

## 9–11 AT NINE: The Conspiracy Industry and the Lure of Fascism

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<http://ww4report.com/node/8992>

New York City's WBAI Radio<sup>1</sup> — flagship of the progressive, non-profit Pacifica Network<sup>2</sup>, where I am a producer — unfortunately provides a case study in the increasing embrace of right-wing conspiracy theory by the remnants of the American (and global) left.

The most useful propaganda device in this ongoing hostile take-over of the rump progressive forces has been an exploitation of the traumatic events of September 11, 2001. Alex Jones, who trumpets anti-immigrant bromides<sup>3</sup> alongside 9–11 pseudo-exposés, now rivals Noam Chomsky as an icon on lefty websites. Where our rhetoric once invoked the military-industrial complex and even the sacro-

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<sup>1</sup> <http://wbai.org/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.pacifica.org/>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.infowars.com/articles/immigration/deisyseis\\_partone.htm](http://www.infowars.com/articles/immigration/deisyseis_partone.htm)

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sanct capitalist system, today our ire is frequently targeted at such arcane entities as the Bilderberg Club, the Bavarian Illuminati, and stranger things.

WBAI provides a useful case study because it has followed the same trajectory as many of basically progressive inclination since 2001. What began as an examination of seeming anomalies in the case of 9–11 has lured some of our best minds down a black hole of irrationality that ultimately leads — and this, as shall be demonstrated, is not just hyperbole — to fascism.

### Critical Inquiry *versus* Conspiranoia

Before detailing the dynamics of this deterioration, it is necessary to define some terms for the discussion — and particularly to draw a distinction between legitimate critical inquiry and what we may term *conspiranoia* — a state of perpetual paranoia about conspiracies in high places, in which the improbable and even faintly impossible is treated as a *fait accompli* if it supports the proffered theory. It may begin with pre-planted explosives or missiles bringing down the Twin Towers, but it frequently doesn't end there — because once you abandon reason, anything goes.

Those who raise such criticisms are inevitably accused of supporting the “official story.” This is where the distinction is critical. The question of what was the *degree* and *nature* of the Bush administration's complicity in 9–11 is a legitimate one. It is also, alas, one the historians are going to be arguing about for generations to come, just like they are still arguing about the Reichstag Fire, the JFK assassination, the Gulf of Tonkin and the sinking of the battleship *Maine*. There is likely never going to be a definitive answer to it. That doesn't mean that inquiry isn't worthwhile. However — especially as concerns our activist efforts against the war(s) and loss of freedoms — there is limited utility to getting obsessed with the minutiae of 9–11.

The output of the lugubrious mini-industry which has sprung up around 9–11 conspiranoia has become increasingly toxic over the passing years. The most innocent of the DVDs and books are just poorly researched, merely exchanging the rigid dogma of the “official story” for another rigid dogma, no more founded in empiricism or objectivity. But, not surprisingly, lots of creepy right-wing types have got on board, using 9–11 as the proverbial thin end of a wedge.

The reason this is not surprising is clear to anyone who under-

stands the dynamics of the populist end of the political right — and the rise of classical fascism in Europe in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

It also has to be made clear in this context that conspiracies, of course, exist. Contragate was a conspiracy; Watergate was a conspiracy; and whoever was behind 9–11, it was a conspiracy. Whether it was al-Qaeda, the Bush administration, the CIA, Mossad or the Illuminati, or any combination thereof, it was a conspiracy — obviously. Conspiracies exist, and are worthy of examination. The fallacy is what has been termed the “conspiracy theory of history,” the notion that conspiracies explain everything that’s wrong with society. This is a reversal of reality. It is political economy, not conspiracy theory, that explains what is fundamentally wrong with society — understanding power relations and wealth inequities. The conspiracies are merely a *symptom* of the prevailing political economy — just like war, terrorism, bad propaganda and fascism.

Fascism in its classical form is predicated on the notion that there is a hidden elite — whether it is the Jewish bankers or, in updated versions, the Trilateral Commission, Bilderbergs, Illuminati or shape-shifting reptilians (about which more later) — that controls everything, and is “the” problem.

These entities aren’t “the” problem, nor do they control everything; nor, often, do they even exist. The Trilateral Commission does exist; you can go their website<sup>4</sup>. The Bilderbergers have no website because they don’t exist in any formal sense; they are just a group of bankers and industrialists who periodically get together in a high-end hotel and kick back martinis and schmooze. The Illuminati existed two centuries ago; it doesn’t exist any more. The shape-shifting reptilians assuredly do not exist.

The obsession with conveniently hidden elites serves to let off the hook the very real elites that are in plain sight. It has become utterly unfashionable to say it, but the problem ultimately is not the power of hidden elites, but that we live under the capitalist system. This is why conspiranoia is inevitably a useful tool of those who seek to distract us from class analysis.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.trilateral.org/>

## The Slippery Slope to Shape-Shifting Reptilians

WBAI's embrace of conspiracy theory started with the comparatively innocuous 9-11 musings of the *Loose Change*<sup>5</sup> videos, the first to be offered as fund-drive premiums. But it is predictable that it got increasingly sinister and wacky from there. Some of the ensuing 9-11 conspiracy hucksters promoted by WBAI not only didn't have their ducks in a row in terms of research, but were creepy fascistic types. Eric Hufschmid, producer of the *Painful Deception*<sup>6</sup> video, has a website<sup>7</sup> full of anti-immigrant xenophobia and Holocaust revisionism. Of course, he uses the soft-sell approach — in the 9-11 video there isn't any xenophobia or Holocaust denial. You have to go his website to see that he's a xenophobe and revisionist (read: likely Nazi-nostalgist).

Next was WBAI's promotion of *The Money Masters*<sup>8</sup>, a DVD purporting to expose the international banking conspiracy to undermine American sovereignty. This was pretty much straight-up right-wing nationalism, and had, at least, a strong fascistic undertone. The next entry was Spanish conspiracy guru Daniel Estulin<sup>9</sup>, author of *The Secrets of the Bilderberg Club*, who asserted that Obama was put in power by the Bilderbergs to impose "socialism."

Finally, in the summer 2010 fund drive, WBAI crossed the line — promoting a real, live neo-Nazi: a former British sportscaster by the name of David Icke, who hawks a book entitled *Alice in Wonderland and the World Trade Centre Disaster*<sup>10</sup>. This is his lure to draw in newbies who can then be indoctrinated with far stranger and more unsavory things. Icke's is soft-sell neo-Nazism, but neo-Nazism nonetheless; you don't have to dig very deep to find it.

In the material aired on BAI, Icke spoke about the Bilderbergs and the Illuminati. But what he actually believes (or says he believes) lies behind the global power nexus can be gleaned very easily by going to his website.<sup>11</sup> In Icke's world, behind the the Bilderbergs and the Illuminati is the Rothschild banking family and associated powerful

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.loosechange911.com/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.erichufschmid.net/ThePainfulDeceptionsVideo.html>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.erichufschmid.net/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.themoneymasters.com/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.danielestulin.com/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.davidickebooks.co.uk/index.php?act=viewProd&productId=6>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.davidicke.com>

Jews – who are literally held to be inhuman. They are, in fact, reptilian aliens from the Fourth Dimension who have mysterious shape-shifting abilities and can assume human form. (I’m not making this up – go to the website.<sup>12</sup>)

The ideology behind all of this comes straight out of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*<sup>13</sup>, the notorious anti-Semitic forgery which was a pillar of the Nazi propaganda system. It purports to be a secret document revealing how the Jews secretly control the world, using both capitalism and communism as instruments to bring governments to their knees. Icke’s bizarre zeitgeist is a mere reworking of the *Protocols*, which he in fact extensively cites on his website.

The shape-shifting-reptilians thing is admittedly Icke’s own little twist. It is a fairly common device of DIY Nazism to assert that the Jews are actually non-human. The Christian Identity movement, which pervades much of the rural radical right in the US, believes that only the white race is truly human; the other races are either sub-human or non-human. The brown-skinned “mud people” are sub-human. The Jews are the non-human offspring of Satan. Both must be exterminated, although the Jews with somewhat greater urgency due to their greater power.

For the Christian Identity cultists, Jews are Satanic offspring because everything is seen through their idiosyncratic spin on the Bible; for Icke they are shape-shifting reptilians, exploiting popular interest in (and credulity about) extra-terrestrials. Both take the *Protocols* as their starting point.

### **The Paradoxical Anti-Fascist Rhetoric of Contemporary Crypto-Fascism**

Today – at least, hopefully, on WBAI – you don’t get very far by openly calling yourself a neo-Nazi. In fact, a standard of contemporary populist invective is to compare our present-day oppressors with the Nazis. How do Icke and his ilk square this?

By applying Hitler’s own ideology and propaganda techniques to Hitler himself.

In Hitler’s world, everything bad was the creation of evil Jews in high places. So of course, David Icke says Hitler was created by the

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.davidicke.com/articles/reptilian-agenda-mainmenu-43/35906>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.biblebelievers.org.au/przion1.htm>

Rothschilds. In fact, he goes beyond that to argue that Hitler *was* a Rothschild. And therefore Hitler, like most of those who run the world, was in fact not human but a shape-shifting reptilian from the Fourth Dimension.

This theory is expounded in a screed entitled “Was Hitler a Rothschild?”<sup>14</sup> In a time-honored method of such propaganda, Icke mixes a few grains of truth amidst the sinister wackiness. Although considerably less so today, the Rothschilds were certainly a powerhouse of high finance in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and funders of the early Zionist movement. But, betraying his hand rather too quickly, Icke in the second paragraph refers to the Rothschilds as one of Europe’s “black occult bloodlines,” “working in league with the Illuminati House of Hesse.” Then he really cuts to the chase: they are “one of the top Illuminati bloodlines on the planet, and they are shape-shifting reptilians.”

Icke seizes on the popular rumor in Germany that Hitler’s grandmother was impregnated by a Rothschild baron for whom she worked as a maid. Icke cites a book by a US intelligence analyst, Walter Langer, who looked into this theory after the war and in 1972 published his findings under the title *The Mind of Adolf Hitler*. If you go to the library and read the book for yourself, you’ll find that Langer ultimately decided the rumor was insubstantial.

Icke, however, has no doubts. “[T]here was no way that someone like Hitler would come to power in those vital circumstances for the Illuminati, unless he was of the reptilian bloodline,” he writes, adding that “the same bloodline has held the positions of royal, aristocratic, financial, political, military, and media power in the world for literally thousands of years. This is the bloodline that has produced ALL 42 of the Presidents of the United States since and including George Washington in 1789 . . . The World War Two leaders, Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin, were of the bloodline and also Freemasons and Satanists. They were manipulated into office, and their country’s war effort funded, by the Rothschild’s and the other Illuminati bloodlines.”

Icke asserts: “These people are NOT Jews, they are a non-human bloodline with a reptilian genetic code who hide behind the Jewish people and use them as a screen and a means to an end.” He seems to think this disclaimer lets him off the hook for anti-Semitism.

In a page on his website<sup>15</sup> boosting the *Protocols of the Elders of*

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.theforbiddenknowledge.com/hardtruth/hitler\\_was\\_a\\_rothschild.htm](http://www.theforbiddenknowledge.com/hardtruth/hitler_was_a_rothschild.htm)

Zion, Icke even deigns to write: “I speak for Jews who oppose this secret plan which was concocted by Cabalist bankers and rabbis centuries ago and revised periodically. These self-appointed Jewish leaders have put all Jews in jeopardy. They are establishing their world tyranny by stealth — manipulating current events, re-engineering society and controlling perception.”

But his tone quickly changes to that of a barely veiled threat: “All Jews will be blamed for the disproportionate role many Jews play unless more speak up and are counted.”

Elsewhere on his website,<sup>15</sup> Icke has a photo of a billboard that was placed on a roadside in Iowa by a local Tea Party chapter (improbable allies for BAI listeners) that reads “RADICAL LEADERS PREY ON THE FEARFUL & NAIVE” below portraits of Hitler, Lenin and Obama. The portraits are labeled, respectively, “National Socialism,” “Marxist Socialism” and “Democrat Socialism.” Icke writes: “Is the Obama-Hitler billboard correct? . . . The billboard suggests that Obama is a radical socialist leader similar to Hitler and Lenin. This is, in fact, a true comparison, which is probably why it was papered over so quickly. Obama, Hitler, and Lenin were all initially financed by Rothschild money. If we look at the historical record, we can clearly see that all three leaders were originally puppets of the House of Rothschild.”

This is particularly telling. Icke, for all his wackiness, is on a spectrum with the Tea Party movement, which is being mainstreamed with terrifying rapidity. And whether Icke himself is deeply delusional or a mere charlatan, it is clear that many of the Tea-Baggers genuinely *think* they are anti-fascist — even as they embrace such fascistic elements as paranoid anti-communism, vague but shrill populism, and (too often) open racism.

### **Leftists Take the Poisonous Bait**

This relates to why WBAI and the Pacifica network, which should be a foremost bulwark of resistance against the rise of fascism in this country, are promoting fascism.

The left is complicit in eroding its own vigilance against fascism by using the word “fascism” as a mere baseball bat to beat our enemies with, often with little regard for its actual *meaning*. Many elements

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.davidicke.com/headlines/37052-protocols-of-zion-damage-control>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.davidicke.com/headlines/36534-is-the-obama-hitler-billboard-correct>

of the reigning system are frighteningly fascistic (aggressive wars, repeal of basic rights, the privileged position of corporate power); many elements of the increasingly conspiranoid opposition culture on the grassroots are *also* fascistic, despite its relentless anti-fascist rhetoric. This opposition culture consistently misses the boat on the *populist lure* of fascism, especially in its incipient phases.

Hitler and Mussolini talked a good populist game during their rise to power. Before they each cut their deal with big capital, they even talked a vaguely anti-capitalist line. Hitler posed himself as standing up for the “Little Man” and German sovereignty against the Jewish banking conspiracy — especially in the period from the Beer-hall Putsch through the rise of the Brown Shirts, the more populist element of the Nazi apparatus. Then in 1934 — the year after Hitler achieved power — the Brown Shirt leaders were betrayed and unceremoniously killed in the Night of the Long Knives. This happened just as Hitler was consolidating his deal with the big German capitalists, the Krupps and the Farbens, who would later avail themselves of slave labor in the concentration camps.

Early fascism nearly always plays to populism and purports to be protecting the little guy against the machinations of all-powerful elites. The error the fascists make — or, more cynically, the lie that they tell — is that “the” problem isn’t class stratification but those occulted elites pulling the strings behind the scenes, who can be neatly extricated from the system. And who better to extricate them than the heroic truth-teller who is exposing them? This is both the fundamental fallacy behind fascism, and the psycho-political instrument by which it achieves power.

Failure to grasp this is a grave error, and it is practically universal on the contemporary left. Even Chris Hedges,<sup>17</sup> who should really know better, incorrectly employs the word “corporatism” — used especially by Mussolini to describe his system — to refer to fascism’s deal with the bankers and industrialists. That deal was certainly a defining element of classical fascism, but that isn’t what the word “corporatism” referred to. It referred to *another* defining element of fascism: the “incorporation” of populist institutions such as trade unions into the apparatus of the ruling party. This element is invisible to nearly all on the left who today warn of impending fascism.

Most of those who invoke Mussolini’s famous “fascism is corpo-

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<sup>17</sup> [http://www.truthdig.com/avbooth/item/chris\\_hedges\\_on\\_illusion\\_corporatism\\_and\\_inverted\\_totalitarianism\\_20100203/](http://www.truthdig.com/avbooth/item/chris_hedges_on_illusion_corporatism_and_inverted_totalitarianism_20100203/)



ratism” quote ironically do so to refer to the opposite of what they really mean. The corporatist (centralist, clientelist) elements of the US system, instated in the New Deal era, have today been largely dismantled in favor of a *corporate* (free-trade or “neoliberal”) state — that is, one dominated by the big corporations. Classical fascism had both corporatist and corporate elements, using corporatism to control populist currents, and divert popular rage from the ruling class and onto scapegoats (Jews and communists); too many on the left today make the error of only seeing one end of the fascist equation.

Blind to the populist element of fascism, we become vulnerable to its propaganda. Amazingly, among those to exhibit this error in recent days is none other than longtime leftist icon Fidel Castro. Since stepping down from power, Havana’s elder statesman has been writing a lot for his blog, “Reflections by Comrade Fidel,” which is posted on the website of the Cuban news agency Prensa Latina. His Aug. 19 entry was entitled “The World Government”<sup>18</sup> — traditionally a canard of the political right, which sees the globalist conspiracy as one of the left. The entry consists in its majority of an extended excerpt from Daniel Estulin’s *The Secrets of the Bilderberg Club*. There isn’t the slightest intimation that Fidel is quoting Estulin in any sense other than favorably.

Most ironically of all, the Estulin quote includes a citation to far-right cult-master<sup>19</sup> (and convicted credit-card fraud felon) Lyndon LaRouche,<sup>20</sup> in which he portrays the “Aquarian Conspiracy” of the “counterculture” as an insidious tool for social control. Those who can remember back to the 1980s will recall that LaRouche was a big booster of Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative (“Star Wars”) program, which was instrumental in driving Cuba’s Soviet patrons to collapse. In true fascist style, LaRouche weds paranoia about sinister banking conspiracies with a vicious anti-communism.

So why is Fidel Castro embracing a writer who, in turn, embraces Lyndon LaRouche? It may be cruel to speculate that it has to do with his advancing years, but Fidel did have the humility to step down from power when he felt he was no longer up to it. Maybe his handlers should clue him in that he should stop doing his blog.

But there is, of course, a bigger political point here.

The conspiracy theory of history has right-wing roots, and remains

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.plenglish.com>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.publiceye.org/larouche/>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.larouchepac.com/>

inherently a phenomenon of the right. Its origins are in the writings of the reactionary 18<sup>th</sup>-century Jesuit Abbé Barruel,<sup>21</sup> who blamed the French Revolution on the medieval Order of Templars. His emulators blamed Freemasons and the Illuminati for the assault on Europe's old order. This became the template nearly a century later for the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. This document first emerged along with the *pogroms*, in which Jewish villages were attacked and burned as Jews were scapegoated for the rising of revolutionary currents in the Russia of the czars. It was later adopted by Hitler, and justified his Final Solution. Conspiranoid thinking was seen in America in the anti-communist hysteria of the Cold War, heyday of the John Birch Society; and then in the "New World Order" scare of the '90s, heyday of the militia movement. Since 9–11, the conspiracy milieu has been in a state of hypertrophy, becoming a virtual industry.

Conspiracy theory is what fascism gives the "Little Man" *instead of* a fundamental change in the system and an overturning of oppressive power relations. Especially with the Tea Party and allied movements perfectly poised to exploit the ongoing economic agony in America and bring about a genuinely fascistic situation in this country, it is imperative that we don't fall for it.

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<sup>21</sup> <http://www.paranoidsonline.com/2010/04/profiles-in-conspiracy-abbe-barruel.html>

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ISSN: 1923-5615