for those who see their lives and
livelihoods under the control of others and moving/changing in
ways that cannot be comprehended easily or accepted. Fear and
resentment are present in the works of radical political gurus such
as LaRouche and in the radio barrage of Liberty Lobby, officer
McLamb, and the ever present Pierce. The politics of hate, if you
will, runs often in the ideological stream of racism and racial intol-
erance.

**Racism Brings About Incidents**

There are unfortunately many incidents in contemporary
American life which illustrate the persistence of racism in this coun-
try. Later in this chapter, for instance, the reader will see the sum-
mary of the ruthless, racially motivated murders committed by neo-
Nazi Jim Burmeister, a soldier stationed at Fort Bragg, NC. More
recently the nation has witnessed a racial crime described by
President Clinton as "shocking and outrageous"—the brutal killing
of African American James Byrd, Jr. near the town of Jasper, TX.
Three whites, Lawrence Brewer, Shawn Berry, and William King,
were arrested and charged with dragging Byrd to his death behind
a pickup truck on a country road in Texas early in the second week
of June 1998. The perpetrators have all served time in prison and
bear connections to the racist prison gang, the Aryan Brotherhood
("Race killing in Texas fuels fear, anger," USA Today —Nation,
Internet, 11 June 1998, 1). In July 1998, the three suspects were
indicted on capital murder charges for Byrd's slaying ("3 whites
charged with murder in black man's dragging death," Minneapolis
Star Tribune, 7 July 1998). In February 1999, King was convicted
of capital murder in the incident and sentenced to die by lethal injec-
tion; of the two other suspects, Brewer and Berry, Brewer was con-
victed and also sentenced to death by a Texas jury, while Berry
received a life imprisonment sentence for his conviction.

As the Byrd killing sadly illustrates, the race hate and race
crimes which so plagued the country during the Civil Rights era
(1950-1970), during the 1920s, and during the Reconstruction Era
after the Civil War, resurfaced in the 1990s. Recently, a South
Carolina jury awarded $37.8 million in damages to the Macedonia
Baptist Church, a black church in rural Clarendon County, SC. The
Baptist church, which was torched in June 1995 along with a black
AME church in the region, was burnt in an apparent effort by the
Ku Klux Klan to initiate a "race war" by Klan members. The jury
award exceeds that made against the neo-Nazi White Aryan
Resistance (WAR) in October 1990 for its involvement in killing an
Ethiopian student in Oregon ("Klan ordered to pay torched black
“Bo Gritz says FBI has enlisted him in Rudolph search.” 1998. CNN, interactive [CNN.com], 3 August.


Canadian Department of Justice. 1998. Disproportionate Harm: Hate crime in Canada (Tables 1-9; Conclusion) [Internet]. 15 August.


Christian Constitutionalist. 1999. Phone conversation. 3 May. Boise, ID.


