

The Watchdogs

A close look at Anti-Racist "Watchdog"
Groups

Second Edition

Part 2

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Chapter Three

The Center For Democratic Renewal

Links and Ties

- The fanatic who refused to admit the existence of a feared facet of himself may eventually be confronted with undeniable evidence that he harbors the very attitudes or desires he has sought to eradicate. Snell and Gail Putney, *The Adjusted American*, 1964.
- The aggressiveness of a person with a paranoid style may be masked, but no less powerful, when it is expressed in intellectual or ideological terms. In such a subtle and controlled form it usually has a greater impact on others. . . .As individuals, extremist reformers utilize psychological mechanisms which resemble those observed in the paranoid individual. David W. Swanson, et. al., *The Paranoid*, 1970.
- Equality feeds on itself as no other single social value does. It is not long before it becomes more than a value. It takes on the overtones of redemptiveness and becomes a religion rather than a secular idea. Robert Nisbet, *Twilight of Authority*, 1981.
- Almost every discussion with myth-addicts, whether public or private, is doomed to failure. The debate is from the beginning removed from the level of objectivity; arguments are not considered on their merit, but by whether they fit the system, and if not, how they can be made to fit. Arthur Koestler, *The Yogi and the Commisar*, 1945.

The Center For Democratic Renewal (CDR) has a fascinating history that reaches into the deepest recesses of the American extreme left. If a counterpart organization on the far right had roots as far into the political extremes as the CDR does, it would have been instantly exposed. More importantly, these roots do not depend upon establishing mere “links and ties.” Rather, they are simply part of its history - the history of how a coalition of extreme leftists managed to blur their origins and avoid exposure by a trusting media. Although presented to the public as a civil rights organization, the CDR has an agenda that embraces much more.

On 3 November 1979 five members of the Communist Workers Party (CWP) died (nine more were wounded) in a shootout with Ku Klux Klansmen and neo-Nazis in Greensboro, North Carolina, during a “Death To The Klan” march through the streets of Greensboro sponsored by the CWP. Six months after the shootout, Terry Eastland, writing in *Commentary* magazine, described the CWP and its program:

The CWP...is one of the small Maoist groups that have developed since the disintegration of the Students for a Democratic Society in 1969....Although it had doctrinal differences with other Maoist groups, it agreed with them on the main goal, namely, the destruction of the American capitalist order by the working class....¹

Eastland also disputed the notion that radicals of the day had “mellowed out” and cited both the People’s Temple of Jonestown and the CWP as examples. He observed:

The CWP can be faulted for another, potentially more deadly [form of racism]: manipulating blacks for its own political ends. The CWP went into a black community thinking that the poorer and less sophisticated of Greensboro’s blacks might be successfully exploited in this campaign to abolish class in America: it did not appear to mind how many black lives thus might be endangered, even sacrificed.

¹ Terry Eastland, “The Communists And The Klan,” *Commentary* (May 1980), 65-66.

In this the CWP ironically made a kind of common cause with its avowed enemy, the Klan.²

Following the shootout the Klansmen and neo-Nazis were tried on two separate occasions, both of which resulted in acquittal. A state jury found the defendants not guilty of murder in 1980, and a federal panel acquitted them on charges of conspiring to violate the CWP demonstrator's civil rights in 1984.³

Until the Greensboro incident, the private, non-governmental anti-Klan effort was divided among a number of organizations, most of which might be considered of a "leftist" persuasion. These included the ADL, the American Jewish Committee (AJC), and a number of civil rights organization including the NAACP and CORE. These were all fairly effective in orchestrating community reaction to Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazi activities.

A number of Marxist-Leninist groups—such as the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) and its affiliate, the International Committee Against Racism (INCAR), founded in 1973; and the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) and its affiliate, the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression (NAARPR) founded in 1972 --- also took their place in the anti-Klan ranks.

The 1970s and 1980s were filled with anti-Klan counter-demonstrations by these and similar organizations, usually greatly outnumbering the Klansmen and often responsible for most of the violence. Observers were treated to the sight of allegedly terroristic Klansmen huddled in a small group while anti-racist opponents pelted them and the police guarding them with bottles and rocks. Anti-racist groups had no scruples in utilizing the appeal to the mob when directed against their opponents.

According to Wyn Craig Wade, author of *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan In America*, a new mood was in the air. Wade recorded the change:

In response to the Klan's 1979 attack on its non-violent marchers in Decatur and the arrest of Curtis Robinson (a Black man convicted of shooting two Klansmen), the SCLC [Southern Christian Leadership Conference]...called a conference in Norfolk, Virginia. Thirty organizations responded and, out of the conference the National Anti-Klan Network was born.

Based in Atlanta, Georgia, the Network began by matching the ADL's research, monitoring and reporting on Nazi/Klan activity. Under the leadership of its coordinator, Lyn Wells, it took a strong stand against the Klan's corruption of children and assisted the NEA [National Education Association] in creating its curriculum guide.⁴

“Links and Ties” of CDR Staffers

Rev. C. T. Vivian, Chairman of the NAKN, was named in a 31 March 1964 report by the Atlanta office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation as having been active in the Communist Party during the 1940's.⁵ It is not known how long that alleged relationship lasted.

On the Executive Committee of the NAKN were Ann Braden, a founding sponsor of the U. S. Peace Council (USPC), an affiliate of the Communist-controlled World Peace Council (WPC). Ann Braden and her husband, the late Carl Braden, have long been associated

² Ibid.

³ Elizabeth Wheaton, *Code Name Greenkill : The 1979 Greensboro Killings* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987).

⁴ Wyn Craig Wade, *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 391.

⁵ David J. Garrow, *The FBI and Martin Luther King* (New York: Murrow, 1986), 116.

with Communist front organizations. Carl, for example, was one of the leaders of the NAARPR, co-chaired by the CPUSA's Angela Davis.⁶ Most recently, Braden was a contributor to the April 2000 issue of the non-party Marxist journal, *Monthly Review*.

Ann Braden was elected Vice-Chair of the NAARPR in May, 1983.⁷ In 1990 she was one of three co-chairs, along with Angela Davis and Lennox Hinds, who had served as the United Nations representative of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL) a Soviet-controlled front. Executive Director was Charlene Mitchell, a long time member of the CPUSA.⁸

Prof. Harvey Klehr describes the nature of Communist front groups:

The essence of a front organization, of course, is that its members include non-communists. The rationale is that a group made up only of devoted communists and their close allies would lack credibility and effectiveness; its motives would be suspect. By lending their names and reputations to an organization, respectable people make the organization look respectable.⁹

Ann Braden was a participant at the 1989 Marxist Scholars Conference in Louisville, KY. Her panel, to be chaired by Rev. Alan Thomson, of the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship (NCASF), was on "Progressive and Reactionary Trends in World Religions." Thomson had recently been indicted for attempting to launder \$17,000 he received from the WPC to operate his Communist front group.

In June, 1992, the Reverend Alan Thomson, NCASF executive director, pled guilty (U.S. v. Alan Thomson, U. S. District Court, Western District of New York) to evading currency regulations in 1989 by concealing a \$17,000 cash subsidy that Thomson brought back from the USSR. The plea agreement ending the case included the transcript of Thomson's secretly videotaped hand over of the \$17,000 to an associate, Barbara Makuch, who turned out to be an FBI operative for the past 21 years.¹⁰

Joseph Lowrey, another director of the CDR, was a speaker at the World Peace Council's assembly in Prague, Czechoslovakia. Executive Director of the World Peace Council is Michael Meyerson, a member of the Communist Party USA and board member of the NAARPR.¹¹

Also on the NAKN's board is Marilyn Clement, who is active with the New York Marxist School (NYMS) and was writer for the *Guardian*, a now defunct Marxist-Leninist weekly tabloid. Martha Nathan, wife of Communist Worker's Party member Michael Nathan who died in a shootout with Ku Klux Klansmen is also present.¹²

Lyn Wells & the Communist Party, Marxist-Leninist

NAKN/CDR National Coordinator Lyn Wells is a former member of the Central Committee of the October League (OL), a Marxist-Leninist group which evolved into the Communist Party, Marxist-Leninist (CPML). A 1979 study of the alternative media of the far left has detailed the history of the Communist Party, Marxist-Leninist as follows:

⁶ Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle and Dan Georgakas, *Encyclopedia of the American Left* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 105, 183.

⁷ Flyer, National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, n.d.

⁸ *Organizer* (April-June 1990); Harvey Klehr, *Far Left Of Center: The American Radical Left Today* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1988), 165.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁰ *Newsletter of the Historians of American Communism* (September, 1992, Vol 11, No. 3), 1.

¹¹ Klehr, *op cit.*, 33.

¹² Wheaton, *op cit.*, 170.

The CPML, like several other organizations evolved out of SDS [Students for a Democratic Society], began in late 1969 as the “October League” under the chairmanship of Michael Klonsky, immediate past national secretary of SDS and son of a long-time CPUSA organizer. In June, 1977 it held a “founding congress” at which it dropped its old name and established itself under the new one. In July, 1977 Klonsky and several associates were received and publicly welcomed in Peking by Hau Kuo-Feng and other officials of the new Chinese leadership.¹³

A 1980 article in *The Nation* magazine discussed the various splits and splinters of the American left. It had this to say about the Communist Party, Marxist-Leninist:

The CPML has somewhere between 800 and 1,000 members, and is the dominant faction in the U. S. - China People’s Friendship Association.¹⁴

In 1972 Wells gave an address to an OL labor conference. Standing below photos of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao, she said:

It is true that building a party requires conscious work on the part of communists. A party is the organized conscious expression of the working-class struggle and cannot develop out of the struggle spontaneously. It takes years of difficult work, developing an experienced core of cadre, raising the theoretical level and deepening ties with the masses. While being close to the united front, the communist organization is at the same time separate with an independent life of its own.¹⁵

A casual reading of *The Call*, official publication of the CPML, or their other journal, *Class Struggle*, reveals flagrant support and justification of totalitarian Marxist-Leninist regimes. The official youth organization of the CPML was the Communist Youth Organization. Its most active front group was the National Fight Back Organization, which focused on anti-racist issues.

Leonard Zeskind, Lyn Wells & the NAKN/CDR

The NAKN has been regarded with sectarian skepticism by other extreme left groups. A November 1982 article in *Workers Vanguard*, journal of the Spartacist League (a Trotskyist sect), described it thus:

NAKN is a loose coalition of the remnants of the pro-Peking Stalinists of Mike Klonsky/Lyn Wells disintegrating “Communist Party Marxist Leninist” with Southern black ministers headed by SCLC’s Rev. C. T. Vivian, who organized in 1979 an “alternative” to the communists in the wake of outrage over Greensboro.¹⁶

In the Summer 1985 issue of *Shmate: A Journal of Progressive Jewish Thought* Leonard Zeskind joined Chip Berlet, Jean Hardisty, Lyn Wells and others in lamenting the emergence of the extreme right. Wells, identified as “Executive Director of the National Anti-Klan Network,” observes:

Political work against fascism by progressive movements has consisted primarily of a struggle to preserve our civil liberties and the right to organize against the establishment, which periodically names various movements its “enemy.”¹⁷

¹³ Francis M. Watson, Jr., *The Alternative Media* (Rockford, IL: Rockford College Institute, 1979), 69.

¹⁴ George Vickers, “A Guide To The Sectarian Left,” *The Nation* (17 May 1980), 596.

¹⁵ Lyn Wells, *The Call* (April 1973) n.p.

¹⁶ “Killer Klan Must Be Smashed,” *Workers Vanguard* (12 November 1982), 1, 11-12.

¹⁷ Lyn Wells, “Cedartown and the Klan,” *Shmate: A Journal of Progressive Jewish Thought*, Issue #11-12 (Summer 1985), 52.

In 1986 the NAKN changed its name to the Center For Democratic Renewal, perhaps an attempt to blur its radical roots. The masthead of its newsletter, *The Monitor*, however, continued to list Lyn Wells as executive director and Leonard Zeskind as director of research.¹⁸

In 1987 another writer for the now-defunct Marxist-Leninist *Guardian*, Lynora Williams, took over as executive director, replacing Zeskind who had been acting director.¹⁹ Jean Hardisty of Political Research Associates and Randall Williams of the Southern Poverty Law Center also have been CDR board members.²⁰

Leonard Zeskind & the Sojourner Truth Organization

Leonard Zeskind, was also an organizer for the Marxist-Leninist group, the Sojourner Truth Organization (STO) during the 1970's and 1980's. On the editorial board of *Urgent Tasks: Journal of the Revolutionary Left*, published by the STO, Zeskind routinely engaged in classical Marxist rhetoric. *Urgent Tasks* acquired its name from a pamphlet by Lenin that asserted the urgent task of party workers was:

...not to serve the working class at each of its stages, but to represent the interests of the movement as a whole, to point out to this movement its ultimate aim and political tasks, and to safeguard its politics and ideological independence.²¹

In a 1980 issue of *Urgent Tasks*, Zeskind comments on events in Afghanistan and on U. S. imperialism:

The United States government, for its part, has constructed its own web of fabrications and deceptions around the Afghan events. It is using the occasion as another opportunity to galvanize the U. S. people around a war policy and to resurrect the military as a tool of U. S. imperialism.....

By concocting a new Soviet policy of aggression, Carter has placed the revitalization of the military as the top item on the national agenda.²²

In another *Urgent Tasks* article entitled "Workplace Struggles In Kansas City," Zeskind offers the following observations:

A school of communism must be based on the actuality or potentiality of workers as freely associated producers. A school of communism is not a lecture hall. It is an arena of critical self-consciousness that seeks to destroy the marketplace, not sell at it.²³

In another publication, *Towards A Revolutionary Party: Ideas On Strategy and Organization*, the Sojourner Truth Organization discussed their program to bring various groups together in a extreme leftist revolutionary movement:

In our view, the primary role of the party in the mass movement is to discover and articulate the patterns of thought, action, and organization which embody the potential of workers to make a revolution. These patterns are manifested, embryonically, in the course of every genuine struggle. This characteristic content of mass struggle provides the only possible social basis for integrating the experiences of masses of workers into a coherent revolutionary ideology and culture.

¹⁸ *The Monitor* (January 1986) 2.

¹⁹ *Southern Changes* (August 1987), 7,

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ V. I. Lenin, *The Urgent Tasks of Our Movement*, pamphlet (n.d.)

²² Leonard Zeskind, "The Events In Afghanistan: A State-Capitalist Viewpoint," *Urgent Tasks*, No. 8, (Spring 1980).

²³ Leonard Zeskind, "Workplace Struggles in Kansas City," *Urgent Tasks* (1978).

The real work of the party involves linking these fragmentary autonomous elements and socializing them into a new culture of struggle...it must emphasize those programs which lay the basis for the unification of the working class. Particularly important in this regard are concrete challenges to the institution and ideology of white supremacy.²⁴

Concerning discipline within the vanguard party, the STO pamphlet quotes Joseph Stalin's *Foundations of Leninism* approvingly:

On the contrary, iron discipline does not preclude, but presupposes conscious and voluntary submission, for only conscious discipline can be truly iron discipline.²⁵

The STO was only one of a multitude of left-wing extremist groups that formed from the remnants of the radical student movement of the 1960s. A surprising number of 1990s anti-racist activists did their apprenticeships in Marxist groups during the 1960s and 1970s.

Noel Ignatiev, Revolutionary

An associate of Zeskind's in the STO was Noel Ignatin (he now spells it Ignatiev), who served as one of several rotating editors of *Urgent Tasks*.²⁶ Like many radicals of that period, Ignatiev discovered the appeal of "anti-racism" as a device to promote his ideological agenda.

In an article in a 1995 issue of *Love and Rage*, an anarchist tabloid, Joel Olson commented on Ignatiev as follows:

Noel Ignatiev put forth the position that the purpose of any revolutionary organization should be to build a "dual power" strategy which means that our political work should be geared toward building resistance movements...

In this way, we could link revolutionary urges (everyone hates the cops) to a revolutionary counterpower that challenges the main pillar upholding capitalism and white supremacy: the state and their pigs.²⁷

Love and Rage is the publication of the Love and Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation, whose motto is: "Governments don't fall by themselves. They need your help. Join the Federation."²⁸ They work closely with radical anti-racist groups such as Anti-Racist Action (ARA), whose members are known for their violent confrontational tactics, and Anarchist Black Cross (ABC), a revolutionary anarchist organization. Both ARA and ABC have international "links and ties" with similar extremist groups.

Martin Glaberman, Marxist

Yet another Zeskind associate at STO was Martin Glaberman, a militant Marxist revolutionary. In 1975 the New Hogtown Press published a pamphlet under Glaberman's authorship which included, along with contributions by like-minded radicals, a lecture he had given in Toronto, Canada on 14 September 1974 sponsored by the Marxist Institute of Toronto. An advocate of traditional "class struggle" Marxism, Glaberman noted:

²⁴ Sojourner Truth Organization, *Towards A Revolutionary Party: Ideas on Strategy and Organization* (Chicago: Sojourner Truth Organization, 20 June 1976), 26.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 37.

²⁶ *Urgent Tasks* (No 7, Winter 1980).

²⁷ Joel Olson, "Re: Proletarian Survival: The Federation Advances," *Love and Rage* (Jan/Feb 1995).

²⁸ *Love and Rage* (Jan/Feb 1997), 2.

There is still the question which derives from the classic Marxist view of whether the worker is the key to the revolutionary overthrow of this society. Is the worker so exploited that he will revolt?...

Marxism has been around for 100 years. Che Guevara said that Marxism is now part of the general heritage of mankind. There are all sorts of ideas which were the property of Marxists, say in 1917, which are not the property of humanity generally.

So long as workers resist alienation and oppression they will revolt. And these revolts will emerge, as they always have, with remarkable power and suddenness.²⁹

Another article by Glaberman first appeared in *Radical America* in November, 1973. In it Glaberman quotes Marx and Engels as follows:

Both for production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a *revolution*.³⁰

Glaberman's activities have continued to the present day. His letters have appeared in the monthly Marxist-Leninist journal *Monthly Review*³¹ and a contributor to *Against The Current*, bi-monthly publication of the Marxist-socialist Solidarity movement. A review of Glaberman's co-authored book, *Working For Wages: The Roots of Insurgency*³², appearing in *Against The Current* noted:

It might be more accurate, then, to describe *Working For Wages* as a kind of primer on class struggle. Imbued throughout with an unswerving focus on class hatred, this examination of "the roots of insurgency" is itself rooted in the understanding that (to quote from the first chapter), "The working class struggles against capitalism because its objective conditions of life force it to...."³³

Are these "links and ties?"

Is Leonard Zeskind responsible for the politics of Ignatiev and Glaberman? Do his politics reflect on them? Do these "links and ties" have any direct bearing on Mr. Zeskind's values, opinions and beliefs today? The "links and ties" technique used here is an exact replica of the technique Berlet and Zeskind use to characterize their critics and opponents.

Consider that some of this information is over 25 years old. Consider also that the act of writing for an ideological journal may not necessarily imply that one agrees with everybody else that writes for it, or if they agreed with them in the past they continue to do so today. Finally, consider that all of the above applies to rightists as well as leftists.

Portrait Of A Marxist-Leninist Activist

In January 1981 Kansas City writer Bruce Rodgers did a story on radical activism for *City* magazine. He had this to say about Leonard Zeskind:

²⁹ Martin Glaberman, "The Working Class and Social Change," (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1975), 8, 17, 19.

³⁰ Martin Glaberman, "The American Working Class in Historical Perspective," *Radical America*, Vol 7, No 6 (November-December, 1973).

³¹ Martin Glaberman, "Reply to Nelson Lichtenstein: Correspondence," *Monthly Review* (Vol 48, No. 10, 1997), 60.

³² Martin Glaberman and Seymour Faber, *Working For Wages: The Roots of Insurgency* (Dix Hills, NY: General Hall, 1998).

³³ Shelia Cohen, "Primer Of Class Struggle," *Against The Current* #80 (Vol XIV, No 2, May/June 1999).

Speaking freely is something Leonard Zeskind doesn't do to people he doesn't know. Call him on the phone and he'll answer with a near hysterical, "Who is this?" Zeskind needs an answerphone to calm his nerves. Plainly, Zeskind won't talk to bourgeoisie writers representing The Establishment Press.

The STO [Sojourner Truth Organization] was brought to Kansas City by Zeskind and his wife, Elaine, around 1973. Where they imported it from would be a good guess. Chicago is where the printed arm of today's STO is published. Both Lenny and Elaine have written for *Urgent Tasks: Journal of the Revolutionary Left*.

Alternately ridiculed, condemned, feared, pitied or admired, Zeskind does exercise control over his group. They are tight-knit, distrust the press and view everyone outside their group with suspicion. They surface on occasion to distract and intimidate non-violent groups working for social change.

The STO is not well-known by political historians. In fact, a recent study (1979) tracing the development of American radical movements, *Power on the Left*, does not even acknowledge the organization.

Whatever its origins, somewhere in Kansas City Zeskind gathers a dozen fellow travelers in an apartment decorated with revolutionary banners and a picture of Sojourner Truth. Led by him, the mostly white, mostly female group study Lenin, seek justification for their beliefs, and pay homage to a former slave and 19th century champion of black and women's rights.³⁴

By 1982 Zeskind apparently found the response to traditional class-struggle Marxism-Leninism disappointing, as have many other American leftists, and shifted his focus to anti-racism. He created the Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights, Inc., and began publishing *The Hammer* (with Lyn Wells on the Board of Directors),³⁵ before hooking up with the National Anti-Klan Network.

A 1986 article in the *Kansas City Jewish Chronicle* gave an account of a talk by Zeskind before the Jewish Community Center Women's Guild Auxiliary. According to Zeskind, the Nazi press describes him as "intense and humorless. The article said:

And just who is he, really? Zeskind isn't saying..... Zeskind likes to keep a low profile.

No photos, he insists, because he is already the target of a number of anti-Semitic, racist groups who would love to see him, well, out of a job. He also is reticent about his background because this, too, could be used by his enemies.³⁶

Attacked by little white Baptist kids

A 1989 article in the same publication featured Zeskind's complaint of being picked on as a kid. He says:

And I remember little white Baptist kids riding by on their bicycles, throwing stones at us and calling us kikes and things like that... My brothers and I had to defend ourselves from these other little kids. We had to throw rocks back...³⁷

³⁴ Bruce Rogers, "Radical Chic, Kansas City Style," *City* (January 1981).

³⁵ Annual Registration Report, Institute for Research and Education of Human Rights, Inc., Missouri Secretary of State (16 July 1984).

³⁶ Elizabeth Kaplan, "Keeping Tabs On Anti-Semitism a Full-Time Job", *Kansas City Jewish Chronicle* (28 March 1986), 2A.

³⁷ Rick Hellman, "K.C. Klan-watcher Continues the Fight Against Hate Groups, *Kansas City Jewish Chronicle* (1 December 1989).

That same article discusses Zeskind's preoccupation with his personal safety and his sense of personal importance to his enemies. Racists and neo-Nazis are out to get him.

Kansas Citian Leonard Zeskind likes to keep a low profile. You would, too, if white supremacists had targeted you for death and attacked you in their publications and rallies.

This is why Zeskind refuses to divulge the city of his birth or other details of his personal life. Releasing personal information like that might make it easier for an extremist to track him down and harm him.³⁸

This theme of great importance and constant danger from fascists appears again in a 1991 issue of *Details* magazine. James Ridgeway begins his essay with

This is a scene from a paperback thriller: the two of us standing awkwardly at a park gate, in a city Lenny says I cannot name. No one is supposed to know what we're doing.³⁹

They are waiting for one of Zeskind's "spies," a man named "Felix" who is bringing Zeskind a bag full of European right-wing literature. The article notes that

Felix is a spy, and Lenny Zeskind...who in glasses and trench coat resembles nothing more than a moderately successful accountant, is the spymaster for Felix and a corps of espionage amateurs.⁴⁰

Ridgeway discusses Zeskind's elaborate security precautions in some detail, including his use of a false address on his Missouri driver's license, which is illegal. He observes,

Lenny has no known fixed address. If stopped by a cop, he can produce a driver's license with a listed street address, but if you visit the place, a pleasant house on a quiet street in Kansas City, it's not Lenny's address; it's a building that houses post-office boxes.

His office...is unmarked and hard to reach through a series of locked elevators. His home is protected by an elaborate alarm system that would sound instantly should someone toss a firebomb through a window.⁴¹

Zeskind's name no longer appears on CDR letterheads, but he continues to maintain the Kansas City office of the organization. In 1989 after accounts of his Marxist-Leninist background began appearing, he was quoted in an article in the *Kansas City Jewish Chronicle* as follows:

I was never the kind of Marxist-Leninist that they think of. I was somebody who thinks that socialism is a good thing. I believe a society that's fair to its citizens is important. I don't think I'm a socialist either now. At one time, I did. But that's not a defining feature of my politics now.⁴²

This is probably true. Many people have been former Marxist-Leninists, Maoists and Ku Klux Klansmen who simply changed their minds and gave it all up. Usually, however, they part company with their old colleagues and avoid the movements and causes they were associated with. A former Klansman or neo-Nazi may be just as sincere as a former Marxist-Leninist in revising his beliefs.

³⁸ Rick Hellman, op cit.

³⁹ James Ridgeway, "Klanbuster: Penetrating the Racist Underground in America's Heartland," *Details* (February 1991), 19-22.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Rick Hellman, "Zeskind Draws Fire From Extremist Critic," *Kansas City Jewish Chronicle* (1 December 1989).

Leonard Zeskind, Gerry Gable and *Searchlight*

It is not known when Zeskind first linked up with Gerry Gable and his publication, *Searchlight*, but in the February, 1983 issue of *The Hammer*, he carried a 2/3 page advertisement listing “*Searchlight* Distribution, USA” at a post office box next to his own.⁴³ In May 1988 *Searchlight* published a full-page laudatory review of Zeskind’s work and publications.⁴⁴ Coinciding with Zeskind’s role as research director for the CDR, he began writing regularly for *Searchlight* and became their USA correspondent.

Searchlight, Britain’s self-proclaimed premier “anti-fascist” magazine, began publishing in its current form in 1975. The May 1975 issue listed Gable as Editor and Maurice Ludmer as Managing Editor. Previously, Ludmer has been a reporter for *Morning Star*, the Communist Party’s daily newspaper. *Searchlight*’s primary constituency was, and always has been, Britain’s extreme left, with whom the magazine collaborates extensively.

Maurice Ludmer was a founder and member of the steering committee of the Anti-Nazi League (ANL), and a platform speaker at their first conference in July 1978. He died in 1981. According to a 1978 series appearing in *News Line*, publication of the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP):

The Anti-Nazi League was launched by the Socialist Workers Party in November, 1977. It was subsequently welcomed by the International Marxist Group - in an editorial in *Socialist Challenge* of 5 May 1978, headed “Hats off to the SWP!” - and by the Communist Party.

The Communist Party’s daily paper, the *Morning Star*, urged party members on 16 May 1978, to join the Anti-Nazi League and participate fully in its activities.⁴⁵

Under Ludmer’s leadership the ANL staged frequent counter-demonstrations against the NF and other right-wing groups, many of which became violent and in some cases causing many injuries, including to policemen. In a 1980 article published in the London *Guardian*, Polly Toynbee observed:

If by creating a public order problem there is hope that Chief Constables will ban the Front marches as they banned Mosley’s, then he feels the counter-demonstrations are valuable.⁴⁶

In December 1976, a British magistrate accused *Searchlight* of actually inciting violence. Magistrate John Milward condemned what he described as the “grave and sinister” feature of the magazine:

What purpose can there be in advertising opponent’s meetings except for the purpose of identifying them and creating disorder and public violence. This seems to be an attempt to stir up trouble which is to be very strongly depreciated.⁴⁷

The comments came at the end of proceedings against Maurice Ludmer, then managing editor of *Searchlight*. Ludmer had been accused of two counts of criminal libel. Magistrate Milward declined to commit Ludmer for trial in the matter.

An important point needs to be made here: Western countries, unlike Marxist-Leninist dictatorships, have traditionally allowed wide latitude with respect to freedom of expression, including the right to hold meetings and demonstrations. Some anti-fascist groups, frustrated in their goal of ideological hegemony by governments which respect the rights of their opposition, have used the tactic of sponsoring counter-demonstrations with the intention that they will create public disorder. In this way they seek to cause authorities

⁴³ *The Hammer* (February 1983).

⁴⁴ *Searchlight* (May 1988).

⁴⁵ *News Line* (10 July to 13 July 1978).

⁴⁶ *Guardian* (25 February 1980).

⁴⁷ “Magazine Accused of Race Incitement,” *Birmingham Post* (31 December 1976).

to prohibit meetings, demonstrations or marches by their adversaries for reasons of public safety.

In the United States, for example, whenever groups like the Ku Klux Klan have planned demonstrations, they are often confronted by very large, and often violent, counter-demonstrations. Usually, the public has associated the violence with the Ku Klux Klan, and not the anti-racist counterdemonstrators. In some cases Klan demonstrations of fewer than a dozen members have been confronted by well-organized counter-demonstrations of several thousand.

This reached its inevitable absurd conclusion in the United States in April 1998 when city officials in Cicero, Illinois, agreed to a payoff of \$10,000 to a small Ku Klux Klan group if they would cancel their planned demonstration.

Town officials said they worked out the deal to avoid the expected violence and security costs, which they say would easily have topped \$10,000....While it looked a little like a payoff, city officials said, it was preferable to the rally.⁴⁸

The violence feared by Cicero city officials, of course, was that from anti-racist counter-demonstrators and not from the small number of deluded Ku Klux Klansmen who might have demonstrated. In the first nine months of 1999 the cost of protecting citizens from potential violence from anti-racist counter-demonstrations cost communities in one state alone - Ohio - about \$800,000, including a counter-demonstration in Cleveland that cost \$573,000 alone.⁴⁹ At that rally there were 41 Klansmen and 300 anti-racists. The association of the Ku Klux Klan with violence has gradually lost some credibility because the activities of violence-prone anti-racist fanatics. The same situation is also developing in the U.K.

Born in January 1937, Gerry Gable was a member of the Young Communist League during his youth and stood as a Communist Party candidate in the Northfield Ward of Stamford Hill, North London, on Thursday 10 May 1962.⁵⁰ He claims to have quit the CP that same year.

On 14 January 1964 Gerry Gable and Manny Carpel plead guilty to breaking and entering with intent to commit a felony. Gable and Carpel, along with another man, had obtained false identification and posed as utility repairmen at the home of David Irving, a British author known for his controversial books on World War II. According to the *Evening Standard*:

One of them, David Freedman, was alleged to have told a policeman, "This man is a fascist. We got in because we wanted to get some of these books and papers of his and he knows a lot of Nazis who are top brass." Sgt. Tavener said Freedman pointed at a number of books and papers on the table in the room.

Charged with breaking and entering with intent to commit a felony were Freedman, 19, electrician, of Solander Gardens, Stepney; Gerald Gable, 26, electrician, of Lynmouth Road, Stoke, Newington; and Manny Carpel, 20, unemployed, of Downs Park Road, Dalston, who appeared on remand. Gable was also charged with stealing a G.P.O. pass card.⁵¹

Carpel, an intimate *Searchlight* associate, was convicted of assaulting P.C. William Nield and having an "offensive weapon" in 1963.⁵² Carpel and *Searchlight* secretary Michael Cohen plead guilty to attempting to break into W. H. Jones Ltd. printing works on 20 July

⁴⁸ *Associated Press*, "Town Heads Off KKK Rally With Cash," (11 April 1998).

⁴⁹ *Associated Press*, "Peace at Klan Rallies Costly," (10 October 1999).

⁵⁰ *Hackney Gazette and North London Advertiser* (8 May 1962 and 15 May 1962).

⁵¹ "Bogus GPO Men Tried To Grab Nazi Papers," *Evening Standard* (18 December 1963); *Focal Point* (30 May 1981).

⁵² *Jewish Chronicle* (26 August 1966)

1966, with intent to commit a felony and to possessing housebreaking implements by night. The company was the printer for a right-wing magazine. He was also jailed for two and a half years for arson at Lewes Criminal Court, 13 April 1981.⁵³

Harry Bidney, another *Searchlight* associate and the man Gable credits with inculcating him into the anti-fascist movement, was fined in 1977 after being found guilty on eight charges of living off the earnings of prostitutes. According to the *Daily Telegraph*:

Harold Bidney, 54, company secretary of Dennett House, Bernoe Road, Bow, was fined a total of 1,600 pounds after being found guilty of eight charges concerning eight female prostitutes; that between January 1973 and October last, he knowingly lived in part on the earnings of prostitution.⁵⁴

Interestingly, the June 1987 *Searchlight* glowingly described Harry Bidney's "long and honorable life fighting fascism."⁵⁵

Ray Hill, a former member of the National Front who subsequently became an employee of *Searchlight*, jumped bail on a fraud charge in Johannesburg, South Africa in 1979, two days before his scheduled hearing. He forfeited 1,500 pounds bail which had been put up by his wife. According to the *Guardian*:

The police in Johannesburg confirmed yesterday that Mr. Hill had also faced prosecution in connection with the alleged embezzlement of 20,000 pounds from the funds of the Sons of England, a Masonic organization of which he was secretary.

Mr. Hill, a former member of the British Movement, was a housemaster at a boys home in Johannesburg earning about 250 pounds a week. He is reportedly intending to open a night club in Britain.⁵⁶

In 1981 *Searchlight* reporter David Roberts was convicted at Birmingham Crown Court with conspiracy to burn down an Asian restaurant.⁵⁷

Another *Searchlight* regular is Graeme Atkinson. Like many *Searchlight* people, Atkinson grew up in a family steeped in Marxism-Leninism. His father was a member of the Communist Party during many years of Communism's purges, mass killings and slave labor camps in the USSR and elsewhere. The elder Atkinson apparently had enough and quit the party in 1956 over the brutal repression in Hungary. Graeme became active in "anti-fascism" in 1962 during a wave of anti-Semitic activity in Europe. He worked closely with the "62 group" in London, many of whom were members of the Communist Party.

According to Atkinson, "Our job is to stick the Nazi label on right-wingers. We keep the issue of Nazis before the general public."⁵⁸ He also acknowledged that *Searchlight* has placed informants in all "fascist organizations," and that occasionally there had been "captured" documents. Through their supporters in the media, he says that "We know who to talk to, to get a story out."⁵⁹

On 23 April 1989 Leonard Zeskind spoke at a rally in Leeds, England, where he shared the platform with Martin Becher of the radical Berlin-based Anti-Fascist Action Group. According to press reports, Zeskind and Becher were "touring the country as part of a campaign mounted by *Searchlight*, the anti-fascist magazine."⁶⁰

⁵³ *Focal Point* (30 May 1981).

⁵⁴ *Daily Telegraph* (6 August 1977).

⁵⁵ *Searchlight* (June 1987).

⁵⁶ *The Guardian* (11 May 1979).

⁵⁷ *Focal Point* (30 May 1981).

⁵⁸ Graeme Atkinson, Interview with Jeffrey Kaplan, (27 February 1997).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ "Rallying Point For Harmony," *Yorkshire Evening Post* (24 April 1989).

The rally was sponsored by the “Blair Peach 10 Anniversary Committee” along with several other radical left groups, including Anti-Fascist Action, Azania Worker, Asian Youth Movement, Camden Black Workers Group, and Black Action. Peach was a supporter of the Anti-Nazi League who was killed by police in 1979 and became a much-needed martyr to the cause.⁶¹

In May 1989 Zeskind again addressed a *Searchlight* rally where he shared the platform with *Searchlight*'s Ray Hill. An article in the *Jewish Chronicle* referred to Zeskind as “one of America’s leading Nazi catchers.” Zeskind also warned that “Free access to guns of American Nazis would soon make murder weapons available around the world.”⁶² In 1998 - nine years after this statement - there is absolutely no evidence that this has happened.

In November 1990 Gerry Gable addressed a benefit for the Center for Democratic Renewal held in Kansas City, MO. Gable lamented the collapse of Communism throughout Europe, blaming that for what he said was an “increase in racial attacks against minority groups.” Leonard Zeskind claimed that the average age for skinheads in the United States had dropped from 22 and 21 years old to 16 and 17 years old. He said:

We’re not concerned about these new kids committing acts of violence. We’re seeing more David Dukes coming down the road at us. These people aren’t just violent thugs. They’re racists who have attained a level of sophistication.⁶³

None of this transpired. David Duke’s political career flopped and the skinhead movement, such as it is, has continued to decline. It is probably safe to say that few of them have acquired a significant level of sophistication. The presence of a couple thousand adolescent “skinheads” in a country of 270 million people, while lamentable, is hardly a national crisis that needs the help of Gerry Gable and Leonard Zeskind.

The CDR and the Paranoid Style

In November 1989 *Atlanta Constitution* writer Alan Sverdlik wrote an article on the CDR in which he detailed the paranoid-like mentality that surrounds the organization:

They operate in quasi-secrecy out of a basement in a southwest Atlanta office building. They won’t give out the street address. They use real names and pseudonyms interchangeably and have unlisted home phone numbers.

This bunker mentality belongs to the Center for Democratic Renewal, one of the nation’s principle monitors of far right hate groups...⁶⁴

Sverdlik also noted that the CDR had a \$300,000 annual budget and quoted ADL Southern counsel Charles Wittenstein that “They have a left-wing political agenda that we don’t have... We don’t have any working relationship with them.” CDR employee Daniel Levitas is quoted as complaining that the ADL has “consistently red-baited us.”⁶⁵

The February 1991 issue of *Details* magazine contains an article on Leonard Zeskind by James Ridgeway in which former right-winger Tom Turnipseed, chairman of George Wallace’s 1968 presidential campaign, now vice-chair of the CDR, is quoted as saying, “His hands kinda shake...(Lenny) is probably scared shitless all the time.”⁶⁶

⁶¹ *Searchlight* (May 1989); flyer, Blair Peach 10 Anniversary Committee, nd.

⁶² “Neo-Nazism On The Rise,” *Jewish Chronicle* (5 May 1989).

⁶³ Steve Penn, “Attacks On Minorities Climb With Communism’s Collapse,” *Kansas City Star* (22 November 1990), C-16.

⁶⁴ Alan Sverdlik, “Keeping An Eye On The Hate Groups,” *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* (3 November 1989), B-2.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ James Ridgeway, *op cit.*

And Lenny, who likes to hunt, owns a semiautomatic Mini .14, the far right's weapon of choice. He also has a shotgun. But when his mother offered Lenny her .38 revolver, he declined. The handgun he wants is a stylish 9mm automatic, which his mom has promised to get him for his birthday.⁶⁷

It is fairly common for extremist groups to welcome former police "infiltrators" of opposing extremist groups into their ranks. These people lend some semblance of credibility to "links and ties" claims and impress contributors who imagine they are now getting inside information. During the 1960's, for example, a number of right-wing groups had former government agents on their payroll as experts.

In 1990 the CDR acquired the services of former San Diego police reservist Douglas K. Seymour who had infiltrated the Ku Klux Klan. He was listed on the CDR letterhead as a "Special Assistant to the Chairman." In 1989 Seymour had received a \$300,000 settlement from the San Diego police, claiming "emotional suffering" as the result of his two-and-a-half years of work as an infiltrator. Seymour's relationship with the CDR did not last long, however. In May 1991 he was convicted of embezzlement in LaCrosse, WI.⁶⁸ CDR's trusted source was quietly dropped from their letterhead.

Leonard Zeskind and Oklahoma City

Following the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing Zeskind teamed with James Ridgeway, who writes about right-wing politics for various liberal and leftist serials, and they produced a conspiracy theory of their very own.

There is every reason to believe that the attack was a call for revolution by the far right wing of this country, organized through the widespread militia movement and carried out by one of the leaderless terror cells created by that movement.

It is probable that the three men being held in connection with the bombing—Timothy McVeigh, James Nichols and his brother Terry Nichols—are all members of that same militia cell.⁶⁹

None of this proved true, of course, and one of the most intensive investigations in FBI history has failed to link these three to any militia organization in any significant way whatsoever. In addition, James Nichols was not even a defendant in the case. The article also refers to the Posse Comitatus, a radical tax protest group of mythical proportions, as a precursor to the militias.

Kansas is an old center for the Posse. During the 1980s federal law enforcement sources said that as many as one-third of all Kansas state sheriffs were either involved in, or sympathetic to, the Posse. Posse doctrine holds that the highest law of the land is the county sheriff.⁷⁰

A rather incredible charge. Checking with the Kansas Attorney General's office and the officers of the Kansas Sheriffs Association, I was informed that they did not know of a single sheriff who had been in any way "involved in or sympathetic to" the Posse Comitatus. In point of fact, Kansas sheriffs, and presumably sheriffs everywhere, tended to view Posse members as "idiots" and troublemakers who were more of a nuisance than a bona fide threat. The occasional Posse member who ran afoul of the law was swiftly dealt with by Kansas or other law enforcement officers.

In 1996 Zeskind was a contributor along with Chip Berlet and others to *Conspiracies: Real Grievances, Paranoia, and Mass Movements*, edited by Eric Ward and published by Peanut

⁶⁷James Ridgeway, op cit.

⁶⁸"Former Klan Spy Found Guilty of Embezzlement," *Tribune*, (9 May 1991).

⁶⁹James Ridgeway and Leonard Zeskind, "Revolution U.S.A.," *Village Voice* (2 May 1995).

⁷⁰James Ridgeway and Leonard Zeskind, op cit.

Butter Publishing. The general thrust of their contributions was to attack conspiracy theories of the right while ignoring those of the left.

Zeskind, in a typical overstatement, writes that during the infamous Tuskegee study of syphilis that 400 black men were “deliberately infected” with the disease. This is not true. They had each contracted syphilis in the usual manner but all were intentionally denied treatment in an effort to track the course of the disease, which is horrible enough in itself.⁷¹

In a generally sympathetic but critical review of the book, Kent Chadwick of the *Washington Free Press*, observed that to be “intellectually honest” progressives need to “clearly distinguish our moral values and our political agenda.” He objects to the “almost exclusive concentration on conspiracies of right-wing groups” in the compilation. He warns that this biased partisanship runs the risk that we “cheapen our own values and become true believers, mirror images of the self-righteous we froth against on the right.”⁷² This may have already happened to Zeskind and Berlet.

Leonard Zeskind’s penchant for alarmist and exaggerated predictions of danger is illustrated by leftist writer Alexander Cockburn in a February 1999 exchange in *The Nation* magazine. Cockburn writes, “Listen to the last sentence of Zeskind’s review of a [Morris] Dees book, here in *The Nation* in 1996:

“When the next generation’s D. W. Griffith shows a militia version of *Birth of a Nation* in the White House amidst fond remembrance of how Christian patriots braved repression and calumny to restore US sovereignty, a few will turn for elements of the truth to...” a book by Morris Dees! “Assuming all the libraries will be purged by then,” Zeskind warns darkly, “find a safe spot for your copies now.”⁷³

Was this merely anti-racist hyperbole, an attempt at inside humor, or was Zeskind serious? Taken seriously, this represents a serious failure of political analysis. Yet, viewed through the eyes of a fevered ideologue the threat from the domestic far right may be distorted to this level. A level, in my opinion, that bears no relationship to political reality whatsoever.

More recently, Zeskind was a panelist on the topic of racism at the 1997 annual convention of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America union. Among other things, he accused Pat Buchanan of amplifying David Duke’s beliefs and expressed concern about “translating the Nazi’s platform ‘into the political language of the Gingrich crowd.’”⁷⁴

“UE” as it is known, has a reputation as perhaps the most radical union in existence today, and also has a well-documented Communist Party past. According to historians Harvey Klehr and John Earl Haynes in their 1992 book, *The American Communist Movement*, referring to the expulsion of a number of Communist-led unions from the CIO in the 1940s:

The director of organization of the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers Union (U.E.), James Matles, was also a secret Communist, as was its secretary treasurer, Julius Emspak. Many second-tier leaders of the union were more open about their party affiliation. After another bitter struggle for control, the pro-Communist forces succeeded in gaining the upper hand and isolating the U.E.’s anti-Communists.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Eric Ward, editor, *Conspiracies: Real Grievances, Paranoia, and Mass Movements*, (Washington: Peanut Butter Press, 1997) See also: James A. Jones, *Bad Blood: The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment*. (NY: The Free Press, 1981).

⁷² Kent Chadwick, “Conspiracies of Hate,” *Washington Free Press*, (1977).

⁷³ Alexander Cockburn, “The ‘Conscience Industry’ says...,” *The Nation* (15 February 1999).

⁷⁴ Convention Summary, National Convention, United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America, 21-25 September 1997; *EU News* (September 1997).

⁷⁵ Harvey Klehr and John Earl Haynes, *The American Communist Movement: Storming Heaven Itself* (New York: Twain, 1992), 82.

Bert Cochran of Columbia University in his *Labor and American Communism*, characterizes U.E.'s pro-Communist behaviors thusly:

To make up for their prudence in striking and bargaining policies, they were reckless in following propagandistically the twists and turns of Communist Party policies... Neither is any enlightenment gained from a detailed recitation of Communists' techniques of control: how they staffed the union with members and adherents, how they fixed their positions ahead of time, how they positioned their people at meetings, how they deliberately muddled embarrassing questions, how they overawed dissenters with vituperation and character assassination.⁷⁶

Zeskind's Jewish Problem

In April, 2000, Zeskind's extremist past caught the eye of Kansas City's premier business journal, *Ingram's*. Jack Cashill, who had worked on the Kansas City Jewish Community Center's holocaust project and editor of *Ingram's*, made the following observation about Zeskind's local activity:

Leonard Zeskind owes Kansas City an apology. A big, fat one. The mischievous Zeskind has bamboozled *The Kansas City Star* and *The [Kansas City] Jewish Chronicle* into believing his prattle about the "abyss of mayhem and murder" America faces at the hands of its "white nationalists." And in the process, he has scared thousands of otherwise sane Kansas Citians half to death.

Zeskind is a so-called "watchdog," Kansas City's most celebrated, the winner of a \$295,000 McArthur "genius grant," the preferred source on "extremism" for papers like *The Star* and *The Jewish Chronicle* and political organizations like the Mainstream Coalition. Over the last decade, in fact, no fewer than ten different *Star* writers have gotten Zeskind's breathless take on everything from Pat Buchanan to the Ku Klux Klan...⁷⁷

The Mainstream Coalition is a left-liberal Kansas City-area coalition chaired by Rev. Robert Meneilly organized to stigmatize conservative activists by claiming specious "links and ties" with racists and neo-nazis. Cashill notes that Meneilly "made the preposterous claim that the altogether decent Christian conservatives of Johnson county were 'a threat far greater than the old threat of communism.'" Cashill continues:

Yet for all of his expertise, the Amazing Zeskind has chosen to keep mum about certain hard-core extremist groups of his acquaintance. And with good reason. He himself has carried their banners.⁷⁸

The *Ingram's* article went on to detail Zeskind's record of Marxist-Leninist "links and ties," quoting both *The Watchdogs* and Kansas City journalist Bruce Rodgers, who detailed Zeskind's paranoid demeanor in *City Magazine* in 1981. According to Cashill, Zeskind's demonization of local Christian conservatives 'has driven a wedge between area Christians and Jews that never before existed.'"

Jack Cashill is not alone in this assessment of Zeskind's extremist behavior. Following the publication of Cashill's article, John W. Uhlmann, president of the Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas, responded with a letter to the editor:

I appreciate very much reading the article about Leonard Zeskind. There some within the Jewish community who advance their own agenda under the guise of protecting the Jewish community. While it helps the liberal wing of the democratic party, it is doing irreparable harm in this country and to the Jewish community.

⁷⁶ Bert Cochran, *Labor and Communism: The Conflict That Shaped American Unions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 285-286.

⁷⁷ Jack Cashill, "Who's Watching the Watchdog," *Ingram's* (April 2000), 19-20

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

Ingram's has helped to expose the duplicity of people like Leonard Zeskind. Thank you for the brilliant writing and the insightfulness of the article.⁷⁹

The CDR and the Great Black Church Arson Conspiracy Hoax

In 1996 a huge media campaign commenced in the United States to publicize an alleged conspiracy by white racists, neo-Nazis and Ku Klux Klansmen to set fire to black churches throughout the south. The Center For Democratic Renewal was the primary organization pushing the story which it described as the work of "a well-organized white supremacist movement." The late Rev. Mac Charles Jones, a CDR leader, officer of the National Council of Churches, and associate of Leonard Zeskind, characterized it as a terrifying resurgence of white racism. CDR chair C. T. Vivian blamed the arsons on the Christian right, noting that there was only a "slippery slope" from conservative Christians to those who are really doing the burnings.⁸⁰

However, the issue was not this simple. On 5 July 1996 *Associated Press* writer Fred Bayles noted that of the 409 church fires since 1990, two-thirds were at white churches, while of the 148 fires since 1995, more than half were also at white churches. In the fires at black churches "only random links to racism" could be found. Bayles concluded that there was "no evidence that most of the 73 black church fires since 1995 can be blamed on a conspiracy or a general climate of racial hatred."⁸¹

A detailed analysis of the claims by the CDR and other players in the church burning conspiracy appeared in *New Yorker* magazine. Writer Michael Kelly noted that:

There is no evidence of a massive plot by organized hate groups. The people who set racially motivated fires at black churches tend to be loners and losers and copycats acting largely on drunken impulse, and they are few in number.⁸²

Kelly also comments on the effects of the CDR's false claims of a white racist conspiracy:

Placing the blame for the church burnings on a cultural conspiracy of white racism works toward two important political goals. First, by changing the definition of the word "conspiracy" to implicate not only the whites who have actually plotted to burn a church but whites in general and the entire American political establishment, it obscures the fact that federal investigators have to date uncovered no evidence of any national, or even regional, conspiracy in any of the fires, and it reaffirms the idea that 1996 equals 1963.

Second, in a critical election year it works to establish a political climate in which any Republican attempts to win votes on some of the Party's most popular issues may be depicted as fostering anti-black violence.⁸³

Michael Fumento, a former attorney for the U. S. Civil Rights Commission, writing in *Commentary* magazine, reported on his own independent investigation and concluded that the controversy was close to a "deliberate hoax." His investigation soon focused on the CDR. He noted that the CDR has a "rather more explicit" agenda than that of a "watchdog" or "anti-hate" group. This includes working "with progressive activists and

⁷⁹ John W. Uhlmann, letter, "Hidden Agenda Exposed," *Ingram's* (May 2000).

⁸⁰ Michael Fumento, "Politics and Church Burnings," *Commentary* (October 1996).

⁸¹ Fred Bayles, *Associated Press* article (5 July 1996).

⁸² Michael Kelly, "Playing With Fire," *New Yorker* (15 July 1996).

⁸³ *Ibid.*

organizations to build a movement to counter right-wing rhetoric and public-policy initiatives.”⁸⁴ According to Fumento:

What I found was that beginning last winter and throughout the spring, the CDR, in conjunction with the National Council of Churches (NCC), had been feeding the media a steady diet of “news” about black church burnings in the South.....Since 1990, the CDR...alleged, there had been 90 arson attacks against black churches in nine Southern states; the number had been rising every year; and each and every culprit “arrested and/or detained” was white.

I established that the CDR had systematically failed to count fires set by blacks in black churches, had labeled as arson a number of fires which responsible authorities insisted were attributable to other causes, and had altogether ignored fires in white churches.⁸⁵

What was the motive behind this CDR hoax? According to Fumento, an article in the 9 August 1996 edition of the *Wall Street Journal* revealed that the NCC had been having a hard time raising money to support its anti-racist programs. Working with seven other groups, the CDR and NCC established a special fund for burned churches and “to challenge racism throughout the country.”

By early August it had accumulated \$9 million from Americans sincerely alarmed by the specter of burning black churches, and contributions were continuing to pour in at the rate of approximately \$100,000 a day.⁸⁶

Fumento also observed that the person in charge of the Burned Churches Fund was a NCC employee by the name of Don Rojas, former press secretary to the late Marxist-Leninist leader of Grenada, Maurice Bishop.

In May, 1997 *Foundation Watch* newsletter discussed the National Council of Churches and its highly suspicious windfall. Observing that the Burned Churches Fund had raised \$12 million and, considering that many of the churches had fire insurance, only \$4.5 million would rebuild all the churches that had burned, the Foundation speculated what the NCC would do with the \$7 million surplus?:

The answer seems to be to use it for unpopular political advocacy programs. [Rev. Charles] Mac Jones and Don Rojas, the administrator for the Burned Churches Fund have plans to spend \$3.5 million “for program advocacy to address economic justice and interlocking oppressions from gender to homophobia”.....

The Institute For Religion and Democracy issued a report on the Burned Churches Campaign that reveals that Mac Jones headed a support committee for Communist leader Angela Davis when she and several Black Panthers were on trial for murder in the early seventies.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Fumento, Op Cit.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Fred Friedman, *Foundation Watch* (May, 1977).

Chapter Four

Political Research Associates

A Study in "Links and ties"

- As a religion, Marxism is a secularized form of the idea of predestination. Nicholas Berdyaev, *The Realm of Spirit and the Realm of Caesar*, 1952.
- Slogans are both exciting and comforting, but they are also powerful opiates for the conscience. James Bryant Conant, *Baccalaureate Address*, Harvard University, June 17, 1934.
- The connection between the Gulag and Marx is obvious. It is not an accident which can be explained by bureaucracy, Stalinist deviation or Lenin's errors. Rather it is a direct and ineluctable consequence of Marxist principles. The classless society is not a messianic vision, but rather another name for terror. Monique Hirschhorn, *Stanford French Review*, vol. 2, 1978.
- The religious quality of Marxism also explains a characteristic attitude of the orthodox Marxist against opponents. To him, as to any believer in a faith, the opponent is not merely in error but in sin. Dissent is disapproved of not only intellectually but also morally. Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 1942.
- It is almost impossible to convince people who are under the influence of ideological bigotry that those whom they regard as belonging to the enemy species are human. Louis J. Halle, *The Ideological Imagination*, 1972.

According to its own literature, Political Research Associates (PRA) began in Chicago in 1981 under the name Midwest Research. In 1987 Midwest Research moved to Cambridge, MA, and effected its name change in the process. In addition to numerous reports, articles and books, PRA publishes *The Public Eye* quarterly newsletter. The two principle officers of PRA have always been Jean Hardisty, Director, and John Foster "Chip" Berlet, analyst.⁸⁸

Although often described as a "senior analyst" at PRA, Berlet was, in fact, for years the only analyst in the three-person office. Margaret Quigley served as Berlet's primary researcher until her untimely death along with domestic partner Susie Chancey-O-Quinn in 1993. Jean Hardisty, an accomplished woman, holds the distinction of having been inducted into the "Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame" in October 1995. In recent years an influx of foundation money has swelled the PRA staff to six, including Berlet and Hardisty.

Guidestar, the internet search service of Philanthropic Research, Inc., lists Political Research Associates as follows:

PRA is a research center that analyzes information on anti-democratic movements and trends and publishes materials that explain their ideologies, strategies, agendas, financing and links to each other.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Unmasking The Political Right: A Ten Year Report, 1981-1991 (Cambridge: Political Research Associates, 1992.

⁸⁹ www.guidestar.org/search/ 13 March 2001.

What this description leaves out is the heavy radical left agenda of PRA itself, including the fact that those “anti-democratic” movements fail to include Marxist-Leninist and extreme leftist movements unless they are in sectarian dispute with PRA. As for the “links to each other,” PRA’s “links” are examined here in detail. There is nothing even vaguely impartial, objective or scholarly about PRA except the image it attempts to foist upon an unsuspecting public, including reporters and researchers who contact it for information.

A 1989 PRA biographical sheet on Chip Berlet lauded his tireless effort toward neutralizing police and counter-terrorist surveillance of radical leftist groups. Among his prepared lectures was “From Concentration Camps to Contragate: Nazis, Anti-Communism, and the National Security State.” In it he reveals:

How obsessive Cold War anti-communism led to an alliance with former Nazi collaborators and the development of the National Security State with its emphasis on militarism and covert action abroad, and secrecy and repression at home.⁹⁰

Another PRA regular is Russ Bellant, who in 1988 wrote a PRA document purporting to show that the Reagan administration was infiltrated by Nazis. The publication, *Old Nazis, The New Right and the Reagan Administration*⁹¹, roundly denounced by Republican Party officials and virtually ignored in the mainstream press, was favorably reviewed in the *People’s Weekly World*, publication of the Communist Party USA, which quoted Berlet as follows:

Only one-third of the report is devoted to the so-called ethnic Nazis...Other chapters reveal how these fascists worked hand-in-glove with the American Security Council, the World Anti-Communist League and other fascist-like groups and how their activities overlapped with the Iran-contras affair and U.S. foreign policy in South Africa and Central America. The bottom line is that a fascist and authoritarian network, whose guiding ideology is anti-communism, has been recruited into the Republican Party.⁹²

Bellant’s publication was also favorably reviewed in *Searchlight*, which was not surprising since it drew on that publication for much of its information. They concluded their review with “We now know who our enemies are.”⁹³

Chip Berlet and the National Lawyers Guild

The Public Eye was for years a semi-official organ of the National Lawyers Guild (NLG), of which Chip Berlet is a long-standing member. His 1989 biographical sheet distributed by PRA admits that he is a “former vice-president of the NLG and currently serves as Secretary of the NLG’s Civil Liberties Committee.” He also coordinates joint work between the NLG and the National Committee Against Repressive Legislation [NCARL].⁹⁴

A 1981 issue of the publication states unequivocally that “*The Public Eye* is produced in conjunction with the National Lawyers Guild Committee Against Government Repression and Police Crimes.” It also lists Chip Berlet as a managing editor.⁹⁵ What was not included in the biographical sheet is Berlet’s history as a writer for *High Times*, the virtual

⁹⁰ *Chip Berlet: Prepared Lectures for 1989* (Cambridge, MA: Political Research Associates, 1989).

⁹¹ Russ Bellant, *Old Nazis, The New Right and the Reagan Administration* (Cambridge: Political Research Associates, 1988).

⁹² Tim Wheeler, “The Bush Campaign - Fascists On Board,” *People’s Daily World* (22 September 1988).

⁹³ “Reviews,” *Searchlight* (May 1989), 20.

⁹⁴ Political Research Associates, *Biographical Information: Chip Berlet* (1989).

⁹⁵ *The Public Eye*, Volume III, Issues 1 and 2 (1981).

house organ of the recreational drug industry. Berlet's articles appeared from 1976 to 1981.⁹⁶

Professor Harvey Klehr of Emory University, in his detailed book *Far Left of Center: The American Left Today*, details the extreme left roots of the National Lawyers Guild:

The NLG is an affiliate of the Soviet-controlled International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL), founded in 1946. Expelled from France in 1949, the IADL is now headquartered in Brussels. Over the years it has steadfastly supported every twist and turn in Soviet foreign policy, including the invasions of Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan.⁹⁷

In *The Soviet Propaganda Network*, published in 1988, British diplomat Clive Rose, describes the IADL thusly:

The IADL, whose organizational links with the pre-war Comintern are more apparent than most of the current Soviet controlled international front organizations.

The IADL has a large number of national affiliates throughout the world, including the Haldane society in the United Kingdom, which was originally founded in the 1930s as a society of British socialist lawyers, which was disaffiliated by the Labour Party in 1949 on account of its subservience to the Communist Party, and the National Lawyers' Guild in the U.S.⁹⁸

During the 1960s and 1970s the NLG experienced considerable growth with the rise of the radical student movement. Several NLG figures were violent revolutionaries, including Bernardine Dohrn, the NLG student organizer in 1967 and fixture on the FBI's "most wanted list" for several years. Another was Judith Clark, now serving a long sentence for murder in the 1981 Brinks armored car robbery undertaken to fund radical leftist activities. According to Prof. Gunter Lewy of the University of Massachusetts:

By the early 1970s old and new left elements in the Guild had come to terms, for they shared basic goals, the most immediate of which was the victory of the Vietnamese Communists..... Marxist-Leninist terminology, previously shunned, now was used openly in Guild proceedings and publications.⁹⁹

An article in a 1981 issue of *Military Police* journal detailed the criminal careers of several National Lawyers Guild members as follows:

...Carlos Zapata who was killed in Denver by a bomb he was planting at a VFW hall on 22 March 1978. He was...involved in the National Lawyers Guild-sponsored 'Police Crimes Task Force.'

Bernardine Dohrn, the much sought Weather Underground fugitive, was named student director for the National Lawyers' Guild in 1967.

NLG member, Stephen Mitchell Bingham, is being sought by the state of California and the FBI for smuggling a .380 automatic pistol to George Jackson in prison...

...Guild member Frank Eugenio Martinez...was a Loyola law student who was active in NLG projects at the college and on the streets. Suspiciously, Frank's fingerprints ended up on several of the eight letter-bombs mailed to Denver police officers in

⁹⁶ Chip Berlet, "Where the Candidates Stand on Dope Reform," *High Times* (May 1976); "Inside The DEA," *High Times* (December/January 1976); "National Anti-Drug Coalition," *High Times* (May 1981).

⁹⁷ Klehr, 1988, 161.

⁹⁸ Clive Rose, *The Soviet Propaganda Network: A Directory of Organizations Serving Soviet Foreign Policy* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1988), 94, 98.

⁹⁹ Gunter Lewy, *The Cause That Failed: Communism in American Political Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 285.

1973...His younger brother, Francisco Kiko Martinez, also an attorney, was killed in a car when a bomb they were transporting exploded.¹⁰⁰

The article by Detective Arleigh McCree, a former military police officer who became Officer in Charge, Firearms and Explosives Unit of the Los Angeles Police Department, observes that “The NLG continues to act as a clearinghouse and as an apologist and defender for terrorists and terrorism.”

Civil Libertarian?

As for being a civil libertarian, consider Chip Berlet’s role in the harassment and humiliation of a 76-year-old Salem, MA, Roman Catholic priest who happened to attend a meeting where anti-Semitic comments were made. Apparently in concert with representatives of the right-wing chauvinistic Jewish Defense League (viewed by the FBI as a terrorist organization with a long history of violence), Berlet “conclusively identified” the priest on a videotape obtained by the JDL as the Rev. Francis S. Strykowski of St. John the Baptist Church in Salem. Berlet, who was also at the 1988 meeting, said “I was there posing as a racist.” According to *The Jewish Advocate*:

Rev. Francis Strykowski, 76, pastor of St. John the Baptist Parish in Salem, has tendered his resignation following an Archdiocese investigation confirming the authenticity of his presence at a videotaped 1988 white supremacist meeting. The controversial tape, released by the Boston area Jewish Defense League (JDL) in August...showed Strykowski and another individual, identified as Msgr. Lipka.¹⁰¹

In a statement, Father Strykowski stated that he “did not know ahead of time what would be the contents [of the talk]...it was racist and anti-Semitic. I sat through that and left immediately after it.” Father Strykowski had held his position at the parish since 1968.¹⁰²

The targeting and public humiliation of an elderly priest had no objective value. It hardly struck a blow against “racism, sexism and homophobia” - Berlet’s most frequently cited hatreds. Rather, it demonstrated the vindictiveness and seeming sadism that has come to characterize Berlet’s activities. He’s a very angry man.

Berlet’s one-sided view of civil liberties runs through his entire career, or perhaps he has constructed a definition of civil liberties more congenial to his ideological imperatives. Writing with Leonard Zeskind, Lyn Wells and Jean Hardisty in a 1985 issue of *Shmate: A Journal of Progressive Jewish Thought*, Berlet rages at right-wing organizations such as the now-defunct American Security Council and Church League of America for “spying” on extreme leftists and sharing some of this information with law enforcement.

Another Berlet article in this same issue of *Shmate* claims that:

The right seeks to enforce upon America a narrow set of political and moral standards. In order to accomplish this, it must stifle debate and dissent. And to do that, it must seriously curtail our civil liberties.¹⁰³

It’s certainly true that there are right-wingers who have intolerant ideas about opponents and who would like to silence them, or worse. However, Berlet’s analysis omits any mention of the same behavior on the extreme left, not to mention by himself. For civil libertarians to be genuine, and not just shells for a particular ideological persuasion, they must apply the same standards along the entire political spectrum. If harassment, intimidation, stalking, and exposure for exposure’s sake are wrong for one they should also be wrong for all.

¹⁰⁰ Sgt. A. McCree, “A Case For Self-Defense,” *Military Police* (Summer 1981).

¹⁰¹ Dalia Miller, “Salem Priest Resigns After Probe,” *The Jewish Advocate* (6-12 November 1992), 1.

¹⁰² Dalia Miller, op cit.

¹⁰³ Chip Berlet, “Civil Liberties,” *Ibid.*, 37-41.

Chip Berlet and the John Birch Society

One of the oft repeated stereotypes of right-wingers, and of the John Birch Society in particular, is that they are “paranoid” or “engage in the politics of paranoia.” There’s probably a bit of truth to that inasmuch as all adversarial political organizations are necessarily suspicious of their opponents. In the case of the Birchers, however, they may not have been paranoid enough.

Chip Berlet, Jean Hardisty & the Revolutionary Left

On 13 January 1984 an open letter to Judge Charles Sifton entitled “Political Grand Juries Must Be Stopped!” appeared in the New York-based Marxist-Leninist, weekly, *Guardian*. The letter expressed outrage that federal grand juries were investigating the activities of leftist revolutionaries who have “supported mass struggle against the military...development of an armed clandestine movement [and] broad struggle against repression.” Among its signers were Chip Berlet and Jean Hardisty.

Other signers included convicted spy Morton Sobel, William Kunstler and Arthur Kinoy, attorneys active in the National Lawyers Guild and closely associated with Communist and revolutionary causes. Among the organizations represented were the Prairie Fire Organizing Committee (PFOC), John Brown Anti-Klan Committee (JBAKC), International Workers Party (IWC), League for Revolutionary Workers (LRW), May 19th Communist Organization (M19CO), National Lawyers Guild (NLG), Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika (PGRNA), Revolution in Africa Action Committee (RAAC), Sojourner Truth Organization (STO); Women Against Imperialism (WAI) and the Youth International Party (YIP).¹⁰⁴

The PFOC, formed in 1974, was the publishing arm of the Weather Underground Organization (WUO), the terrorist spin-off from Students For a Democratic Society (SDS). Its first pamphlet was *Prairie Fire: The Politics of Revolutionary Anti-imperialism*, written by Bernardine Dohrn, Bill Ayers and Jeff Jones. According to Harvey Klehr:

It announced that “we are communist men and women” and urged its supporters to form an above-ground arm of the WUO. Chapters soon formed in several cities with perhaps a thousand members. Members of PFOC helped facilitate communication and logistics for WUO members living underground.¹⁰⁵

The PFOC also published *Breakthrough*, a quarterly journal which routinely called for widespread violent resistance to U. S. imperialism, and ran article after article praising third-world single party Marxist-Leninist dictatorships.

Another Weather Underground front, the John Brown Anti-Klan Committee, was formed in 1978 and soon had chapters in over a dozen cities with about 300 members.¹⁰⁶ It quickly took its place alongside other Marxist-Leninist based anti-Klan organizations and proceeded to stage violent confrontations with small Klan groups when they held marches or demonstrations.

The JBAKC counter-demonstrators were almost always more violent than the Klansmen they protested. In 1983, for example, the JBAKC attempted to halt a parade of seventy Klansmen in Austin, TX. Counter-demonstrators threw rocks injuring twelve people, including several police officers. Two members of the JBAKC - Elizabeth Ann Duke and Linda Evans - were among those involved in the openly terrorist May 19th Communist

¹⁰⁴ *Guardian* (11 January 1984).

¹⁰⁵ Klehr, 1988, 109.

¹⁰⁶ *Montgomery Journal* (10 February 1983).

Organization.¹⁰⁷ In 1984 the JBAKC publication, *Death To The Klan*, published the following communiqué:

November 7, 1983

Tonight we bombed the U. S. Capitol building. We attacked the U. S. Government to retaliate against imperialist aggression that has sent the marines, the CIA and the army to invade sovereign nations...

We are acting in solidarity with all those leading the fight against U. S. imperialism - the peoples of Grenada, Lebanon, Palestine, El Salvador, and Nicaragua - who are confronting direct U. S. aggression...

Our action carries a message to the U. S. imperialist ruling class: we purposely aimed out attack at the institutions of imperialist rule rather than at individual members of the ruling class and government. We did not choose to kill any of them at this time...¹⁰⁸

The May 19th Communist Organization acquired its notoriety from the role of several members in the attempted holdup of a Brinks armored truck in Nyack, NY, in November 1981 that left two policemen and one security guard dead. A press release claimed M19CO was being persecuted because it supported armed struggle of oppressed nations like American blacks and Puerto Ricans as well as the militant struggle against white supremacy.¹⁰⁹

Approximately six months later on 11 July 1984 another letter, this time addressed “To All Progressive People,” appeared in the Marxist-Leninist *Guardian* weekly that included the following:

We, the undersigned, are grand jury resisters, former grand jury resisters, people who have been targets of grand jury investigations, and people who have consistently fought for non-collaboration with the grand jury. We are united now to protest the current escalation of grand jury attacks....

Criminal contempt is a “legal” mechanism to establish political internment in the United States...an attempt to instill a “snitch mentality” in which fear of jail overrides justice and principle.

We urge you to join us in refusing to collaborate with the grand jury or the FBI. Now more than ever before we need a powerful resistance movement that would never give the U. S. government or its agencies any information about the national liberation struggles and progressive movements, that refuses to collaborate with the military draft, that is willing to harbor Central American refugees, that staunchly resists the U. S. War mobilization. We won’t cooperate! Stop the grand jury!

Among the over one hundred signers—a virtual who’s who of the extreme radical left—were Chip Berlet and Jean Hardisty. Other signers included David Gilbert, Kathy Boudin and Judith Clark, all members of the radical Weather Underground organization and all serving prison sentences for the murder of a Brinks armored truck guard in 1981. Among the numerous organizations included was the Sojourner Truth Organization.¹¹⁰

This letter is an example of the classic Marxist-Leninist approach to the crimes committed by Communists in the service of their ideology. Here we see an attempt to shift attention from what Marxist-Leninists have done to what has been done to Marxist-Leninists. By focusing on the civil liberties implications of the government’s case against the Weather

¹⁰⁷ John George and Laird Wilcox, *Nazis, Communists, Klansmen and Others on the Fringe* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1992), 158.

¹⁰⁸ “Armed Resistance Unit Bombs US Capitol,” *Death To The Klan* (Winter, 1984, No. 3).

¹⁰⁹ May 19th Communist Organization, *Press Release* (2 November 1981).

¹¹⁰ *Guardian* (11 July 1984), reprinted in *Stop The Grand Jury*, John Brown Anti-Klan Committee (November 1984).

Underground, they seek to dodge the question of the horrible crimes committed by them, and the historic crimes of Marxist-Leninists generally. Not what they have done, but what has been done to them.

The *Guardian* contained a long article by Chip Berlet and Jean Hardisty in a 1981 *Guardian Special Report*. Entitled “An Anatomy of the New Right,” they say:

The paramilitary, neo-fascist and ultra-right branch [of the right-wing] has ties to both the old right and the new right, but is publicly shunned by both. This branch includes groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, the Nazis, Posse Comitatus and other armed militants.

The new right, by inflaming public opinion and promoting fear, is attempting to galvanize its followers into a militant anti-Communist crusade reminiscent of the cold war...¹¹¹

With a relationship lasting a full decade and more, in September 1991 Chip Berlet penned what was to be among his last articles for the *Guardian* before it went out of business. *Right-wing Conspiracists Make Inroads Into Left* was devoted to a major theme in Berlet’s worldview, that “fascists” were conspiring to establish common ground with leftists on certain issues in order to compromise and infiltrate the radical left.¹¹²

In 1983 an issue of *The Public Eye* contained a statement by Cathy Wilkerson, a captured fugitive from the ill-fated Weather Underground terrorist bomb factory that blew up in March 1970 killing three people, “prior to her imprisonment for Weather Underground Activities, January 15, 1981”:

Today I am going to prison to serve a three-year term. I have been identified as one who sought to attack the foundations of American justice...I want to take this opportunity to extend my solidarity to the people and communist parties of Vietnam and Cuba...and I want to send special love and solidarity to the sisters and brothers of the Puerto Rican Movement who are P.O.W.’s in our prisons....¹¹³

Much of this issue of *The Public Eye* was devoted to the “New McCarthyism” surrounding the 1981 Brinks Armored Car Robbery. In a preface to an article critical of press coverage of the event, *The Public Eye* had the following lead:

The Brinks Robbery ushered in a new phase for the current witch hunt. As before, the press becomes a willing, almost eager, partner in circulating the most ludicrous charges regarding progressive political groups and individuals, as long as someone could be quoted alleging a connection to the Brinks robbery.¹¹⁴

One cannot but reflect on the many articles by Chip Berlet “linking and tying” individuals to various right-wing causes based on “someone being quoted alleging a connection...”

Chip Berlet and Chicago Area Friends of Albania

His long-standing relationship with the NLG notwithstanding, perhaps the most outrageous extreme left link Chip Berlet possesses is his membership in the Chicago Area Friends of Albania (CAFA). Founded in 1983, CAFA is dedicated toward individuals who “are friendly and supportive of the People’s Socialist Republic of Albania.”¹¹⁵ In 1985

¹¹¹ *Guardian Special Report* (Fall, 1981), reprinted by *Public Eye*.

¹¹² Chip Berlet, “Right-wing Conspiracists Make Inroads Into Left,” *Guardian* (11 September 1991), 3.

¹¹³ *The Public Eye* (Volume IV, Issues 1 & 2, 1983), 20-21.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, 23.

¹¹⁵ Chicago Area Friends of Albania, *form letter signed by Sally Olson* (6 June 1983).

when Albanian dictator Enver Hoxa died, CAFA circulated a letter to its mailing list requesting “condolences” be sent to Hoxa’s wife and other Communist officials there.¹¹⁶

Albania, now going through the rigors of transformation from a one-party Marxist-Leninist dictatorship to some semblance of democracy, was for decades one of the most repressive of Communist countries. Moreover, this characteristic has been so widely documented that no one could not be aware of the horrible, murderous nature of that regime. Freedom House, which monitors human rights around the world, gave the following characterization of Albania at approximately the time of Berlet’s membership in CAFA:

Albania is a traditional Marxist-Leninist dictatorship. While there are a number of elected bodies, including an assembly, the parallel government of the Communist Party (4.5 percent of the people) is decisive at all levels; elections offer only one list of candidates.

Press, radio, and television are completely under government or party control, and communication with the outside world is minimal. Media are characterized by incessant propaganda, and open expression of opinion in private conversations can lead to long prison sentences. There is an explicit denial of freedom of thought for those who disagree with the government. Imprisonment for reasons of conscience is common; torture is frequently reported, and execution is invoked for many reasons.¹¹⁷

Nevertheless, on 26 June 1987 when Political Research Associates was preparing to make its move to Boston, CAFA held an open house and farewell party in Chip Berlet’s honor. A CAFA flyer requested:

Help C.A.F.A. say goodbye and good luck to one of its long-time members, Chip Berlet. Chip and his family are moving to the Boston area, to continue their anti-fascist work there. Chip was one of our founding members, and a steadfast friend of Albania through thick and thin. Come give him a good send off.¹¹⁸

After this information was made public in 1992 Berlet was challenged concerning it. In an Internet posting under the heading of the NLG Civil Liberties Committee dated 13 August 1993 Berlet responded thusly:

I joined the Albania group at a time when I was investigating why Yugoslav agents were harassing the émigrés from Albania and Kosovo in Chicago. One did not have to support the government of Albania to join. I have always opposed Stalinism.¹¹⁹

However, at the Millennial Studies Conference at Boston University in 1998 Berlet acknowledged that his membership in CAFA was proving embarrassing and claimed that his only reason for joining was to find a platform to practice public speaking!¹²⁰ This from a “one of our founding members, and a steadfast friend of Albania through thick and thin.”

Chip Berlet and U.S. Law Enforcement and Intelligence Agencies

¹¹⁶ Chicago Area Friends of Albania, *form letter signed by Sally Olson* (12 April 1985).

¹¹⁷ Raymond D. Castill, *Freedom In The World: Political Rights and Civil Liberties, 1987-1988*, (New York: Freedom House, 1989).

¹¹⁸ Chicago Area Friends of Albania, *flyer*, (26 June 1987).

¹¹⁹ H2JArticle 16502...in alt.conspiracy, From: NLG Civil Liberties Committee <cberlet@igc.apc.org>. Date: 13 Aug 93 20:29 PDT. Subject: 4mRe: Who Is Chip Berlet?.

¹²⁰ Millennial Studies Conference, Boston University, 2-4 February 1997.

Concern over anti-Communism represents a thread that runs through almost everything Chip Berlet does. In 1991 Chip Berlet and Linda Lotz released a revised version of their *Reading List On Intelligence Agencies and Political Repression*. It was distributed by far left groups including the Movement Support Network (MSN), Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), and National Lawyers Guild Civil Liberties Committee. The list consists mainly of works attacking United States intelligence and law enforcement agencies and virtually none of some 150 titles are critical of the intelligence or law enforcement activities of any Communist regime. The list notes that “This is the reading list circulated by Phil Agee at his Speakout lectures.”¹²¹

Who is Linda Lotz? According to a biographical note on the *Reading List*:

...Ms. Lotz was formerly a staff organizer for the now-defunct Campaign for Political Rights, a Washington, DC-based coalition which organized against covert action abroad and political surveillance at home.¹²²

The Campaign For Political Rights (CPR) was originally founded in 1977 as the Campaign To Stop Government Spying (CSGS) with the help of Morton Halperin and the National Lawyers Guild. It changed its name in 1978. The primary role of the organization, in addition to exposing American intelligence efforts overseas, was to undertake a disinformation campaign on behalf of Marxist-Leninist terrorists in the United States. According to Scott Steven Powell:

Under the leadership of Morton Halperin, CPR became the workhorse in the campaign against the CIA, FBI, and local law-enforcement agencies.

For Halperin there are, it seems, “no enemies on the Left.” One of his CPR assistants, Ester Herst, was national director for the National Committee Against Repressive Legislation (NCARL)...Halperin flew to London in 1977 for the defense of Philip Agee, who was being deported from Great Britain as a security risk after his continuing collaboration with Cuban intelligence.¹²³

Who is Phillip Agee? He is a renegade Central Intelligence Officer implicated in revealing the names of CIA officials in a manner leading to their endangerment, and in at least one case, that of Richard Welch, their death.¹²⁴ Agee was deeply involved in the anti-government *Counterspy* magazine, which made a practice of such disclosures. According to an item in *Security Intelligence* newsletter:

To the surprise of few, CIA defector Philip Agee was named as a recipient of KGB pay for almost 20 years. Florintino Aspillaga Lombard, formerly a major in Cuba’s Direccion General de Inteligencia (DGI) before defecting to the US, said payments to Agee for anti-CIA writing and lecturing could exceed \$1 million.

Agee...left the agency in 1968 and began exposing CIA officers and operations through lectures, magazines and books.¹²⁵

Referring to *Counterspy*, a *Washington Post* editorial asked, “What other result than the killing did Mr. [Timothy] Butz and his colleagues at *Counterspy* expect when they fingered

¹²¹ Chip Berlet and Linda Lotz, *Reading List on Intelligence Agencies and Political Repression* (NY: National Lawyers Guild Civil Liberties Committee, 1991).

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ S. Steven Powell, *Covert Cadre: Inside the Institute For Policy Studies* (Ottawa, IL: Green Hill Publishers, 1987), 72-73.

¹²⁴ “Richard S. Welch,” *Washington Post*, (29 December 1975), p. A16.

¹²⁵ “To The Surprise Of A Few....,” *Security Intelligence* (24 August 1992), 5.

Mr. Welch?"¹²⁶ Butz, incidentally, was on the editorial staff of *The Public Eye*, along with Chip Berlet and Russ Bellant.¹²⁷

U.S. Senator John Chaffee, a ranking member of the Select Committee on Intelligence pointed out in the *Congressional Record*:

At the time of the Welch assassination, *Counterspy* magazine claimed they had leaked the names of 225 alleged CIA agents. Now, five years later, Louis Wolf of *Covert Action Information Bulletin* can boast that he has helped to disclose the names of more than 2,000 American intelligence officers stationed around the world.¹²⁸

Louis Wolf, incidentally, is listed as being on the advisory board of Political Research Associates on PRA's 1999 letterhead.¹²⁹

Agee is one of Chip Berlet's heroes, and the old *Counterspy* and *Covert Action Information Bulletin* crowd include some of his close working associates. Agee gave a revealing account of his politics in an interview with a Swiss magazine in 1975:

The CIA is plainly on the wrong side, that is, the capitalistic side. I approve [of] KGB activities, communist activities in general, when they are to the advantage of the oppressed. In fact, the KGB is not doing enough in this regard...¹³⁰

More recently Agee commented on his revolutionary sympathies and his role (with Louis Wolf) in the destabilization of American intelligence activities:

Havana, Cuba, July 1998

This was an exciting city 20 years ago this month, as more than ten thousand young people from around the globe gathered for the Eleventh World Festival of Youth and Students.

A group of had just launched this magazine in Washington, DC. as the *CovertAction Information Bulletin*, and all six of us were here for the world festival.

We gave speeches describing Agency [Central Intelligence Agency] operations and how to identify their undercover personnel, and we testified at the International Tribunal Against Imperialism, the Festival's main political event which focused on the CIA's war against Cuba.¹³¹

As for *Covert Action Information Bulletin*, according to counter-terrorism writer Neil Livingstone:

Publications like the *Covert Action Information Bulletin* are widely regarded, even within the liberal community, as paranoia mongers that view the counterterrorism community as a sinister aggregation of quick-on-the-trigger thugs and ideologues engaged in all manner of skullduggery...¹³²

Unlike the far right, where alliances are difficult and unstable and individuals tend not to work well together, alliances and linkages among certain elements of the extreme left appear common and more enduring, even when they have the effect of destabilizing U.S. government operations against terrorism, domestic and foreign.

¹²⁶ Welch, Op Cit.

¹²⁷ "Public Eye Staff," *The Public Eye* (Vol II, Issues 1 & 2, 1979), 3.

¹²⁸ "For The Record," *Washington Post*, 27 July 1980.

¹²⁹ Letterhead, Political Research Associates, 1999.

¹³⁰ Peter Studer, "Philip Agee -- Turncoat CIA Agent," *Tages Anzeiger* (Zurich, Switzerland), March 1975 (undated clipping).

¹³¹ Philip Agee, "CovertAction Quarterly: Turning Twenty, Looking Back," *CovertAction Quarterly* (Fall 1998).

¹³² Neil C. Livingstone, *The Cult of Counterterrorism* (NY: Lexington Books, 1990), 30-31.

In the Spring of 1987 a Berlet article attacking domestic counter-terrorism practices of various police departments appeared in *Overthrow*, the appropriately named organ of the far left Youth International Party. Among those targeted were the Chicago Police Department Intelligence Unit, the Texas Department of Public Safety, the Indianapolis Police Department and the Detroit Police Department.¹³³

In recent years Berlet has softened his stance against repressive actions against political dissidents, providing they are identified with the conservative right. In March 2000 a group of students at Brandies University sought to bring veteran movie actor and National Rifle Association president Charlton Heston to speak at the campus. The university responded with a poorly concealed tactic used to discourage politically incorrect speakers. They would not allow Heston to speak unless the student group put up between \$5,000 and \$10,000 to finance “security” for Heston. These included “a bomb sniffing dog, ten police officers, two metal detector wands, a paramedic team and four pints of Mr. Hestons blood type.”¹³⁴

Had similar requirements been made for a speech by Jesse Jackson or a similar figure on the far left the implied threat to the safety of the speaker would have been an instant scandal. Berlet responded to the situation with a statement that “What Brandies University is asking for is the minimum security required for a major public figure such as Heston in a country that does not have adequate handgun control.”¹³⁵ But security for Heston from whom? Certainly not the “gun nuts” that Heston champions, or the militia types Berlet has tried to associate both Heston and the NRA with. Perhaps its security from the extreme leftists who are more comfortable with Berlet than Heston. Berlet may know what he’s talking about.

Chip Berlet and the United Front Against Fascism

On 10 August 1991 Chip Berlet was a featured speaker at a rally on “Racism, Fascism and the New Right,” in Seattle, WA, sponsored by the “United Front Against Fascism.” Endorsers of the event included such diverse elements as the Freedom Socialist Party (FSP), on whose premises the rally was held, and “Asian Lesbians Outside Asia (ALOA).”¹³⁶ The FSP was formed in 1964 when the Seattle branch of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) broke away from the national organization. The organization has slowly shifted its emphasis from traditional Marxism-Leninism to revolutionary feminism and anti-racism.¹³⁷ Its principles include:

The working class is international and bound by global abuse. It must liberate itself through socialism. We support revolution on all fronts and seek to transform it into world socialism, which alone can defeat capitalism.

The struggles of the oppressed minorities against racism objectively challenge the basic core of the American political system. The resistance of people of color, who suffer dual oppression, spurs all other sections of the working class to advanced political consciousness and militancy.

¹³³ Chip Berlet, “Secret Police Political Spying Network Revealed,” *Overthrow*, Vol. 9, No. 1, Spring 1987, np.

¹³⁴ Press Release, Young America’s Foundation, *Students Want Hesston; Administration Asks for Blood...LITERALLY*, 14 March 2000.

¹³⁵ Op cit.

¹³⁶ Flyer, United Front Against Fascism, Seattle, WA, n.d.

¹³⁷ Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle and Dan Georgakas, *Encyclopedia of the American Left* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992).

History has proven that only a thoroughly democratic and centralized vanguard party can lead the proletariat and its many allies to power. The FSP, a product of the living tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky, aspires to become a mass organization capable of providing direction for the coming American Revolution.¹³⁸

The Freedom Socialist Party has branches in Australia and Canada in addition to ten branch offices in the United States. Its membership is estimated at several hundred.

Chip Berlet and the Socialist Scholars Conference

On 24, 25, and 26 April 1992 the 10th annual Socialist Scholars Conference was held in New York City. Sponsors included the Marxist-Leninist *Guardian* newspaper, the New York Marxist School (NYMS), the Research Group on Socialism and Democracy (RGSD), and the Radical Philosophy Association (RPA). The program included panels with Angela Davis, then member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party USA (CPUSA), and Carl Bloice, then editor of the CPUSA's *People's Weekly World*.

Chip Berlet, along with Dennis King, Linda Hunt and A. J. Weberman conducted a panel on "How to Investigate the Right," sponsored by Political Research Associates. Other panels on radical topics were conducted by the *Socialist Register* and *Monthly Review* magazines; the Workers Defense League (WDL); the Soviet Workers Information Committee (SWIC); and *Social Text* magazine.¹³⁹

Chip Berlet and the Brecht Forum / New York Marxist School

In the extremist underworld of New York City's Marxist subculture there exists a complex of organizations governed by an interlocking directorate. The Brecht Forum / New York Marxist School / Institute for Popular Education are basically one and the same. Of special interest is the Brecht Forum, named after Marxist-Leninist writer Bertolt Brecht, perhaps one of the most blatant apologists ever for Communist atrocities. Regarding the role of the Communist functionary Brecht had this to say:

He who fights for Communism must be able to fight and to renounce fighting, to say the truth and not say the truth, to be helpful and unhelpful, to keep a promise and to break a promise, to go into danger and to avoid danger, to be known and to be unknown. He who fights for Communism has of all the virtues only one: that he fights for Communism.¹⁴⁰

Brecht was involved with Communist activity in the motion picture industry among his many activities on behalf of Marxism-Leninism. According to Kenneth Lloyd Billingsley's 1998 account of Communist activity in 1930's and 40's Hollywood, *Hollywood Party*:

Brecht, who in 1935 had told Sidney Hook that Stalin's victims deserved to be shot even if they were innocent, had gained fame with *Three Penny Opera*, written by Kurt Weill. Brecht collaborated with Hans Eisler on *Die Massnahme* (The Measures Taken"), an agitprop musical about four agitators who are faced with a decision about a delinquent comrade. "We must shoot him and throw him into the

¹³⁸ *Freedom Socialist Party -- Its Program and Principles: Where We Stand*, Freedom Socialist Party, n.d.

¹³⁹ Flyer, Tenth Annual Socialist Scholars Conference, April 24, 25, 26 1992, Borough of Manhattan Community College, NY, n.d.

¹⁴⁰ Quoted in Irving Howe and Lewis Coser, *The American Communist Party: A Critical History (1919-1857)*, (New York: Praeger, 1962), 505.

quicklime pit,” the agitators decide. Later they say, “We shot him and threw him into the quicklime pit. And when the quicklime had eaten him, we returned to our work.” In the final chorus is the line “And our work was happy, and you have spread the teachings of the classics, the ABC of Communism.”¹⁴¹

Hans Eisler was the brother of Gerhart Eisler, one of the most notorious Comintern agents of his era, highly skilled in espionage, sabotage and subversion. Billingsley states:

According to Ruth Fisher, Gerhart’s sister, Gerhart Eisler was a major Communist agent in America, directing Party affairs on behalf of the Kremlin.¹⁴²

Bertolt Brecht...had fled to East Germany, where Gerhart Eisler had also been welcomed. There Brecht would enjoy full cooperation from the Communist regime in staging his plays, along with an Austrian passport, a West German publisher, and a Swiss bank account.¹⁴³

According to FBI documents released under the Freedom of Information Act, Brecht’s communist activities were well known to the Bureau:

...it has been ascertained that Brecht is a frequent contact of individuals suspected of espionage activities in behalf of the Soviet Government as well as known Communists active in the movie industry in the Hollywood area. Brecht himself is a suspected agent of the Soviet Government and has been contacted by Gregori Khiefets, the former Soviet Vice Consul in San Francisco, who was in charge of Soviet espionage activities on the West Coast prior to his departure from the United States in July of 1944.¹⁴⁴

The New York Marxist School was established in 1973 by Arthur Felberbaum, a Young Socialist Alliance (YSA) activist, in collaboration with the Marxist Educational Collective (MEC).¹⁴⁵ The board of directors of the BF/NYMS/IPE includes Marilyn Clement, formerly of the *Guardian* and Center For Democratic Renewal. On the advisory board we find Carl Bloice, former editor of the Communist Party USA’s *People’s Weekly World*.¹⁴⁶

In September 1994 Chip Berlet conducted a three lecture seminar under the auspices of the Brecht Forum on “The Resistible Rise of Neofascism.”¹⁴⁷ Other recent programs by the group have included presentations by Irwin Silber, former editor of the *Guardian*, current editor of *Crossroads*; Peter Camejo, former officer of the Socialist Workers Party;¹⁴⁸ and a “two-week intensive study entitled “Marxism vs. The Contract On America.”¹⁴⁹

Berlet’s association with the Brecht Forum is an enduring process. On 11 May 2001 he will lecture on “Producers and Parasites: Scapegoating and Right-Wing Power” with Matthew Lyons. Programs by other lecturers during this session of the Forum include

¹⁴¹ Kenneth Lloyd Billingsley, *Hollywood Party: How Communism Seduced the American Film Industry in the 1930’s and 1940’s* (Rocklin, CA: Forum, 1998), 196.

¹⁴² Op Cit., 202.

¹⁴³ Op. Cit.

¹⁴⁴ Office Memorandum [FBI], United States Government, to E. A. Tamm, from D. M Ladd. 3 October 1945.

¹⁴⁵ Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle, and Dan Georgakas, *Encyclopedia of the American left* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 650.

¹⁴⁶ Schedule of Events, January-March 1997, Brecht Forum.

¹⁴⁷ Brecht Forum / New York Marxist School / Institute for Popular Education, Sept-Oct 1994 Schedule.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Brecht Forum / New York Marxist School / Institute for Popular Education, May-July 1995 Schedule.

“Twentieth Century Marxism: An Evaluation” and “Revolution and the Transition to Socialism.”¹⁵⁰ A congenial place for Mr. Berlet.

An associate of Berlet’s, Dennis King, conducted a seminar on “David Duke, Lyndon LaRouche, and the Growth of Electoral Neo-Fascism” at the New York Marxist School on 4 June 1991.¹⁵¹ King is author of *Lyndon LaRouche and the New American Fascism*¹⁵² as well as a ten-year past member of the extreme Marxist-Leninist sect, the Progressive Labor Party. King’s Marxist-Leninist “links and ties” are not mentioned in his book or any of the publicity surrounding it. Many people mistakenly believed that it was written by an objective researcher who was simply opposed to LaRouche’s brand of extremism.

Another participant in the Brecht Forum/New York Marxist School is Harry Magdoff, a long-time member of the advisory board and occasional lecturer. In 1991, for example, Magdoff gave a lecture entitled “The Age of Imperialism” during the BF/NYMS spring session.¹⁵³ Since 1968 he has also been an editor of the non-party Marxist journal, *Monthly Review*. In the April 2000 issue of that publication he spoke of spending “years struggling against the odds to make a living in the environment of great fear produced by the mania of anticommunism.”¹⁵⁴

Magdoff is also known in other circles as well. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union scholars have gradually gained access to Soviet records of their dealings with the Communist Party, USA, and the transcription of the “Venona” coded documents, which contain information on Soviet undercover activities in the United States. Mentioned in the Venona documents in conjunction with the Communist infrastructure that had penetrated the U. S. Government was an individual named Magdoff, an employee of the War Production Board and alleged member of the secret “Perlo Group.” Harry Magdoff had worked for the War Production Board.

According to John Earl Haynes and Hervey Klehr, authors of *Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America*, former Communist Party courier Elizabeth Bentley had named Harry Magdoff as a member of the Perlo Group, and in a 1944 cable KGB officer Iskhak Akhmerov had assigned Magdoff the cover name of “Kant.”¹⁵⁵

Chip Berlet and the Midwest Anti-Fascist Network (MAFNET)

On 25 September 1995 the second annual “Midwest Anti-Fascist Network” (MAFNET) held a three-day conference in Columbus, Ohio. Speakers included Chip Berlet as well as:

Rita Bo Brown, former member of the nominally terrorist George Jackson Brigade (JGB). Jackson was killed in August 1970 when his brother attempted to free him from Soledad Prison by bursting in to a Marin County, CA, courtroom handing guns to three convicts and taking five hostages. In the shootout that ensued five people were killed including the judge.

¹⁵⁰ Brecht Forum / New York Marxist School / Institute for Popular Education, April-June 2001 Schedule.

¹⁵¹ Catalog, New York Marxist School (Spring, 1991), 12.

¹⁵² Dennis King, *Lyndon LaRouche and the New American Fascism* (New York: Doubleday, 1989).

¹⁵³ Catalog, New York Marxist School, 23.

¹⁵⁴ Harry Magdoff, “Notes From An Editor,” *Monthly Review* (April 2000).

¹⁵⁵ Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, and Fridrikh Igorevich Firsov, *The Secret World of American Communism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 312-13, 316.; John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, *Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 117, 118, 119, 121, 128, 409n2.

Signe Waller, former member of Jerry Tung's Worker's Viewpoint Organization (WVO), which evolved into the Communist Workers Party (CWP), a small, violence-prone Marxist-Leninist sect. In 1979 armed members of the CWP were killed in a shootout with Ku Klux Klansmen in Greensboro, NC. Her husband, Michael Waller, was one of five people killed.¹⁵⁶

Also in attendance were representatives of Southern Poverty Law Center's (SPLC) Klanwatch project, Leonard Zeskind's Center For Democratic Renewal (CDR) and RASH, an anti-racist Skinhead organization. Seminars were held on such diverse subjects as "Doing Revolutionary Anti-Klan Work" and "What Is Fascism."

Guardian

In order to fully grasp the apparent affinity both Chip Berlet and Political Research Associates and Leonard Zeskind and the Center For Democratic Renewal had for the now-defunct Marxist-Leninist (and sometime Maoist) publication, *Guardian*, it may help to know a little of its background.

Guardian long described itself as an "independent radical newsweekly." If the publishers, Weekly Guardian Associates, later the Institute for Independent Social Journalism, Inc., wanted to be more exact they would call their tabloid an "independent Marxist-Leninist newsweekly," for that has been the main thrust through its many changes over the years.

Launched as the *National Guardian* in October 1948 by James Aronson, Cedric Belfrage and John McManus, the paper was closely associated with the 1948 Progressive Party candidacy of Henry Wallace and also with the American Labor Party, on whose ticket John McManus ran for governor of New York in 1950 and 1954.

National Guardian was allied with the Communist Party's *Daily Worker* in opposing United States involvement in the Korean War and was among the first publications to oppose U. S. involvement in Vietnam. Contributors included pro-Communist writers such as Agnes Smedley and Anna Louise Strong. It also carried dispatches from Wilfred Burchett, often behind Communist lines, during the Vietnam War. Burchett, who died in Sofia, Bulgaria in September 1983, was a significant influence in the *National Guardian's* editorial policies and it would help to look into his background.

Robert Manne, an Australian historian and author of *The Petrov Affair: Politics and Espionage* has produced a detailed report on Burchett under the auspices of the McKenzie Institute for the Study of Terrorism, Revolution and Propaganda of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. He notes:

Wilfred Burchett, however, did not completely commit himself to the Communist cause (at least in public) until the Cold War... His book from this period, *Cold War In Germany*, shows him now a convinced, credulous and often vicious Stalinist...

The Allied sectors of Germany are described as being in the grip of a Nazi revival...under the dominance of industrial barons and feudal landlords. By contrast Soviet policy in Germany is portrayed as staunchly for peace and the Soviet sector is seen has a haven of genuine culture and nursery of progressive land reform. It was not for nothing that *Cold War In Germany* was nominated for a Stalin prize.¹⁵⁷

Burchett is most notorious for his false reports on American use of germ warfare in the Korean War and his collaboration in the brainwashing of American POWs. In May 1952 Burchett reported to the world his own version of conditions in Communist-controlled POW camps claiming that

¹⁵⁶ See John George and Laird Wilcox, *Nazis, Communists, Klansmen and Others on the Fringe* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1992); see also Elizabeth Wheaton, *Code Name Greenkill: The 1979 Greensboro Killings* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1987).

¹⁵⁷ Robert Manne, *Agent of Influence: The Life and Times of Wilfred Burchett* (Toronto, McKenzie Institute, 1989).

This camp looks like a holiday resort in Switzerland. The atmosphere is also nearer that of a luxury holiday resort than a POW camp¹⁵⁸

According to Manne, Burchett also reported that:

...men in the POW camps were fed so well that he himself could not finish the “standard portion of meat and eggs he was offered....A British prisoner, selected “at random,” told him “we are all getting fat and brown.” Prisoners lazed around during the day with “swimming, fishing, sports, reading, writing.”¹⁵⁹

In June 1952 over Peking radio Burchett accused the Americans of perpetrating “the most monstrous crimes against humanity.” He said that in germ warfare the Americans had launched upon mankind a weapon more frightful than the atomic bomb. In order to support these allegations, Burchett assisted in the extraction of “confessions” from American pilot POWs. Manne explains the use of these confessions:

False confessions to fantastic crimes, extorted by protracted processes of mental and physical torture were of course a standard feature of the international Stalinist culture...Burchett himself...had played an important part in publicizing the confessions of Cardinal Mindszenty and Laszlo Rajk in post-war Hungary. Now in Korea he was to play a far more important role in publicizing to the world germ warfare “confessions” of captured American pilots.”¹⁶⁰

The hoax of American use of germ warfare in Korea has persisted in Marxist-Leninist circles until the present day. In 1998, however, news reports noted:

...documents from Russia’s Presidential Archive finally prove, more than four decades after the fact, that the United States was the victim of a disinformation campaign scripted by North Korea, China, and the Soviet Union.

A report by Lavernti Beria, head of Soviet intelligence, outlined the deception: “False plague regions were created, burials...were organized, measures were taken to receive the plague and cholera bacillus.”¹⁶¹

Burchett was typical of the extreme left viewpoint in *National Guardian*, for over the years the publication registered support for one single-party Marxist-Leninist dictatorship after another, lied and apologized for brutality and murder on a grand scale, and offered excuse after excuse for suppression, censorship and dictatorship.

John McManus died in 1961. James Aronson continued on until 1967 when he and Cedric Belfrage resigned. After leaving the paper Aronson taught journalism at universities in New York and was a teacher of journalism and propaganda techniques in the People’s Republic of China. He wrote three books, including a history of the *National Guardian* which he co-authored with Belfrage. Aronson died in 1987.¹⁶²

With occasional bursts of deviation, usually along the lines of support for the even more totalitarian Chinese Communist regime or the genocidal Cambodian Khmer Rouge, the *National Guardian* followed the line of the Communist Party USA most of the time until February 1968. Then a drastic change in staff took place following a revolt by younger radicals who felt that the publication should provide the anti-war and Marxist-Leninist movement with ideological coherency and leadership. After this editorial shakeup, the newsweekly declared independence from the CPUSA and shortened its name to *Guardian*. Dan Georgakas describes it as follows:

¹⁵⁸ New China News Agency (18 May 1952).

¹⁵⁹ Manne, Op Cit, 20.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 25.

¹⁶¹ Bruce B. Auster, “Unmasking An Old Lie: A Korean War Charge Is Exposed As a Hoax,” *U. S. News & World Report* (16 November 1998), 52.

¹⁶² Cedric Belfrage and James Aronson, *Something to Guard - The Stormy Life of the National Guardian, 1948-1967*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).

The *Guardian* maintained friendly but problematic relations with the CP. A major area of difference was the *Guardian's* rejection of the CP view that independent political parties were futile and that radicals should work within the Democratic Party. The *Guardian* held exactly the opposite view. In spite of the failures of the third parties in the 1950s, the *Guardian* took part in a party-building movement in the 1970s and in the 1980s used its influence within the Rainbow Coalition to keep that movement as independent of the Democratic Party as possible.¹⁶³

The first issue of the new *Guardian* carried a biting attack on liberal Senator Eugene McCarthy. A few issues later the readers were informed (once again) that the enemy was (and still is) liberalism:

The future of the radical movement will depend on how effective new left...advocates have been in convincing activists that their enemy is corporate liberalism -- of which Kennedy and McCarthy are both a part."¹⁶⁴

The following month *Guardian* readers were informed that "White Americans...lost their best friend when Martin Luther King was assassinated." Stokely Carmichael was quoted to the effect that King's death made it easier for blacks, since it proved to them that they should get guns.¹⁶⁵

Throughout the 1970s *Guardian* kept up a steady defense of "national liberation" struggles and focused on third world revolutionary movements and their occasional rise to power, which they invariably supported. In the 1980s, however, a subtle shift was taking place among Marxist-Leninist groups and publications. As usual, *Guardian* was in the forefront.

As it became more and more obvious even to Marxists that Marxism-Leninism was failing as an economic theory and growing unrest was developing within the Eastern European bloc, *Guardian* began to shift gears. Instead of applying Marxist analysis and Leninist organizing tactics to traditional economic issues (class struggle Marxism-Leninism), *Guardian* reinvented itself along with other elements of the American left and shifted to issues of ethnicity and gender and a kind of Marxism-Leninism of race and sex emerged, complete with a special vocabulary of cliches', buzzwords and slogans.

No longer did we see the steady knee-jerk rhapsodizing about this or that leftist dictatorship but a new knee-jerk rhapsodizing about the radical feminist, gay rights and anti-racist movement. These concerns had, of course, been part of the *Guardians* agenda all along, but in the 1980s they took on a new intensity and significance. Radical anti-racist, gay, and feminist cadres with Marxist-Leninist tendencies found a very congenial home in the new *Guardian*.

Whatever the nature of the relationship between Chip Berlet and Political Research Associates and Leonard Zeskind and the Center For Democratic Renewal and *Guardian*, it's significant that both parties regularly attempt to "link and tie" opposing individuals and groups with the publications they have written for or were favorably reported in. If one uses the standards suggested by their own writings, their "links" with *Guardian* bear looking into. If, on the other hand, these "links and ties" with the *Guardian* are tangential and unimportant, then so might be the alleged "links and ties" of their enemies on the right.

Summary

Watchdog organizations, although they may have laudable concerns, bear close and critical watching by journalists and law enforcement. In some cases they are but a lobby for the opposite extreme. If one accepts the legitimacy of their "links and ties" reasoning

¹⁶³ Dan Georgakas, in Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle and Dan Georgakas, *Encyclopedia of the American Left* (New York: Garland Publishing Company, 1990), 503.

¹⁶⁴ *Guardian* (23 March 1968).

¹⁶⁵ *Guardian* (13 April 1968).

then the “links and ties” of Watchdogs should be considered as well. To do otherwise would be irresponsible and dishonest.

Watchdogs have a general and self-admitted program of stifling freedom of expression with respect to criticism of their interests and a tendency to use underhanded and undemocratic means to attack their enemies. While claiming “human rights” as an agenda, they make it clear that not everyone is “human” enough to enjoy those rights. In this respect, they merely mimic the jingoism and bigotry of the movements they ostensibly oppose, including neo-Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan.

From a law enforcement standpoint, Watchdogs may be dangerous because of their disinformation activities. They tend to exaggerate and dramatize the activities of small and marginal individuals and organizations, thereby promoting over-reaction and hypervigilance. By releasing “lists” of alleged extremists which claim dangerous on the basis of their attitudes, beliefs and opinions, they put both law enforcement and innocent citizens at unnecessary risk.

From a journalistic standpoint, Watchdogs are often the journalist’s primary source of information on the groups and interests they oppose. Watchdog organizations are agenda driven and represent the interests of their constituencies. They are lobbying organizations. They are not disinterested, unbiased or objective. Instead of consistently opposing extremist behavior, they often advocate and practice it. They do not advocate fair play and open debate, but rather the suppression of their opponents and critics. They invariably advocate some kind of censorship, which legitimate journalists should always oppose.

From a political standpoint, Watchdogs have a history of representing the political extremes themselves and may, in a manner of speaking, merely represent one side in a contest between extreme ideological positions, neither of which is good for a free society.

Some Watchdog programs are valuable and important, especially as they help to promote real racial understanding and dispel antagonism and hatred between groups of people. In entering into a program of political warfare against their enemies, real or imagined, they have compromised this goal.

End

What Is Political Extremism?

by Laird Wilcox*

If it's a despot you would dethrone, see first that his throne erected within you is destroyed. *Kahlil Gibran, 1923.*

Roger Scruton, in the *Dictionary of Political Thought*, defines “extremism” as:

1. Taking a political idea to its limits, regardless of unfortunate repercussions, impracticalities, arguments, and feelings to the contrary, and with the intention not only to confront, but to eliminate opposition.
2. Intolerance toward all views other than one's own.
3. Adoption of means to political ends which show disregard for the life, liberty, and human rights of others.

A similar view is found in the work of Milton Rokeach, whose book, *The Open and Closed Mind*, is a classic in the field of dogmatic thinking, prejudice, and authoritarianism. He observes:

To study the organization of belief systems, we find it necessary to concern ourselves with the structure rather than the content of beliefs. The relative openness or closedness of a mind cuts across specific content; that is, it is not uniquely restricted to any particular ideology, or religion, or philosophy, or scientific viewpoint. A person may adhere to communism, existentialism, Freudianism, or the “new conservatism” in a relatively open or a relatively closed manner. Thus, a basic requirement is that the concepts to be employed must not be tied to a particular belief system; they must be constructed to apply equally to all belief systems.

This definition basically reflects my own experience that extremism is more a matter of style than of content. In the thirty years that I have been investigating political groups of the left and right, I have found the most people can hold radical or unorthodox views and still entertain them in a more or less reasonable, rational, and non-dogmatic manner. On the other hand, I have met people whose views were fairly close to the political mainstream but were presented in a shrill, uncompromising, bullying, and distinctly authoritarian manner. The latter demonstrated a starkly extremist mentality while the former demonstrated only ideological unorthodoxy, which is hardly to be feared in a relatively free society.

Another point is that the extremist style is not found only on the fringes of the political or religious spectrum, but sometimes in the “middle” as well. An individual who is

uncompromisingly “centrist” may be far more dogmatic and prejudiced than someone with more radical views but does so in an open and tolerant manner.

The use of “extremist” as an epithet tends to confuse the issue. Sometimes it’s like calling someone a “pervert” or a “subversive,” based primarily on the fact that you don’t like or disagree with them. Political ideologues are fully aware of the power of name-calling and labeling, and often attempt definitions of “extremism” that condemn the views of their opponents while leaving their equally strident and intolerant behavior untouched. For the term to retain any objective meaning, it must apply equally across the board. The late Robert F. Kennedy recognized this when he said,

What is objectionable, what is dangerous about extremists is not that they are extreme, but that they are intolerant. The evil is not what they say about their cause, but what they say about their opponents.

Traits and Tactics of Political Extremists

1. Extremists tend to believe that it’s OK to do bad things in the service of a good cause. This may mean shouting down speakers, harassment, intimidation, threats, censorship, and even violence. Defeating heretics, deniers, critics or other “enemies” becomes an all-encompassing goal to which other values become subordinate. In this sense, for extremists *the end justifies the means*.

2. The use of slogans, buzzwords, epithets and thought-stopping clichés are common among extremists. Complex problems are dramatically simplified. These cognitive shortcuts are necessary for extremists to avoid awareness of troublesome facts and to bolster group solidarity.

3. An emphasis on emotional responses and corresponding devaluation of reasoning and rational analysis is a frequent extremist trait. Extremists have an unspoken reverence for propaganda, which they may call education or “consciousness-raising.” Harold D. Lasswell, in his book, *Psychopathology and Politics* says, “The essential mark of the agitator is the high value he places on the emotional response of the public.”

4. Extremists often practice and openly advocate flagrant double standards. They generally tend to judge themselves, their interest groups or allies in terms of their noble intentions, which they view generously, and their opponents by their acts, which they view very critically. They want you to accept their claims on faith, but demand proof from their opponents. They tend to view arguments that call their premises into question as hostile propaganda or provocation.

5. Confusing of mere similarity with essential sameness is a common extremist trait. Hence, for the extremist socialist medicine may be *just like* Communism, or the appearance of racism is *just like* Nazi Germany. Instead of trying to understand complex phenomenon in its own particular context, they attempt to associate it with a *God* word or a *Devil* word.

6. Extremists often attack the character of an opponent rather than deal with the issues and views he presents. Through this kind of *character assassination* they may question motives, qualifications, sexuality, race, associations, personality, mental health and so on as a diversion. In some cases these matters may not be entirely irrelevant, but they shouldn’t obscure the issues in question.

7. A *Manichean worldview* tends to characterize many extremists, where they see the world in absolutes of good and evil, for them or against them, with no middle ground or intermediate positions. All issues are framed in stark terms of right and wrong, with the “right” position happily coinciding with their interests. Their slogan is *those who are not for us are against us*.

8. Some extremists tend to identify themselves in terms of their enemies, i.e., whom they hate and whom hates them. Accordingly, extremists may become emotionally bound to their opponents in a strange *symbiotic relationship*, where their lives have meaning primarily in terms of conflict and opposition to one another. Because they view their

opponents as unprincipled and powerful, they tend, perhaps subconsciously, to emulate them and adopt their tactics.

9. Hypersensitivity and vigilance are hallmarks of the extremist style. They may perceive hostile innuendo in casual remarks; imagine hostility and rejection “concealed” in honest disagreement and dissent, and discover “subtle” manifestations in ordinarily innocuous events.

10. An inclination toward *groupthink* permeates extremist organizations. They are prone to the kind of inward-looking group cohesiveness that Irving Janis discussed in his book, *Victims of Groupthink*. This involves a strong tendency to conform to group norms and to preserve solidarity at the expense of dealing with conflicting evidence and disquieting observations that may call into question their shared assumptions and beliefs of the group.

11. Finally, extremists often have problems tolerating ambiguity and uncertainty. Indeed, the ideologies and belief systems extremists tend to adopt often represent grasping for certainty and absolute truth in an uncertain world.

It’s important to realize that nobody is perfect nor should perfection be sought. What is important is that we monitor our behaviors toward others and avoid extremist traits to the best of our ability.

*Condensed from the article, “What Is Political Extremism?,” by Laird Wilcox in the Fall, 1990, issue of *Free Inquiry*, quarterly publication of the Council for Democratic and Secular Humanism.

Added Material

Smoke and Mirrors

Many important figures in the far right - the primary target of the anti-racist watchdog movement - are not quite what they seem. Sometimes the racist and anti-Semitic extremists and neo-nazis we think we are seeing are something altogether different. This is an area of political intrigue that deserves considerable attention but there is room to only touch on it here with a few examples.

In the mid-1960’s, for example, the Canadian news media was confronted with the appearance of what seemed to be bona fide “neo-Nazi” activists, particularly around Toronto. Among these “nazis” were Ronald Bottaro, Chris and John Dingle, and their leader, John Beattie, who came to be regarded as the primary Canadian neo-nazi.

Coincidentally, during this period there occurred several incidents that provoked the Canadian media and populace to react to this new “nazi” threat, including anti-Jewish graffiti, Nazi literature in public rest rooms, and most suspiciously, a large mailing of Nazi literature to Toronto Jews.¹⁶⁶ From the standpoint of advancing the cause of a successful neo-nazi movement in Canada, nothing could have been more counterproductive.

At least part of the Canadian neo-nazi movement, it turns out, may have been a black operation operated by the Canadian Jewish Congress. Appearing on the Don Simmons CBC radio show on 20 October 1965, Bottaro and the Dingle brothers boasted that they

¹⁶⁶ “Jews Got 95% of Hate Cards,” *Toronto Telegram* (22 February 1964).

had been undercover agents of the CJC. They claimed that they had bugged Beattie's apartment and that they had been sent to various public meetings in Toronto to make anti-Semitic remarks and to wear Nazi-style uniforms. Out of a total of 10 Canadian neo-nazis, 7 were CJC operatives and only three were genuine including, at the time, Beattie.

Beattie dropped out of sight after a brief career, much of which was devoted to establishing "links and ties" with various American neo-nazi figures in order to lend credibility to the image of an international Nazi movement. He surfaced again in 1972 when it was revealed that he had been employed as an informant by the Ontario Provincial Police.¹⁶⁷

In 1974 an article in *The Sunday Sun* revealed his contacts with Al Applebaum of the Jewish Defense League, an anti-nazi organization widely suspected of terrorism. The paper noted that:

The profound irony in his life is that a Jew was one of the few people to give him a second chance to become useful.¹⁶⁸

Beattie surfaced again, in 1989, this time in connection with skinheads at a white supremacist rally in Minden, Ontario.¹⁶⁹

Most recently, Beattie is planning to testify before a Canadian Human Rights Tribunal in Toronto in December 2000. According to a release from the Canadian Association For Free Expression:

Beattie will reveal...that everything from his group's name to its major activities was suggested or quarterbacked by persons acting as agents for the Canadian Jewish Congress.

...the same agent proposed legal maneuvers that were calculated to frighten and cause distress among dues, thus heightening the "Nazi" menace, which was used as the argument for the 1971 "hate law (Section 319 of the Criminal Code) and the subsequent section 13.1...of the Canadian Human Rights Act, where truth is no defense.¹⁷⁰

Admittedly Beattie himself has credibility problems given his bizarre and checkered career. Nevertheless the general thrust of his story is backed by other sources and it raises serious questions about the authenticity of Watchdog claims.

¹⁶⁷ Richard Campbell, "OPP Paid ex-Nazi \$15 a week To Inform," *Toronto Star*

¹⁶⁸ Bruce Blackadar, "An Ex-Nazi Tries To Forget," *The Sunday Sun* (10 November 1974), 8.

¹⁶⁹ Alan Cairns and Kathleen Griffin, "Nazi Leader Staging Rally," *The Toronto Sun* (16 June 1989); Manuel Prutschi, "Hate Groups and Bigotry's Fellow Travelers," *Currents*, Urban Alliance for Race Relations, Toronto (Vol 6, No. 2, October 1990, 8).

¹⁷⁰ Canadian Association for Free Expression, "John Beattie To Expose the Nazi Party That Never Was," *Press Release* 26 November 2000).