

To Ensure Domestic Tranquility: The FBI, COINTELPRO-WHITE HATE and Political Discourse, 1964–1971

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Between September 1964 and April 1971, the Federal Bureau of Investigation conducted a domestic covert action program named COINTELPRO-WHITE HATE. This counterintelligence program endeavored to discredit, disrupt, and vitiate the Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacist vigilante organizations.¹ While historians are quite familiar with the FBI's efforts to nurture anticommunism and to discredit civil rights and leftist movements, the FBI's role in discrediting KKK groups in the American South during the late 1960s has not been systematically assessed.² This article provides an analysis of the first aspect of this three-pronged attack. It describes how the FBI secretly coordinated efforts to discredit Klan organizations before local Southern communities that continued to tolerate vigilante violence. Intelligence information on Klan activities, provided discretely by the FBI to liberal

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¹ John Drabble, "COINTELPRO-WHITE HATE, the FBI, and the Cold War Consensus," Ph.D. diss., University of California at Berkeley, 1996.

² On domestic anticommunism and FBI surveillance, see Kenneth O'Reilly, *Hoover and the Un-Americans: The FBI, HUAC, and the Red Menace* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983); Athan Theoharis, *Spying on Americans, Political Surveillance from Hoover to the Huston Plan* (Philadelphia, 1978); and Athan Theoharis, ed., *Beyond the Hiss Case: The FBI, Congress, and the Cold War* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982); Frank J. Donner, *The Age of Surveillance* (New York: Knopf, 1980). For an analysis of COINTELPRO-WHITE HATE's origins and place in the Cold War domestic security apparatus, see William Keller, *The Liberals and J. Edgar Hoover, Rise and Fall of a Domestic Intelligence State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); Kenneth O'Reilly, *Racial Matters: The FBI's Secret File on Black America, 1960–1972* (New York: Free Press, 1989). No systematic assessment of COINTELPRO-White Hate's effect on Klan groups has been published. For my unpublished papers on this subject, see <http://home.ku.edu/~jdrabble/workingpapers>.

Southern journalists, politicians and other molders of public opinion, helped those white Southerners who were opposed to Ku Klux Klan activity to transform their private dismay into public rebuke and criminal prosecutions. The article also analyzes corresponding COINTELPRO operations that discredited Ku Klux Klan leaders before rank-and-file Klan members. FBI agents and their clandestine informants circulated discrediting information about KKK leaders among rank and file Klan members, inculcating disillusionment among Klansmen and prompting resignations from Klan organizations.

In so doing, COINTELPRO-WHITE HATE operations prompted white Southerners, including some Klansmen, to re-define their understanding of concepts such as “subversion” and “extremism.” When Americans employed such concepts during this period, they were also, implicitly, proposing relationships between subversives and extremists, to a more general political consensus. Yet they also contested the exact meaning of this terminology. Thus, they helped to shape notions of consensus by defining limits of inclusion within mainstream politics and obscuring divisions within it. Between 1964 and 1971, then, a great variety of social groups attempted to establish certain meanings for relational terms such as subversion and extremism and to de-legitimize alternative ones in order to formulate consensus and maintain governance.³ Political constituencies, in turn, interpreted and redefined countersubversive and counter-extremist rhetoric, creating the dynamic process that defined the rhetoric of “moderate” political discourse during the decade. One outcome of this struggle for terminological control was that by the late-1960s, most white Southerners, and even some ex-Klansmen, came to agree that the Ku Klux Klan was an “extremist” conspiracy, a conspiracy that should be suppressed in the interest of domestic tranquility.

In 1976, Godfrey Hodgson argued that a “liberal consensus” existed in American politics from the middle of the 1950s until the late 1960s. This consensus, he asserted linked capitalism, interventionist anti-communism, and support for civil rights.⁴ More recent historiography, however, has raised serious questions about the existence of consensus, especially with regard to

³ On the dynamic and contested nature of political discourse, see Michael Holquist ed., *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), xviii–xxi, 270–273, 280–283.

⁴ Godfrey Hodgson, *America in Our Time: From World War II to Nixon What Happened – And Why* (New York: Doubleday, 1978), 67, 76, 179. See also, M. J. Heale, *American Anti-communism: Combating the Enemy Within 1830–1970* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 196; Richard Gid Powers, *Not Without Honor: The History of American Anti-communism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 306–308.

desegregation.⁵ Research on ethnic whites in the urban North during the late 1960s, as well as studies of the origins of neo-conservatism, reveals cracks within the liberal political coalition. It clarifies the limited appeal of racial policies that endeavored to desegregate schools and residential neighborhoods, and to secure equal access to jobs and higher education.⁶ Subsequent political conflicts over the proper response to urban riots, court ordered busing, and affirmative action foreshadowed the alienation of this constituency from the liberal coalition.

The most militant and violent resistance to African-American aspirations after World War II, however, came from white supremacist vigilantes that operated in the American South. While Ku Klux Klan groups were never able to regain the political influence that the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan had achieved in the early 1920s, fundamental social values – including white supremacy and anti-unionism – nourished Klan organizations in cities such as Birmingham, Alabama; Atlanta, Georgia; and Tampa, Florida. During the 1930s, some Southern businessmen, politicians, and law enforcement officials continued to sponsor Klan vigilantes.⁷ As Glenn Feldman has most clearly described in his work on Alabama, the opposition to KKK vigilantism that did exist in many parts of the South before World

⁵ Gary Gerstle, “Race and the Myth of the Liberal Consensus,” *Journal of American History*, 82: 2 (September 1995). See also, Bernard Sternsher, *Consensus, Conflict and American Historians* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975).

⁶ On the limits of the liberal consensus, with reference to civil rights in the urban North, see Arnold R. Hirsch, “Massive Resistance in the Urban North: Trumbull Park, Chicago, 1953–1966,” and Thomas J. Sugrue, “Crabgrass-Roots Politics: Race, Rights, and the Reaction against Liberalism in the Urban North, 1940–1964,” *Journal of American History*, 82: 2, September 1995; Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991), 398–411. On education and busing, see James T. Patterson, *Brown vs. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 155–190. On the rise of neo-conservatism, see Mary C. Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties: The Conservative Capture of the GOP* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Dan Carter, *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995); Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York: Guilford Publications, 1995).

⁷ Diane McWhorter, *Carry Me Home: The Climactic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 44–45, 52–55, 72–73, 119; David Alan Horowitz, “White Southerners’ Alienation and Civil Rights: The Response to Corporate Liberalism, 1956–1965,” *Journal of Southern History*, 54: 2 (May 1988); Charles H. Martin, “White Supremacy and Black Workers: Georgia’s Blackshirts Combat the Great Depression,” *Labor History*, 18 (Summer 1977); John Hammond Moore, “Communists and Fascists in a Southern City, Atlanta, 1930,” *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 57 (1968); Robert P. Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes in the New South: Tampa 1882–1936* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1988), xvii.

War II was “soft,” motivated by the need for capital investment, the fear of social disorder, and concern that violence might invite federal intervention.⁸

Between World War II and the early 1960s, some Southern communities provided implicit sanction for vigilante violence against the civil rights movement, simply through their acquiescence.⁹ As late as 1965, white jurors in Southern communities refused to convict white supremacist vigilantes who murdered civil rights workers or black residents. Moreover, in particular areas, such as Neshoba County, Mississippi; and certain cities, such as Birmingham, Alabama; Bogalusa, Louisiana; and St. Augustine, Florida, Ku Klux Klan groups coordinated their vigilantism with local law enforcement officials. As late as 1963, such coordination was undertaken, at times, with the support of local and state politicians.¹⁰ Late that summer, for example, Alabama Governor George Wallace enlisted militants from the National States Rights Party, to instigate violent anti-integration disturbances and

⁸ Glenn Alan Feldman, “The Ku Klux Klan in Alabama, 1915–1954,” (Ph.D. diss., Auburn University, 1996), 28–30, 440–446; Glenn Feldman, “Soft Opposition: Elite Acquiescence and Klan-Sponsored Terrorism in Alabama, 1946–1950,” *The Historical Journal*, 40: 3, 753–777. See also, Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes*, 203–204, 214; David R. Colburn, “The Saint Augustine Business Community: Desegregation, 1963–1964,” in David J. Garrow ed., *St. Augustine, Florida, 1963–1964: Mass Protest and Racial Violence* (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishers, 1989), 211–235.

⁹ Evelyn Rich, “Ku Klux Klan Ideology, 1954–1988” Ph.D. diss., Boston University, 1988, 87–88; Michal Belknap, *Federal Law and Southern Order: Racial Violence and Constitutional Conflict in the Post-Brown South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987), x, 26.

¹⁰ On Mississippi, see Reed Massengill, *Portrait of a Racist: The Man Who Killed Medgar Evers* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1994) 5; Florence Mars, *Witness in Philadelphia* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 102–103; Delmar Dennis, *To Stand Alone: Inside the KKK For the FBI* (Sevierville: Covenant House Books, 1991), 28–33, Seth Cagin and Philip Dray, *We Are Not Afraid: The Story of Goodman, Schwerner, and Chaney and the Civil Rights Campaign for Mississippi* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988), 8, 249, 264, 361, 447. On Birmingham, see McWhorter, *Carry Me Home*, 73, 120, 129, 197–219, 293–294, 341, 473; Glenn T. Eskew, *But For Birmingham* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 202; Michael and Judy Ann Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland Publications, 1991) 90, 350, 375; Carter, *Politics of Rage*, 126–127, 139–141, 166–167, 171, 173–174, 190–191; Frank Donner, *Protectors of Privilege: Red Squads and Political Repression in Urban America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 307–312. On Bogalusa, see Belknap, *Federal Law and Southern Order* 134–135; Newton, *KKK Encyclopedia*, 58–59, 261, 402–403, 404, 443–444, 481; US Congress, House. Hearings before the Committee on Un-American Activities. *Activities of Ku Klux Klan Organizations*. 89th Congress, 1st Session (1966), 2450–2520, 2529–2531, 2415–2437; 2475–2609–2625; US Congress, House. Committee on Un-American Activities. *Report: The Present-Day Ku Klux Klan Movement*. 90th Congress, 1st Session (1967), 99–102. On St. Augustine, see David R. Colburn, *Racial Change and Community Crisis: St. Augustine, Florida, 1877–1980* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); Garrow ed., *St. Augustine*.

thereby justify his closing of the public schools.¹¹ Godfrey Hodgson's notion of a liberal consensus, then, is weakest when it comes to racial desegregation.

On the other hand, other scholars have continued to point to the existence of anticommunist consensus. This consensus, however, encompassed many different and even opposing definitions of Communism, each of which gained and lost acceptance over time. Anti-Communism, which I use to denote opposition to actual Communist States and the Communist Party-USA, was never able to completely displace the variety of anticommunism that counter-subversives used to discredit liberals and labor organizers, as well as socialists and other non-Communist leftists. Nevertheless, by the 1960s the American public came to judge the red-baiting rhetoric of Joseph McCarthy as irresponsible and divisive.¹² To be sure, many white Southerners continued to employ anticommunist rhetoric against desegregation, "to signify a centralized, administrative state that used coercive methods to intervene" in social relations that they deemed "private."¹³ Nevertheless, their efforts to discredit the civil rights movement with charges of Communist "domination" never appealed to more than a "healthy minority" of Americans.¹⁴

¹¹ Carter, *Politics of Rage*, 166–167, 173–174. Wallace also set up a private slush fund for former Klansman and anti-Semitic Ace Carter, who acted as a speechwriter and later, as a presidential campaign organizer. Newton, *KKK Encyclopedia*, 99–100.

¹² The term anti-Communism, denoting opposition to Communist states and the CPUSA, is borrowed from Joel Kovel, *Red Hunting in the Promised Land: Anticommunism and the Making of America* (New York: Perseus Book Group, 1994), xii, 1–13. The term anticommunism denotes ideologies that countersubversives have employed against domestic social movements and political opponents since the late nineteenth century, as used and analyzed by Heale, *American Anticommunism*. Richard Gid Powers makes a similar distinction between honorable, responsible anticommunists versus irrational, irresponsible countersubversives in *Not Without Honor*. See especially, his index references to 'countersubversives' and 'conspiracy theories.'

¹³ Horowitz, "White Southerners' Alienation," 173–187. See also, Sarah Hunt Brown, *Standing Against Dragons: Three Southern Lawyers in an Era of Fear* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998); Adam Fairclough, *Race and Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 1915–1972* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993), 135–147; Kim Lacy Rogers, *Righteous Lives: Narratives of the New Orleans Civil Rights Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 101–104; Glenda Alice Rabby, *The Pain and the Promise: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Tallahassee, Florida* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999), 65–73, 99–101.

¹⁴ Carter, *Politics of Rage*, 160. The use of anticommunist rhetoric against the civil rights movement has not been fully incorporated into the historiography of anticommunism. For references to this phenomenon, see 157–162; Brown, *Standing Against Dragons*; Heale, *American Anticommunism*, 175–176, 179; and *McCarthy's Americans: Red Scare Politics in State and Nation, 1935–1965* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 294–301; Numan V. Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance, Race and Politics in the South During the 1950s* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969), 118–120, 188–189; James Graham Cook, *The Segregationists* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1962), 16–29, 250–266;

M. J. Heale's delineation of an "ebb" in anticommunist politics during the late 1950s and a corresponding rise of a liberal consensus during the early 1960s, if somewhat overdrawn, remains useful in this context.¹⁵ Michael Klarman has speculated that this discursive shift may have removed a temporary impediment to civil rights activity.¹⁶ By the mid-1960s, as the ideology of biologically determined white supremacy lost popular support, Congress passed Civil Rights Acts, Federal Courts issued injunctions and police agencies cracked down on Klan activity.¹⁷ Openly racist rhetoric was purged from American political discourse and was replaced by discourses about the welfare state and the underclass.¹⁸ In the aftermath of the civil rights era, Southern whites forged new identities, disaffiliating from segregationist and white supremacist discourses as they helped to forge neoconservative strategies to slow civil rights implementation, undo efforts to extend civil rights legislation and reconfigure structures of white privilege.¹⁹

Even among those Southerners who were vehemently opposed to desegregation after World War II, most were not persuaded by the Ku Klux Klan's conspiratorial variety of anticommunist demonology. Fewer still had ever embraced Klan vigilantism as a legitimate or viable solution to racial conflicts in the region. If opposition to Klan violence remained soft during the early Cold War, however, by the mid 1960s, Southerners would cease to tolerate it at all. Michal Belknap has argued that a breakdown of law and order occurred during the early 1960s, ending toleration of vigilante violence on the part of white Southerners. By mid decade, as Southern politicians and law enforcement officials began to proscribe vigilantism, Southern juries began to convict the most violent perpetrators, even in those recalcitrant communities

David M. Callejo-Pérez, *Southern Hospitality: Identity, Schools, and the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi, 1964-1972* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2001), 48-49; Robert Cook, *Sweet Land of Liberty? The African American Struggle for Civil Rights in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Addison Wesley Publishing Company, 1998), 95-98; Wayne Addison-Clark, "An Analysis of the Relationship between Anticommunism and Segregationist Thought in the Deep South, 1948-1964," Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, 1976.

¹⁵ Heale, *American Anticommunism*, 191-192, 196. See also Powers, *Not Without Honor*, 306-308.

¹⁶ Michael Klarman, "How Brown Changed Race Relations: the Backlash Thesis," *Journal of American History*, 81: 1 (June 1994), 90. See also, John L. Godwin, *Black Wilmington and the North Carolina Way: Portrait of a Community in the Era of Civil Rights Protest* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 76-77.

¹⁷ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York, 1986), 114-118.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, *passim*.
¹⁹ Robyn Wiegman, "Whiteness Studies and the Paradox of Particularity," in Donald E. Pease and Robyn Wiegman eds., *The Futures of American Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 271-272.

mentioned above.²⁰ During the next few years, moreover, Southern journalists and other opinion molders increasingly depicted Klansmen, not only as lower-class hotheads, but also as conspiratorial extremists, who propounded an un-American ideology.²¹ By the mid-1960s, the notion that Klan groups and Klansmen were un-American was becoming conventional in the South. Conspiratorial, racist rhetoric was being purged from Southern political discourse. It was becoming extreme. It is in the context of the Southern crackdown on KKK vigilantism against African Americans, as well the integration of racist extremism into countersubversive political discourse, then, that the notion of a liberal consensus remains strongest.

Pluralistic anti-Klan political coalitions, which denounced the secret order's biological racism, anti-Catholicism and anti-Semitism as un-American, first developed during the 1920s in the urban North.²² In the late 1930s, liberal and radical interventionists used counter-extremist rhetoric to discredit far rightists, isolationists and Klansmen, linking them to Nazi Fifth Column activity in a Brown Scare.²³ In 1944, the Internal Revenue Service hit the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan with a bill for back taxes, forcing the Imperial Wizard to dissolve the nationwide organization.²⁴ Two years later, Georgia's

²⁰ Belknap, *Federal Law and Southern Order*, 232–251. In the Mississippi delta for example, many whites vehemently opposed desegregation after 1964, yet they exhibited a type of paternalism toward blacks that was missing in the southwest counties where the Klan held sway. Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 110–114.

²¹ Rich, "Ku Klux Klan Ideology," 1–4, 26–30, 204–206.

²² David J. Goldberg, "Unmasking the Klan: the Northern Movement Against the KKK, 1920–1925," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 15:4 (Summer 1996). For an example, see Ezra A. Cook Publishers, *Ku Klux Klan Secrets Exposed* (Chicago: Ezra A. Cook, Publishers, 1922).

²³ Brett Gary, *The Nervous Liberals: Propaganda Anxieties from World War I to the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Francis MacDonnell, *Insidious Foes: The Axis Fifth Column and the American Home Front* (Westport: Oxford University Press, 1995); Geoffrey S. Smith, *To Save A Nation: American 'Extremism,' the New Deal, and the Coming of World War Two* (Chicago: Basic Books, 1990); Leo P. Ribuffo, *The Old Christian Right: The Protestant Far Right from the Great Depression to the Cold War* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983). None of these historians discuss the Ku Klux Klan per se, but some exposés in the counter-extremist cannon also raised concerns about "ties" between Klansmen and Fifth Columnists. See John Roy Carlson, [Arthur Derounian]. *Under Cover: My Four Years in the Nazi Underworld of America – The Amazing Revelation of How Axis Agents and Our Enemies Within Are Now Plotting to Destroy the United States* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. Inc., 1943); and *The Plotters* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. Inc., 1946); George Marshall, "Forward," in *Investigate Martin Dies!: The Case for a Grand Jury Investigation of Martin Dies Submitted to the Department of Justice on August 6, 1942 By the National Federation for Constitutional Liberties* (New York: National Federation for Constitutional Liberties, 1942).

²⁴ David Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), 326–328; Newton, *KKK Encyclopedia*, x–xi; Michael Newton, *The Invisible Empire: The Ku Klux Klan in Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 105.

Assistant Attorney General Daniel Duke exposed overlapping membership between the local Klan and groups such as the Colombians and the German American Bund, as well as German propagandists and far-right activist Gerald L. K. Smith. For example, Duke connected KKK lecturer A. C. Schuler to the neo-Nazi Colombians organization, leaders of which were indicted for inciting riots, illegal possession of explosives and usurping police power. He charged that the Klan intended to seize parts of the Georgia State government. Undercover journalist Stetson Kennedy aided Duke by providing membership lists. Two members of the Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League, who had infiltrated the Colombians, provided him with copies of organization documents.²⁵

By this time, the Brown Scare was being subsumed into a second Red Scare. US Attorney General Clark placed the Georgia Klan on the Attorney General's list of "un-American" political groups. To oppose the post-World War II Klan revival in Alabama, anti-Klan editors employed the charge of subversion.²⁶ Anticommunism was in the process of becoming a "driving ideological force and policy determinant among both political elites and social movement actors." A Cold War consensus on the need to defeat international Communism set the parameters of political debate.²⁷

In domestic politics, however, the Cold War also "highlighted the discrepancy between the United States' democratic ideals and the reality of disenfranchisement for racial minority groups."²⁸ A number of scholars have pointed out that Black activists used the Cold War context to legitimate their struggle for civil rights.²⁹ In response, liberals postulated a "vital center"

²⁵ The largest Klan organization in the US was headquartered in Georgia during this period. A number of bombings of black homes established in previously all-white neighborhoods, had taken place. By early 1947, faced with Brown-Scare-type attacks in journals and newspapers, Grand Jury proceedings in Fulton County, and investigation by the House Un-American Activities Committee, the Colombians were disintegrating. Georgia revoked their charter in June 1947. Arnold S. Rice, *The Ku Klux Klan in American Politics* (Washington, DC: Haskell House Publishers, 1962), 110–114; US Congress. Senate. Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence ["Church Committee"], *Final Report*, Book III, 471–472; Feldman, "The Ku Klux Klan in Alabama," 480–481; Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 326–328; Belknap, *Federal Law and Southern Order*, 20; J. Wayne Dudley, "'Hate' Organizations of the 1940s: The Colombians, Inc.," *Phylon*, 42: 3 (1981), 262–274.

²⁶ Feldman, "The Ku Klux Klan in Alabama," 480–481; Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 326–328. ²⁷ Diamond, *Roads to Dominion*, 20. ²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Timothy Buie Tyson, "'Radio Free Dixie': Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power," (Ph.D. diss. Duke University, 1994), 269–270; Ben Green, *Before His Time: The Untold Story of Harry T. Moore, America's First Civil Rights Martyr* (New York, 1999), 88, 93; Callejo-Pérez, *Southern Hospitality*, 35; Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race relations in the global arena* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

opposed to subversion on the left and extremism on the right.³⁰ Their agenda mixed military interventionism abroad, and strong state initiatives at home to secure economic welfare and civil rights for African Americans.³¹ There were many reasons why liberals responded to the African American demand for civil rights after World War II, including genuine beliefs in the principles of equal rights and equal opportunity, as well as recognition of the increasing significance of black votes.³²

Foreign policy concerns, however, also played a role. Competition with the Soviet Union for markets, and political influence in third-world nations, encouraged Cold Warriors to portray the United States as a nation committed to democracy, equality and racial tolerance. Since Communist propaganda overseas exploited news of racial violence in the United States, white supremacy and Klan vigilantism became a damaging political embarrassment.³³ The international implications of racism spurred President Truman's Committee on Civil Rights to warn that

We cannot escape the fact that our civil rights record has been an issue in world politics ... Those with competing philosophies have stressed – and are shamelessly distorting – our shortcomings. They have tried to prove our democracy an empty fraud and our nation a consistent oppressor of underprivileged people.³⁴

Truman's Justice Department submitted segregation cases to the Supreme Court, declaring that "Racial discrimination furnishes grist for the Communist propaganda mills and it raises little doubt even among friendly nations as to the intensity of our devotion to the democratic faith."³⁵ In order to prod state authorities, the Attorney General insisted that the FBI investigate

Assessing the effect of anticommunism in Louisiana, Adam Fairclough argues that "the anticommunism of the early Cold War damaged the cause of racial equality far more than it helped it." Fairclough, *Race and Democracy*, 146–147.

³⁰ Arthur Schlesinger Jr. coined the term 'vital center,' to divorce post-World War II liberalism from the popular front. Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *The Vital Center* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962).

³¹ Diamond, *Roads to Dominion*, 35–36.

³² Alonzo L. Hamby, *Liberalism and its Challengers: from F.D.R. to Bush* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 66–67, 209–212, 256–265; Steven F. Lawson, *Black Ballots: Voting Rights in the South, 1944–1969* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 1999), 250–254.

³³ Borstelman, *Cold War and Color Line*; Robert Weisbrot, *Freedom Bound: A History of America's Civil Rights Movement* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991), 10–11; Mary L. Dudziak, *The Cold War and Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

³⁴ Quoted in Leon F. Litwack and Winthrop D. Jordan, *The United States: Becoming a World Power* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1991), 770. On the Truman Administration's linkage of civil rights and anti-Communism see Donald R. McCoy and Richard T. Ruetten, *Quest and Response: Minority Rights and the Truman Administration* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas, 1973), 66, 96–118, 162, 342.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

lynchings. The Bureau had begun gathering information on Klan groups from newspapers and other public sources in 1946.³⁶

It was not only liberals, however, who recognized the need to fight racism. Libertarians and traditional conservatives joined together, as anticommunism also became a unifying principal in the “strategic integration” of conservative thought. Corporate elites began to recognize the utility of foreign aid, and conservatives endorsed military interventionism.³⁷ In 1954, Vice President Nixon declared that “every act of discrimination or prejudice in the United States hurts America as much as an espionage agent who turns over a weapon to a foreign country.” Four years later, a Venezuelan mob attacking his motorcade screamed, “What about Little Rock?”³⁸ J. Edgar Hoover presented material on “hate groups,” including the KKK, at a presidential cabinet meeting that year.³⁹ The FBI also began to aid Southern law enforcement in their new efforts to solve racial bombings in 1958.⁴⁰ Concerned about Soviet propaganda and de-colonization in Africa, President Eisenhower put unprecedented pressure on the FBI to resolve a Mississippi lynching in 1959.⁴¹

During the Cold War, then, consensus was made possible, not only because liberals isolated radicals, but also because conservatives came to interpret nativism, overt racism, and isolationism, as atavistic, indeed extremist.⁴² A coalition of traditionalists, advocates of laissez faire, progressive opponents of the New Deal, and militant anti-Communists constructed a “new conservatism.” Creating their own vital center, they ostracized conspiratorial

³⁶ See notes 25 and 26 above.

³⁷ Diamond, *Roads to Dominion*, 31. See also 29–36; Kim McQuaid, *Uneasy Partners: Big Business in American Politics 1945–1990* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), Ch. 2.

³⁸ Tyson, “Radio Free Dixie,” 162. Republicans also recognized the importance of the growing black vote. See, for example, Steven F. Lawson, *Running for Freedom: Civil Rights and Black Politics in America Since 1941* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997), 51; Lawson, *Black Ballots*, 250–254; Fairclough, *Race and Democracy*, 222.

³⁹ The Nation of Islam was also included in the presentation. Church Committee, *Final Report*, Book III, 471–472.

⁴⁰ Belknap, *Federal Law and Southern Order*, ch. 3. This limited Southern concern about bombings did not extend to acts of vigilantism against individuals. O’Reilly, *Racial Matters*, 34–123.

⁴¹ Mississippi’s failure to indict resulted in swift enactment of the 1960 Civil Rights Act. Edwin Howard Smead, Jr., “The Lynching of Mack Charles Parker in Poplarville Mississippi, April 25, 1959,” Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 1979, Abstract, 181–185, 225–226, 339–340.

⁴² For examples from the early 1960s, see Senator Thomas Kuchel (RCA) “The Fright Peddlers” *Congressional Record*, 88th Congress, 1st Sess., 7636–7641; “Peril to Conservatives” *Los Angeles Times*, 12 March 1961; William F. Buckley, “The John Birch Society,” *National Review*, 19 October 1965; J. Edgar Hoover “Shall it be Law Or Tyranny”, *American Bar Association Journal*, 18 (February, 1962), and “No Vigilantes” *Law Enforcement Bulletin* (April, 1961).

anti-Semites, race-baiters and vigilantes.⁴³ Conservative journalists warned that anti-Semitic and racist remarks undermined the cause.⁴⁴

Liberals went further, engaging in a revival of Brown-scare themes to counter “Ultra” and “Superpatriot” anticommunists who had become alienated from mainstream politics. Thus, between 1962 and 1964, the Kennedy Administration mobilized the IRS against the “Radical Right,” and a corresponding flood of sociological exposés discredited “Right Wing Extremism.”⁴⁵ The Cold War battlefield that emerged in Africa during the 1960s helped to increase support for civil rights. Police Commissioner Eugene “Bull” Connor’s suppression of civil rights demonstrations in Birmingham, Alabama during May 1963, had been effectively exploited by Moscow, which devoted 25 percent of its propaganda broadcasts to American police violence. Negative reporting in the African press had also led to a flurry of reports from concerned United States Information Agency officers. In July, Secretary of State Dean Rusk took the unprecedented step of testifying on behalf of a civil rights bill. President Kennedy, who had “dragged his feet on civil rights,” began labeling civil rights a “moral issue.”⁴⁶

Back in Birmingham, as Connor was forced out of office, city police ended overt sponsorship of Klan vigilantes. Alienated white supremacist militants were slowly transformed from system-supportive vigilantes into terrorists.⁴⁷ In 1963–64, Klansmen in Alabama, Georgia and Mississippi committed a number of terrorist murders, which finally forced the issue.⁴⁸ In June 1964,

⁴³ George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America: Since 1945* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), chs. 5–6; Justus D. Doenecke, *Not to the Swift: The Old Isolationists in the Cold War Era* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1979); Heale, *American Anticommunism*, 197–198.

⁴⁴ Powers, *Not Without Honor*, 312–314. See also, Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties*, 10–11, 17, 54–55, 60–62.

⁴⁵ For exposés see Daniel Bell et al., *The Radical Right* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964); Harry and Bonaro Overstreet, *The Strange Tactics of Extremism* (New York: Norton, 1964); John Carpenter *EXTREMISM USA* (Phoenix, 1964); Mark Sherwin *The Extremists*; (New York, 1963); Donald Janson and Bernard Eismann, *The Far Right* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), 225–231; Seymour Martin Lipset, *The Politics of Unreason: Right Wing Extremism in America, 1790–1977* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1977), bibliography. For three different views of liberal anti-communism, see David Caute, *The Great Fear The Anti-Communist Purge Under Truman and Eisenhower* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979); Powers, *Not Without Honor*; Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1998).

⁴⁶ Renee Romano, “No Diplomatic Immunity: African Diplomats, the State Department, and Civil Rights, 1961–1964,” *Journal of American History*, 87: 2 (September 2000), 546–551.

⁴⁷ McWhorter, *Carry Me Home*, 256, 293–294, 303–304, 341, 351–352, 425–426, 472–473, 477–478, 483–485; Carter, *Politics of Rage*, 189.

⁴⁸ O’Reilly *Racial Matters*, 111–114; Newton *KKK Encyclopedia* 350, 90; Carter, *Politics of Rage*, 176–194; Frank Sikora, *Until Justice Rolls Down: The Birmingham Church Bombing Case*

when three civil rights workers went missing near Meridian, Mississippi after being released from police custody, President Johnson ordered the FBI to infiltrate Ku Klux Klan groups and collect evidence about terrorism for Justice Department prosecutors.⁴⁹ Liberals in his administration agreed that FBI infiltration of Klan groups and harassment of active Klansmen would provide an effective way to suppress vigilante violence.⁵⁰ In response, FBI executives launched an internal security investigation – an aggressive campaign of surveillance, harassment, infiltration and intelligence collection – against the Mississippi Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.⁵¹ In September, they went further, launching the COINTELPRO-WHITE HATE operation.⁵²

Ever since 1924, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover had gained domestic security responsibilities by contrasting the FBI's "professional" law enforcement and counterintelligence techniques with unlawful, nefarious vigilante

(Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1991); Massengill, *Portrait of a Racist*; Belknap, *Federal Law and Southern Order*, 135–144, 237.

⁴⁹ Church Committee, *Hearings*, vol. 6, 94th Congress, 1st Session (1975), 513–514, 938–940; Belknap, *Federal Law and Southern Order*, 135–144, 232–251, 237; O'Reilly, *Racial Matters*, 157–199, 205–206; Richard Gid Powers, *Secrecy and Power: The Life of J. Edgar Hoover* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 407–411.

⁵⁰ Keller, *The Liberals and J. Edgar Hoover*, 72–78, 85–92. For discussions regarding Attorney Generals' knowledge about the scope of the program, see Church Committee, *Hearings*, vol. 6, 199–200, 206–209, 213–216, 219, 231–235, 513–527, 827, 870–872.

⁵¹ Keller, *The Liberals and J. Edgar Hoover*, 75–78; O'Reilly, *Racial Matters*, 157–199, 205–206; Powers, *Secrecy and Power*, 407–411; Assistant Burke Marshall to Robert Kennedy, June 1964, reprinted in Victor Navasky, *Kennedy Justice* (New York: Scribner, 1971), 105–106; Church Committee, *Hearings* V6, 513–514, 938–940; Gale to Tolson, 7/30/64 (Section 1); William Sullivan with Bill Brown, *The Bureau: My Thirty Years in Hoover's FBI* (New York: Norton, 1979), 127–128; Report, Director, to Attorney General, 19 December 1967, KU KLUX KLAN INVESTIGATIONS FBI ACCOMPLISHMENTS. Reprinted in Church Committee, *Hearings*, vol. 6, 516–527; Bill Shipp, *Murder at Broad River Bridge, The Slaying of Lemuel Penn by Members of the Ku Klux Klan* (Atlanta: Peachtree Publications, 1981), 46; Taylor Branch, *Pillar of Fire: America In The King Years, 1963–65* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998), 429–430; Wyn Craig Wade, *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 361.

⁵² Director to Atlanta, 9/2/64; Keller, *Liberals and J. Edgar Hoover*, 75–85. All FBI documents cited in this article are contained in the COINTELPRO-WHITE HATE File (Bureau File 157-9) unless otherwise indicated. The complete COINTELPRO file, as released by the FBI in 1977, is available on microfilm: Athan Theoharis ed., *COINTELPRO: The Counter-intelligence Program of the FBI* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1978). The WHITE HATE file comprises microfilm reels 18–20. Sections 1 and 2 of this file contain executive level communications. The rest of the sub files are organized by city of field office location. "SAC" denotes Special Agent in Charge. "Director" denotes FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover. In the interest of brevity, I cite the section or field office file, the direction of the communication, and the date it was sent. Occasionally, if a document that originated from a given sub file or section, is located in a different sub file, I indicate the actual location in parenthesis, following the date.

justice.⁵³ In December 1964, Hoover decried the “blindness and indifference to outrageous acts of violence” displayed by a Mississippi jury who acquitted Klan bombers, and called for “constant vigil” against the “cowardly jackals” of the Ku Klux Klan.⁵⁴ With COINTELPRO-WHITE HATE, the FBI promoted the following notion: by threatening the domestic tranquility, Klansmen undermined the mission of US soldiers in Vietnam. Klansmen, according to this analogy, were not simply misguided vigilantes, but un-American extremists, who, perhaps unwittingly, served the interests of the Communists.

To rouse public opinion, the FBI secretly disseminated intelligence information to trusted contacts in the media and local government.⁵⁵ They suggested that journalists emphasize that Klan rallies created a negative image, affecting investment decisions by military contractors and private investors. Journalists proceeded to re-package their scoops for public consumption.⁵⁶ Once published, such information became attributable to a public source, and FBI agents could distribute it further.⁵⁷ As FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover explained to the American Bar Association in 1966, “Actions by agencies of the government will not be sufficient by themselves to bring the Klan under control.”⁵⁸ Since “only an aroused and mobilized public demand for the protection of freedom under the law will bring about control of the Klan,” the Director declared, “key segments of the population ... must join with governmental bodies in a constructive, systematic, coordinated and total effort against the Klan.”⁵⁹

In order to alert the Southern public to the danger posed by the Ku Klux Klan, COINTELPRO-WHITE HATE operations endeavored to “expose” the “devious maneuvers and duplicity” of Klan groups.⁶⁰ Local Klan leaders were publicly identified and ridiculed in newspaper articles, cartoons, and

⁵³ John Drabble, “From Pinkerton to G-Man: Private Detective Agencies and the Origins of Federal Counterintelligence Tactics, 1890–1939,” paper presented at the European Social Science History Conference, Amsterdam, 2000, 2002); and “A Negative and Unwise Approach”: Private Detectives, Vigilantes and the FBI Counterintelligence, 1917–1971. Clive Helmsey and Haia Shakov-Player eds., *Detectives in History* (Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Ashgate Publishing, forthcoming).

⁵⁴ Douglas Robinson, “Hoover Asks Vigil Over Extremists,” *New York Times*, 13 December 1964, 79.

⁵⁵ For examples of such contacts, see SAC, Miami to Director, FBI, 10/14/64.

⁵⁶ For background see, Cathleen Thom and Patrick Jung, “The Responsibilities Program of the FBI, 1951–1955,” *Historian*, 59: 2 (Winter, 1997); O’Reilly, *Hoover and the Un-Americans*.

⁵⁷ Birmingham field office agents redistributed this article to media sources in Alabama. Director to Birmingham 4/12/67; “Kluxer’s Logic Impossible,” *Tampa Times*, 11 February, 1967; Birmingham to Director, 12/13/67.

⁵⁸ J. Edgar Hoover, “The Resurgent Klan,” *American Bar Association Journal* 52 (July, 1966), 618–620.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Director to Atlanta, 9/2/64.

caricatures.⁶¹ News stories and editorials based on FBI intelligence exposed the undemocratic nature of Klan administration, publicized allegations about missing funds, and ridiculed the Klan's countersubversive anticommunist rhetoric.⁶² Klan officers and rank-and-file Klan members became concerned about who was providing information to journalists, resulting in dissension, suspicion, mistrust, and resignations.⁶³

FBI agents, for example, launched an ambitious campaign to expose and discredit organizers of the National States Rights Party (NSRP), a vehemently anti-Jewish organization that excoriated the FBI in its publications.⁶⁴ Local FBI field office agents provided Miami television station WKCT with NSRP literature, information about the identity, residence, and employment of a local NSRP activist, and the name of a knowledgeable policeman who was available for interview. The Baltimore field office sent along information on recent race riots that ensued after NSRP agitators held rallies in that city. WKCT utilized this material to compile a thirty-minute documentary. NSRP members were interviewed and excerpts from their speeches provided. Photographs of local activists and their places of employment were broadcast.⁶⁵ A psychiatrist provided his analysis of what causes people to "hate."⁶⁶

⁶¹ Baumgardner to Sullivan, 1/19/65, 10/1/65, 10/19/65 (Section 1); Sullivan to Moore, 5/5/69 (Miami file).

⁶² For example, see Brennan to Sullivan 5/2/67; Detroit file, April 1967–January 1968; Michael Maharry series, *Detroit News*, *Detroit News*, 24–27 April 1967.

⁶³ Miami to Director, 4/29/69, 5/20/69; Jed Drews, "Klan's Raggle-Taggle Induction Rites Related," *Ft. Lauderdale News*, 24 April 1969; and, "This Is What Klan Man Is Like," *Ft. Lauderdale News*, 25 April 1969; Moore to Sullivan, 6/8/70.

⁶⁴ Director to Birmingham, 10/29/64, 1/21/65, 5/13/65; Director to 23 Field Offices, 12/17/65 (Section 1); Miami to Director, 6/21/66; Director to Miami, 7/11/66. On the NSRP, founded by members of the Colombians after the Brown Scare, see E. B. Duffee, Jr., "The National States Rights Party," Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 1968. For NSRP rhetoric, see *The Thunderbolt*, in *The Right Wing Collection of the University of Iowa Libraries, 1918–1977* [microform] (Glen Rock, NJ: Microfilming Corp. of America, Ann Arbor, MI: [Distributed by] University Microfilms International, 1978), Microfilm Reel 40 A40a. For the FBI's view of the NSRP, see FBI Monograph, "National States Rights Party," August 1966, 3–4, 16; FBI Monograph, "WHITE EXTREMIST ORGANIZATIONS, Part II, National States Rights Party," May 1970, 1–3.

⁶⁵ Entitled "Thunderbolt on the Right," the exposé was shown 9 September 1967. An estimated audience of 150,000–200,000 viewed the program. After the telecast WKCT received about twice the number of calls as usual for similar programs. The FBI had the film copied, to make it available to patriotic and church groups. Brennan to Sullivan 7/17/67, 9/11/67 (Section 1), 9/22/67 (Birmingham file); Miami file, June–October 1967; "Turnpike Crash a Mystery," *Fort Pierce News Tribune*, 27 August 1967; Miami to Director, 9/18/67, 9/26/67, 10/5/67; Director to Miami, 10/4/67.

⁶⁶ Director to Miami, 10/16/67.

The chairman of the State Committee of the Republican Party requested a special screening of the documentary for his staff and officials of the Anti-Defamation League. School districts requested copies for use in the classroom.⁶⁷ Newspaper editorials celebrated the program and censured the NSRP.⁶⁸ One writer declared that such “extremists” should be silenced:

[They are] insane radicals ... you and I had to fight a war because of them ... Hitler only had 20% of the German people. It can happen here ... most have prison records ... These men are just as great a danger to our way of life as are the Rap Browns who holler for death and violence against white people ... [They are] a definite threat to our national security and our families.⁶⁹

In the months after the program was aired, the featured activist stopped attending NSRP meetings, and the three NSRP chapters that had existed in Broward County all folded.⁷⁰

Delighted with these results, FBI executives decided to provide information to WKCT for an exposé of the United Klans of America (UKA), as well.⁷¹ Closing this second documentary exposé with the admonition that “actions, not image count in any assessment of the Klan,” the program interspersed professions of non-violence by Klan members, with long recitations that documented Klan murders, bombings and assaults.⁷² Critical newspaper articles followed, and the State Securities Commission investigated the UKA. Infighting between Florida Klansmen also occurred.⁷³

To facilitate such exposés, FBI agents searched for information that could be used to discredit Klan leaders.⁷⁴ Derogatory or embarrassing information was highlighted in exposés on Klan officers.⁷⁵ Evidence of embezzlement or

⁶⁷ Miami to Director, 9/26/67, 10/5/67.

⁶⁸ “WKCT’s States Rights Documentary Stirs Up a Storm,” *Miami News*, 9 September, 1967; John Powel Editorial, *Fort Lauderdale Tribune*, 28 September, 1967, attached to Miami to Director, 10/5/67.

⁶⁹ Editorial Column, John Powel, “*Fort Lauderdale Tribune*,” 9 September 1967, attached to Miami to Director, 9/26/67.

⁷⁰ Miami to Director, 10/16/67, 12/27/67; Moore to Sullivan, 10/3/67.

⁷¹ Miami file, 9–23 October 1967.

⁷² Moore to Sullivan, 10/12/67 (Birmingham file); Miami to Director, 10/23/67.

⁷³ Miami to Director, 10/31/67, 11/6/67, 12/6/67, 12/29/67, 8/13/68; Director to Miami, 12/6/67 (two memoranda).

⁷⁴ See, for example the efforts of agents in Birmingham Alabama, to uncover material on UKA Imperial Wizard Robert Shelton. Birmingham to Director, 8/29/66, 9/20/66 (Section 1), 10/12/66, 1/13/67; Director to Birmingham, 9/18/64, 12/28/66.

⁷⁵ Director to Atlanta, 4/29/65 (Section 1), 9/22/66; Baumgardner to Sullivan, 1/6/66 (Section 1); Atlanta to Director, 8/31/66; 6/8/70 (Miami File); Director to Charlotte, 7/10/69; Howard Covington series, *Charlotte Observer*, 21–23 July 1968.

sexual immorality was deemed especially useful.⁷⁶ To prevent speaking engagements at an Ohio high school, for example, the FBI provided information that was used to expose Ohio Klansman Wade Kemper's "degeneracy," in the *Dayton Daily News*.⁷⁷

To disrupt the Klan from within, the FBI passed on allegations to the Imperial Wizard that a Klansman was engaging in adultery.⁷⁸ Another Klansman's plan to marry the sixteen-year-old daughter of a fellow Klansmen was leaked to local authorities, who thwarted the arrangement. A year later, this same Klansman was arrested for contributing to the delinquency of a minor, resulting in his expulsion from the United Klans of America (UKA).⁷⁹ As part of the extensive campaign conducted against J. Robert Jones, UKA Grand oDragon for North Carolina, the FBI anonymously distributed cartoon leaflets to rank-and-file UKA members, as well as opponents of the Klan in that state. The cartoons, which depicted Jones spending Klan funds on extra-marital escapades, resulted in dissension and resignations.⁸⁰ FBI agents, well schooled in the use of non-commercial white slavery and vice prosecutions for political targeting purposes, knew that such exposés would be effective.⁸¹ After all, white supremacist and segregationist rhetoric often fixated on allegations that subversives were sexually promiscuous and morally degenerate.⁸²

⁷⁶ Birmingham to Director, 10/29/64; Mobile to Director, 10/12/64; Tampa to Director 5/7/65 (Section 1); Baumgardner to Sullivan 4/25/66 and attached cartoon; Director to Charlotte 10/1/64, Charlotte to Director, 12/8/64, 8/11/65.

⁷⁷ Baumgardner to Sullivan 3/25/66. Kemper, a member of the National Knights of the Ku Klux Klan and a National States Rights Party activist, had been convicted of larceny in 1937 and was registered as a habitual sex offender. Cincinnati to Director, 3/11/66, 5/27/66; Director to Cincinnati 3/28/66.

⁷⁸ Birmingham to Director, 9/19/68, 10/1/68.

⁷⁹ Cincinnati to Director, 8/29/67, 9/19/68, 10/14/68; Director to Cincinnati, 9/10/68, 9/26/68.

⁸⁰ Baumgardner to Sullivan 4/25/66, and attached cartoon (Charlotte file); Baumgardner to Sullivan 6/7/66 (Section 1). Some Klansmen quit after receiving postcards. The postcards also caused dissension within and between Klan organizations. Charlotte, Memphis, Savannah, Cleveland, Columbia, and Atlanta files, April 1966–August 1967; Birmingham file, April–October 1965. See also, Richmond to Director, 8/19/66, 8/26/66; Director to Richmond, 8/25/66, 9/8/66.

⁸¹ Athan Theoharis, *J. Edgar Hoover, Sex, and Crime* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1995), ch. 2; David J. Langum, *Crossing Over the Line: Legislating Morality and the Mann Act* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 56, 175–197.

⁸² Miami to Director, 6/21/66; Robert M. Mikell, *Selma* (Huntsville, AL: Publishers Enterprise, 1965); Albert C. Persons, *Sex and Civil Rights: The True Selma Story* (Birmingham: Esco Publishers, 1965). Copies of the UKA newspaper, *The Fiery Cross*, are available on microfilm in *The Right Wing Collection of the University of Iowa Libraries* (Reel 51 F16) and in hard copy in *The Wilcox Collection of Social Protest Movement Documents* at the University of Kansas, Lawrence.

In order to remove the Klan's "cloak of quasi respectability," COINTELPRO exposés also pointed out that, despite pretensions of "patriotism," Klan goals could "only be accomplished through unlawful means."⁸³ According to one of the Bureau's journalist allies in Miami:

The Klan is an organization that seems to want to run the country according to the lights of its personnel, with little or no regard for the law of the land that the FBI is dedicated to protect. This is the way to rule by emotion and ignorance.⁸⁴

In 1970, a panel of Miami journalists interviewed UKA Imperial Wizard Robert Shelton on WKCT-TV's Florida Forum program. The Miami FBI office provided the television station with embarrassing questions about UKA finances, secrecy of membership, and Klan activities concerning land purchases by the Nation of Islam in Alabama. Used in the interview, the questions resulted in unfavorable publicity.⁸⁵

An editorial in the Miami Herald labeled Klansmen "Un-American."⁸⁶ *Miami News* Reporter Jack Roberts editorialized:

I see no difference between the Black Panthers and the Ku Klux Klansmen. Both would try to bully me. Both would try scare tactics. The disaster would come when a majority of Americans just looking for a little peace and quiet would swing for some smooth talking fellow who would sell them on the idea that a dictatorship, a kindly one, would give us all a little rest. When we go for that, forget freedom.⁸⁷

Roberts also depicted racial conflict and violence as a product of extremist political discourse, alluding to Richard Nixon's concept of the silent majority, and his appeal for a society of law and order.⁸⁸

⁸³ Indianapolis to Director, 7/7/69, in Theoharis ed., *COINTELPRO*, Reel 3 [Black Nationalist Hate Groups].

⁸⁴ Editorial, Charles S. Miley "We Don't Need Them," *Fort Pierce News Tribune*, 29 January 1967. For context see Miami to Director, FBI, 1/23/67, 2/8/67; Director to Miami, 2/3/67. Birmingham FBI agents distributed this editorial to newspapers in Alabama. Birmingham to Director, 2/14/67, 3/8/67; Director to Birmingham, 3/21/67.

⁸⁵ Domestic Intelligence Division Informative Note, 4/6/70 (Miami file); Birmingham to Director, 2/13/70. For context, see Miami to Director, 2/6/70, 2/24/70; Birmingham to Director, 2/13/70; Director to Miami, 2/24/70. The Nation of Islam's purchase of ranches in Asheville and Pell City Alabama led to mass protests by white residents. Vigilantes poured acid on automobiles, shot 25 cows and poisoned another 30. Shelton had held Klan rallies in the vicinity during the controversy, and had announced that the Klan was watching the ranch. Neil Maxwell, "A Black Muslim Ranch Sparks a Hot Battle In an Alabama County," *Wall Street Journal*, 25 November 1969, 1; Martin Waldron, "2,200 Alabama Whites Protest Buying of Land by Black Muslims," *New York Times*, 29 November 1969, 33; Martin Waldron, ACLU. Files Suit Supporting Black Muslim Farm in Alabama," *New York Times*, 10 December 1969, 40; James T. Wooten, "Black Muslims Would Sell Farm to Klan," *New York Times*, 17 March 1970, 32.

⁸⁶ Mike Morgan, "Klansmen Un-American," *Miami Herald*, 1 June 1966.

⁸⁷ Jack Roberts "KKK's Shelton from a Past Era" *Miami News*, 6 March, 1970.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

COINTELPRO documents do not positively identify Roberts as a Bureau contact. That the FBI disseminated copies of his editorial, was apparently unknown to him. In the popular imagination, covert action is too often thought of in conspiratorial terms. In order to succeed, such operations required the spontaneous support of opinion molders, as well as a readership who would readily accept countersubversive rhetoric in the first place. Thus, Jack Roberts framed Shelton's "extremism" with reference to apparently self-evident assumptions concerning Black Nationalism. He, as well as the agents who disseminated his column, assumed that a good number of readers already believed that armed Black Nationalists constituted a threat to internal security. Their task was to convince the Southern public that Klansmen constituted a similar threat.⁸⁹

In order to promote this view, COINTELPRO agents publicized arrests of Klan officers.⁹⁰ The arrest of United Florida Ku Klux Klan officer Charles Riddlehoover, on illegal gun-possession charges, provided one such opportunity. A militant, Riddlehoover advocated violent vigilantism. According to the logic of one FBI executive:

The UFKKK is not a powerful Klan organization, however, the general public does not make the distinctions we do. Therefore, and in the event [Bureau deletion] is convicted, mass media coverage of same would mitigate against all Klan organizations.⁹¹

FBI agents also assisted state prosecutors, for the same reason.⁹²

The following discussion of a dynamite transportation case involving Georgia Klansmen illustrates that prosecution, in addition to deterring criminals, was thought of as a counterintelligence tactic that could discredit the Klan:

the most far reaching and long lasting effort against the Klan as far as the general public is concerned is the publicity which might be directed against the Klan as a whole as a result of actions of violence by its individual members ... If these

⁸⁹ For an FBI treatise that attempted to accomplish this, see Moore to Sullivan, 12/17/68 and attachment, "The Black Klan" (Birmingham file), which argued that the Black Panther Party was a black version of the KKK.

⁹⁰ When Roderick Huntsinger killed Army private Richard Brownlee in a bar-room brawl, for example, the FBI made sure that Huntsinger's Klan membership was publicized. Telegram, Miami to Director, 11/26/67, 11/27/67, 11/28/67, 11/29/67; Raleigh Mann, "Klanman Charged in Soldier's Death," *Miami Herald*, 28 November 1967; Ott Cefkin, "Klanist Charged in GI's Slaying," *Popano Beach, Sun Sentinel*, 28 November 1967.

⁹¹ Director to Miami, Atlanta, Jacksonville, Tampa 5/16/66. For context, see Miami to Director, 4/26/66, 5/3/66, 5/5/66, 5/16/66, 5/23/66, 6/3/66; Director to Miami 5/23/66.

⁹² Charlotte to Director, 8/15/69, 9/9/69, 9/12/69, 9/16/69, 9/22/69, 10/3/69; Director to Charlotte 8/27/69; Letter attached to Birmingham to Charlotte 8/29/69.

individuals can be prosecuted, it is expected the publicity resulting therefrom would have a most salutary effect against all Klan organizations.⁹³

Similarly, agents argued that a 1966 perjury prosecution of the North Carolina UKA Grand Dragon “would be discrediting to the Klan generally and [bureau deletion] leadership specifically.”⁹⁴

Finally, the FBI and anti-Klan Congressmen also attempted to demonstrate that crimes committed by Klansmen were inspired by extremist ideas. COINTELPRO exposure operations, as well as an inquiry by the House Committee on Un-American Activities, both highlighted ideological affinities, as well as shared membership, between Klan groups, the vehemently anti-Semitic National States Rights Party, the American Nazi Party, and a paramilitary anticommunist group called the Minutemen.⁹⁵ As we have seen, COINTELPRO operations associated Klan rhetoric with insanity, con-artistry, mindless violence, and ignorance. They associated Klansmen with violent black nationalists, criminality, sexual deviance and extremist, un-democratic ideologies.

When most Americans thought about such associations in the mid-1960s, their thoughts would presumably have turned to the Soviet Union and its Communist regime. COINTELPRO agents targeting the Klan, therefore, appealed to countersubversive anticommunist discourse. They reasoned that if they could link Klan activity (which claimed to be anticommunist), to Communist subversion, they could discredit the Klan. FBI executives reasoned that:

The Ku Klux Klan has attempted to depict desegregation efforts as a communist inspired plot. Similarly, the Communist Party, USA, endeavors to propagandize the activities of the Klan as symbolic of the alleged Fascist climate of the United States. In fact, the agitational activities of both the Klan and the Communist Party benefit from the activities of their opposite group.⁹⁶

Thus, FBI headquarters directed the Birmingham, Alabama FBI field office to “develop a plan whereby Robert Shelton,” the UKA’s Imperial Wizard, “may be progressively associated with or identified as in sympathy with the communists.”⁹⁷ In another, seemingly implausible operation, the New Orleans office took out a subscription to the *People’s World*, in the name of

⁹³ Atlanta to Director, 10/21/65.

⁹⁴ Director to Charlotte, 5/26/66.

⁹⁵ Miami to Director, 6/21/66, 4/29/69; Director to Miami, 7/11/66; Richmond to Director, FBI 11/23/66, 11/30/66; Charlotte file March–June 1967; Los Angeles file, September 1966–January 1967; HUAC, *Activities of KKK*, 2060, 2114, 3343–3699, 3424–3442, 3525–3546, 3622–3656, 3813S–3814.

⁹⁶ Director to Birmingham, 9/18/64.

⁹⁷ Birmingham to Director, 11/9/64.

a Bogalusa Klansman.⁹⁸ This was done because a co-worker with whom the Klansman had associated “may have had communist connections,” and because locals were “spreading rumors that [the Klansman] is affiliated in some manner with the Communist Party.”⁹⁹

In regions where the epithet “Communist” was habitually used to discredit civil rights activists, attempts to liken the Klan to the Communist Party or even to label the Klan subversive, must have seemed incongruous.¹⁰⁰ In Tennessee, for example, where “no acts of violence within recent years ... were attributable to the Klan,” FBI agents observed that, although the general public did not overtly sympathize with the Klan, there was “certainly no antagonism toward the organization” either.¹⁰¹ Many residents had “a passive feeling” toward (the Klan’s) membership and its activities.¹⁰² Local politicians solicited Klan support, as did one US Congressional candidate. The cooperation of the public and local politicians in FBI plans to disrupt Klan activity, according to the Knoxville FBI Special Agent in Charge, were not “such as might be available if the targets were Communist front organizations or related groups.”¹⁰³ Indeed, subsequent exposure operations in Tennessee elicited “curiosity” from Knoxville Klansmen, but they did not become “alarmed.”¹⁰⁴ Most Klansmen there were “old-time members and they apparently [did] not become concerned over the fact they are known to be Klan members.”¹⁰⁵

Virginia residents, FBI executives agreed, would be more receptive to operations exploiting the tactic of guilt by association. Richmond field office agents sent letters purporting to be from UKA Klansmen to randomly selected Virginia General Assemblymen. The letters solicited purchases of raffle tickets to “serve the only organization which can save Virginia from the Nigger.”¹⁰⁶ When Klansmen harassed an Amelia, Virginia business that had recently dismissed workers, agents sent copies of a letter to more than one hundred local businessmen. The letter asserted that “a very small band of hoodlums cannot be allowed to upset our economy by their childish acts of stupidity.”¹⁰⁷ A second letter declared that the Klan contributed nothing to the community and accused Klansmen of engaging in “disgusting”

⁹⁸ New Orleans to Director, 10/1/65; Director to New Orleans 10/8/65.

⁹⁹ New Orleans to Director, 10/1/65. ¹⁰⁰ Rich, *KKK Ideology*, 32.

¹⁰¹ Knoxville to Director, 10/15/64. ¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* ¹⁰⁴ Knoxville to Director, 7/6/66.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* See also, Memphis to Director, FBI 10/8/65, Director to Memphis 10/28/65.

¹⁰⁶ The letters attempted to “convey ... the impression that the Klan is attempting to use [the legislators] by connecting them to a Klan function,” and thereby induce a legislative investigation. Director to Richmond, 6/22/66.

¹⁰⁷ Fifteen of the recipients expressed their “agreement” with the letter, and one made a move to “enforce zoning regulations and local laws” against the Klan. Among Klansmen,

activities that “suggest[ed] secrecy and terrorism.”¹⁰⁸ Finally, agents prompted fraternal, civic, and patriotic organizations in Virginia and elsewhere, to disrupt Klan activities by refusing to grant access to public meeting halls and theaters.¹⁰⁹

FBI agents, then, did not act alone in the anti-Klan endeavor. COINTELPRO’s exposure operations often coordinated activities that were actually undertaken by powerful, if sometimes unwitting allies in Southern communities. By the mid 1960s, moreover, the politics of anti-extremism were adopted by the US Congress. The House Committee on Un-American Activities, which had refused to investigate the Klan during the early Cold War, came under increasing pressure to justify its existence. After the mid-term elections of 1964, many of the Committee’s most vocal supporters lost their seats. Realizing also that Klan murders were harming the segregationist cause, Southern Congressmen endeavored to change the HUAC’s image. At first, the inquiry did little to stem Klan organizing in the South.¹¹⁰ By early 1966, however the investigation would tarnish the Klan’s image and hindered Klan operations. Committee investigators collected thousands of documents, photographs, canceled checks, membership lists, and police records. Between October 1965 and February 1966, HUAC scrutinized the seven largest and most active Ku Klux Klan organizations in the nation, interviewing 187 witnesses.¹¹¹

The FBI provided information on KKK activity and individual Klansmen, which agents had compiled from the media, as well as their own intelligence operations, to the HUAC. They also forwarded photographs and film taken by Bureau agents, a list of possible questions to ask, and the names of people who were willing to testify.¹¹² Through their Internal

the letters caused “consternation,” and Klan officials sent a letter of rebuttal. Richmond to Director, 9/23/66.

¹⁰⁸ Richmond to Director, 11/25/66.

¹⁰⁹ Norfolk to Director, FBI 4/27/67, 6/20/67; Director to Norfolk, 6/27/67; Richmond to Director, FBI 12/11/67, 3/13/68, 11/13/68; Director to Richmond 3/19/68; Director to New Orleans, 9/2/66; New Orleans to Director, 10/4/66; Director to Mobile, 1/26/67.

¹¹⁰ Walter Rugaber, “Klan Leaders Say Inquiry Aids Them,” *New York Times*, 7 November, 1965, 1.

¹¹¹ Susan Evans King, “Repression and Resistance, The Bureau, the Committee, and Liberal Dissent, 1938–1975”, 1995. (Unpublished paper in possession of author); Roy Reed, “HUAC Meets the KKK,” *New York Times*, 4 December 1965, 1; Lewis A. Kaplan, “The House Un-American Activities Committee and its Opponents: A Study in Congressional Dissonance”, *Journal of Politics*, 30: 3 (August 1968), 647–671; Mary Stanton, *From Selma to Sorrow: The Life and Death of Viola Liuzzo* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 218; Newton, *KKK Encyclopedia*, 274–275.

¹¹² DeLoach to Mohr 3/22/65; Director to Birmingham 6/25/65; Director to Atlanta, 7/8/65; Director to Dallas et al., 7/14/65; Mobile to Director, 7/13/65; Baumgardner to Sullivan, 3/12/65 and Attachment “The Klan Today,” 6/3/65, 8/3/65, 8/5/65, 8/19/65,

Revenue Service liaison, FBI executives obtained corporate tax returns of the Original Knights of the KKK, the National Knights of the KKK, and the United Klans of America, as well as the personal returns of each Klan's leaders. Business associates of UKA Imperial Wizard Robert Shelton were also investigated. The FBI disseminated their reports on Klan finances to IRS officials.¹¹³ Committee members based their interrogation of Klan leaders on many of the same themes utilized in COINTELPRO: arms purchases and crimes by individual Klansmen, financial irregularities and undemocratic decision making practices within Klan organizations.¹¹⁴ Consequently, rank-and-file Klan members began to question the integrity of their leaders.¹¹⁵

HUAC committee members also attacked the Klan's countersubversive anticommunist ideology. "Claiming to be anti-Communist," according to

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- 10/1/65, 10/7/65, 1/5/66. All the preceding contained in *The FBI File on the House Committee on Un-American Activities* [microform] (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1986).
- ¹¹³ New Orleans to Director, 11/3/64; Director to New Orleans, 8/24/65; Jackson to Director, 10/20/65; Birmingham to Director, FBI 12/24/64, 4/6/65, 4/29/65, 2/22/66, 5/20/66; Director to Birmingham, 11/7/64, 2/23/65, 5/12/65; Memphis to Director, FBI 6/5/65 (Birmingham file); Director to Memphis 6/18/65 (Birmingham file); Baumgardner to Sullivan 11/18/64 (Birmingham file), 5/10/65 (Section 1), 6/28/65 (Section 1), 7/19/65 (Section 1); Jackson to Director 10/20/65; Knoxville to Director, 12/10/65; New Orleans to Director, 11/3/64; Charlotte to Director, 7/29/70, 10/5/70, 2/26/71, 4/1/71; Director to Charlotte, 8/23/65, 8/12/70; Director to Atlanta, 8/23/65; US Congress, Senate. Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence. *Final Report*, Book III, 94th Congress, 1st and 2nd Sessions, 1975, 847-848.
- ¹¹⁴ HUAC, *Present-Day KKK*, 12-14, 75-77, 106-107, 125-131, 137-138; US Congress, House, Committee on Un-American Activities, *Annual Report for the Year 1965* (Washington, 1966); Newton, *KKK Encyclopedia*, 443-444, 523, 379, 109, 404; Ned Cline, "Ku Klux Klan Is Big Business Now: Collections Next Year Could Amount To \$125,000," and "KKK Headquarters Going Up," *Salisbury Post*, 11 April 1967. For COINTELPRO actions which capitalized on these same themes, see New Orleans file, September 1964-August 1965, especially Baumgardner to Sullivan, 9/22/64, 3/30/65 (New Orleans file); Charlotte file, January 1965-April 1967. South Carolina State officer Younger Newton, was banished from the UKA, and many former UKA leaders lost faith in Shelton's leadership as a result of these revelations. HUAC, *Activities on KKK*, 2113, 2169-2177; Patsy Sims, *The Klan* (New York: Stein and Day, 1978), 38, 102, 126; Newton, *KKK Encyclopedia*, 266. The Grand Dragon of Texas resigned after the hearings. Editorial "Many Official Warnings Made Against the Klan" *Richmond Time Dispatch*, 30 March 1966. The Hearings were published by the Government Printing Office in 1966, but the hearings received attention in the press. The GPO published HUAC's final report, which reorganized and summarized committee findings, in 1967.
- ¹¹⁵ Patsy Sims, *The Klan*, 2nd edn. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 37-38, 46-47.

Congressman Charles Weltner,

the Klan has played into the hands of atheistic communism, fulfilling Communist goals for racial strife and turmoil in our nation, punctuated by acts of violence, and providing grist for the Communist propaganda mills all over the world.¹¹⁶

Birmingham FBI agents provided a copy of HUAC's final report on the Klan to a reliable source in a local newspaper for use in articles and editorials.¹¹⁷ In a number of Southern communities, residents were alerted to the existence of local Klan units for the first time.¹¹⁸ The governor of Mississippi was applauded by the state legislature when he pledged to suppress church-arsons and other nightriding activity.¹¹⁹ The most effective outcome of the hearings was that Imperial Wizard Robert Shelton and six other high ranking UKA leaders were cited for contempt of Congress after they refused to turn over UKA records. Despite protests by a group of more than one hundred university law professors and legal support from the ACLU, Shelton and two of his Grand Dragons were incarcerated in a federal prison.¹²⁰

By 1965, as explained above, liberals had pressured HUAC into exposing the KKK, and President Johnson had forced the FBI to infiltrate and disrupt Klan organizations. The Nation's most respected countersubversive institutions were now portraying the Klan as an unconscious agent of Communist subversion. Liberal anti-Communism, however, could not fully supplant the countersubversive anticommunist ideology propounded by the FBI. Liberal journalists who received information on extremists were admonished to follow the FBI line on Communism as well. Ralph McGill, a staff writer for the *Atlanta Constitution*, who had "downgraded the Communist Party, USA, as a danger to United States internal security," according to FBI executives, later incorporated "suggested revisions" in his article, this after a talk with FBI executive Cartha DeLoach. DeLoach had advised McGill that the FBI was "strongly opposed" to the content of his first draft. The original draft had been based on conversations with Attorney General Robert Kennedy. J. Edgar Hoover, communicating the differences between FBI and Justice

¹¹⁶ HUAC, *Activities of KKK*, 3827. See also 2361.

¹¹⁷ Birmingham to Director, 1/9/68.

¹¹⁸ John Herbers, "Klan Data Called Surprise to Many: Investigator Says Southern Towns Learn of Activities," *New York Times*, 31 October 1965, 85.

¹¹⁹ "Declining Power of the Nightriders," *London Times*, 1 February 1966, 8.

¹²⁰ John Herbers, "Law Professors Score House Contempt Action," *New York Times*, 7 February 1966, 21; ACLU to Support Klan Chief In Contempt of Congress Plea," *New York Times*, 16 September 1966, 39; Newton, *KKK Encyclopedia*, 513-514; "Klan Wizard to Subpoena Flowers," *Fierce Cross* II: 7, 1. Robert Shelton served a six-month sentence at a Texarkana Federal prison from February to November 1969, when he was paroled.

Department perceptions of domestic security concerns, had noted that McGill had been “efficiently ‘brainwashed’ by the Attorney General.”¹²¹

The politics of anticommunism, as M. J. Heale pointed out, were waning during this period. This necessitated the covert intervention of FBI officials with the *Atlanta Constitution*. At the same time, however, anti-Communist counterinsurgency was becoming a fundamental foreign-policy goal. The day after Klansmen killed civil rights activist Viola Liuzzo, President Johnson told the nation:

We will not be intimidated by the terrorists of the Ku Klux Klan any more than the terrorists of the Viet Cong ... I shall continue to fight [the Klan] because I know their loyalty is not to the United States but to a hooded society of bigots.¹²²

He warned Klansmen, “get out of the Klan now and return to decent society before it is too late.”¹²³

In accordance with this admonition, the FBI created a paper organization called “The National Committee for Domestic Tranquility.”¹²⁴ The NCDT aimed to attack the Klan “from a low key, common sense and patriotic position.”¹²⁵ NCDT bulletins were mailed to Klansmen in order to capitalize on factionalism, to heighten disputes, to discredit Klan officers, to reduce vigilante activity, and to facilitate the development of informants.¹²⁶ FBI executives deliberately oriented these NCDT communications toward the worldview of Southern Klansman, as they perceived it. Appealing to the anticommunist aspects of the Klan’s Christian-Patriot rhetoric, NCDT communications accommodated the anticommunist aspects of the Klansman’s countersubversive demonology (while ignoring the white supremacist aspects), even as they condemned the KKK leadership and vigilante violence.

The first NCDT bulletin defined the war in Vietnam as a test of America’s ability to survive “the constant and insidious onslaught of communism,” and declared that the Ku Klux Klan acts as an “unconscious agent” of the “communist conspiracy.”¹²⁷ Klan activity was depicted as a “transgression of domestic tranquility” that “grant[s] aid and comfort to the enemy.”¹²⁸ Klansmen, the bulletin argued, should realize that Klan activity actually aided

¹²¹ Baumgardner to Sullivan, 9/21/64 (Section 1).

¹²² Wade, *The Fiery Cross*, 351.

¹²³ Ibid. Florida Klansmen “complained bitterly” about the speech. The ACLU expressed an opinion that Johnson’s statements were inconsistent with a criminal justice system based upon the presumption of innocence. “Klansman depicted as FBI Informant,” *St. Petersburg Times*, 18 April 1965.

¹²⁴ Baumgardner to Sullivan, 3/10/66 (Section 1).

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ “The National Committee for Domestic Tranquility,” attached to Baumgardner to Sullivan, 3/10/66 (Section 1).

¹²⁸ Ibid.

subversives. Klansmen should redeem themselves, by supporting anti-Communist foreign policy:

The anti-Christ, the atheistic communist ... drains great support from the American scene when our domestic tranquility is turmoiled ... The Soviet Communist, the Peking propagandist and the Viet Cong killer all derive great satisfaction from the communist inspired student riots in California, the draft card burnings and other disruptionist activity.

Yet, how much greater their satisfaction, when, without the expenditure of one ruble, the communist conspiracy is effectively augmented by an unconscious agent, the Ku Klux Klan.

“QUIT THE KLAN; AND BACK OUR BOYS IN VIETNAM”

The great tradition of our Southland, written in the pages of History with the sweat, heartbreak and blood of our Southern sons, has been perverted by the self-seeking machinations of Bob Shelton, [Bureau deletion], Sam Bowers and other Klan leaders. Like the Communists, they have duped their members, misapplied funds and brought chaos to their communities ... Thus, the honest, God fearing Klan Folk seeking only fraternity and friendship through Klan membership are also forced into a profile of friendship with the Communist Party.¹²⁹

The bulletin appealed to Klansmen in the name of God and “our fathers, husbands and sons who made the supreme sacrifice in defense of their country.”¹³⁰ It urged Klansmen to discard their robes, disavow their leaders, replace the “black oath” with a simple prayer, take personal and political positions with the ballot box, and “let domestic tranquility reign, forming a solid front of democracy for our National Effort.”¹³¹

A second NCDT newsletter declared that Klan leaders were “in league with the Anti-Christ.”¹³² The letter appealed to an evangelical Protestant understanding of religious re-awakening:

We former Klansmen all, who bear witness in the light of day, urgently beseech you to embrace our public commitment to Christ and disavow the path of the Anti-Christ, delivered to you, the misdirected souls, on the sugary, forked tongue of deceitful Klan leaders.

For you who seek Christ and reject the Klan, we have enclosed a membership card announcing your commitment to Christ.

To join with us, merely display this card in your home which will demonstrate to those who are really concerned about you that “A Klansman I Was, A Christian I Am.”¹³³

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² “My Fellow Americans,” attached to Baumgardner to Sullivan, 5/4/66 (Section 1).

¹³³ Ibid. (Quotation marks in the original.)

Another NCDT communication concluded:

We recognize the reasons which have caused many patriotic Americans to join the United Klans of America, but we now find that the majority of Klan members are swelling the ranks of our committee because they are patriotic Americans, who no longer support the juvenile machinations of Shelton and others who seek to disrupt the domestic tranquility through hate and violence at a crucial point in our history. That Shelton is an unconscious agent of the Soviets and Communist Chinese ideology, we most heartily concur.¹³⁴

UKA leaders, maintained that they too supported the war effort. In keeping with their white supremacist anticommunism, however, they charged that civil rights policies were attributable to Communist influence in government.

In January 1967, for example, the Clarksville, Virginia unit of the UKA placed the following advertisement in a local newspaper:

Due to the rising tide of Communist influence in our government, schools and churches, it is vital that all patriotic Americans join together to combat this destructive evil. It should be apparent to everyone in this area how the Communist-influenced federal government has stolen the rights of our local citizens to operate our public school system as they see fit. (Federal guidelines now have control of your children's minds.) Communism can also be seen taking its toll as our church literature is infiltrated with un-Christian doctrines and the federal government handcuffs the State, County and local government.¹³⁵

FBI agents drafted a response. Since no businessmen responded to the UKA advertisement, the Bureau never mailed this letter. Nevertheless, its content reveals the FBI's view of Klan rhetoric. If the Klan knows about "Communist influence" in the community, the letter asked,

Why hasn't the Klan pointed out exactly where and what it is so we, as citizens, can fight it? Why is the Klan keeping information to itself? Does the Klan want to keep it a secret so it can grow and then the Klan can justify its being in our city?¹³⁶

Although the FBI's primary concern was KKK vigilantism, which it viewed as a threat to law and order, the Bureau also aimed to de-legitimize the Klan's version of countersubversive, anticommunist rhetoric.

By the late 1960s, FBI executives had fully formulated their notion of a relationship between an international Communist conspiracy and the activities of the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan, according to this view, undermined domestic tranquility by engaging in vigilante violence and propagating irresponsible charges about Communist infiltration in America. This caused

¹³⁴ Baumgardner to Sullivan, 8/8/66 (New Orleans file).

¹³⁵ Letter, Clarksville, Virginia Unit, United Klans of America, to All Local Businessmen, Clarksville, VA, 25 January 1967 (Richmond file).

¹³⁶ Richmond to Director, 2/15/67.

confusion, giving aid and comfort to the very subversives whom the Klan purported to be fighting. Responding to this conviction, the FBI, in turn, exposed the Klan as an unconscious agent of the Communist Party. On the discursive level, then, the Klan and the FBI were engaging in a struggle over the rhetorical content of countersubversive anticommunism, over American political demonology itself.¹³⁷

In order to marginalize the KKK, the FBI endeavored to de-legitimize the notion that the Klan was a patriotic and Christian organization. Given the limited plausibility of linking the Klan to the Communist Party, COINTELPRO operations also linked Klan ideology to neo-Nazism. Reviving Brown Scare themes from the Nazi-Soviet Pact era, COINTELPRO agents depicted Klan groups as both subversive and extremist. The so-called “KLANZI Party” operation, linked the United Klans of America to the American Nazi Party.¹³⁸ In March 1966, just after HUAC exposed relationships between George Lincoln Rockwell’s American Nazi Party and some tiny UKA units in the Middle Atlantic States, FBI executives contemplated using media sources in order to raise the question, “Did Shelton sign a Munich Pact with Rockwell?”¹³⁹

Four months later, when Virginia UKA Grand Dragon Marshall Kornegay announced a policy to shoot FBI agents who appeared on Klansmen’s property, FBI executives responded with the following news release about the “infamous” Grand Dragon’s assemblage of “illiterate and provincial Southerners.”¹⁴⁰

At the beginning of World War Two, similar threats were made by the Nazi Bund. Today some of the more militant communists have indicated that they would endeavor to frustrate the FBI through violence ... If they are seriously considering attempting violence against FBI agents, they are even more stupid than previously indicated.¹⁴¹

A NCDT newsletter that was sent out six months later also emphasized a Brown Scare theme:

those who seek to oppose our domestic tranquility are those who openly oppose our Vietnam effort or do nothing to support American interests. I do not think it necessary to tell you that most prominent among those who lend this opposition is the Communist Party ...

¹³⁷ On American political demonology, see “American Political Demonology: A Retrospective,” and “Political Repression,” in Michael Rogin, *Ronald Reagan, The Movie and Other Episodes in Political Demonology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

¹³⁸ Baumgardner to Sullivan, 3/18/66 (Section 1).

¹³⁹ HUAC, *Activities of KKK*, 3265–3363; Baumgardner to Sullivan, 3/18/66 (Section 1).

¹⁴⁰ Baumgardner to Sullivan, 7/22/66 (Section 1).

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Yet, we are not blind to the fact that Nazism and totalitarian ways are as unwarranted in our great country as communism ... in the ultimate analysis there is no difference existing between totalitarian philosophies and communism.

The Imperial Wizard you have followed, spews a special kind of venom which has reduced the Klan to a totalitarian organization which well serves the interests of the communists. If you still listen to him without evaluating his words, you may also be duped into diverting the public interest from the great problems at hand which must be tended to ...

Remember, be calm of judgment; do not be stampeded by irresponsible rabblers, black Powerites, or the Tuscaloosa tulip.¹⁴²

In 1939, J. Edgar Hoover had characterized totalitarian dictators as leaders who “further their own selfish purposes and greed by operating behind a smoke screen of pseudo benevolence.”¹⁴³ In keeping with this view, CO-INTELPRO operations endeavored to expose dictatorial Klan leaders who were duping rank-and-file Klan members. Domestic tranquility, according to NCDT communications, was threatened not only by Communist subversives but also by black nationalists, neo-Nazis, and the “totalitarian” KKK.¹⁴⁴

Similar strategizing lay behind an FBI effort to publicize allegations of homosexual activity in American Nazi Party ranks and to link them to evidence of fraternization between Nazis and Klansmen, which had been publicized by the HUAC.¹⁴⁵ The Bureau had already launched operations that “created the impression that the Klan and the ANP might form the Klanzi Party.”¹⁴⁶ With the arrest of two Improved Order of the United States Klans (IOUSK) members on sodomy charges, FBI executives decided to “suggest that the other Klan organizations seeking to support the ANP are doing so because of their common interests in perversion.”¹⁴⁷ The IOUSK was a very small organization, possessing only five units. FBI bureaucrats reasoned, however,

¹⁴² Brennan to Sullivan, 1/24/67 (Section 1).

¹⁴³ Powers, *Secrecy and Power*, 213.

¹⁴⁴ Webster’s Dictionary defines a tulip as “Someone as gorgeous or showy as a tulip.” Shelton’s UKA was headquartered in Tuscaloosa Alabama. The “Tuscaloosa tulip” refers to Shelton’s handling of Klan funds, implying that hard-earned Klavern money was being used to support Shelton’s vanity. Shelton’s ostentatious dress and consumerism, like that of 1930s era gangsters, betrayed his effeminacy. On the gendering of gangsters in American popular culture see David E. Ruth, *Inventing the Public Enemy: The Gangster in American Popular Culture, 1918–1934* (Chicago: University of California Press, 1996).

¹⁴⁵ On exposing fraternization and cross-membership between northern Klansmen and Nazis, see HUAC, *Activities of KKK*, 3320–3324, 3330–3331, 3341–3349, 3360, 3363; Richmond to Director, FBI 11/23/66, 11/30/66; Baumgardner to Sullivan 3/18/66 (Section 1); HUAC, *Present-Day KKK*, 12–14, 35–36; *Activities of KKK*, index references to American Nazi Party, FBI Monograph, American Nazi Party, June 1965, 33–36 (Acquired by the author through the Freedom of Information Act).

¹⁴⁶ Director to Richmond et al., 11/8/66 (Section 1).

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

that: "Since the general public does not distinguish one Klan group from another and normally attributes white supremacist activity to the Klan as represented by Robert Shelton, Imperial Wizard United Klans of America, Inc. (UKA), it is believed that [publicizing the arrests] might also be discrediting to the UKA."¹⁴⁸

In retrospect, this memorandum appears quite prescient: today, most Americans do not distinguish between Klansmen, neo-Nazis, Christian Identity adherents and participants in citizens' militia. They are all understood to be extremists, who promote un-American ideologies and commit "hate crimes." As UKA Imperial Wizard Robert Shelton put it in 1976, "they have smeared the word 'racist' to associate it with somethin' like the Gestapo or Hitlerism or Nazism."¹⁴⁹ This success in associating of the Ku Klux Klan with neo-Nazism, marked the culmination of a discursive process that had begun during the Fifth Column Scare. In 1966, the FBI was attempting to "recreate" the anti-Klan "atmosphere" of 1946–47.¹⁵⁰

The FBI's efforts to discredit Klansmen as un-American extremists took place within a context of liberal ascendancy in American politics. Liberals revived and re-defined counter-extremist politics. Conservative politicians distanced themselves from racist rhetoric, but they did not engage in anti-extremist campaigns. At the July 1964 Republican Party convention, for example, conservatives defeated an effort by moderates to insert an "anti-extremism" platform plank that condemned the Klan and the John Birch society. They also voted down a plank endorsing "vigorous enforcement" of existing civil rights statutes.¹⁵¹ The FBI did not target ethnic working-class whites of the urban North, who opposed busing and integration, a constituency whose votes would do much to undermine the hegemony of the

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. See also, Birmingham to Director, 11/23/66 (Richmond file); Director to Birmingham, 12/2/66 (Richmond file); Richmond to Director, 11/30/66; Director to Charlotte, 9/29/66. Led by Earle E. George, the IOUSK controlled 5–6 Klaverns containing about 80 members, in Georgia and Alabama during 1965–1966. HUAC, *Activities of KKK*, 1563, 1568, 1580; Jim Devine, Deputy Attorney general to Ramsey Clark, "Working paper for Conference on Legislative Proposals to Curtail Activities of the K.K.K.," April 8, 1965, 4 in Michal Belknap ed., *Securing the Enactment of Civil Rights Legislation, 1965–1968* (New York: Garland Publishers, 1991) vol. 14: Document 25, 61.

¹⁴⁹ Sims, *The Klan* (2nd edn.), 104. ¹⁵⁰ Charlotte to Director, 4/6/66.

¹⁵¹ After former President Eisenhower demanded that Presidential candidate Barry Goldwater clarify his famous line, "extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice," Goldwater repudiated the Klan and promised to support civil rights legislation, in a conference with Eisenhower, Richard Nixon, and about thirty republican governors. Diamond, *Roads to Dominion*, 64.

so-called “liberal consensus.”¹⁵² Nevertheless, by the 1965 a liberal consensus defined mainstream national politics, particularly with regard to desegregation, voting rights and the repression of vigilante violence. Even the Nixon administration’s approach to civil rights, according to Alonzo Hamby, while “far cooler than that of the Johnson administration ... was well beyond anything that Eisenhower could have envisioned.”¹⁵³

Conservative and liberal anticommunist discourses were both opposed to what were defined as anti-American ideologies. Definitions of Americanism, in turn, were constructed with reference to the countersubversive tradition. The debate that occurred during the early Cold War thus involved the nature of the Communist threat and the strategy that should be used to meet it. While conservative Cold Warriors envisioned outlawing Communists and Communist propaganda and championed overt political repression by legislative investigation, liberal anti-Communists championed the cause of non-partisan, bureaucratic professionalism. J. Edgar Hoover had convinced them that the FBI was such a professional institution. When racial violence threatened to undermine anti-Communist foreign policy goals, both liberals and conservatives took notice.

In 1964, as racial violence began to alienate even conservative Southerners, liberals delegated internal security functions to the FBI in order to suppress the Ku Klux Klan. COINTELPRO-WHITE HATE was the FBI’s response to this particular exigency. A central feature of this response involved an attempt to influence KKK rhetoric through appeals to anti-communism. By 1970, the FBI had infiltrated the UKA to such an extent that it was controlling Robert Shelton’s speechwriter.¹⁵⁴ At a May 1970 UKA rally following the Imperial Wizard’s release from prison, informants reported, “Shelton’s speech was less racist and more anticommunist than usual.”¹⁵⁵ Shelton denounced violence and “urged legal means to effect change.”¹⁵⁶ He continued to emphasize these themes in subsequent speeches.¹⁵⁷ William Vincent Moore, who analyzed the content of the UKA’s *Fiery Cross* publication between 1968 and 1972, found an increased emphasis on “external communism” after 1970.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵² Exhibit 68-3 in Church Committee, *Hearings*, vol. 6, 680. See also O’Reilly, *Racial Matters*, 224–225.

¹⁵³ Hamby, *Liberalism and its Challengers*, 320. ¹⁵⁴ Birmingham to Director, 9/2/70.

¹⁵⁵ Moore to Sullivan, 5/28/70 (Birmingham file). ¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Director to Birmingham, 6/1/70; Birmingham to Director, 9/29/70.

¹⁵⁸ William Vincent Moore, “A Sheet and a Cross: A Symbolic Analysis of the Ku Klux Klan,” Ph.D. diss., Tulane University, 1975, 238–246; Evelyn Rich questions whether this rhetorical change represented any substantive policy shift. Rich, “Ku Klux Klan Ideology” 147–148. The Birmingham FBI field office, however, reported that there had been

The FBI also succeeded in associating the KKK with totalitarian political ideology. This association of Klansmen with Nazis created difficulties for Klan recruiters. As Robert Shelton complained in 1976,

If you've got the American Nazi party – which most people despise – associated with the Klan and they go into an area and philosophize on their theories, people are going to say, “well that's not what I thought the Klan was.” Then we gotta spend all this time patchin' up and redoin' what they tore down.¹⁵⁹

In the discursive realm, then, COINTELPRO had helped Southerners to re-define the countersubversive imagination.

By the late-1960s, Klan groups were being shunned by most Southern politicians and castigated even in conservative Southern newspapers. By 1968, the Imperial Wizard of the nation's largest Klan organization was “complain[ing] constantly that of the conspiracy of the ‘controlled news media.’”¹⁶⁰ Klan members, who had once played an integral role in policing the white supremacist social order, were now shunned *because* they were “prepared to resort to illegal means to achieve their ends.” Since vigilante violence had become counterproductive, Klansmen were now deemed “violence prone.” The stereotypical Klansmen was now characterized as “unpredictable and mentally unstable.”¹⁶¹

The FBI's COINTELPRO-WHITE HATE program played no small role in nurturing such ideas. Just as FBI bureaucrats were instrumental in nurturing anticommunism during the early Cold War, they also helped to discredit the KKK and other “hate groups” during the 1960s. FBI bureaucrats acted as guardians of the nation, neutralizing and destroying the new enemy. By the late 1960s, KKK (as well as Black Nationalist) extremists would eclipse Communist subversives in national security discourse.¹⁶² At this point, the FBI was disrupting and neutralizing non-violent Communist, socialist, civil rights, Black nationalist, and antiwar organizations on the one

no Klan violence for many months, due to the fear of highly placed FBI informants. Birmingham to Director, 9/29/70.

¹⁵⁹ Sims, *The Klan* (2nd edn.), 122.

¹⁶⁰ Godfrey Hodgson, “The Man Who Leads the Ku-Klux-Klan,” *London Times*, 19 April 1968, 10.

¹⁶¹ Rich, “KKK Ideology,” 1–4.

¹⁶² Keller, *The Liberals and J. Edgar Hoover*, 130. On COINTELPRO-Black Nationalist Hate Groups, see O'Reilly, *Racial Matters*, 8–9. For pro-black nationalist accounts, see Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement* (Boston: South End Press, 1988), ch. 3; and *The COINTELPRO Papers: Documents from the FBI's Secret Wars Against Domestic Dissent* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), ch. 5.

hand, as well as violent Klan, Nazi organizations on the other.¹⁶³ FBI counterintelligence had nurtured an emerging “consensus” in American political discourse, a consensus to suppress white supremacist vigilantism and ensure domestic tranquility.

¹⁶³ By the late 1960s and early 1970s, of course, some Black-nationalist groups (such as the Black Liberation Army), and some of the more militant New Left groups (such as the Weather Underground), had also embraced violent tactics, committing robberies, shootings, and bombings to propagandize their causes. For comparison of these operations, see Drabble, “COINTELPRO-WHITE HATE, Epilogue.”