

The Political Forum

*A review of social and political trends and events
impacting the world's financial markets*

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WE DON'T MEAN TO SCARE YOU, BUT . . .

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Okay, brothers and sisters. This week we're going to begin with a question. What do you get when the following things all happen at once over a relatively short period of time, say 20 years?

- o The government extends its influence far beyond the role of defending the shores, delivering the mail, establishing justice, ensuring domestic tranquility, and overseeing the economy, and takes on the task of altering the nation's culture, using its great judicial and executive powers in an attempt to significantly degrade the importance of religion, family and virtually all of the traditional customs and mores around which society was ordered for over 200 years.
- o Immigration skyrockets to over one million illegal and legal individuals per year, boosting the percentage of the population that is foreign born from under 5% in 1970 to almost 10% in 1996, with an overwhelming majority of new arrivals coming from nations with sharply different cultures than that of America.
- o The government launches an attack on a fundamental principle of American democracy, namely legally guaranteed equal opportunity, with the primary target of this change being white males, the single most influential demographic cohort in the nation.
- o In the face of vociferous opposition from the nation's two largest religious congregations, the Catholics and the Baptists, all restrictions on abortion, both legal and ethical, are abandoned (including those relating to late term procedures), and the number of abortions performed skyrockets to approximately 1.5 million per year, approximately 300,000 or so on teen-agers.

The answer to this question is as follows.

- o You get a powerful political and social backlash, led by people who feel that "change" has gone way too far; who feel that a renewed respect for traditional values and customs, both religious and secular, is not only desirable, but necessary if social order is to be maintained.

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o You get an astonishing political reaction, which results in a shift in control of both houses of Congress; a dramatic increase in the number of Republican state legislators; a big jump in the number Republican governors; a surge in the number of Democratic politicians switching to the Republican party; and a steep decline in the number of Democrats who call themselves liberals.

o You get a big increase in popular support for various reform initiatives in such important areas as welfare, immigration, taxes, public education, affirmative action and abortion policy, all aimed at rolling back or stemming the liberal tide. And you get scores of formerly liberal Democrats endorsing some variation of each of these measures.

o Finally, you get a remarkable, conservative-based, political union between Catholics and Baptists, who not too many years earlier agreed upon nothing except their common allegiance to the Democratic party. The genesis of this union was recently described as follows in the magazine *First Things* by Father John Neuhaus, who is, in my opinion, one of the nation's most astute observers of the social, cultural and political scene.

Neuhaus noted that in 1971, two years before the Supreme Court's *Roe* decision, which made abortion legal, the Southern Baptist Convention passed a resolution calling for legalized abortion, a position that it reaffirmed in 1974. In fact, he notes that in October 1973, the Baptist Joint Committee--which then represented also the Southern Baptists--opposed a constitutional amendment banning abortion, and "joined the general agitation against Catholic efforts to 'impose' their morality on the country."

A few years later, however, Neuhaus recalls, at the 1980 convention in St. Louis, the Southern Baptists turned around, supporting an amendment "prohibiting abortion except to save the life of the mother." This development was described at the time by the *Boston Globe* as "a major earthquake within the nation's largest Protestant denomination."

The paper went on to say that the shock wave is important because the strong anti-abortion position by the 13.4 million member denomination "severely damages the argument that abortion is a 'Catholic issue,' and that efforts to end government spending for abortion amount to applying Catholic doctrine for the determination of public policy."

Today, Neuhaus claims, this shock wave can be further described as "one of the most important realignments in American religious and cultural history."

From a Republican party standpoint all of this is good news. It is also, I believe, evidence that the American political system is reasonably healthy. In a healthy democracy, substantial social change is accomplished, usually slowly, via the ballot box, as each new generation asserts its values and beliefs and as the beliefs of older generations change as they mature. In totalitarian societies, and in those where democratic institutions are weak, fundamental social change is usually accomplished by, or at least accompanied by, widespread violence.

I said "reasonably healthy" in the preceding paragraph because the on-going social revolution that I am describing here is not without an extremely violent element.

Some violence would be expected during periods of such sweeping political and social change and would not be cause for great concern. The 1960s social "revolution," which ushered in the leftist policies that sparked the conservative reaction I am describing here, had an important violent element. Such groups as the Weather Underground, the Black Panthers, and the Yippies didn't just talk about inciting social mayhem, they actually did it.

Among other things, some members of these and similar groups robbed banks, murdered policemen, stole weapons, kidnapped, precipitated riots and actively disrupted the political process, all in the name of "social justice." Many prominent members of the left wing establishment at the time smugly described these groups as "liberals in a hurry," and argued that their violence and disregard for legal niceties was "understandable."

The difference today is that the violence-prone individuals on the right are infinitely more dangerous than their leftist counterparts of two decades earlier. By all accounts, there are more of them. They are better equipped and better organized. And some are clearly more psychotic and blood thirsty.

My friend Peter Probst, a former CIA terrorism expert, who now works in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, where he concentrates on international terrorism, political violence and infrastructure vulnerability, believes that today's home grown terrorists represent one of the gravest, internally-generated threats to American society since the founding of the nation.

Peter is also Vice President and Director of Programs at the "Institute for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence." The Institute, which is a 501C3 non-profit corporation, was established in 1995 to, among other things, study the roots, ideologies and goals of terrorist groups, and to facilitate information flow among the various organizations, both private and public, that have been established around the world to respond to the growing terrorist threat to free societies everywhere. In my opinion, the Institute is more than just a worthwhile venture. It is a crucial one, and corporate sponsorships are much needed.

I have never disputed Peter's claim about the serious nature of the threat from violent elements within the "Patriot" and "Militia" groups that are proliferating across the nation. But my interest in terrorism has been concentrated on Islamic fundamentalism, and I had never been inclined to probe too deeply into the domestic brand, until recently when Peter provided me with some literature on the subject.

These articles were eye openers, more than confirming Peter's fears. So this week, I thought I would present a brief look at the subject; first by placing it in some historic context, as I attempted to do above, and second by describing the nature of the organizations from which the threat emanates.

I am aware that terrorism has no direct bearing on the investment process. But I believe that people who work in the financial industry should be familiar with a problem that is potentially so threatening to the social and economic well-being of the nation.

For starters, it is, I think, important to briefly examine the so-called Patriot movement, which is the spawning ground for the right-wing violence I am discussing here. I'll begin with some

words from a comprehensive, 1996 report prepared by the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery Alabama, entitled "False Patriots, The Threat of Antigovernment Extremists."

The Patriot movement is not easily defined. It has no single national organization or leadership but consists of previously unrelated groups and individuals who have found a common cause in their deep distrust of the government and their eagerness to fight back.

They are convinced that the American people are being systematically oppressed by an illegal, totalitarian government that is intent on disarming all citizens and creating one world government. They believe that the time for traditional political reform is over, that their freedom will only be secured by resistance to the nation's laws and attacks against its institutions.

Though they have no unified leadership, the Patriots are connected like no rebel force has ever been. On the Internet and by fax machine, they share their gripes against government and trade tips on how to avoid tax laws and fight government regulations. At gun shows and survivalist expos, they equip themselves for the armed confrontation they believe is inevitable. Through mail-ordered manuals, they learn how to build bombs, conduct surveillance and disable public utilities. On the weekends in isolated fields, they practice the arts of guerrilla warfare. At public meetings, their rage is rationalized by the propagandists of the movement.

The study notes that Patriot groups exist everywhere. One study identified 441 armed militias operating in all 50 states. It is estimated that there are approximately 12 million members of Patriot-type groups, who come from all walks of life.

Among them are real estate agents, preachers, commodities traders, elk ranchers, electricians, and retired military officers. They include tax protesters, millennialists, survivalists, Populists, freemen, constitutionalists, neo-Nazis, Skinheads, Klansmen, Identity believers, Christian Reconstructionists, secessionists, militant abortion foes, radical anti-environmentalists, and gun enthusiasts.

The study notes that Patriots fall into many categories, including "armchair Patriots," who "immerse themselves in arcane political theories;" "lifestyle Patriots," who follow rigid "Identity doctrines" in their daily lives; a few "professional Patriots," who serve as media spokespersons and operate Patriot mail order businesses; and "outlaw Patriots," who might refuse to pay income tax, fail to appear in court, resist arrest, collect illegal weapons, and join illegal private armies or militias.

But the most dangerous and most dedicated, and the ones about whom we are most interested here, are the so-called "underground Patriots," who "form secret cells of two to ten people and plan acts of terrorism and large scale sabotage against public officials and institutions." They are described as follows.

Their hope is that, through a series of catastrophes like the Oklahoma City bombing, they will provoke a harsh government reaction, create greater public frustration and distrust, and drive ordinary American citizens into the Patriots' ranks.

A list of crimes and serious confrontations with law enforcement officers which involve Patriot groups is long and frightening. Among the terrorist attacks credited to persons affiliated with Patriot groups are the April 19, 1995 bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City that left 169 people dead, and the October 9, 1995 derailment of Amtrak's Sunset Limited passenger train that killed one passenger and injured 83. The following, from the False Patriots report, will provide a flavor of the other type of activities in which these groups engage.

In March 1995, four members of the Minnesota Patriots Council, an extremist Posse Comitatus faction with ties to Identity, were convicted of conspiracy to produce and possess ricin--one of the deadliest known toxins--in order to kill IRS officials and law enforcement officers. The four had learned how to manufacture ricin through a manual marketed to Patriots.

The Tri-States Militia, comprised of militias from at least 30 states, was linked to at least five would-be terrorists whose bomb plots were thwarted by federal and state law enforcement. Oklahoma militia leaders and Identity "prophets" Ray Lampley and Larry Crow had been involved with Tri-States since April 1995. The two, along with Lampley's wife Cecilia and J.D. Baird, were arrested in November 1995 on federal explosives charges. The four were allegedly part of a terrorist cell that planned to blow up the Southern Poverty Law Center, offices of the Anti-Defamation League, federal buildings, abortion clinics and sites in the gay community.

While these guerrilla groups are not formally connected, they do share an organizational system described as "leaderless resistance." This concept has been discussed in right wing circles since the 1960s, but it gained widespread attention after being outlined in a 1992 article by Louis Beam, a former Klansman and one of the Patriot movements' leading theorists.

The following are some lines from that essay, which I found in an article by Jeffrey Kaplan, entitled, appropriately enough, "Leadership Resistance," in the Autumn 1997 issue of the quarterly journal, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, published by Frank Cass & Co, London.

The concept of Leaderless Resistance is nothing less than a fundamental departure in theories of organization. The orthodox scheme of organization is diagrammatically represented by the pyramid, with the mass at the bottom and the leader at the top This scheme of organization . . . is, however, not only useless, but extremely dangerous for the participants when it is utilized in a resistance movement against state tyranny. Especially is this so in technologically advanced societies where electronic surveillance can often penetrate the structure revealing its chain of command. . . .

An alternative to the pyramid type of organization is the cell system Since the entire purpose of Leaderless Resistance is to defeat state tyranny (at least insofar as this essay is concerned), all members of phantom cells or individuals will tend to react to objective events in the same way through usual tactics or resistance. Organs of information distribution such as newspapers, leaflets, computers, etc., which are widely available to all, keep each person informed of events, allowing for a planned response that will take many variations. No one need issue an order to anyone. Those idealists truly committed to the cause of freedom will act when they feel the time is ripe, or will take their cue from others who preceded them.

This concept was, Kaplan explains, expanded upon in a paper by David Lane, another icon of the movement. According to Kaplan, Lane merged the leaderless resistance strategy with the concept of the so-called Phineas Priesthood. This later idea, which draws its name from the Biblical story of Phinehas, sprang from a 1990, right wing screed entitled *The Vigilantes of Christendom* by Richard Kelly Hoskins. This book is about a Templar-like order of assassins "whose sacred role is to cull from the pure flock of Christ those wayward sheep who through race mixing or other transgressions, would do the work of Satan."

In this manner, Kaplan notes, Lane arrived at the concept of the Wotan. Here are a few lines from Lane's work. While reading them, it is worthwhile, I believe, to remember Timothy McVeigh, who blew up the federal building in Oklahoma City.

So, let's go on to strategy. Resistance to tyranny within an occupied country necessarily forms into certain structures. Most basic is the division between the political or legal arm, and the armed party which I prefer to call Wotan as it is an excellent anagram [sic] for the will of the Aryan nation. The political arm will always be subjected to surveillance, scrutiny, harassment, and attempted infiltration by the system. Therefore the political arm must remain scrupulously legal within the parameters allowed by the occupying power. The function of the political arm is above all else to disseminate propaganda

Wotan draws recruits from those educated by the political arm. When a Wotan "goes active" he severs all apparent or provable ties with the political arm. If he has been so foolish as to obtain "membership " in such an organization, all records of such association must be destroyed or resignation submitted.

The goal of Wotan is clear. He must hasten the demise of the system before it totally destroys our gene pool. Some of his weapons are fire, bombs, guns, terror, disruption, and destruction. Weak points in the infrastructure of an industrialized society are primary targets. Individuals who perform valuable service to the system are primary targets Wotan has a totally revolutionary mentality. He has no loyalty to anyone or anything except his cause.

As I said in my title, my purpose here isn't to scare anyone. But I think too few people know about this frightening crowd, whose members travel under such organization titles as the Posse Comitatus; The Order; The Covenant, The Sword, and The Arm of the Lord, and the Freemen of 'Justus Township,' Montana. They are armed. They are dangerous. They are serious. And if experts who have studied them are to be believed, they are coming to your town soon, if they aren't already there.

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