

The Bush Family Saga - Airbrushed Out of History

By [William Bowles](#)

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Author's Note

This essay is an updated version of my original piece, '[Frauds-R-US](#)', written for 'Devastating Society', edited by Bernd Hamm, Pluto Press, 2005. Unfortunately, due to space restrictions, I had cut down the size of this essay for the book version. WB

INTRODUCTION

That a family with so many skeletons in its collective closet could have produced two presidents of the world's most powerful nation should have every last one of us wondering whether the world has gone completely mad. Perhaps it has. This may be the lesson we need to learn from the Bush Family Saga, that far from being an exception to the rule, it is the rule because they and the class and "race" they represent write the rules. Most important of all is the fact that the Bush family is not an aberration, but symbolic of the nature of US imperialism and how it came to be.

The cast is huge and the connections vast and complex. Essentially though, in tracking the rise of the Bush family, we track the rise of the American Empire. It is no wonder then that some subscribe to a conspiratorial view of American history, given all the connections. But it doesn't require a conspiracy to explain the enormous power that a handful of families have acquired, merely an understanding of how the ruling class maintains its power in the United States. One thing is clear; today's leaders are yesterday's gangsters and the descendants of the robber barons of turn-of-the-century America. And in a terrible irony of history, the wealth that built the dominant corporations of today's America was built with money made from the opium trade and, as we shall see, the opium trade was instrumental in connecting the grandfather of the current US president with the rich and powerful founders of US capitalism—a connection that not only persists to this day but one that has been extended into virtually every sector of US business.

Airbrushed out of history: Prescott Bush—The Nazi's American Banker



Prescott Bush

In April 1999, [the then] Texas Governor George W. Bush proclaimed a week of remembrance for the Holocaust. He said, “I urge Texans to never forget the inhumanity of those who perpetrated the Holocaust, and reflect upon our own humanity and our responsibility to respect all peoples.”

The ability to continually rewrite history is perhaps the greatest “triumph” of modern capitalism, although it would be more accurate to describe it as “airbrushing” out those events that belie how things came to be. And perhaps the greatest of these “triumphs” is the one performed on the Bush family (although by no means restricted to them), a family that has for the better part of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, with the able assistance of the corporate media, managed to hide its ignominious past from the public gaze.

In 1823 Samuel Russell founded Russell and Company in order to smuggle opium into China. Russell’s head of operations in Canton was Warren Delano Jr, grandfather of Franklin D. Roosevelt, a connection that was to play an important role in the Bush family fortunes, and indeed in the fortunes of the leading industrial corporations such as General Motors, Standard Oil and others, decades later.

Samuel Russell’s cousin, William Huntington Russell, founded an alumni association at Yale University in 1832, the Skull & Bones (S&B) alumni, which Prescott Bush, grandfather of the current president, was to join in 1917. Other members include founders of the leading corporations of the time, including Percy Rockefeller (1900) of Standard Oil; Averell Harriman (1913) of Brown Brothers, Harriman banking; Frederick Weyerhaeuser (1896), paper; three generations of Kelloggs; Alfred Vanderbilt (1899)—a veritable Who’s Who of corporate America. Other connected corporations whose founders or corporate bosses attended Yale and belonged to S&B include the founder of Dresser Industries (now part of the Halliburton empire), the Trust Bank of New York, and The Guarantee Bank. Other members of S&B over the past century and more include the key individuals who helped shape US foreign and domestic policy for the entire twentieth century: McGeorge, Hollister, and William Bundy (the Manhattan Project, the CIA, and the Vietnam war respectively); Archibald Coolidge, son of the founder of the United Fruit Company and co-founder of the Council on Foreign Relations; Henry Stimson, Hoover’s secretary of state and later secretary of war for both Presidents Roosevelt and Truman; Dean Acheson, chief architect of the Cold War doctrine—the list goes on. In the context of the Bush family, however, from the beginnings of modern corporate capitalism, financial and political links were

established between US and German corporations which were to play a central role in the development of international relations for the rest of the twentieth century.

Whilst at Yale, Prescott Bush formed strong friendships with several key people, including Samuel Pryor, owner of the Remington Arms company, and Averell Harriman, whose father, railroad baron E. H. Harriman, gave Averell an investment firm, W. A. Harriman and Company. E. H. hired George Herbert Walker, Prescott Bush's future father-in-law (after whom George Bush Sr is named) the job of running the firm. This set in motion a chain of events that was to continue for the next 90 years.

By 1922 Harriman & Co. was set to expand, and a branch was established in Berlin, where Herbert Walker met Fritz Thyssen, son of the owner of Thyssen and Company, August Thyssen, the main supplier of weapons to the German war machine. Following the crippling postwar settlement, Thyssen was in deep financial trouble. Seeing the writing on the wall, he took steps to protect the family fortune by establishing Bank voor Handel en Scheepvaart in Rotterdam, a bank that was later to play a significant role during and after WWII in protecting the Thyssen family fortunes—with Bush family help.

It has to be remembered that throughout this period German capitalism was “on the rocks,” with the German state under threat from a potential socialist revolution. At the end of the war, the country was effectively bankrupt, unemployment was rife, and there were workers' uprisings in Berlin and other cities which were brutally suppressed by the WWI “hero” General Erich Ludendorff, for which the Thyssens and other big capitalists were, of course, eternally grateful. It was through Ludendorff that the Thyssens met Adolf Hitler, who was, according to Ludendorff, “the only man who has any political sense.” Fritz Thyssen eventually met Hitler, and the Thyssens, along with other leading industrialists, funded the nascent Nazi Party with its anti-union, anti-communist agenda. However, the party's failed 1923 coup de tat resulted in Hitler's imprisonment and (temporary) “fall from grace” with big German capital.

Meanwhile, the meeting between Averell Harriman and Fritz Thyssen resulted in the creation of a US banking operation, jointly owned by Harriman & Co. and the Thyssen family. Set up in 1924, the Union Banking Company (UBC) cemented the economic—and later political—relationship between German and US capital. Occupying the same building as Harriman & Co. at 39 Broadway in New York City, UBC was to become the pivotal connection that led to the relationship between the Bush family and the Nazi Party. It also became the “model” for the relationship that was to emerge in the 1930s between big business under Nazi rule and the mainly pro-Fascist (and anti-Semitic) leaders of the major US corporations.

By the mid-to late 1920s, with the threat of a socialist revolution receding and an economic recovery underway, there were rich pickings to be had by investors, including US businesses, and from which Herbert Walker and Averell Harriman did very well, generating an estimated \$50 million for its investors. In 1926 the Thyssen company joined forces with another major industrial family, the Flicks, and formed the United Steel Works (USW). The Flick industrial empire also owned coal and steelworks in Poland. Via the UBC connection, the USW combine brought Herbert Walker on board to manage the new enterprise, and he in turn brought in Prescott Bush to supervise the Thyssen/Flick Polish operations (the Consolidated Silesian Steel Corporation and the Upper Silesian Coal and Steel Company). These two corporations between them owned the bulk of Polish steel and coal production which was to play such a crucial role in the Nazi military machine as well as in the use of slave labor through the Auschwitz concentration camp which was located near the UBC and

USW plants.²

In 1928, the Nazi Party, strapped for cash and badly in need of funds, approached Fritz Thyssen once again for support, support that Thyssen gave through Bank voor Handel en Scheepvaart, estimated to be around \$2 million at today's prices, and in any case enough to finance the purchase and renovation of Hitler's new headquarters, Barlow Palace in Munich.

The 1929 Wall St Crash badly affected the Harriman banking operation and in 1930 Harriman Banking merged with the British bank Brown/Shipley and became Brown Brothers/Shipley. Harriman and Prescott Bush established a new operation, Harriman 15 Corporation, and it was through this new holding company that Prescott Bush came to own stock in USW through its shareholding in Consolidated Silesian Steel Company, with-two thirds owned by Friedrich Flick and the rest by Harriman 15 Corp.

The business/political links established at this time were to last through to the post-WWII period and included not only the UBC/USW connection but also the "commanding" heights of US capital, which embraced Standard Oil, General Motors, the Ford Motor Company, IBM, Alcoa, DuPont, and ITT. All had economic and political relations with German capital, including cross-ownership of industrial plants, not only in Germany but also in what was to become occupied Europe. Indeed, the last thing US capitalism wanted was for the war "to get in the way of doing business," something that has persisted to this day.

The relationship that perhaps best illustrates the connections between US and German capital and the Bush family's hidden role is that of the Consolidated Silesian Steel Corporation and the Upper Silesian Coal and Steel Company and the establishment of the Auschwitz concentration camp close by the coal plants. This was no accident as they were able to draw on a constant supply of slave labor.

Following Hitler's conquest of Europe, Consolidated Silesian Steel was sold outright to Union Banking Corporation and became the Silesian American Corporation managed by Prescott Bush. Its plants continued to supply the Nazi war machine. It was not until 1942 that the US government took action against Union Banking, but Prescott Bush was never prosecuted for "trading with the enemy":

On October 20, 1942, the US Alien Property Custodian, under the Trading With the Enemy Act, seized the shares of the Union Banking Corporation (UBC), of which Prescott Bush was a director and shareholder. The largest shareholder was E. Roland Harriman. (Bush was also the managing partner of Brown Brothers Harriman, a leading Wall Street investment firm.)

Among the companies financed was the Silesian-American Corporation, which was also managed by Prescott Bush, and by his father-in-law George Herbert Walker, who supplied Dub-a-Ya with his name. The company was vital in supplying coal to the Nazi war industry. It too was seized as a Nazi-front on November 17, 1942. The largest company Bush's UBC helped finance was the German Steel Trust, responsible for between one-third and one-half of Nazi iron and explosives.³

What is important to note here is that the Bush/Harriman/Nazi connection was by no means exceptional; the same holds for most of the top US corporations of the period of which the following examples are typical:

Just after the war erupted in Europe, Standard Oil [now Exxon] sent Frank Howard, a vice-

president, to meet Fritz Ringer, a representative of I. G. Farben, at The Hague on September 22, 1939. The two men drew up an agreement, known as the Hague Memorandum, that specified they would remain in business together “whether or not the United States came into the war.”⁴

And what held true for Standard Oil also held for the Ford Motor Company:

[Hermann] Goering assured a director of the German Ford subsidiary, Carl Krauch (also with I. G. Farben), that, “I shall see to it that the German Ford Company will not be incorporated into in the Hermann Goering Company ... Thus, we succeeded in keeping the Ford Works working and operating independently of our [the German] government’s seizure.”⁵

Goering also assured General Motor’s president, William Knudsen, in 1933 that “there would be no German annexation of GM’s operations in Germany.”⁶ By the mid-1930s, General Motors were committed to full-scale production of trucks, armored cars, and tanks in Nazi Germany.

Nazi tanks and bombs “settled” this dispute in September, 1939 with the invasion of Poland, beginning World War II. The Nazi army had been equipped by Flick, Harriman, Walker and Bush, with materials essentially stolen from Poland.⁷

Comparable arrangements were made between ITT, DuPont, IBM, and Alcoa and their German subsidiaries which continued to manufacture products and materials vital to the German war machine. In some instances, the supply of critical *materiel* continued throughout the war, including strategic aircraft lubricants to the Japanese and aluminum to the Germans. None of the leaders of these giant US corporations was ever prosecuted for his role in supplying the German and Japanese war effort. John Loftus, former US Department of Justice Nazi War Crimes prosecutor, had this to say about Prescott Bush and his relationship to the Nazis:

From 1945 until 1949, one of the lengthiest and, it now appears, most futile interrogations of a Nazi war crimes suspect began in the American Zone of Occupied Germany... [The interrogation of] [m]ultibillionaire steel magnate Fritz Thyssen—the man whose steel combine was the cold heart of the Nazi war machine.

They were trying to find out what had happened to Thyssen’s billions but without success. Why?

What the Allied investigators never understood was that they were not asking Thyssen the right question. Thyssen did not need any foreign bank accounts because his family secretly owned an entire chain of banks. He did not have to transfer his Nazi assets at the end of World War II, all he had to do was transfer the ownership documents—stocks, bonds, deeds and trusts—from his bank in Berlin through his bank in Holland to his American friends in New York City, Prescott Bush and Herbert Walker. Thyssen’s partners in crime were the father and father-in-law of a future President of the United States. ...

The British and American interrogators may have gravely underestimated Thyssen but they nonetheless knew they were being lied to. Their suspicions focused on one Dutch Bank in particular, the Bank voor Handel en Scheepvaart, in Rotterdam.

If the investigators realized that the US intelligence chief in postwar Germany, Allen Dulles, was also the Rotterdam bank’s lawyer, they might have asked some very interesting

questions. They did not know that Thyssen was Dulles' client as well. Nor did they ever realize that it was Allen Dulles' other client, Baron Kurt von Schroeder, who was the Nazi trustee for the Thyssen companies which now claimed to be owned by the Dutch. The Rotterdam Bank was at the heart of Dulles' cloaking scheme, and he guarded its secrets jealously. ...

The enormous sums of money deposited into the Union Bank prior to 1942 are the best evidence that Prescott Bush knowingly served as a money launderer for the Nazis. Remember that Union Bank's books and accounts were frozen by the US Alien Property Custodian in 1942 and not released back to the Bush family until 1951. At that time, Union Bank shares representing hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of industrial stocks and bonds were unblocked for distribution. Did the Bush family really believe that such enormous sums came from Dutch enterprises? One could sell tulip bulbs and wooden shoes for centuries and not achieve those sums. A fortune this size could only have come from the Thyssen profits made from rearming the Third Reich, and then hidden, first from the Nazi tax auditors, and then from the Allies.⁸

The money, about \$1.5 million made from the proceeds of Thyssen's laundered Nazi fortunes, was handed out to Prescott Bush's family, effectively setting them up in business.⁹ But most important of all, it was the political and economic connections that they inherited from Prescott, connections that have enabled the Bush family to evolve into a veritable dynasty, a dynasty based on oil and its Middle Eastern/Iranian connections, the "intelligence community" that has its origins in the Vietnam war that extended into the illegal operations conducted by the CIA, including smuggling heroin from the "Golden Triangle," through to the "guns for drugs" operations that were at the core of the Iran-Contra operations and the US' illegal "low-intensity war" it conducted against the Sandinista government of Nicaragua.

The history of the Bush family illustrates something very profound about the nature of capitalism—its opportunistic character hidden beneath the guise of patriotism, democracy, or whatever label is suitable to the occasion. Prescott Bush's links to German Fascism have been mirrored in the post-WWII period by successive US governments and their relationships with dictatorships that, on the one hand, the US government was instrumental in bringing to power and, on the other, by the public pronouncements made about the nature of these dictatorships, most often justified by the "war against communism." A double standard operated throughout these relationships, whether it was with the Shah of Iran, or the innumerable dictatorships of Central and South America, Africa, and the Middle and Far East. George Bush Sr, son of Prescott Bush, personified this relationship as does his son George W. Bush. George Bush Sr was head of the CIA and George Bush Jr had close connections with the Agency. Under their tutelage, the CIA has engaged in the overthrow of governments deemed hostile to US interests and in the furtherance of US strategic interests. The CIA and other organs of the US state have formed relationships with organized crime that involved money laundering, assassinations, and international smuggling operations too numerous to mention here.

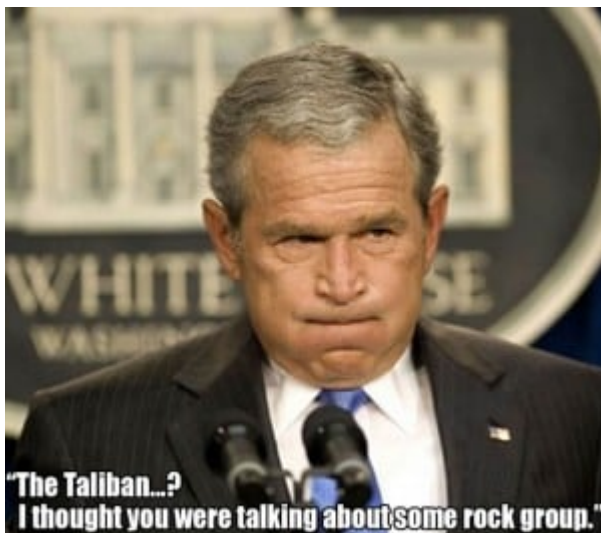
THE POSTWAR PERIOD

Prescott Bush's Nazi-based fortunes enabled him to set up George Bush Sr in business—the oil business of course—and it's through these connections in Texas and Oklahoma that George Sr continued along the same trajectory as his father. And once more, the network of connections built over the preceding decades kicked in. One of them was Ray Kravis, who

arrived in Texas in 1925 and quickly amassed a fortune made from oil. Kravis also managed the Kennedy family fortunes (made from bootlegging). Prescott lined up a job for George Sr and as a back-up, asked another connection, Henry Neil Mallon, who was president and chairman of the Board of Dresser Industries (now owned by Halliburton), manufacturer of oil well drilling equipment. Dresser had been incorporated in 1905 by Solomon R. Dresser, but had been bought up and reorganized by W. A. Harriman & Company in 1928-29. George Sr however, turned down Kravis's 'offer' and went to work for Dresser in Cleveland, Ohio.

Whilst working for Dresser, George Sr met John Overbey, what they call a "landman," someone who identifies potential oil sites and hopefully leases the plot for a pittance and in return for a fee, sells the lease to an oil company, or for a royalty arrangement on any oil discovered. Bush Sr and Overbey established Bush-Overbey and through George's connections the money poured in. By 1953 almost \$2 million (a considerable part of which coming from Bush's British connections, including \$500,000 from the then director of the Bank of England¹⁰) had been invested and the company changed its name to Zapata Petroleum. Although the company never made a vast fortune, and for some years reported a loss, the value of Bush's shares rose. In 1954, again utilizing Prescott Bush's connection as a US Senator, Bush and his partners formed Zapata offshore to exploit the newly released offshore mineral rights. Zapata was never a money-making concern, but nevertheless Bush was able to roll over debts and line up more credit. The speculation is that Zapata was a "cover" for US intelligence operations and, given the geographical location of its operations (the Gulf of Mexico and its Cuban connections), and the fact that the company made little or no money, it could still get millions invested into its operations.

BUSH JUNIOR AND BUSH SENIOR—THE CIA YEARS



The current Bush administration is the culmination of a process that has its origins in the post-WWII period and the rise of the Cold War. It also represents the central importance of oil and the related military-industrial complex which, as we have seen, has its roots in the US-German industrial axis formed during the early years of the twentieth century. It is therefore no accident that George Bush Sr was made director of the CIA under the Reagan administration, for he brought with him a range of connections that made him indispensable to Reagan's foreign policy.

The Bush's business network also has connections to the government and the two are interchangeable. From the days of Prescott Bush through to the current president, corporations, private institutions, and government departments have evolved into a network: banking, transportation, oil, weapons, communications, "think tanks," the

Department of Defense, the State Department, the White House, the CIA. What is important is the intimate link between business and government, something that goes back to the foundations of modern US capitalism.

To take just one example, Prescott-Harriman-G. W. H. Bush and George Jr, the connections made in the 1930s between Dresser Industries and the Harriman Bank that carried on through Dresser's connections to the "Five Sisters" (the fifth largest oil companies) and in turn to companies that were later to play a central role in carrying out the Bush doctrine, in which Halliburton and Carlyle were so important. Bush Sr and Bush Jr both had oil companies and not particularly successful ones at that, but what was important were their government connections which enabled them to carry through their policies. In turn, Halliburton bought Dresser, which had already changed hands.

In turn this led to the manner in which private business was greased by oil as the US brokered a deal with the Saudis which gave them military access to the Gulf and Halliburton got \$1 billion deal to build Saudi's military and Bush's friends in the oil business did deals with the sheikhs.¹¹

It might be said that the Bush presidencies are the culmination of a process that has been a century in the making. For in one way or another, *there's not a single US president in the twentieth century whom the Bush family has not had a direct connection to through one or more relationships.*

The better known associates of the Bush family are those in government, but as presidencies have come and gone, a core group has either remained in the Federal government or moved out into those areas of the corporate world to which they were the closest, then often returning to government, bringing with them even more connections. The process, of course, has been accelerated and transformed by all the mergers and acquisitions that have taken place over the past 20 years. It's why a single company like Halliburton can end up playing such a crucial role in government policy and illustrates what happens to the state when it effectively gets privatized and falls into the hands of a few corporations, ideologues, and vested interests like the military establishment.

Halliburton is actually a collection of already giant corporations that straddle the economic-political bridge and includes oil, its extraction, transport and distribution; and privatized defense, which includes servicing the armed forces, supplies, mercenary forces, training, logistics, communications, and so forth. It has close connections to Carlyle, which is no more than an investment banking concern that "does business" in all the places that Halliburton, Boeing, Grumman et al. do. They all sup at the same table—on government contracts.

Collectively, all shared links in the Middle East either through oil (Saudi Arabia) or the CIA in Iran, starting in the 1950s with the overthrow of Mohammed Mossadegh and the installation of the Reza Pahlani as the Shah, which in turn came down to oil and the Cold War:

Taking the CIA helm in January 1976, Bush cemented strong relations with the intelligence services of both Saudi Arabia and the Shah of Iran. He worked closely with Kamal Adham, the head of Saudi intelligence, brother-in-law of King Faisal and an early BCCI insider.¹²

BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

The Savings and Loans scandal

In trying to document the innumerable illegal dealings of the various members of the Bush family it's all too easy to provide a simple "list," but what becomes apparent after even the most perfunctory investigation is a network of relationships that unites the past 40 or so years of Bush family involvement in a series of events, with each piece in the jigsaw linked by one thing: US foreign and domestic policy and business interests. To quote Gary W. Potter of Eastern Kentucky University:

To some, the savings and loan (S&L) scandal of the 1980s is "the greatest ... scandal in U.S. history" (Thomas, 1991: 30). To others, it is the single greatest case of fraud in the history of crime (Seattle Times, June 11, 1991). Some see it as the natural result of the ethos of greed promulgated by the Reagan administration (Simon and Eitzen, 1993: 50). To others, it was a conspiracy to move covert funds out of the country for the CIA (Bainerman, 1992: 275).

S&Ls were living, breathing organisms that fused criminal corporations, organized crime and the CIA into a single entity that served the interests of America's political and economic elite.¹³

A number of S&Ls including First National Bank, Palmer National Bank, Indian Springs Bank, Vision Banc Savings, Sunshine State Bank, were used to funnel money as part of the illegal funding of the Nicaraguan Contras, funding that was paid for through the sale of cocaine and involved the CIA "asset" Manuel Noriega, former strongman of Panama, now languishing in solitary confinement in a US federal prison, and the Colombian drug cartels.¹⁴ Jeb Bush, second son of George Bush Sr, was the one of the connections to Miami Contras and right-wing anti-Castro Cuban-Americans. In the mid-1980s, he took contributions to the Miami Republican Party from Leonel Martinez who was arrested in 1989 and later convicted of bringing 300 kilos of cocaine into the U.S.

Jeb was also connected to the drug money laundering scandal of the CIA-linked the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, in 1986–1987.

In the mid-1980s, Jeb worked for businessman Miguel Recarey, Jr. whose mafia links went back 20 years. During the 1980s, Recarey is thought to have embezzled \$100 million from Medicare through his Miami-based company, International Medical Centers, which also treated wounded Contras at its Florida hospital.

When the Bush administration bailed out Broward Federal S & L in 1988, for \$285 million in bad loans, Jeb and partner Armando Cordina (leader of the right-wing Cuban American Foundation) didn't have to repay their \$ 4.1 million loan.

Jeb successfully lobbied Dad in 1990 for the release from jail of Orlando Bosch, who fired a bazooka at a Polish freighter in the Miami harbour in 1968 and master-minded the explosion of a Cuban airliner killing 73 people over Barbados in 1976.¹⁵

And so, too, with Neil Bush, third son of George Bush Sr:

Between 1985 and 1988, Neil was also a director of Silverado Banking Savings and Loan in Denver, Colorado. Silverado lent over \$200 million to Good and Walters. Neil did not disclose his connections to Good and Walters, when—as a Silverado director—he voted to grant them

the loan. Good raised Bush's JNB salary from \$75,000 to \$125,000 and gave him a \$22,500 bonus. In total, Bush received \$550,000 in salaries from Walters and Good. Neil also received a \$100,000 loan from Good that was later forgiven.

In 1990, Federal regulators filed a \$200-million lawsuit against Neil and other officers of Silverado Banking. Regulators determined that Neil was completely dependent on Good and Walters for his income. An expert hired by regulators said Neil suffered from an "ethical disability."

In 1990, Neil was reprimanded by the U.S. Office of Thrift Supervision for "multiple conflicts of interest" and ordered to pay \$50,000. Neil's \$250,000 legal bill was paid by a legal defense fund formed by Thomas Ashley, a friend of Neil's father.¹⁶

Ignite!

This may be small fry by comparison with all the other Bush clan scams, but nevertheless Ignite! Learning has made Neil Bush \$20 million over the past three years, largely through a con

tract with Florida State Education Authority, where his brother Jeb is governor.¹⁷ Not bad for a guy who ran Silverado S&L into the ground. With accusations of nepotism flying around, especially now that Neil is trying to get the Florida school system to buy into his learning software (at \$30 a pop per student per year), it's no wonder. Connected is the wholesale privatization of state services, which opens such areas as education to the predations of people like Neil Bush and indeed, the whole issue of influence peddling and nepotism.

Yet the S&L scandal, which cost the US taxpayer an estimated \$3 trillion, was merely one facet of an international network needed to move vast sums of money around the world and involved the biggest crash in banking history, the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI), which is still the object of legal actions. BCCI was the de facto CIA bank for laundering the billions of dollars needed to mount its international operations.

The Bank of Credit and Commerce International

The mosaic of BCCI connections surrounding Harken Energy may prove nothing more than how ubiquitous the rogue bank's ties were ... But the number of BCCI-connected people who had dealings with Harken—all since George W. Bush came on board—likewise raises the question of whether they mask an effort to cozy up to a presidential son.¹⁸



George Bush Sr's position as head of the CIA under Reagan

and his connections to oil, the anti-Castro Cubans, the Nicaraguan Contras and the Iran hostage crisis of 1979 had a common element: BCCI. BCCI was the bank of choice for the CIA and the innumerable “proprietary” companies that the CIA operated which included airlines (e.g. Air America) and an unknown number of front companies utilized for illegal arms deals, spying, and mercenary operations spanning the planet, but that have their genesis in the Vietnam war where, following the defeat of the French at the hands of the Viet Minh, found the US, via the CIA, taking over the drug smuggling operations initiated by the French intelligence services.¹⁹

The BCCI saga is still on-going. Suffice it to say that aside from illegal money-laundering deals that revolved around drugs for guns, the other major use of BCCI (as well as the Nugan Hand and Banco Nazionale Del Lavoro (BNL) or the Vatican Bank, both of which were also used for moving CIA and drug money) was the financing of a variety of illegal operations that required “plausible deniability” on the part of the US government.

The BCCI-Bush connection is, it could be argued, an “accidental” one, but it’s highly unlikely even if it is difficult to track. Nevertheless the seeds are all there, including George Sr’s CIA connection (as head of it) in the 1970s and the links to BCCI as well as his long association with James R. Bath, an investor in Arbusto. Bath, a Houston businessman and old friend, was also an investor in BCCI (and on the board of BCCI). BCCI was a convenient “channel” for moving money to fund the various illegal enterprises being undertaken at the time, including Iran/Contra, the Iranian arms sales, CIA money-laundering operations, connections to powerful Middle Eastern businessmen, the Vatican and its right-wing connections through BNL:

BCCI defrauded depositors of \$10 billion in the ’80s in what has been called the “largest bank fraud in world financial history” by former Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau.²⁰

Perhaps this extract from Texas Connections gives you an idea of the reach:

Sheikh Abdullah Bahksh of Saudi Arabia, a 16% shareholder in Harken Energy at the time, was represented by a Palestinian-born Chicago investor named Talat Othman, who served with George W. Bush on the board of Harken Energy. Othman made at least three separate visits to the White House to discuss Middle East affairs with then President George Bush. At about the same time, and just prior to the Gulf War, Harken Energy, with no previous international or offshore drilling experience, was awarded a 35-year petroleum exploration contract with the emirate of Bahrain.

Sheikh Bahksh emerged as a co-investor in the Bank of Commerce and Credit International (BCCI), a criminal enterprise since dissolved, that existed primarily as a mechanism for obtaining political influence using Middle Eastern oil money. Bahrain’s prime minister, Sheikh Khalifah bin-Sulman al-Khalifah, was a major investor in BCCI’s parent company, BCCI Holdings, of Luxembourg. Through its commodities affiliate, Capcom, BCCI was used as a money laundering service by drug traffickers, arms dealers, etc. BCCI’s front man in the U.S., and the person chiefly responsible for its takeover of First American Bank in the U.S., was Kamal Adham. Adham is referred to in the Kerry Committee report on BCCI as having been “the CIA’s principal liaison for the entire Middle East from the mid-1960’s through 1979.” He was also the head of intelligence for Saudi Arabia during the time George Bush Sr. was Director of the CIA.²¹

Arbusto Oil, the Carlyle Group and the bin Laden Connection

Oh what a tangled web we weave. Salem bin Laden, one of 57 children their father Mohammed sired with his twelve wives, and Bush were founders of the Arbusto Energy oil company in Texas. Salem bin Laden— like his father—died in a plane crash but not before the Arbusto Energy Oil Company, founded in 1978, had become hugely successful. Later, Spectrum 7 Corp bought out Arbusto (now called Bush Exploration Co.). In 1986, with the company on the verge of bankruptcy, it was purchased by Harken, and even though Bush Exploration Co. had debts of \$3 million, Harken paid Bush \$2 million for his stock.

Time magazine described Bath in 1991 as “a deal broker whose alleged associations run from the CIA to a major shareholder and director of the Bank of Credit & Commerce.” BCCI, as it was more commonly known, closed its doors in July 1991 amid charges of multi-billion dollar fraud and global news reports that the financial institution had been heavily involved in drug money laundering, arms brokering, covert intelligence work, bribery of government officials and—here’s the kicker—aid to terrorists.²²

There are so many connections between the Bushes, the “defense” establishment and the global trade in arms that the mind boggles. That it barely gets a mention in the mainstream media (except, of course, occasionally simply to “report” it) is a scandal of the grandest proportions. But it only goes to show the power of big business and the political class they have installed in both the US and the UK (after all, John Major former British prime minister is employed by the Carlyle Group, and BAE Systems, the major arms supplier to the UK, is part- owned by Carlyle). Not only do the connections beggar belief, but the sheer hypocrisy of the Bush government should put it in a new category in the *Guinness Book of Records*. The Bush family tentacles extend to many of the armed conflicts going on in the world. There’s no business like war business!

THE CARLYLE GROUP AND GOVERNMENT: A REVOLVING DOOR RELATIONSHIP

On the morning of September 11, 2001, Frank Carlucci (Reagan’s secretary of defense), former secretary of state James Baker III, and representatives of the bin Laden family were attending a board meeting of the Carlyle Group at the Ritz-Carlton in Washington, DC.

The Carlyle Group is a private equity corporation with some \$12–14 billion in assets. Aside from being the nation’s eleventh largest defense contractor and a force in global telecommunications, it has investors in major banks and insurance companies, billion-dollar pension funds and wealthy investors from Abu Dhabi to Singapore. It also owns health care companies, real estate, internet companies, a bottling company, and *Le Figaro*, the French newspaper. There are five central players in the “revolving door” between business and government: George Bush Sr and George Jr, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, James Baker III, Vice President Dick Cheney and Frank Carlucci:

“Carlyle is as deeply wired into the current administration as they can possibly be,” said Charles Lewis, executive director of the Center for Public Integrity, a nonprofit public interest group based in Washington. “George Bush is getting money from private interests that have business before the government, while his son is president. And, in a really peculiar way, George W. Bush could, some day, benefit financially from his own administration’s decisions, through his father’s investments. The average American doesn’t

know that and, to me, that's a jaw-dropper."²³

The Bush-Carlyle connection also has less well-known links that are connected directly to the current „war on terror“, including major investments in South Korea, which include KorAm Bank and telecommunication's company Mercury.

But it is the bin Laden-Saudi connection that attracts the most interest. A Carlyle-owned company trains the Saudi Arabian National Guard. Carlyle also advises the Saudi royal family on the Economic Offset Program, designed to encourage foreign investment in Saudi Arabia. And after the 9/11 attacks, reports surfaced of Carlyle's involvement with the Saudi bin Laden Group, the \$5 billion construction business run by Osama's half-brother, Bakr. The bin Laden family invested \$2 million in the Carlyle Partners II fund, which includes in its portfolio United Defense and other defense and aerospace companies. Following 9/11, the bin Laden Group purportedly severed its connection with Carlyle, but Carlyle continues to maintain its many and diverse business relationships with Saudi Arabia.

Corporations such as Carlyle have really come into their own with the wholesale privatization of government under Bush Jr based on the connections that extend back to the 1980s and earlier, of which Carlyle is the best known but by no means the only result of two decades of "neoliberal" economic policy. Carlyle personifies the symbiotic relationship between politics and business with the Bush family as well as the connection with those in the various branches of government who decide on policy and who are also connected to the Bushes. These include Richard Perle, the "Prince of Darkness," who in turn, sits on the boards of major corporations, including Hollinger International, the giant media corporation. Perle, one of a handful of influential "neo-con advisors" to the current Bush administration with strong connections to the Israeli right wing, is yet another facet of Bush's Middle East strategy.

Enron connection

The Bush-Enron connection started in 1988 when George Bush Jr first met Kenneth Lay, former chairman of Enron. Bush Jr lobbied the Argentine government on behalf of Enron for a multi-million dollar gas pipeline deal, which had already been rejected by the government of Raul Alfonsin. The pipeline was approved by the succeeding administration of President Carlos Saul Menem, leader of the Peronist Party and a friend of President Bush Sr:

George W. was an active player in his father's 1988 election campaign, which was also heavily funded by Lay, Enron and Enron executives. George H. W. Bush's campaign finance chairman Robert Mosbacher, who worked intimately with the younger Bush, became an Enron board member in December 1987, more than a year before the elder Bush became president and eight years before W. made Lay's acquaintance.²⁴

Enron was Bush Jr's single biggest campaign contributor, with over three-quarters of a million dollars over an eight-year period including donations for Bush Jr's campaign for the Texas governorship. Moreover, over half of Bush's major campaign contributors had links to Enron, including Morgan-Stanley (banking and originally a Prescott Bush connection, though then known by another name). Other companies are Anderson Consulting, Credit Suisse, First Boston, Citigroup's Salomon Smith Barney, and Bank of America.²⁵

Neil Bush also performed services on behalf of Enron, in his case in Kuwait. In 2002 when the Enron bubble burst, the Bush administration claimed that it did nothing to assist the

company but the facts belie this:

[Bush's] Treasury Secretary O'Neill was aware of Enron's impending collapse and did nothing to warn or protect the stockholders. A man so intimate with Wall Street, and with Kenneth Lay, could not have missed the disparity between Enron's stock value and the dire financial news he was getting from Enron's chairman. Rather than perform the duties of his office and step in to protect the thousands of Americans who would lose their life savings within the capital market that deserved and expected his guidance, O'Neill chose only to inform Mr. Bush and then remain silent. This was a dire breach of the clearly stated requirements of his position, one that cost a lot of people a lot of money.²⁶

Moreover, the Bush administration did everything in its power to stave off the impending collapse, with Bush personally intervening to stop caps on the soaring price of electricity in California (brought about by Enron's manipulation of the supply of electricity). In addition, Bush granted Kenneth Lay broad influence over the administration's energy policies, including the choice of key regulators to oversee Enron's businesses.²⁷

Enron and Bush personify the era of "funny money," that is, profits based on currency speculation, asset-swapping, buy-outs, the "dot com" boom (and subsequent bust) of course and, most importantly, the drive to deregulate the energy industry, once more highlighting the symbiosis between business and government policies—policies that guaranteed billions of dollars in profits at the expense of the public in what amounts to grand larceny and which has left the US with the biggest national debt in its history and many of the states on the verge of bankruptcy.

International Medical Centers: The Jeb Bush connection

Miguel Recarey's International Medical Centers

International Medical Centers faced pressure in 1985 to comply with the "50-50" rule, which prohibits certain HMOs from having more than half of its customers on Medicare. According to Recarey, the middle son of then-Vice President Bush called Health and Human Services Secretary Margaret Heckler (meanwhile, IMC paid Bush's company a \$75,000 "real-estate consultant" fee). Former HHS [Health & Human Services] chief of staff McClain Haddow says Bush's call gave IMC a waiver to the 50-50 rule, and Recarey allegedly bilked \$200 million in Medicare funds while leaving 150,000 seniors without coverage. Jeb Bush, the GOP loser in Florida's 1994 governor's race, denies calling Heckler.²⁸

This is a murky story with connections to the Nicaraguan Contras, the Mafia, Cuban-American terrorists, Iran/Contra, bribery and corruption, cover-ups, and the CIA. Essentially, IMC was contracted to give medical assistance to the Nicaraguan Contras, but the story is in fact a lot more complex and gives you some idea of just how interconnected events really are when you're dealing with the Bush clan:

- Cuban exile Miguel Recarey, who ... earlier assisted the CIA in attempts to assassinate President Castro.
- Recarey ... employed Jeb Bush as a real estate consultant and paid him a \$75,000 fee for finding the company a new location, although the move never took place, which raised questions at the time. Jeb Bush did, however, lobby the Reagan/Bush administration vigorously and successfully on behalf of Recarey and IMC. "I want to be very wealthy," Jeb Bush told the *Miami News* when questioned during that period.

In 1985, Jeb Bush acted as a conduit on behalf of supporters of the Nicaraguan contras with his father, then the vice-president, and helped arrange for IMC to provide free medical treatment for the contras.

Recarey was later charged with massive Medicare fraud but fled the US before his trial and is now a fugitive.

Most controversially, at the request of Jeb, Mr Bush Sr intervened to release the convicted Cuban terrorist Orlando Bosch from prison and then granted him US residency.

According to the Justice Department in George Bush Sr's administration, Bosch had participated in more than 30 terrorist acts. He was convicted of firing a rocket into a Polish ship which was on passage to Cuba. He was also implicated in the 1976 blowing-up of a Cubana plane flying to Havana from Venezuela in which all 73 civilians on board were killed.²⁹

The Bush-Cuban connection is central to an understanding of the later involvement with the Nicaraguan Contras, for both involved organized crime and the use of mercenary armies. In Cuba it was the protection of gambling and prostitution (in the pre-Castro days), and with the Contras it was the drugs that paid for the illegal supply of weapons to the Nicaraguan Contras.³⁰ Both connections proved useful, the first in the attempts to overthrow the Castro government, the second, to remove the Sandinistas. In both instances, it meant breaking the law in order to pursue a foreign policy. The IMC proved to be a useful front, one of many used by the CIA.

In Florida, Jeb Bush (then head of the Dade County Republican Party) operated as the Republican administration's unofficial link with Cuban exiles, the Contras and Nicaraguan exiles in Miami. During this period, Jeb also aligned with Leonel Martinez, a Miami-based, right-wing Cuban-American drug trafficker associated with Contra dissident Eden Pastora (who was later assassinated by an alleged CIA operative based in Costa Rica). Jeb forged business ties with Contra supporter Miguel Recarey, a right-wing Cuban and major contributor to PACs controlled by then Vice President George Bush Sr.³¹

The network extends in many directions, but with the Bush family at the center of the web. The common links are: the CIA, drugs, anti-Castro Cubans, money-laundering operations, gun-running and a plethora of "front" organizations, many of which are still in operation today but now operating in the "war on terror."

MARVIN BUSH AND THE KUWAITI CONNECTION

Marvin P. Bush, brother of President Bush Jr, is the founder (1993) and managing partner of a private investment company, Winston Partners Group of Vienna, Virginia. He is also the managing general partner of Winston Growth Fund, LLP, Winston International Growth Fund, LP, and Winston Small Cap Growth Fund, LP—all related companies.

Before this, he spent twelve years in the investment business with the firms of Mosley, Hallgarten, Estabrook and Weeden, Shearson Lehman Brothers, and John Stewart Darrel & Company.

In January 1998, Marvin was appointed to the Board of Directors of the Fresh Del Monte Produce company, the giant fruit company that makes the canned goods we buy in our

supermarkets. Del Monte is owned by a very wealthy family from Kuwait, the Abu-Ghazaleh family. Mohammed Abu-Ghazaleh is the CEO and he has several family members on the Board alongside Marvin. Another member of the Fresh Del Monte Board of Directors is Stephen Way, a major Bush fundraiser. Way is the head of the Houston-based HCC Insurance Holdings Company. In early 2000, Way arranged the appointment of Marvin Bush to the Board of Directors of HCC. In that transaction, Marvin secured not only a very large salary, but also a sweet stock option deal.³²

HCC was one of the insurers of the World Trade Center and the major investor in HCC is Kuam Corporation. Marvin was also named to the Board of Directors of the Stratesec Company, another large, publicly traded firm that handled security for the World Trade Center. Virginia-based Stratesec is a provider of high-tech security systems. Two of the other major customers for which they provide security are Dulles International Airport in Washington, DC and the Los Alamos

National Laboratory. Stratesec's revenues recently went up by 60 per cent, due to what the company describes as "new customers." Prominent people at Stratesec include former Reagan operatives Barry McDaniel and General James A. Abrahamson (who was involved in the Reagan Star Wars project). Stratesec is a company heavily interrelated with the Kuam Corporation ("Kuw" = Kuwait; "am" = America; Kuam is a major Kuwaiti company involved in many activities, including the aircraft business; and it also owns Fresh del Monte). Stratesec's chief executive is also the managing director of Kuam Corporation and Kuam's chairman, Mishal Yousef Saud Al Sabah, sits on Stratesec's Board of Directors.

What is apparent from this tangle of relationships is the sheer scale of the Bush family business connections; perhaps even more revealing is the fact that they have taken almost a century to "mature" to the point where they now constitute a mafia of global proportions, which sits at the center of power, aided by the increasing concentration of ownership of key sectors of the global economy with which the Bushes have direct and indirect connections. These connections have become all too apparent as the "War on Terror" has replaced the "Red Menace" as the central rationale for US capitalism's strategy, personified in the curtailing of civil liberties and the construction of a global security state, all under the guise of the 'war on terror.'

GEORGE BUSH AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE GLOBAL SECURITY STATE

George Bush Sr as Ronald Reagan's vice president presided over the culmination of the decades-long war on communism, whose apogee was its support of those fighting the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. It is here that we find the political and business connections of the Bush clan coming into their own. It is also here that we find all the connections with oil, weapons, the media, covert operations, and the ultra right-wing Reagan players finding a voice for a program three decades in the making.

9/11 was the pivot, and here once more the Bush clan, aided by the 'neo-con' cabal now firmly ensconced at the center of power, had all the right weapons at its disposal, best expressed through H.R. 3162, or The Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act, or USA Patriot. And yet again, Bush's corporate connections were instrumental in the making of this key piece of legislation, for through it, the political elite were able to consolidate their grip on power and call upon the corporate forces needed to implement the construction of Mussolini's vision of

a corporate state; anti-union, anti-working class and, above all, where the interests of the corporation are installed at the center of political power through the privatization of the public sphere.

The state now has all the weapons it needs to suppress domestic dissent and the necessary corporate connections to carry it out.

ChoicePoint

ChoicePoint was the firm that Katherine Harris, Florida's Secretary of State during the 2000 elections, paid to erase 57,000 names from the voter rolls which made the difference between a Bush and a Gore presidency.³³

ChoicePoint is a database company with prominent Republicans on its board and payroll, and it now offers up over 20 billion pieces of information on American citizens to law enforcement and intelligence agencies. Since passage of the USA Patriot Act, the feds can access all that formerly private info without a search warrant.³⁴

However, the connection between ChoicePoint, the Patriot Act, and the Bush family is more complex. Enter two corporations: Winston Partners and Sybase. Sybase developed 'Patriot-compliant' software and a major shareholder in Sybase is Winston Partners, part of the Chatterjee Group. One of Winston's co-owners is Marvin Bush.

Choicepoint "compliant"

SEC filings show that Winston Partners LP owns 1,036,075 shares in Sybase; Winston Partners LDC holds 1,317,825 shares; and Winston Partners LLC owns 1,221,837 shares. The shares owned by the subsidiaries are collectively managed in funds for Winston Partners by Pernendu Chatterjee. ...

The company is also a significant government contractor ... with contracts from the Agriculture Department, the Navy (\$2.9 million in 2001), the Army (\$1.8 million in 2001), the Defense Department (\$5.3 million in 2001), Commerce, Treasury and the General Services Administration among others. The federal procurement database lists Sybase's total awards for 2001 as \$14,754,000.

Sybase is only one of the companies with federal contracts from which Marvin Bush's firm derives financial benefit. Winston Partners' portfolio also includes Amsec Corp., which got Navy contracts worth \$37,722,000 in 2001.³⁵

Also on the board of ChoicePoint is Richard Armitage, deputy secretary of state, president of Armitage Associates, international lobbying, marketing, and strategic planning consulting firm who was investigated for his role in the Reagan era Iran/Contra scandal.³⁶ What goes around, comes around ...

Once more, the vested interests of corporations that are intimately connected to the Bush family are intrinsic to the domestic and foreign policy objectives of the Bush administration. Sybase software is part of the ChoicePoint system, which is part of the Patriot Act, which is part of the whole damn system for keeping track of everybody and everything we do, read, visit, buy, and no doubt think about. At every step of the way, Bush family members are

making money out of the “war on terrorism.” Never before have the interests of government and business been so closely aligned, indeed they are in lock-step with one another.

CONCLUSION: A CORPORATE COUP D’ETAT

The assault on the rights of citizens, won at great cost and over generations of struggle, has, since the 1970s, been steadily eroded to the point that we are now left with a facade of the original, a cardboard mock-up that has all the appearances of democracy, civil rights, and so forth, but with virtually no substance.

Central to this de facto corporate coup d’etat is the Bush family and its business and political network which this essay has only scratched the surface of. What is clear is that big business is now firmly ensconced at the center of government. No longer is there any pretense of government representing the people. The transformation wrought by the Bush dynasty is perhaps best summed up with the following quote:

The Cheney-Bush pirates are about to birth a new brood of billionaire pillagers and parasites with no direct connection to the well being of the domestic economy and those of us who depend on it.³⁷

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