

Fascist gunman attacks Jewish center in Los Angeles

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The latest shooting rampage in the US occurred Tuesday when a man walked into the North Valley Jewish Community Center in the Los Angeles suburb of Granada Hills and fired seventy rounds at staff members and children attending a day camp. Five were wounded, including one five-year-old who remains in critical condition.

Unlike most of the recent multiple shootings—August 5 in Pelham, Alabama; July 29 in Atlanta, Georgia; July 12 in Atlanta; June 11 in Southfield, Michigan—this was a politically motivated attack. Buford O'Neal Furrow, 37, eluded a police dragnet after the shooting but turned himself into the FBI in Las Vegas, Nevada, reportedly telling agents “he wanted this to be a wake-up call to America to kill Jews.”

Furrow, a native of Washington state, was actively involved in such fascist organizations as the white supremacist Aryan Nation, which is based in the neighboring state of Idaho. He lived for some time in Metaline Falls, Washington with Debbie Mathews, widow of Robert Mathews, founder of the neo-Nazi group, the Order. This virulently racist and anti-Semitic group carried out the 1984 assassination of Alan Berg, a Jewish talk-radio host in Denver, Colorado. Mathews was killed the same year when his hideout burned to the ground during a shootout with federal agents on Washington's Whidbey Island.

Furrow is apparently an adherent of Christian Identity, a sect that preaches the globe must be swept clean of satanic forces—Jews, homosexuals, blacks and other minorities—in order for Christ to return to Earth.

Last November he tried to commit himself to the Fairfax Psychiatric Hospital in Kirkland, a Seattle suburb, but ended up pulling a knife on hospital staffers. He pled guilty to second-degree assault and spent more than five months in a Seattle jail. He was

released on parole in May.

“Sometimes I feel like I could just lose it and kill people,” he told a King County sheriff's deputy after his arrest. He told hospital staff he had been feeling suicidal and thinking about shooting people at a nearby shopping mall.

In addition to the assault on the Jewish community center, Furrow is being held for the shooting death of a Los Angeles-area postal worker, which occurred several miles from the scene of the mass shooting when Furrow was making his get-away.

The Granada Hills attack is the latest eruption of homicidal violence in a country where such incidents have become, as grotesque as it may sound, almost routine. This particular event underscores a significant element of the social and political crisis that rages behind the complacent headlines proclaiming prosperity and “good times.”

Alongside the intense economic pressures bearing down on broad layers of the population, who are not benefiting from the boom in stock market values and corporate profits, and the anger and frustration over a political system that ignores the needs of all but the most privileged, there is an undercurrent of extreme right-wing and fascist ideology. For this the political and media establishment bears major responsibility. It systematically promotes the most backward and reactionary conceptions—narrow individualism, religious bigotry, American chauvinism, anti-communism—in order to keep the people confused and politically disoriented.

In the absence of any mass organizations that offer a progressive answer to the brutal policies of American big business and its two parties, extreme right-wing organizations, often with financial support from corporate benefactors and political support from

establishment politicians, appear to some embittered and disoriented sections of the population as the only alternative.

Last year's impeachment crisis revealed the powerful influence, far out of proportion to their support in the general population, of fascistic elements—the Christian right, anti-tax fanatics, anti-immigrant and racist forces—within the Republican Party. One need only recall the exposure of links between Republican Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott and Republican House Judiciary member Bob Barr and the white supremacist Council of Conservative Citizens.

In Furrow's home state of Washington the ties between the Republican Party leadership and extreme-right organizations are, if anything, even more overt. Linda Smith, who served from 1994 to 1998 as the Republican Congresswoman from the state's 3rd District, was well known as a political ally of right-wing militia groups. She was the party's Senate candidate in 1998 but was defeated by the Democratic incumbent Patty Murray.

Ellen Craswell, a long-time Republican state legislator, was the party's unsuccessful candidate for Washington governor in 1996. A Christian fundamentalist, anti-tax, anti-abortion and anti-gun control fanatic, she resigned from the Republican Party last year and joined the United States Taxpayers Party. This ultra-nationalist organization advocates an end to immigration, introduction of school prayer, outlawing of abortion, and other ultra-right nostrums. The preamble to its National Platform states: “The US Constitution established a republic under God, rather than a democracy.”

The Democrats, for their part, do their best to conceal from the American people the influence of the ultra-right within the Republican Party. Such is the political environment that fosters the likes of Buford Furrow.



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