

# Globalization, Theocracy and the New Fascism: Taking the Right's Rise to Power Seriously

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Since George W. Bush's reelection in 2004, the Christian right in the U.S. has come under new scrutiny, here and around the world. Some, of course, are celebrating the religious right's rise to power; but a great many others are worried about the political direction the country has taken on matters of war and peace, on the future of respect for liberty and diversity, and on prospects for equitable and sustainable development.

The worry is quite justified. With two Islamic countries occupied by U.S. troops, with Iran and North Korea on the nuclear threshold to counter threats of occupation, with the ongoing violence and counter-violence of Israel's occupation of the Palestinians, with the continuing plots against Venezuela for its oil—who would not be worried about a White House under the thumb of zealots longing for theocracy, the Apocalypse and the Second Coming?

America's cantankerous relationship with its right wing preachers over the years is no longer simply a part of our country's 'local color.' Bush's victory, even if narrow, against his multilateralist and corporate liberal rivals in the ruling class, as well as against the popular 'Anybody But Bush' forces that mobilized against him, has caused the Christian Coalition forces to become even bolder. America's theocrats are now a global concern and a growing danger to all.

Today's Christian and conservative rightists, to be sure, didn't suddenly spring out of nowhere. Their current incarnation spans nearly four decades. They got their big start in 1968 when Alabama Gov. George Wallace led a mass movement of anti-civil-rights white Southerners out of the Democratic Party and into an alliance with Richard Nixon's GOP through its 1968 and 1972 'Southern Strategy.' With Nixon's Watergate demise in the 1970s, the key organizers of what was then dubbed 'the New Right,' chiefly Paul Weyrich and Richard Viguerie, retrenched and began raising and spending millions from big capitalists to build the think tanks, policy coalitions, grassroots churches and media infrastructure that, by 1980, helped put Ronald Reagan in the White House.

Nonetheless, as the Reagan years began, the Religious Right was still only a junior partner in the GOP. They were often used, sometimes cynically and opportunistically, but the 'Rockefeller Republicans,' then represented by Reagan's Vice President, George H. W. Bush (the Elder), still mainly ran the show.

The New Right, however, did not intend to play second fiddle for long. Some critics saw what was happening early. Futurist and sociologist Alvin Toffler, for instance, said in his classic work, *The Third Wave*, published in 1980: 'In the United States, it is not hard to imagine some new political party running Billy Graham (or some facsimile) on a crude 'law-and-order' or 'anti-porn' program with a strong authoritarian streak. Or some as yet unknown Anita Bryant demanding imprisonment for gays or 'gay-symp.' Such examples provide only a faint, glimmering intimation of the religio-politics that may well lie ahead, even in the most secular of societies. One can imagine all sorts of cult-based political movements headed by Ayatollahs named Smith, Schultz or Santini (p. 379).'

Along with others, Toffler saw the beginning of the new religious right here in a much broader context. The rise of fundamentalism was a worldwide phenomenon, taking root in Islamic, Christian, Jewish and Hindu peoples around the world. Jeffrey Hadden and Anson Shupe, authors of *Televangelism*, the 1988

critical study of the merger of religion and modern telecommunications, tied it directed to the rapid social change and disrupted social structures brought about by the onset of globalization.

Hadden and Shupe argue that globalization, in part, is a 'common process of secularizing social change' containing 'the very seeds of a reaction that brings religion back into the heart of concerns about public policy. The secular...is also the cause of resacralization...[which] often takes fundamentalistic forms.' They also explain, ironically, that the fundamentalist voice of protest against global secularism is itself amplified by the same high technology of globalization, a powerful tool that gives it global reach and an accelerated rate of growth. The World Council of Churches, itself a liberal-to-moderate target of the fundamentalist right, described the process at its 1998 report on its 8th Assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe:

'Globalization gives rise to a web of contradictions, tensions and anxieties. The systemic interlocking of the local and the global in the process created a number of new dynamics. It led to the concentration of power, knowledge, and wealth in institutions controlled or at least influenced by transnational corporations. But it also generated a decentralizing dynamic as people and communities struggle to regain control over the forces that threaten their very existence. In the midst of changes and severe pressure on their livelihoods and cultures, people want to affirm their cultural and religious identities...

'While globalization universalized certain aspects of modern social life, it also causes and fuels fragmentation of the social fabric of societies. As the process goes on and people lose hope, they start to compete against each other in order to secure some benefits from the global economy. In some cases this reality gives rise to fundamentalism and ethnic cleansing.'

Alvin and Heidi Toffler go further in describing the impact of this 'loss of hope' in their 1993 book, *War and Antiwar: Survival at the Dawn of the 21st Century*. Dividing the world into their now popularized 'three waves' analysis-an agricultural First Wave, an industrial Second Wave, and an information technology Third Wave-they put it this way:

'On a world scale, the lurch back to religion reflects a desperate search for something to replace fallen Second Wave faiths-whether Marxism or nationalism, or for that matter Scientism. In the First Wave world it is fed by memories of Second Wave exploitation. Thus it is the aftertaste of colonialism that makes First Wave Islamic populations so bitter against the West. It is the failure of socialism that propels Yugoslavs and Russians toward chauvinistic-cum-religious delirium. It is alienation and fear of immigrants that drives many Western Europeans into a fury of racism that camouflages itself as a defense of Christianity. It is corruption and the failures of Second Wave democratic forms that could well send some of the ex-Soviet republics tracking back either to Orthodox authoritarianism or Muslim fanaticism.'

## **BUILDING THE POLITICS OF RESENTMENT**

The New Right in the U.S. made use of globalization's economic stress and erosion of traditional identities to build a new politics of resentment. To fund it, Weyrich and Viguerie, and dozens of others who learned from them, raised millions from the super-rich of the right: Mellon's Scaife Foundations, Coors' Castle Rock Foundations, the Bradley Foundation, the Smith Richardson Foundation and the Olin Foundation, just to name the top five with combined assets of nearly \$2 billion. They helped to deploy the money to build dozens of think tanks and hundreds of policy groups and coalitions, such as the

Heritage Foundation, the Free Congress Foundation, and the Rockford Institute, just to name a few. And they gave resentment a political focus, particularly around the themes of race, gender and class.

- **Race.** They used post-segregation affirmative action and immigration growth to fuel chauvinism and racism rooted in the fear of the erosion of white privilege.
- **Gender.** They used independence won by women in reproductive rights and entry into the workforce, along with the gains of the gay rights movement, to grow female insecurity over family breakups and to nurture the 'angry white male' syndrome in response to challenges to weakened traditional notions of masculinity and male identity.
- **Class.** They used class anger over job loss and wage decline, stemming from capital flight and outsourcing, to target the 'power elites' of corporate liberalism and its mass media.

The key launching pad was the 'right to life' movement. This grassroots campaign emerged after the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision in the 1970s. Pushed by the Catholic Church and the more conservative Christian Protestants in the South and Southwest, the anti-choice movement gave the New Right elites the opening they needed for a broader mass base. They quickly deployed their direct mail, think tank and electronic media networks to build and coordinate a vast single-issue, direct action movement around the issue of abortion.

They were very successful. By the late 1980s, the right-to-life movement had mobilized millions and was becoming an important factor in elections. Some elements had become quite militant, like Operation Rescue, which organized regional mobilizations to shut down abortion clinics in cities like Atlanta, Los Angeles and Wichita. Reversing *Roe v. Wade* had become a moral crusade, demagogically borrowing rhetoric from the last century's abolitionists, and engaging in mass civil disobedience. In some cases, extremists took it to the level of armed assault and murder of health professionals.

But the New Right was interested in much more than changing abortion laws. They wanted political power themselves, not just an alliance with the politically powerful. They decided to transform single-issue mass action and lobbying campaigns into a multi-issue, grassroots electoral operation. The only question was whether to do it inside or outside of the GOP. They decided to do both, but the main emphasis was taking over the Republican Party from the bottom up. Thomas Frank, in his current best-seller, *What's the Matter with Kansas*, describing the 1992 'Voter's Revolt' in Kansas, put it clearly:

'This was no moderate affair. The ones who were actually poised to take back control of the system [from GOP moderates and a few Democrats] were the anti-abortion protesters. There was a grassroots movement of the most genuine kind, born in protest, convinced of its righteousness, telling and retelling its stories of persecution at the hands of the cops, the judges, the state, and the comfortable classes... Now they were putting their bodies on the line for the right wing of the Republican Party. Most important of all, the conservative cadre were dedicated enough to show up in force for primary elections... And in 1992, this populist conservative movement conquered the Kansas Republican Party from the ground up.'

What happened in Kansas was part of a bigger picture, a longer-term, nationwide and carefully thought out set of strategy and tactics. One of the more interesting explanations of this was put forward by talk radio ace, Rush Limbaugh. In his 1994 book, *See, I Told You So*, Limbaugh unveils his fascination with Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Communist theoretician and leader of the 1920s and early 1930s:

'In the early 1900s, an obscure Italian communist by the name of Antonio Gramsci theorized that it would take a 'long march through the institutions' before socialism and relativism would be victorious ... Gramsci is certainly not a household name...his name and theories are well known and understood throughout leftist intellectual circles. Gramsci theorized that by capturing these key institutions and using their power, cultural values would be changed, traditional morals would be broken down, and the stage would be set for the political and economic power of the West to fall...Gramsci succeeded in defining a strategy for waging cultural warfare... Why don't we simply get in the game and start competing for control of these key cultural institutions? In other words, why not fight back?'

Gramsci himself often noted that his views on strategy and tactics were not the intellectual property of the left alone. In fact he developed them, in part, through an analysis of how Mussolini and his fascists rose to power in a lurch-by-lurch 'passive revolution' against both the liberal bourgeoisie and the working-class left of Italy.

In fact, by combining Limbaugh's views and efforts with those of his New Right godfathers, think-tank builder Weyrich and direct mail computer whiz Viguerie, one gets a clear outline of a Gramscian strategy deployed by the right. Here's what it looks like:

**IDENTIFY THE MAIN ENEMY.** Here the New Right's target is both corporate liberalism, whose political hegemony in 1960 was cracked by the decade of revolt that followed, and the 1960s New Left, which had won a new kind of cultural hegemony in the next decades, even if it failed to consolidate those gains politically. To the right, it didn't matter if corporate liberalism and the new left were fundamentally opposed; it suited their purposes to morph them into one, not even wincing when, say, describing the New York Times as an organ of the far left. To wage populist class warfare against both the left and corporate liberalism, the left had to be joined at the hip with elites that provoked resentment

**BUILD COUNTER-THEORY.** Since liberalism had near- hegemony in the universities, at least in the schools of liberal arts, the New Right established think tanks and publishers as counter-institutions to train the next generation of cadre who could challenge the elite's ivory towers. With foresight, it funded several diverse schools of thought: traditionalist, libertarian, secular neo-conservative, theocratic and paleo-conservative nationalists and racialists.

**BUILD MASS COMMUNICATIONS.** The New Right is best known through flamboyant people like Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, and Michael Savage in their daily polemics on talk radio. But the Christian right's religious media and direct mail infrastructure is far flung, especially Pat Robertson's global Christian Broadcasting Network. Christian theocrat James Dobson's popular radio program, Focus on the Family, alone claims to reach four million people every day, with up to 25 million more occasional listeners. FOTF is carried by 4,000 radio and TV stations in 40 countries. Its name also refers to its sister organization, the Family Research Council, a powerful lobbying organization. It has thousands of employees, with even its own zip code in Colorado Springs. It has a mailing list of 2 million supporters, and gets 12,000 letters, calls and e-mails every day.

**BUILD BASE COMMUNITIES.** These are situated in churches-mainly Assemblies of God, Pentecostal, and some Southern Baptists and right Presbyterians. These have evolved into grassroots political caucuses, mainly in the GOP, but also in the Reform Party and the Taxpayer's Party.

**BUILD THE COUNTER-HEGEMONIC BLOC.** This involves broader alliances, like the Christian Coalition, that pulls in Mormons and Catholic rightists. Some forms draw in conservative Jews as well.

**TAKE POWER IN GOVERNMENT.** The main approach so far is taking over the GOP and purging the party of its moderates, and then winning elections and appointments by combining voting with direct action and any other means necessary.

**RADICAL RECONSTRUCTION OF SOCIETY.** There is a range of approaches here, from secular NeoCon global projects to theocratic reconstruction of government, law and the Constitution to purge it of Enlightenment values and subordinate them to Biblical law. The steady drift is toward the far right.

## **THE GOP AND GRAMSCI'S 'PASSIVE REVOLUTION'**

What are the results of this strategy? The February 2002 issue of *Campaigns & Elections*, a trade journal for campaign workers and pundits on all sides, published a study, *'Spreading Out and Digging In,'* by Kimberly Conger and John Green, that demonstrated considerable growth of the religious right in the GOP over the past decade. The *Christian Statesman*, a right theocratic publication, recently summed up the C&E study this way:

'Christian conservatives now hold a majority of seats in 36% of all Republican Party state committees (or 18 of 50 states), plus large minorities in 81% of the rest, double their strength from a decade before. They are weak in just 6 states (plus D.C.), all northeastern. As the study put it, Christians are 'gaining influence by spreading out to more states and digging in when faced with opposition.' Once dismissed as a small regional movement, 'Christian conservatives have become a staple of politics nearly everywhere.'

Once ensconced in the GOP, the Christian right then uses the threat to go with a third party or to boycott key campaigns to move it ever further in their direction. Focus on the Family's Dobson has been most outspoken on this tactic: 'If they get disinterested in the values of the people who put them in office as they have done in the past,' he said in a Jan. 17, 2005 NPR interview, 'if that happens again, I believe the Republican Party will pay an enormous price in four years and maybe two.' Dobson spelled out just what he meant in an earlier 1998 article in *US News*: 'It doesn't take that many votes to do it. You just look how many people are there by just a hair, [who won their last election by] 51 percent to 49 percent, and they have a 10- or 11-vote majority. I told [House Majority Whip] Tom DeLay, 'I really hope you guys don't make me try to prove it, because I will.' '

As Dobson indirectly indicates, it would be a mistake to see the GOP today as simply a tool of the Christian right. The reality is more complex, and the topography of right-of-center politics in the U.S. in 2005 reveals an often bewildering cluster of colluding and contending schools of thought, as well as varying degrees of power and influence. In the broadest strokes, they can be separated into three main groupings-secular conservatives, religious conservatives, and the anti-conservative racialists.

### **Secular Conservatives**

Here are mainly the multinational businessmen, neoconservatives and right libertarians. These people may be privately religious, but their faith is usually separate from pragmatic politics. Some are pro-choice and want to maintain a separation of church and state. In their view, growing their businesses trumps promoting religion in the political arena. Former Secretary of State George Schultz and Vice President Dick Cheney are typical examples.

## **Religious Conservatives**

These fall into two main groupings, Christian nationalists and Christian theocrats. What's the difference? When Bush says, as he did at a recent press conference, that his faith in God drives his politics, but that Jews, Muslims and even non-believers can be equally patriotic and welcome in an America that wants to spread its message around the world, he is expressing a Christian nationalism tinged with U.S. hegemonism.

The Christian theocrats, on the other hand, view other world faiths as Satanic that need to be fought, subdued and eventually eliminated. House GOP leader Rep. Tom Delay (R-TX) and Pat Robertson, founder of the Christian Coalition and a GOP presidential candidate in 1988, are typical examples.

The Catholic right and Jewish right are best put in their own subgroups under this heading, since they often are not comfortable in a permanent alliance with the Christian right, especially its theocratic trend, which is often anti-Catholic and anti-Jewish.

Finally, there are the Paleo-Conservatives. They see themselves rooted in traditional, often aristocratic, Christian denominations, such as Anglicans or pre-Vatican II Catholicism, but defend a much older conservatism that is wary of theocracy. They define themselves nationalists, isolationists and even patriots of various U.S. states or regions, such as the South, and are strongly opposed to the NeoCons, which they view as closet Jewish leftists, in the main. Most PaleoCons even opposed invading Iraq as a 'Jacobin' adventure of the NeoCons. Pat Buchanan is a prime spokesman.

## **Anti-Conservative Racialists**

This is the extreme right, which is revolutionary rather than reformist, and often expresses a populist contempt for both secular and religious conservatives. It includes the Ku Klux Klan network. But the executed Oklahoma City terror bomber, Timothy McVeigh, is the most recent well-known example. He was a student of William Pierce, author of the anti-Semitic and anti-Black manifesto, *The Turner Diaries*, and founder of the neo-Nazi National Alliance. In the last years of his life, Pierce worked to build a global network of neo-Nazi groups, as well as met in the Middle East with Islamist fundamentalists to extend his reach. Their religious views, to the extent that they have any, are either neo-pagan or 'Christian Identity,' which combines pagan beliefs with the notion that 'Aryans' are the true descendants of Israel, with Jews and Blacks descended from pre-Adamic, Satanic and subhuman 'Mud People.' The mass base is in the armed militia movements, the Aryan Brotherhood white gangs in prisons, and the skinheads among alienated youth. While relatively small (they still number in the tens of thousands) these groups are an armed and dangerous wild card that could surge under crisis conditions.

## **THE CONSERVATIVE RIGHT IN A GLOBAL ECONOMIC CONTEXT**

For a more all-sided understanding of U.S. politics today, it needs to be stressed that the conservative right is only one sector of the ruling class. Like most countries in the world, the U.S. has not been immune to how globalization, especially the emergence of a transnational capitalist class (TNC), has changed its own class structures and political priorities. Most industrialized and even many developing countries have witnessed the emergence of complex conflicts between their domestic partners of TNC, their nation-based capitalists with multinational reach, their capitalists limited to their own domestic market, and, last but not least, the broad masses of their own population. It is often expressed in the conflict of neoliberal free marketer vs. national protectionist, globalist vs. nationalist, or multilateralist vs. unilateralist.

This worldwide conflict takes on a special character here. The U.S. is a superpower and, since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, it has found itself caught between two visions, one rooted in the past and the other in the future.

The first vision sees a unipolar world with the U.S. having emerged victorious as the sole superpower, and one that is ready and willing to challenge any other power or bloc of powers seeking to change the present relations of power. This is the politics of U.S. hegemonism, where U.S. sovereignty is unrestricted and all other sovereignties are limited. It is the variant of U.S. nationalism that is the core of the ruling GOP coalition under George W Bush.

The second vision sees the emergence of a new multipolar world. It is a global arena where the TNC is emerging in a way that is not tied to any one national state, where new forms of global governance are emerging, where new regional power blocs are developing and the national interests of every state are advanced, ironically, by accepting some restriction on their sovereignty. This is the politics of multilateralist globalism. U.S. nationalism and national interests here are mediated in the form of corporate liberal internationalism expressed by the Democratic Leadership Council and the John Kerry campaign, now the minority opposition in Congress, such as it is.

This was the core conflict of the 2004 election. It explains why globalist billionaires like George Soros were going all out to defeat Bush. It also explains why the race wasn't between antiwar and pro-war candidates, since the corporate liberal line remains, 'Now that we're there, we can't just leave. We have to stabilize the country and the region.' It also explains why so many forces internationally expressed their anti-hegemonism by opposing the Iraq invasion-whether from a pro-globalist, nationalist and popular democratic perspective.

It would be reductionist, however, simply to stop here. There are complex nests of contradictions and conflicts in American political life. But the most important set to look at for understanding and combating the rise of the right are the conflicts within the GOP and Bush's ruling coalition.

### **Multinational 'Free Trader' vs. Populist Protectionist**

This is a conflict between the wealthiest sector of the GOP, on one side, and smaller business and labor GOP voters, on the other. Unfortunately, the more grassroots side pulls the GOP even further to the right. Its anti-immigration stance led some, like Ross Perot and Pat Buchanan, to run against the GOP on the Reform Party ticket. The latest expression of this is the Minuteman Project, groups of paramilitary vigilantes setting up their own patrols of the Mexican border.

### **Pro-War vs. Anti-War**

Opposition to the Iraq War in the GOP comes from several quarters. Many libertarians, along with right populists like Buchanan, oppose 'Empire' from a nationalist and isolationist perspective. There is also resentment among high military officers in the Pentagon against policies of the NeoCons that are viewed as adventurist and ill planned. They look to Colin Powell and Wesley Clark over George Bush and Donald Rumsfeld.

### **Christian Nationalists vs. Christian Theocrats**

The Christian nationalists like Bush tend to give priority to their patriotism even as they promote the agenda of the religious right generally. The theocrats, on the other hand, are openly hostile to Islam as

Satanic. Bush has had to criticize at least one of his top theocratic right generals for anti-Islamic remarks, and also had to distance himself from Rev. Franklin Graham, son of Rev. Billy Graham, who launched similar attacks on Islam. In their own journals, the theocrats criticize Bush for 'capitulating to polytheism' and warn their followers that they still have a way to go before the GOP is reconstructed along Biblical lines. Some of this turmoil also erupted in the Terry Schiavo 'right to die' case, where Frist, DeLay and their theocratic allies over-reached themselves in attacking the judiciary. Bush had to backpedal in the face of a mass backlash.

### **Zionist vs. Anti-Semite**

While the most virulent anti-Semites are in the neo-Nazi groups, which often give rhetorical support to Arabs fighting Israel, overt anti-Semitism also reaches into the populist and paleo-conservative trends. This puts them at odds, at least superficially, with the so-called Christian Zionists among the theocrats. It needs to be stressed, however, that this so-called Zionism, even as it is welcomed by the Israelis, is at its core also anti-Semitic. The theocrats embrace Israel because it is a sign of the 'End Times,' meaning the Rapture, the Apocalypse and the Second Coming of Christ. In the Book of Revelations, however, it claims that only 144,000 Jews will be saved and converted, while the rest will be destroyed as unbelievers. These views had a mass impact in the ongoing best-selling *Left Behind* book series by Tim LaHaye, which have sold over 40 million copies.

### **'Color-Blind' vs. White Supremacist**

Open white supremacy on the right is mostly confined to the neo-Nazi and KKK groups, although a new version celebrating the supposed virtues of 'Euro-American' and neo-confederate 'Southern traditionalism' perspectives that downgrade other cultures has emerged among the paleo-conservatives. When Senator Trent Lott of Mississippi expressed these views in a tribute to Sen. Strom Thurmond, he was compelled to back down by the 'colorblind' version of racism in the GOP, and elsewhere, which uses the 'not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character' quote from a Dr. King speech to oppose affirmative action and many other programs challenging the structures of white privilege.

### **Pro-Life vs. Pro-Choice**

There is a relatively small sector of pro-choice Republicans, centered mainly among the old school 'Rockefeller moderates' in the Northeast and among libertarians. Christine Todd Whitman, former New Jersey governor and Environmental Protection Agency secretary, speaks for the group in her new book, *It's My Party, Too: The Battle for the Heart of the GOP and the Future of America*. Others in this group include Colin Powell, Rudolph Giuliani, John McCain, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and George Pataki. While their influence in the party is under a cloud, they are often put front and center at GOP conventions to appeal to a broader range of voters.

### **Authoritarian vs. Libertarian**

The right libertarians in the U.S are centered in the Cato Institute think tank. They have their own party, while some also run as Republicans. Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX) is the prime example. He attacks the current GOP Christian right for departing from the conservative libertarianism of the late Barry Goldwater in favor of 'a program of bigger government at home, more militarism abroad, and less respect for constitutional freedoms.' He is outspoken against the war in Iraq, against restriction on civil liberties, but offers 'critical support' for anti-abortion legislation. Libertarians and some of their sometimes allies, like George Schultz and William Buckley, also go against the tide on the so-called war on drugs, arguing the



drugs laws merely increase the profits in the drug trade and thus expand it. They argue for decriminalization.

Thus not every Republican is a conservative, although the conservative right clearly has the upper hand. Nor is every conservative part of the Christian right, although the Christian right is in the White House, dominates the GOP in the Congress, and is working for all-around hegemony at all levels of the party in all 50 states. Finally, not all of the Christian right are considered Christian theocrats, although the theocrats are a militant growing minority, strong in the grassroots social movements, and lined up with powerful allies in Congress, especially Frist and Delay.

## **THEOCRACY AND THE NEW FASCISM**

Just who are the Christian theocrats? Are they really a new form of fascism arising in American politics in the 21st century?

The short answer is 'Yes.' But the longer answer starts off by noting that fascism in the past has come in many flavors, and more than one political theoretician, liberal and leftist, has come up with more than one set of characteristics defining fascism. Fascism, moreover, does not require swastikas or black shirts or even a close match with the political and economic conditions of pre-Hitler Germany. In fact, back in the 1930s, Louisiana Governor Huey Long ironically noted that, 'When fascism comes to America it will come disguised as anti-fascism.'

Mussolini coined the term from the Latin 'fasces,' the word for the wooden rods used by ancient Romans for beating their subordinates. A number of these rods were bound together in a bundle to symbolize unbreakable strength, and carried in front of the Emperor's processions. (If you have an American Mercury-head dime from 1915-1945, look on the back to see the fasces symbol of authority.) But Mussolini himself was quite slippery when it came to defining fascism. In one 1925 speech, however, he summed it up this way:

'Everything in the State, nothing outside the State, nothing against the State.'

Now look at the key tenets of the Calvinist theology of the Pentecostal and Presbyterian right in the U.S. from which the new 'dominionist' theocratic trend called 'Christian reconstructionism' has arisen:

'Everything in Christ, nothing outside of Christ, nothing against Christ,' which is modeled on Romans 11:36 'Of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things.'

Today's Christian Reconstructionism, was launched chiefly in the late 1960s by Rev. R. John Rushdoony, founder of the Chalcedon Foundation. His most famous work, *Institutes of Biblical Law* in 1965, takes its title from the 16th Century John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Rushdoony's basic idea is that all human social and political institutions must be 'reconstructed' to bring them in line with a literal absolutist reading of the Bible. Since this includes the barbaric penalties in the Book of Leviticus, Christian theocracy looks forward to the following, and their writings are rather open about it:

- Death penalty for abortionists, gays and disobedient women under theocracy.
- Liberal democracy is a product of anti-Christian Enlightenment and French Revolution
- Public schools must be abandoned for home schools.

- 'Biblical' slavery is justified for non-Christian prisoners, captives in war, and, in some cases, disobedient women.
- The Bible is the ultimate test of scientific truth.

Many have drawn the parallel with the radical Islamist imposition of The Koran and 'Sharia law' on Muslim societies. They make an excellent point, even though both Rushdoony and the Islamists would consider each other the tools of Satan. Rushdoony, who has wide influence in fundamentalist circles, especially Presbyterian and Pentecostal, died in 2001, but his foundation and work are continued by his son, Rev. Mark Rushdoony and other Reconstructionist theologians.

The Rev. George Grant, founder of the Franklin Classical School in Tennessee, is among them. One of his recent books, *The Blood of the Moon*, which takes its title from a line in the Koran, argues that the Islamic world must be conquered and subdued by military might, in order to bring about their conversion, and the current war in Iraq is only the beginning. Here's the message from his *The Changing of the Guard: Biblical Principles for Political Action*, published in 1987:

'Christians have an obligation, a mandate, a commission, a holy responsibility to reclaim the land for Jesus Christ -- to have dominion in civil structures, just as in every other aspect of life and godliness.

'But it is dominion we are after. Not just a voice.

'It is dominion we are after. Not just influence.

'It is dominion we are after. Not just equal time.

'It is dominion we are after.

'World conquest. That's what Christ has commissioned us to accomplish. We must win the world with the power of the Gospel. And we must never settle for anything less... Thus, Christian politics has as its primary intent the conquest of the land -- of men, families, institutions, bureaucracies, courts, and governments for the Kingdom of Christ.'  
(pp. 50-51)

One further point needs to be pointed out and clarified regarding Reconstructionism. Christian theocrats can be divided into two schools, premillennialists and postmillennialists. The premillennialists believe the End Times are relatively soon, where Jesus will return to govern over a 1000-year Kingdom of God. This is the view expressed in LaHaye's *Left Behind* series and the movies about *The Rapture*. Their special danger is their Christian Zionism, where they lobby both Bush and the Israelis not to give a single inch of land to the Palestinians. Here's an example of their take on Iraq from a recent 700 Club News-Talk show on CBN:

'It has nothing to do with oil. It has everything to do with that there's 1.2 million Muslims that have been deceived by the false God Allah, and that the God of heaven, Jehovah, is now in the process of doing war if you will against that spirit to ... break the power of deception so those people can be exposed to the gospel.' (Interviewee Glenn Miller.)

While the Reconstructionists would agree with this, they are postmillennialists. This means they don't think the Second Coming will occur until after a 1000 years of theocratic rule, which is required to prepare and purify the way for Jesus. Their special danger is their longer-term, but step-by-step strategy to take over and purge secular governments and institutions worldwide-by elections if they can, by warfare if necessary.

Reconstructionists, for example, are currently leading the right's assault on the U.S. Judiciary. Their allies have introduced the Constitution Restoration Act (CRA) in Congress-HR 1070 in the House and SB 520 in the Senate. The CRA affirms the right of government officials to 'acknowledge God as the source of law, liberty and government.' It prohibits federal judges from using foreign laws and judgments as the basis for rulings. Theocrats were opposed to the recent Supreme Court prohibiting the death penalty for juveniles as cruel and unusual punishment, and particularly upset with Justice Anthony Kennedy, when he pointed out that the U.S. was now in tune with international law. 'The opinion of the world community,' he said, 'while not controlling our outcome, does provide respected and significant confirmation for our own conclusions.' The CRA says, in part:

'In interpreting and applying the Constitution of the United States, a court of the United States may not rely upon any constitution, law, administrative rule, Executive order, directive, policy, judicial decision, or any other action of any foreign state or international organization or agency, other than English constitutional and common law up to the time of the adoption of the Constitution of the United States.'

This is both interesting and dangerous for what it includes, as well as for what it excludes. Why nail down the time, for instance, as 1788? The reason is that the French Revolution's 'Declaration of the Rights of Man' followed a year later, in 1789. In the years ahead were also the Civil War Amendments, the Geneva Conventions, the Nuremburg Principles, and the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, among other milestones. Theocrats behind the CRA view most of these as inspired by the Enlightenment, and therefore Satanic and anti-Biblical. It basically means the CRA is an enabling act for abolishing the separation of church and state and a launching pad for theocratic lawmaking.

'There's a, you know, majority on the Supreme Court,' James Dobson proclaimed at the April 24, 2005 'Justice Sunday' TV broadcast. 'They're unelected and unaccountable and arrogant and imperious and determined to redesign the culture according to their own biases and values, and they're out of control. And I think they need to be reined in.' The court's majority does not care, he added, 'about the sanctity of life... plus this matter of judicial tyranny to people of faith, and that has to stop.'

## **RIGHT THEOCRATS: FASCISM WITH A CLERICAL COLLAR**

Despite its religious trappings, progressive activists familiar with the left's traditional writings on fascism will have little problem recognizing this phenomenon for what it is. Georgi Dimitrov, a Bulgarian communist and leader of the Comintern in the late 1930s and 1940s, formulated the widely accepted view that 'Fascism is the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinist, most imperialist element of finance capital' (Speech to the 7th Comintern Congress in 1935). Later, in 1947, when anti-communism was rising in the U.S., he added: 'The fascist tendencies in the US are ideologically masked with the aspects of 'Americanism', 'defense of the free initiative', 'safeguard of democracy', 'support to the free peoples', 'defense of the free institutions', 'safeguard against totalitarianism'. The people who restored fascism in the US are not so naïve that they would mechanically repeat the ideology spread by Goebbels and Rosenberg and that failed catastrophically... This is why they mask their aspirations to hegemony and

cleverly use the ideas of 'freedom', 'democracy' and 'peace'. The forms of fascist ideology appear to have changed but their content remains the same. It is the aspiration to world domination.'

The anti-fascism of Gramsci, while largely in agreement with Dimitrov, has a number of different dimensions. First, Gramsci speaks of fascism's coming to power in which he terms 'passive revolution,' meaning that it can happen in fits and starts over a long period; it can happen through a quick seizure of power, but he stresses its 'war of position,' of gradually accumulating forces in a counter-hegemonic bloc against the liberal bourgeoisie and the left. At the final moment, it shifts to the 'war of maneuver,' or frontal assault, when its adversaries are weak and divided, rather than united and insurgent. He also stresses fascism as a social movement with allies in related social movements. Finally, he advocates the reverse of this process for the left: the war of position to build up progressive strength and allies, growing counter-hegemonic institutions and centers of independent power, the formation of the multiclass historic bloc of all forces preparing to fight fascist hegemony, break up its power and destroy its influence. Within the counter-hegemonic bloc, according to Gramsci, the working-class left rises to power and influence.

These are only two of the more prominent left theorists on the question of fascism and how to fight it. There are many others. In the third world, Mao Zedong and the Communist Party of China made a powerful contribution to the united front against fascism, both in defeating the Japanese and Mao's theory of New Democracy for building strength in the base areas. More recently, some of the most sophisticated developments in the theory of the united front in the national liberation movement and against imperialist war were written by Truong Chinh, a Vietnamese revolutionary who eventually became General Secretary and President of the unified Vietnam.

In the end, however, fighting the theocratic right in the U.S. today is not so much a matter of determining whether one or another of past definitions is more correct; rather, it is a matter of finding the best guidelines and methods for solving the problem at hand, whether it's called fascism, neofascism, theocratic reaction or simply the anti-democratic right.

## **WHAT CAN BE DONE? A BROAD NONPARTISAN ALLIANCE**

Defeating the new fascism in America requires a broad nonpartisan alliance to defend peace, democracy and diversity. Such an alliance needs to anchor itself, first and foremost, in the institutions and social movements that have proven themselves over the past decades as bulwarks of democracy. But it must reach beyond a core of progressive forces to win over and activate more moderate forces inside and outside of all political parties and throughout civil society that are willing to take a stand against war and the growing danger of the anti-democratic right.

A good starting point is the African-American church. In its majority, this is demonstrably one of the most, if not the most, democratic institutions in our society. It has a strong track record of activism for social justice and for building alliances far beyond its base community. Especially important in this fight, it has historically, in its majority, been a source of an alternative liberation theology and culture that has been the voice of the poor and oppressed and has challenged, exposed, shamed and defeated the most reactionary traditional theocratic and political reactionaries. Similar points can be made about the social justice commitment of the Latino church, as well as the traditional global justice and peace commitments of the Quakers, Unitarians, and liberal-minded Catholics, Jews and Muslims.

A second starting point of primary importance is the women's movement and the related struggles around gender and sexual orientation. These are not only targets of the right's most public venomous hatreds,

they have proven capable of mobilizing millions to defend their rights, the rights of others under fire, and to promote a progressive agenda in the legislative and electoral arenas.

Of critical importance are youth and students. This is a primary battleground in the war of ideas between democracy and intolerant reaction. Young people are the future, the fresh thinkers, the conscience and the front-line fighters of social change. On one side, progressive youth have been at the forefront of the fight against war and for global justice. They have been audacious and creative at confronting the right. Theocrats, however, have also targeted youth in creative ways. Christian Rock has been developed as a powerful recruiting force and as a critic of the more decadent and anti-social elements of popular culture. Enormous amounts of money have also been spent by the conservative right to develop political organizations on campuses and youth ministries in working-class communities.

The newly insurgent wing of the labor movement also has an important role. The working-class base of the right is within its reach. The unions can be the source of an alternative economic agenda that opposes the low-road advocates of an unrestricted 'free' market. It can counterpose economic democracy to the businesses that produce the 'race-to-the-bottom' policies--policies that widely spread insecurity and anxiety into the working people and leaves them open to the anti-immigrant, xenophobic rhetoric of the far right.

How can this alliance of left and center forces be developed? Here it's useful to recapture the Gramscian model the right itself has borrowed from the left:

**IDENTIFY & NARROW THE TARGET.** Our main adversary is the anti-democratic right, which includes the war-making hegemonists, the NeoCons and much of the conservative right, especially the religious right in power. While we expose their roots in the most reactionary sectors of big capital, we are not opposing corporations or capitalism in general. The idea is to isolate and divide the right, defeating its components step by step.

**BUILD COUNTER-THEORY.** The progressive movement needs to expand the number of progressive and radical democracy think tanks and policy centers available to it, and to encourage cooperation among them. The right is extremely sophisticated about its propaganda output and it requires dedicated resources to counter it and provide alternatives. It is not enough, for instance, to expose their effort to undermine the public schools. Viable, progressive alternatives for school reform must be developed as well. The same goes for economic growth projects, both here and abroad.

**BUILD MASS COMMUNICATIONS.** This requires both developing independent media and putting more critical heat on the existing mass media, especially those not owned or controlled by the conservative right. Most working journalists, electronic and print, have no great love for the far right or the religious right, and can be worked with via progressive media watch projects and other publicity projects. But the left is still relatively weak in talk radio, despite its advances in the use of the internet with projects like Indymedia, Meetup.org and Moveon.org.

**BUILD BASE COMMUNITIES.** Real people power is not built merely through coalitions of letterheads. Without grassroots organizations in neighborhoods, workplaces, schools and churches, there is no way to mobilize the political forces for the kind of electoral and mass action needed to defeat pro-theocratic legislation and remove the conservative and religious right from power.

**BUILD WIDER ALLIANCES.** With an organized network of base communities as an anchor, it is possible to reach out even further to the anti-theocratic groupings and caucuses within more moderate

church and civic organizations, as well as in the Democratic and Republican parties. The 'war of position' to develop these kind of alliances is the true substance of the counter-hegemonic bloc aimed at the right.

**DENY POWER, TAKE POWER.** Defeating war and the danger of fascism requires removing the warmongers and budding fascists from positions of political power. There is no way to do this without a protracted, bottom-up battle to build independent electoral organization and to reform the election system itself in favor of wider, multiparty democracy. The progressive and democratic forces in America need their own political party, and the time to start building it is now.

But in the meantime, as a broad nonpartisan alliance, there is every reason to select appropriate lists of candidates from all parties for the progressive grassroots organizations to elect, to bypass or to defeat. Through the experience of these campaigns, positive and negative, the strength and knowledge will be grown to carry on and win the battle for democracy on a much higher level.

The United States has gone through a number of periods in its history where the right has been ascendant. The counter-revolution against Reconstruction following the Hayes-Tilden deal was arguably the worst, with the rise of Klan terror against the Black freedmen in the South. Even Hitler saw fit to model some of his repressive legislation on the KKK-inspired 'Black Codes' in the U.S. But the WW I anti-red Palmer Raids, including the imprisonment of Socialist presidential candidate Eugene V. Debs, left their mark, as did the armed repression of strikes and sharecroppers in the 1930s. After WW 2, the McCarthy period and Smith Act trials helped create the so-called 'Silent Generation' of the 1950s.

In each period, however, the left was able to resist, survive and eventually turn the tide in another direction. It must be said that in each case, it did not do so alone, but reached out far beyond itself. In fact, this is the first question of strategy: Who are our friends; who are our adversaries? As Alvin Toffler once noted, if you don't have a strategy, then you end up being part of someone else's strategy. This is a critical point to take to heart, especially when our task is not only to understand the rise of the right, but also to forge the tools required to do something about it.

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