

INTRODUCTION

America has been a cradle for conspiracies and secret societies from its earliest beginnings. Christopher Columbus held apocalyptic beliefs and claimed to have received a vision that the world would end in 1650; he considered it his divine mission to find a new land that would be the location of the new heaven and new earth promised by Saint John of the Apocalypse in the book of Revelation. In the 1600s the master Freemason Sir Francis Bacon predicted that America was the New Atlantis and that it would bring forth a New World Order that would restore all humankind to the earthly paradise that existed in the Golden Age of old.

By the mid-1700s Freemasonry had established its lodges throughout Europe and had crossed the ocean to the British colonies in New England. George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, John Hancock, Paul Revere, and many others of the founding fathers were openly proud of being Masons, and Washington, the nation's first president, donned his ceremonial Masonic apron to preside over the dedication of the U.S. Capitol.

Opposite the Great Seal of the nation on the back of the one-dollar bill, the basic unit

of currency in the United States, is an incomplete pyramid with an eye floating in a glowing triangle where the capstone should be. The pyramid is the Great Pyramid of Cheops at Giza, which for the Freemasons is emblematic of the legend that Egyptian civilization was founded by survivors from the lost continent of Atlantis. The all-seeing eye represents the Great Architect of the Universe that guided the founding fathers to establish a nation that might one day reveal itself as the heir of the fabled mysteries of Atlantis. Above the eye is the caption *Annuit Coeptis*, commonly translated as "He has favored our undertaking," and in a scroll beneath is the slogan *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, "a new order of the ages," a New World Order.

While the Freemasons remain today as a benign nondenominational fraternity, many clergy members and conspiracy theorists insist that the organization's secret rites, passwords, initiations, and handshakes have their origins in the Roman mystery religions, Egyptian rituals, and Babylonian paganism. These same critics claim that the Freemasons are linked to the Illuminati and other secret societies working to achieve a New

Introduction

World Order and a One World Government. Together, conspiracists insist, these sinister groups constitute powerful brotherhoods of darkness that have exerted their influence on every aspect of American society and are planning to take over the world.

Petty conspiracies that circulate about political or business rivals are as old as the human psyche, Daniel Pipes reminds us in *FrontPage* magazine (January 13, 2004); but fears about grand, global conspiracies, “that the Illuminati or Jews plan to take over the world,” are only nine hundred years old and “have been operational for just two centuries, since the French Revolution.” While royal heads were being lopped off by Madame Guillotine, some citizens were blaming the revolution on the political manipulations of the Bavarian Illuminati and its hold on the Jacobins.

Fear of such conspiracies and shadowy societies has made American history replete with warnings of secret plots by the Freemasons, the Zionists, the Roman Catholics, the Communists, the World Bankers, the Secret Government, the New Agers, and the Extraterrestrial Invaders. Charges of conspiracy have grown into self-perpetuating histories of sinister cabals responsible for the assassinations of Abraham Lincoln, James Garfield, John F. Kennedy, Robert F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and Princess Diana of Wales. Polls indicate that increasing numbers of Americans believe they have not been told the truth about Pearl Harbor, the Gulf of Tonkin, the Oklahoma City bombing, the fires that consumed the Branch Davidian compound at Waco, or the destruction on September 11, 2001.

The years following 9/11 have seen what Mike Ward, writing in *PopMatters* (January 3, 2003), termed “probably the most staggering proliferation of ‘conspiracy theories’ in American history. Angry speculation—focused mainly on government dirty dealings, ulterior motives, and potential complicity in the attacks—has

risen to a clamor that easily rivals what followed the Kennedy assassination.”

A Reassuring Sort of Paranoia

Michael Barkun, a political scientist at Syracuse University and the author of *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America* (2003), has remarked that conspiracy theories “are one way to make sense of what happened and regain a sense of control.” Such theories, he explains, are actually “reassuring” because “what they say is that everything is connected, nothing happens by accident, and that there is some kind of order in the world, even if it is produced by evil forces.” In Barkun’s opinion, conspiracy theories are “psychologically consoling to a lot of people.”

There seems little question that since the end of the cold war and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the American public has tended to believe that their government lies to them. Rick Ross, whose Ross Institute of New Jersey investigates conspiracies, has observed that more and more Americans see manipulative forces working behind the scenes of their own government. “The enemy is the United States government, the enemy is within,” Ross said to Carol Morello of the *Washington Post* (October 7, 2004). “Instead of projecting theories out [they have] become internalized.”

Conspiracy theorists in the United States are quick to respond that they have many good reasons to question the government’s behind-the-scenes dirty dealings. The FBI’s COINTELPRO really did have orders to defame, disgrace, and dispose of war protesters, radical political groups, and freedom marchers by any means necessary. The CIA’s insidious, top-secret MK-ULTRA really did conduct ghastly brainwashing and mind-altering drug experiments that may have produced the perfect assassins, as well as the Unabomber.

For at least fifty years the Department of Defense has used hundreds of thousands of

Introduction

military personnel and private citizens in experiments with mustard and nerve gas, ionizing radiation, and hallucinogenic drugs. Although there were individuals who volunteered for some of these experiments, the two hundred black men who were diagnosed with syphilis in the 1932 Tuskegee Study were never told of their illness and were used as human guinea pigs in order to better understand the symptoms of the disease. None of the men received any kind of treatment, and more than half of them died as a result.

In 1950, when nuclear weapons were still in their infancy, the Department of Defense detonated nuclear devices in desert areas, then monitored unsuspecting civilians in cities downwind from the blasts for medical problems and mortality rates.

In 1966 more than a million civilians were exposed to germ warfare when U.S. Army scientists dropped light bulbs filled with bacteria onto ventilation grates throughout the New York City subway system.

In 1977 U.S. Senate hearings revealed that between 1949 and 1969, at least 239 highly populated areas, including San Francisco, Washington, D.C., Minneapolis, St. Louis, Key West, and Panama City, Florida, had been contaminated with biological agents.

In 1995 evidence surfaced that the biological agents used during the Gulf War had been manufactured in Houston and Boca Raton and tested on prisoners in the Texas Department of Corrections.

In the August 26, 2005, issue of *Executive Intelligence Review*, Jeffrey Steinberg discusses a document coauthored by Col. Paul E. Valley, commander of the Seventh Psychological Operations Group, U.S. Army Reserve, entitled "From PSYOP to MindWar: The Psychology of Victory," and details the occult and paranormal activities of Pentagon researchers regarding "weapons that directly attack the targeted population's nervous system and

brain functioning" and "such phenomena as atmospheric electromagnetic activity, air ionization, and extremely low frequency waves."

Kernels of Truth

Sometimes, it seems, the paranoid are onto something. When such conspiracies as those just cited prove to be real, the assertion that there is a kernel of truth in even the most far-fetched conspiracy theory appears also to be true. Conspiracies are often replete with internal paradoxes, and some are easily dismissed by rational folks as completely weird and crazy. Often the truth lies in the middle, and the task of the serious researcher is to make an intelligent discernment. To dismiss some conspiracy theories as too wild to deserve attention may result in the last laugh being enjoyed by those who seek to control and to manipulate others.

Michael Barkun has identified three principles he believes can be found in every conspiracy theory: *Nothing happens by accident. Nothing is as it seems. Everything is connected.* The essence of conspiracy beliefs, Barkun says, "lies in attempts to delineate and explain evil." He also states that contemporary conspiracy theories have taken on a major new development, often conjoining the occult, the heretical, and the unfashionable—for example, in a combined belief in spiritualism, alchemy, and Theosophy.

On this point, we disagree. In our research we have found that for centuries the schools of "hidden wisdom" have coexisted with rational and materialistic progress in the Western world. While science and technology have advanced in the European and American cultures, there have always been conspiracy theories that maintained a belief in demonology, forbidden secrets, and a global plot by a satanic secret society to obtain world domination.

Norio Hayakawa, director of the Civilian Intelligence Network, has defined *conspiratology* as a "comprehensive study of the origins,

Introduction

the role, and the effects of conspiracy theories on society,” in order to determine why conspiracy theories are so “deeply ingrained in the psyche of a segment of human society.” With the advent of the Internet, anyone can become a conspiracy theorist and broadcast his or her unchecked, unquestioned, and unchallenged claims of government corruption, racist propaganda, or alien reptilian abduction all over the world. On Google alone, there are 222,000 Web sites devoted to conspiracy theories and 2,250,000 dedicated to secret societies. Sharing stories about conspiracies and secret societies is very much like spreading sinister gossip, and one needs to develop a sense of what is true and what is merely a reflection of someone else’s personal prejudices and beliefs.

No Hidden Agenda Here

Readers of our previous books will know that we believe in a Divine Plan, good eventually triumphing over evil, and the power of everyone to be able to exercise his or her personal responsibility to resist the demons of avarice and self-aggrandizement that inspire people attracted to secret societies to seek to manipulate and exploit others. As researchers

of the unusual and the unknown, we have tried our best to approach this work on conspiracy theories and secret societies without any personal agendas. We do not subscribe to any particular conspiracy theory, and we do not belong to any secret society.

For many years now, we have studied and evaluated the enormous influence of conspiracy theories on society and how people’s beliefs can be manipulated for good or for evil by the promulgation of certain ideas, theories, and belief concepts. In conventional works of history, many historians wish to leave a record of how noble, wise, and compassionate our species has become in its social, moral, and political evolution. We present in this book more than 200 entries and nearly 100 photographs and illustrations, plus a list of resources for further investigation and a comprehensive index for obsessive cross-checking: a dossier of the more shadowy visages of human history, the images that appear in the dark mirrors that reflect portraits of chaos, confusion, and deceit. It remains for the readers to judge which images of humankind are the more accurate—and it is up to the readers to work to build a future that more accurately reflects what they hope humankind may become.