

# The Indiscreet Charm of the Bush Nazi Web Conspiranooids

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"American politics has often been an arena for angry minds," historian Richard Hofstadter wrote nearly four decades ago. As the first great analyst/connoisseur of American political paranoia, or what he called "the paranoid style," Hofstadter, who died in 1970, would have been amazed by the web.

As we all know, myriad versions of the perennial conspiracy theories Hofstadter knew well, the ones involving plots by Freemasons, Jesuits, Jews, and/or Communists to take over the world, are alive and thriving in the new medium. In addition, the web, as a radically accelerated technology for moving facts, rumors, myths and memes, has vastly widened the theater of the political imagination. It has become, for better and worse, the spiritual home of "conspiranoia." A quick search of the word "conspiracy" on Google turns up (as of mid-2001) just under 2 million hits. All of the modern classics are well represented. These include; JFK Assassination plots (75,000 hits) (whether by CIA, Mafia, Gusanos or the newly popular Federal Reserve theory), extraterrestrial visitations (over 75,000 sites), and shadow world governments (well over a million) (as administered by, the Trilateral Commission, Council on Foreign Relations, The UN, The Bank of England and any one of several dozen other organizations). Then there are the more recent conspiracy theories involving; the deliberate or accidental unleashing of the AIDS virus (roughly 65,000 hits), U.S. government involvement in the Oklahoma City bombing, (nearly 100,000), and collusions between DuPont Chemical and the oil industry to squelch hemp production (10,000).

Many, indeed most of these conspiracy "exposes" are illogical, if not totally incoherent, rants. Others are obsessively detailed, but ultimately implausible concoctions of fact and fantasy. And a few are well researched and documented. Not a few are a bit of all of the above. All are populist attempts to locate cracks in the official versions of history.

Nowhere is this seen as clearly as in the sites devoted to the current rising stars of web conspiranoia, the Bush family.

Conspiratorialists, whether their bete noire is Anglophile internationalist bankers, socialist one-world government advocates, neo-fascist state planners, or eugenic proponents of white supremacy, can and do find in the Bushes everything and more than they've ever wanted to imagine about American history and its rulers. Lurking in the shadows of nearly every major episode of recent U.S. history, from World War Two to the rise of the CIA to third world drug running to the Bay of Pigs, the Kennedy and King assassinations, Watergate and beyond, the Bushes have emerged as the Zeligs of the global power elite.

At the crux of this saga are the Bushes' real and imagined relationships with Nazi Germany. Rumors about Bush-Nazi connections began circulating in earnest in the pre-web days of the late 80s. The Philadelphia Enquirer discovered a number of German Nazi military officers working as low-level operatives for the Republican National Committee in the Bush presidential campaign of 1988. Rumors of a Bush-Nazi association were kept alive on alt.news conspiracy bulletin boards through the 90s. They gained critical mass during the 2000 election campaign, generating a bewildering variety of exposes, mythic narratives and shadow histories.

Below is just a sampling of some of the hottest current web forums dedicated to exploring Bush-Nazi ties:

## **Eugenics in a Bottle**

Robert Lederman, a New York City artist, believes the Bush family, along with the Harrimans, Rockefellers, Nazis, neo-Nazis and leaders of the oil and pharmaceutical industries, has been instrumental in a plot to commit genetic genocide against "inferior races".

This racial supremacist plot allegedly began in the 1920s with the founding of the Averill Harriman- Prescott Bush funded Eugenics Research Office. Accused accomplices include Planned Parenthood, the Nazi German government, and in post-war America, neo-Nazi led research under the auspices of the CIA, National Science Foundation, and Center for Disease Control. It has also involved such environmentalist fronts as Zero Population Growth and conservative think-tanks such as the Manhattan Institute. It is currently backed by large corporations, prominently including Alcoa (the theory flouride, tested by the Nazis, is being used in the water supply to create a submissive population), and big pharmaceutical companies (especially those, like I.G. Farben, with Nazi pasts). These companies are believed to be involved in introducing toxic, potentially genocidal vaccines and sprays. One example is malathion, used recently in New York City and vicinity to (presumably) control the West Nile virus.

For Lederman, the project of genocide through eugenics reaches its apogee in the Human Genome Project, designed to enable realization of the Nazi goal of eliminating inferior genetic castes through genetic profiling. According to Lederman, "Following the Holocaust it was necessary to disguise Eugenics as something more politically acceptable. This was something, of course, accomplished through birth control, vaccinations, insect control sprays, and other thinly disguised modes of genocide. There is mounting evidence AIDS was one of these programs."

While for Lederman, the Bushes meet Nazism at the intersection of genetics and big pharmaceutical companies, the website Conspiracy Planet sees the Bushes, through three generations, as active, if subterranean, Nazi ideologues. In this reality, the Bush family has been financing the Nazi cause through clandestine sources, including drug dealing. The website, which calls itself "the Alternative News and history Network", hosts a regular "Bush Crime Family" channel, exploring supposed relationships between the Bushes, Nazi groups and organized crime. One of its conspiracy researchers, writing under the moniker King Felix, declares, "George W's grandfather Prescott Bush was among the chief American fundraisers for the Nazi Party in the 1930s and '40s. In return he was handsomely rewarded with plenty of financial opportunities from the Nazis helping to create the fortune and legacy that his son George inherited."

On the other hand, for Richard Draheim, columnist for the Dallas Libertarian, the Bushes' represent a traditional Republican collusion of big business and big government. Specifically, Draheim sees in the Bush Dynasty a marriage between Wall Street and the oil industry and (despite the low-tax rhetoric), a conspiracy to impose high taxes to subsidize Bush family-connected businesses. "The Bush family fortune is old, and it comes from a century old alliance with the most powerful interests on Wall Street and in industry. Worse, a big part of Dubya's money comes from Grandfather Prescott Bush's alliance with the Nazis."

Less diplomatically, Marie Vance and John Cappelletti claim in syninfo.com: "The silver spoon in George W. Bush's mouth was bought and paid for by Nazi butchers, who yanked the fillings from dead Jew's mouths. The Bush mob/Bush international crime family was and is a bunch of Satan worshipping Nazis."

Though space doesn't permit, it wouldn't be tough at all to find several hundred more examples. Internet rants? Technologically amplified paranoia? Indeed.

It's easy enough to tear apart the notion of a still active, century-long, racist-Nazi (with a capital N) conspiracy based on the science of genetics. Many racist ideologues do use rhetoric couched in the scientific (or more often pseudo-scientific) jargon of genetic determinism. Some racist ideologues do continue to advance schemes for sterilizing "undesirable" populations, all too similar to those of Nazi Germany. Most scientists, (including most molecular biologists), most birth-control and reproductive rights advocates, as well as most environmentalists and population control proponents, have nothing to do with them, following totally divergent and conflicting social and political agendas.

Wild stretches? Yes. But wrong about any Bush-Nazi connection? Not really. Or, at least, not entirely.

### **Beating Around the Bushes**

The following is a thumbnail sketch of the Bush family biography from the early 1900s to the 1950s, as culled from several recent mainstream Bush (George the Father and Junior) biographies, a canon including Lone Star Yankee by Herbert S. Parmet, First Son by Bill Minutaglio and W: The Revenge of the Bush Dynasty by Elizabeth Mitchell, as well as official family memoirs.

Samuel Bush (George H.W.'s paternal grandfather) was a successful Midwestern entrepreneur who ran both a small Ohio railroad and the Buckeye Steel Castings Company. A man of vaguely populist leanings, despite his affluence, Bush helped frame Ohio's first worker's compensation laws and has been said to have been a Democrat, and "friendly with organized labor."

His son Prescott Bush, after attending Yale in the 1910s, worked briefly in a small, family owned rubber company in Ohio. In the early '20s, he accepted an invitation from his new father-in-law George Herbert to join the Harriman brothers' investment, a high-flying international banking house. George Herbert Walker, father of Prescott's wife Dorothy, was the founder of GH Walker and Co. investment bank in St. Louis. While Samuel Bush might be characterized as "petit-bourgeois," GH Walker was a man of great wealth. In addition to being a major power broker in the Midwest, Walker had close connections to the Eastern banking elite as well. By the early '20s, he maintained an estate in Kennebunkport, Maine, a mansion on Long Island, and a ten thousand-acre hunting preserve called Duncannon in South Carolina.

At the urging of his friend, railroad magnate E.H. Harriman, father of Averill and Roland (Bunny) Harriman (classmates of Prescott Bush at Yale), Walker had come to New York to help the younger Harrimans run the Harriman investment bank. By the late 1920s, Walker had groomed his son-in-law to

handle large parts of the bank's investments, including its interests in the fledgling Columbia Broadcasting Network, and several European projects. By the early 1930s, Walker left daily operations of the Harriman bank. Bush stayed on throughout the 30s and 40s as a partner in the firm. By 1931, Harriman Investment had merged with the British-American bank Brown Brothers, becoming Brown Brothers Harriman. During the 1940s Bush, who had shed his father's Democratic politics for his father-in-law's Republicanism, became active in Connecticut electoral politics. He ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. Senate in 1950, before winning a seat in 1952. Bush served 12 years in the Senate, earning a record as a moderately liberal "Rockefeller Republican" and a supporter of civil rights legislation, and a reputation for being President Eisenhower's golfing buddy.

### **Trading With Enemies**

One could read through the bulk of mainstream Bush family biographies and find no mention of a significant 1942 event: That year the U.S. federal government, under the auspices of the office of the U.S Alien Property Custodian, seized the assets of the Union Banking Corporation, a subsidiary of Brown Brothers Harriman, under authority of the "Trading with the Enemy Act." Prescott Bush served on the board.

An eclectic body of revisionist work, most originally available in book form (and most now "out of print"), has been dedicated to investigating the background of this historically excised event. Though largely ignored by established book reviewing media, mainstream print, and broadcast punditry, three books in particular have attempted to explore and document the historical background of the "Bush-Nazi" connection. These attempts to fill in the gaps left by mainstream historians have found new life on the web.

The most frequently cited and circulated source of Bush-Nazi investigations/conspiranoia, George Bush-The Unauthorized Biography (a biography of George Herbert Walker Bush) by Webster Griffin Tarpley and Anton Chaitkin, published in 1992, while well-documented, is also the most suspect. The problem is that Tarpley and Chaitkin are colleagues of the political cult leader Lyndon LaRouche. Not surprisingly, they insist on overlaying otherwise solidly researched data with wildly speculative interpretations. The book, originally published by LaRouche's Executive Intelligence Review, though "out of print," is ubiquitous on the web, and freely used and quoted by Bush conspiranoia buffs of all persuasions.

Tarpley and Chaitkin fill in important details of the period of Prescott Bush's involvement in international investment banking. They document W.A. Harriman Bank's European operations, and the roles of Herbert Walker, who joined as president and chief executive in November, 1919, and Prescott Bush.

According to Tarpley and Chaitkin, the first major German connections made by the newly minted Harriman bank took place in 1920, when Averill Harriman announced plans to re-launch the dormant Hamburg-American shipping line. The German shipping line, said to be the world's largest private line, had been confiscated by the U.S. government at the end of World War I. Harriman purchased it from the government at a fraction of its market value. According to the terms of the deal, the original German management would buy back the line from Harriman at its market value, with the Harriman Bank gaining rights to 50% of all business originating in Hamburg and complete control of all activities of the line in the U.S.

Soon after, In 1922, Harriman and Walker set up a European headquarters in Berlin, forming a relationship with the Hamburg-based Warburg Bank. Through Warburg, Harriman began a series of investments during the mid-to-late 1920s in German industry and raw materials. During this period, Harriman also set up a New York bank called the Union Banking Corporation. This was designed, primarily, to handle funds supplied by the Bank von Handel en Scheepvaart, a Dutch bank owned by German industrialist Fritz Thyssen. By personal agreement between Averill Harriman and Thyssen, Union Bank would transfer funds back and forth between New York and the Thyssen interests. During the 1920s and '30s, Thyssen accounted for much of Germany's pig iron, universal plate, heavy plate, pipes and tubes, wire and explosives. In 1926, along with another Wall Street bank, Dillon-Read, Harriman helped establish the new German Steel Trust, also largely owned by Thyssen. By the mid-1930s, GST had become Germany's largest industrial corporation.

From 1923 on, along with his industrial and financial activities, Thyssen was an instrumental early financial backer of a fledgling political group called the Nazi Party, extending a large credit line to the party through the Harriman banking subsidiary. (He admits this in a post-WW2 memoir entitled I Paid Hitler.)

In January, 1931, the Harriman Bank merged with the British-American Brown Brothers' investment house to become Brown Brothers Harriman. By then, Herbert Walker had left full-time work at Harriman to devote himself to GH Walker & Co., but Prescott Bush stayed on with the Harrimans to become senior partner in the new firm.

The consolidated Silesian Holding company (which included Prescott Bush as director) was another major German industrial trust that Brown Brothers Harriman partnered with in the 1930s. This was a complex of

steel-making, coal-making and zinc-making operations in Germany and Poland. According to a U.S. government brief presented in 1946 at the Nuremberg war crimes tribunal, industrialist Friedrich Flick, owner of two-thirds of Silesian, was "a leading financial contributor to the Nazi Party from 1932 on and a member of the Circle of Friends of Himmler who contributed large sums to the Nazi SS." Silesian and United Steel Trust were the two primary suppliers of war material to the Nazi government throughout its arms build-up in the 1930s, and into the 1940s.

US government documents also show that two other Harriman Bank affiliates, Wilhelm Cuno and Baron Rudolph von Schroder, directors of the Hamburg-America line, were major contributors to the Nazi Party in its 1932 election campaign. Additionally, according to the Nye commission (a 1934 US Congressional investigation), The Hamburg-America line was a primary conduit for the shipment of American guns to the Nazis. They also provided free passage to individuals going abroad for Nazi propaganda purposes, as well as subsidies for pro-Nazi newspapers and other Nazi propaganda materials throughout the 1930s, according to the Nye Report..

These activities continued until September, 1942, when the U.S. government ordered all property of the Hamburg-America line seized under the Trading with the Enemy Act. Two months later, also under the authority of the Trading with the Enemy Act, the government issued Vesting Order No.248 seizing assets of the Union Banking Co. (approximately \$4 million.)

While the evidence amassed by Tarpley and Chaitkin in no way directly implicates Prescott Bush or Brown Brothers Harriman as Nazi supporters, a strong case is made for their complicity in aiding and abetting the Nazi cause for profit long after the nature of the Nazi regime became clear to any informed observer, and even after the US declaration of war against Germany.

Unfortunately, not content with solid muckracking, Tarpley and Chaitkin insist on super-imposing their pet (entertaining but unsubstantiated, not to mention off-the-wall) conspiracy theory of US history, inspired by Lyndon LaRouche, leader of a radical left/right, right/left cult with so many political incarnations and reincarnations, it's spawned its own mini-industry of critic/conspiranoiaists. As a highbrow conspiracy theorist's theorist, LaRouche puts poor John Birch and Bo Gritz not to mention Tom Clancy -- to shame. Indeed there are those who think posterity may yet judge him the grandest historical fictioneer of this era, surpassing Pynchon, Vidal, and DeLillo. His theory, as advanced by Tarpley and Chaitkin, involves linking the Bushes, Harrimans, and much, if not all, of the American elite to a several century old plot for world subjugation by a secret British-American cabal steeped in arcane lore, drug smuggling and pagan ritual. They attempt to trace the roots of this conspiracy to the collusion of British financiers and pro-Brit American Tories during the Revolutionary War and follow its machinations through two centuries of intrigue.

As Tarpley and Chaitkin explain it: "Diehard pro-British families, known as Boston Brahmins, who had prospered in the ship transportation of rum and black slaves, regained power in Boston shortly after their British allies lost the Revolutionary war. In 1805 these cynical neo-pagan Tories succeeded in placing their representatives in the Hollis chair, parading publicly as liberal religionists called Unitarians."

Thus commenced a secret war (which continues, two centuries later) between Tories and "true American nationalists" like the Reverend Jedidiah Morse, the head of the Andover Academy, an institution set up to counter the British spies, atheists and criminals who had taken over Harvard. By 1840, when Jedidiah Morse's generation died out, the Andover nationalist movement was, say Chaikin and Tarpley, "crushed by New England's elite families, who were by then Britain's partners in the booming opium traffic."

According to the authors, by the second half of the 19th century, Andover, though still ostensibly a Christian school had become (as had Yale University, the college of choice for Andover graduates) a front for occult-inspired Anglophile secret societies. These elite societies were dedicated to undermining American nationalism and replacing it with a secret government, run furtively by Anglo-American financiers.

Though these cults did not fully prevail in the 19th century, as "national power was still precariously balanced between the imperial Anglo-American financiers and the heroic old-line nationalists who built America's railroads, steel and electric utilities," the "New Age Aristocrats" prevailed in the 20th century. Pivotal to that rise was Skull and Bones, the most formidable of these secret cults, which by the early 20th century had become the primary breeding ground of a new kind of American establishment, with imperial economic and political ambitions.

"The 20th century," write Tarpley and Chaitkin, "owes much of its record of horrors to certain Anglophile American families which have employed Skull and Bones as a political recruiting agency, particularly the Harrimans, Whitneys, Vanderbilts, Rockefellers," and their lawyers, the Lords, Tafts, Bundys and Dulleses.

Above all, they write, "Skull and Bones was dominated from 1913 onward by the circles of Averill Harriman, who succeeded in vanquishing traditional nationalists like Douglas McArthur."

In addition to financial control, Tarpley and Chaitkin claim Skull and Bones has exerted power in many other ways through politics (especially the CIA and Bush family), "environmentalist" organizations like the conservation, birth control and Zero Population Growth Movements (fronts for genocidal eugenics research). They even claim that would-be revolutionaries, such as the new left "Up Against the Wall Motherfuckers" (inspiration for the Yippies, but angrier), were furtively supported back in 1968 by McGeorge Bundy's Ford Foundation front ESSO (The East Side Service Organization) through the intermediary of none other than "former OSS operative, neo-Marxist philosopher Herbert Marcuse."

### **Business As Usual**

Less flaky, *The Secret War Against the Jews*, by Mark Aarons and John Loftus, puts the Harriman Bank - Nazi connections in a wider, less conspiratorial (though far from innocent) context. The book, originally published in 1994 by St. Martin's Press, is primarily focused on the relationship between Western intelligence agencies and the state of Israel, but it contains a very detailed chapter on U.S. corporate investment in Nazi Germany. Aaron and Loftus draw extensively on records of the Nye and Truman Senate committees, declassified intelligence and State Department documents, interviews with unnamed former intelligence operatives, and a rare interview conducted with former Supreme Court justice Arthur Goldberg shortly before his death. As a government attorney in the 1940s, Goldberg had extensively investigated and documented corporate ties to the German military-industrial complex, only to have his findings ignored and "buried" in State Department archives, a cover-up he blamed to his dying day on the Dulles Brothers, Allen and John Foster.

Though the book has largely languished in semi-obscurity since its publication, public statements by Loftus (now president of the Florida Holocaust Museum) about the Bush family financial ties to Nazi Germany were widely circulated on the web during the 2000 election campaigns. Hopefully this will spur more conspiranoia-ists to actually study the book.

According to *The Secret War*, Allen and John Foster Dulles, as young international finance specialists for the Sullivan and Cromwell legal firm in the 1920s, were pivotal advisors and agents for a "who's who" of major US. Corporations eager to get in on the bull market for German re-industrialization. The motivations behind these investors, which included Dupont, Alcoa, Standard Oil, General Motors, Chase Manhattan, GE, Ford and IBM, had less to do with ideology than money.

In *The Splendid Blonde Beast: Money, Law, and Genocide* by Christopher Simpson, published in 1993, the most thoroughly investigated account yet of the period, these financial relationships are laid out in fairly exhaustive detail.

According to Simpson, U.S. - German investment mania gripped the Roaring 20s financial elite. This mania was rooted in the 1919 Versailles agreements on reparations, which imposed payments of approximately \$30 billion (about \$600 billion in 2000 dollars) by the German government to other European countries over 30 years. By 1922, attempts to raise the money to pay reparations had driven the German economy into a deep crisis. For U.S. companies, this was a golden opportunity.

John Foster Dulles masterminded a scheme wherein a consortium of banks and brokerage houses (among them the Harriman Bank, Chase Manhattan and Dillon Read) offered to loan U.S. dollars, through leading German banks and industrial firms, for the construction of factories, electrification and industrial plant. In turn, the German companies would issue millions of dollars worth of bonds and sell them to Dulles' clients for a discounted price. The U.S. banks would then turn around and sell the bonds "retail" to individual or small institutional investors at a hefty mark-up.

The bonds helped jump-start German industry and, in fairly short order, provided the underpinning for German re-armament. For much of the 1930s, the German economy, sparked by the Nazi military build-up, stood out as one of the few bright investment opportunities in an internationally depressed economy. Some corporate executives (particularly Henry Ford, and top echelon DuPont executives) were sympathetic to Nazi and Fascist movements, publicly and financially supporting Hitler. Most, however, who engaged with Germany in the Nazi-era were probably motivated by profit, not ideology. They regarded the Nazis, Simpson believes, as a temporarily useful, if not entirely agreeable, "disciplinary" force, capable of maintaining economic stability and a safe investment climate. As a bonus, they were seen as a counter-weight to militant "Soviet inspired" labor and socialist movements.

The probable zeitgeist of these financial high-flyers is perhaps best evoked by (current CNN News Executive Editor) Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas in their 1988 study *The Wise Men*, a largely hagiographic profile of

the post-World War Two foreign policy establishment that includes portraits of Averill Harriman and Robert Lovett, another Harriman bank director. As described by Isaacson and Thomas, the directors of Harriman Bank (Prescott Bush included) were less crypto-Nazi ideologues than characters out of *The Great Gatsby*, '20s wild kids thumbing their noses at such fuddy-duddy traditions as national borders and political moralism. As they write: "With the end of the war to end all wars, America quenched its yearning for a return to normalcy by retreating into isolation Wall Street, on the other hand, did nothing of the sort. Europe was industrially devastated and mired in debt. America was throbbing with revitalized factories. The situation was ripe for financiers interested in foreign investment and trade, internationalists who understood America's ties to Europe.

"While the rest of the country slept, a close-knit clique of Wall Street bankers and lawyers, most of whom had traveled through Europe as children met in the clubs of London, Paris and Berlin as friendly competitors putting together suitable investments for their firms. In a private and profit seeking capacity they were rebuilding a war-ravaged Europe in a manner as grandiose as any of these men would employ a world war later with the Marshall Plan."

In Harriman, Isaacson and Thomas, see the prototype of the man without borders, the true pioneer elite globalist, the Elvis of the New World Order. "Harriman," they write, "would always harbor a belief that foes could be bargained with as easily as friends. Thus he had no qualms about entering into a shipping agreement with Germany before an armistice had been signed or a mining concession in the Soviet Union, even though the U.S. had spurned diplomatic relations with that country."

What Isaacson and Thomas suggest here, and Aaron-Loftus and Simpson substantiate with more detail and in a far wider historical context, is that the relationships between Harriman Bank and other corporations and Nazi-era Germany need to be understood as part of a larger pattern. There is little evidence that the free-form meta-diplomatic modes of international financial deal making developed by Harriman, Bush and company in the 1920s and '30s signaled pro-Nazi or pro-fascist political ideology. However, it did help form a template for U.S. international finance and politics in which support for dictatorships, (financially in the '30s, financially and politically-militarily during the cold war) would become business as usual in U.S. foreign policy. One of the most interesting aspects of both the Simpson and the Aaron and Loftus books is their examination of how the private sector style of international affairs pioneered by Dulles, Harriman, Lovett and Bush in the '30s gradually metaphorphosed, during and after World War 2, into the official realpolitick of the U.S. government, often under the guidance of these same men. The ruling precepts of anti-communism and free trade that guided the international banking elite in the '30s in their dealings with Hitler would become the official policy through which the U.S. would support a wide variety of corporate-friendly dictators throughout the world, from the '50s to the present.

A persuasive case can be made that investments by Brown Brothers Harriman and numerous other major U.S. corporations in Germany made the rise of Nazism possible. It's clear Harriman, Bush, Dulles and legions of the financial elite share a degree of (largely unacknowledged) responsibility for providing Hitler and the Nazis the wherewithal to launch World War Two and the Holocaust. However, it's an untenable leap to conclude that this banking elite exerted some sort of secret nefarious control over events of the 1930s, or that the rise of Nazism was not an unintended consequence of their own far shorter-sighted intentions. Those intentions involved using both German companies and unwary individual investors in their lucrative German bond investment scheme. Micro-conspiracies clearly planned to make money by pumping up German industry, including German armaments. For those micro-conspiracies, support for a compliant, pliable, big business friendly government capable of strong-arming labor and other anti-capitalist troublemakers was a matter of short-term expedience. "Blowback" (the title of another Simpson book) is the term Simpson uses to describe the unintended consequences.

### **The Validity of Cranks Filling Cracks in the Historical Narrative**

There are sharp distinctions between the "Bush is a Nazi" vulgarizations of the conspiranoia-ists, and the documented corporate-Nazi connections delineated by Simpson or Aaron. Where one sees ideology, the other sees opportunism. Where one sees intention, the other sees unintended consequences. The theorists who see this historical episode not as evidence of Nazism but of business-as-usual are clearly the more sophisticated of the bunch, but this is small comfort. The results were (and are) the same.

The vast majority of the Bush-Nazi conspiracy discourse is eccentric and clearly over-the-top. However, it is these web-based amateurs, and not our allegedly working professional journalists, who have kept alive a significant, largely ignored, body of evidence. This evidence is only partly about the Bushes. More significantly, it traces the origins of the cavalier, amoral relationship between American and global financial elites and genocidal dictatorships that has characterized U.S. policy for decades.

At this stage, the radical media democracy thriving on the web, at least as evidenced by the Bush conspiranoia sites, is short on logic, investigative discipline and common sense, but long on guts and moxie. Unfortunately, Art Bell seems to be closer to the role model of DIY web muckrackers than I.F. Stone or Howard Zinn. Even so, at least partly because of the tireless circulation of facts, rumors, and speculations about "Bush Family Ties," dirty little secrets about the complicity of major American institutions in the rise of Nazism, buried for decades, have finally started emerging into mass consciousness. Despite generally supine treatment of the Bush family by mainstream media, there are signs that Prescott Bush's investment banking adventures of the '30s are coming under new scrutiny. A major two-part series on "The Rise of the Bush Family Dynasty" published in April 2001 by Michael Kranish in the Boston Globe, explores the Harriman Bank- German connection in some detail. The movement for reparations for Holocaust survivors has widened its focus. Previously focused on European banks laundering money stolen by the Nazis from German Jews, investigators have started looking also at US institutions. This process has exposed dealings by several major banks, including Chase Manhattan and JP Morgan. Chase Manhattan, in fact, publicly acknowledged culpability of its Paris branch in active collaboration with the Nazis in liquidating accounts of German Jews. In early 2001 Edwin Black published a widely publicized study of "IBM and the Holocaust" detailing how IBM's German division was instrumental in developing the Hollerith tabulators Nazis used to process concentration camp prisoners.

This new wave of muckracking undoubtedly has sources besides the wild and wooly web. Still, it's quite likely that, without a touch of conspiranoia, mainstream media-maintained amnesia on these matters would have remained undisturbed.

#### **AN AFTER 9/11 ADDENDUM**

This piece was written before the events of 9/11/2001. Needless to say, the atrocities of that day, in addition to dramatically changing the political and cultural landscape, and provoking an open-ended "War Against Terrorism," have ushered in a new era in conspiranoia.

At this very early stage, at least five major theories wholly or partially rejecting the official version of the attacks as the responsibility of Ossama BinLaden and Al Queda, have emerged, and gained currency on the web. The most plausible theory doesn't claim direct Western/US involvement in the act. It simply claims that elements of the Bush Administration/CIA knew about the plan, but decided it would be politically advantageous not to stop it. Other versions involve Iraqi secret agents (a favorite of neo-conservatives), the Israeli Defense force, or domestic dissidents in the U.S. (mostly far right militias, but some claiming it was radical left anti-globalists).

Finally, there are theories involving undefined rogue elements of U.S. intelligence or the military exploiting Middle Eastern fundamentalist assets. This is called "The Ossama Harvey Oswald theory."

Mad as this last may seem, there is documented evidence that something nearly as grotesque has been planned at least once before in recent U.S. history. In his book, *Body of Secrets: Anatomy of the Ultra-Secret National Security Agency*, former ABC World News investigative reporter James Bamford details a plan by the US Joint Chiefs of Staff to launch terrorist activities against US people and property. The plot was put together in the early '60s, under the auspices of General Lyman Lemnitzer. The right wing extremist Lemnitzer was the powerful Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, inherited from the Eisenhower Administration by a displeased JFK. His brilliant notion was that these incidents (which might include bombings, hijackings of planes, even shooting down John Glenn's Friendship 7 space capsule) could be blamed on Castro's Cuba. This would be used to galvanize U.S. public support for invading that island. Luckily, their plans were shot down by the administration. But the history of Operation Northwoods, as the plan was called, stands as a cautionary tale against considering anything "unthinkable."

Whatever the merits (or lack thereof) of these conspiracy counter-narratives, it seems certain that the secrecy and sketchiness of government and mass media explanations about how the evil-doers were able to get into a position to terrorize the American population, will (and should) breed far more conspiranoia.

Even for those of us who don't buy into any of the conspiracy arguments above, and believe that AlQueda was fully responsible and should be forcefully retaliated against, questions proliferate. For starters how involved has the U.S. been in training and supporting the growth of Islamic fundamentalist terrorism, not just (as is already well known) during the Soviet-Afghani conflict of the 80s, but long after in places like Bosnia via U.S. "allies" like the Albanian Kosovo Liberation Army? To what extent has that semi-secret support undermined US domestic security?

Any adequate history of the entanglements between U. S. foreign policy makers and the new breed of Islamo-Fascism the U.S. has helped spawn will likely find the same sort of reckless opportunism -- partly inspired by

business and partly by geo-political considerations that have already been examined in the article. Only now, the "blowback" has reached our shores and threatened the safety of U.S. civilians.

As earlier, I see this as less a question of conscious design or plan than as the consequence of a chaotic set of short-term tactics motivated primarily by profit. But if it develops that the US is undergoing something akin to a real live fascist takeover under George W., I don't think that invalidates this analyses, except possibly for its failure to emphasize the fact that fascism can be the last refuge for capitalist opportunism, when it's in crisis. It's still more about profit than ideology.

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