

The Darkest Sides of Politics, I
Postwar fascism, covert operations and terrorism

The Darkest Sides of Politics, II
State terrorism, "weapons of mass destruction", religious extremism
and organised crime

Jeffrey M Bale

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Where to begin with this enormous publication that has over 900 pages between the two volumes? Jeffrey Bale is now a professor¹ in the United States but this collection of his essays begins with material he wrote for the PhD he was awarded in 1994. I published extracts from that in *Lobster* while it was a work in progress in the late 1980s and, sitting down to write this, I began by searching *Lobster's* back copies for references to Bale. I found this in *Lobster* 37:

'Some of the best and most original research published in *Lobster* was the series of essays by Jeffrey Bale in *Lobsters* 18, 19 and 21. Bale then dropped off the *Lobster* radar. He reappeared on it recently as the editor of *Hit List*, a magazine devoted to punk rock whose first issue appeared in March 1999. In his introductory editorial Bale described his recent career.

"A PhD in modern European history at the University of California at Berkeley, two year post-doctoral fellowship at Columbia University, visiting professorship at a college in Oregon, then research fellowships at the Library of Congress and the Center for German and European Studies at Berkeley." '

Which tells us that Jeffrey Bale is not your run-of-the-mill academic. He began with music, producing a 'zine, *Maximum Rock and Roll*,² in the early 1980s. From there he segued into his PhD, with Peter Dale Scott as one of his supervisors, at Berkeley. And not just any old PhD, either, a parapolitical PhD:

¹ His CV is at <<http://www.miiis.edu/academics/faculty/jbale>>.

² See <<http://www.maximumrocknroll.com/about/>>.

'The "Black" Terrorist International: Neo-Fascist Paramilitary Networks and the "Strategy of Tension" in Italy, 1968-74'.³

Some of that PhD thesis is the basis for part of the first of these two volumes and it is stunning. This is the Peter Dale Scott school of parapolitical analysis: read widely enough and even the covert world can be understood. But doing European fascism, terrorism and their relationship to covert operations by states means source material in several languages and Bale taught himself to read six languages to do it. It also means massive documentation. For example, the first big essay, 'Post-war Fascist Internationals Part 1', has 45 pages of text and 30 pages of endnotes; and chapter 8, 'The ultranationalist right in Turkey and the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II' – yes, with Turkish-language sources – has 30 pages of text and 24 pages of notes. Those notes contain not just the documentation but also commentary, doubts, questions, debates with other scholars and digressions. It would be difficult to adequately convey just how dense and complex this material is. Happily, I don't need to: you can see for yourself using 'Google preview'.⁴ Anthony Frewin quoted the late Stanley Kubrick as saying that footnotes are where the action is. With these two volumes they are certainly where some of the action is.⁵

The second volume begins in roughly the same vein as the first, with essays on the use of terrorist proxies by states; the apartheid South African state's Project Coast, its exploration and use of chemical and biological weapons; and an account of the Unification Church (the 'Moonies'), the Korean CIA and the World Anti-Communist League – all fine pieces of detailed parapolitical work. And then 9/11 happens and Bale sets out to explain

³ On-line at <<https://tinyurl.com/ydd2k4a9>> or <https://www.economicsvoodoo.com/wp-content/uploads/DISSERTATION-The-Black-Terrorist-International-Neo-Fascist-Paramilitary-Networks-Strategy-of-Tension-in-Italy-1968-1974_Jeffrey-Bale.pdf>.

⁴ For volume I go to <<https://tinyurl.com/lDsepy9>> or <<https://www.routledge.com/The-Darkest-Sides-of-Politics-I-Postwar-Fascism-Covert-Operations-and/Bale/p/book/9781138785618>>. For volume II go to <<https://tinyurl.com/lDsepy9>> or <<https://www.routledge.com/The-Darkest-Sides-of-Politics-II-State-Terrorism-Weapons-of-Mass/Bale/p/book/9781138785632>>. Click the 'Google preview' button on those pages.

⁵ Volume II has a couple of 'footnotes' which are two pages long. I am reminded of a little book – a pamphlet, really – the 1977 *Crime and Cover-up*, by Peter Dale Scott, which I had many years ago but which fell apart. Its footnotes were so extensive and dense that someone produced and circulated an index to them.

Islamic terrorism.⁶

Bale describes himself as 'a classical liberal, a radical individualist, an unabashed secularist, a member of the anti-PC and anti-totalitarian left, and a counter-cultural rebel'.⁷ What it means in practise is that he can write this of the phrase 'political correctness':

'This is a well-known term that has come to refer not only to the uncritical if not slavish following of political "party lines" but also to insistent displays of rigid moral self-righteousness and puritanism, humourlessness, and an intolerance (if not outright hatred) directed against, as well as an undemocratic impulse to demonise and suppress, the opinions of anyone who does not share one's own biases and agenda.' (p. 253).

And he heads one chapter with a quotation which includes this:

'Islamism is a reactionary ideology that kills equality, freedom and secularism wherever it is present Its victory can only lead to a world of injustice and domination: men over women, fundamentalism over others. . . .'

With these views, in three long essays, totalling 200 pages (if you include the massive footnotes), he discusses:

- * the distinctions between Islam, Islamism and jihadism
- * what Islamists have said and meant
- * what Bin Laden and other Islamist jihadist leaders have said and meant
- * what Al Qaeda and ISIS have done⁸
- * the responses in the West to Islamism and jihadist violence.

He shows in enormous detail that Islamism is a legitimate expression of Islam and jihadism a legitimate expression of Islamism. Islamism and jihad are not deviations from some 'true path': Islamic scripture justifies both. The violence

⁶ In an e-mail to me he wrote:

'I'd been studying medieval Islamic history for many, many years [when 9/11 happened], and was thus familiar with the sources for that history. As a matter of fact, one cannot understand Islamism and jihadism without being intimately familiar with a) Islamic theological and legal doctrines, and b) the earliest eras of Islamic history, which the Islamists (and most other Muslims) idealize and wish to revive. The Islamists, including the jihadists, are constantly citing passages from the Qur'an and Muhammad's own behavior (as recorded in the hadith collections and biographies of Muhammad) to justify everything they do.'

⁷ Vol II p. 285. I Googled 'anti-PC left' and got not a single hit (but got a few on DuckDuckGo).

⁸ He dismisses the 'inside job' theories of 9/11, discussing documentation from Bin Laden and others which shows they did it.

– the terror – Islamism has used in its pursuit of an Islamic world will continue so long as people believe ‘the book’. To deny this, thinks Bale, is failing to deal with reality. His discussion of liberal-PC apologists for Islam, in ‘Denying the link between Islamist ideology and jihadist terrorism’, is as devastating an intellectual assault as I have read.⁹ If you hadn’t been paying much attention to the Islamist threat – and I haven’t – these chapters will be a series of discomfoting revelations.

None of this is easy; you can’t whizz through Bale. It requires work and concentration and if, like me, your attention span has been diminished by the Net, it will be a slow read. But it’s worth the effort. Wonderful stuff. Check it out.

⁹ This chapter has 20 pages of text and 35 pages of footnotes.