

BATF special agent (whether because he was on the payroll or to inspire more cooperation with investigations being unclear). He had also served on BATF's National Arson Response Team.

One of the last structures to fall at the compound was the flagpole holding the Davidian flag (with its Star of David). The government promptly mounted the blue "A.T.F." flag, along with the American and Texas flags, amidst the wreckage of the building, where lay the dead adults and children.

From start to finish, charges of child abuse against Koresh were used as justification for the government's aggressive actions. Was there really child abuse? According to child psychologists who talked with the kids released from Mount Carmel (and who were consulted with by the FBI prior to the final assault on April 19), children were taught that they might have to commit suicide. David Koresh took as wives in his polygamous "House of David" girls at least as young as thirteen. While girls of such age have often been brides in other cultures or other eras, Koresh's actions violated the statutory rape laws of Texas. None of the Branch Davidian girls contacted by state child abuse investigators were willing to testify against Koresh.

Children at Mount Carmel were also expected to be obedient and were spanked severely and often. This would not legal-

ly constitute child abuse in some other cultures, or in any generation of Americans before the current one, although many modern Americans would consider it abusive. Koresh himself was reported to have inflicted vicious beatings on several infants and toddlers. Such punishments were clearly abusive. All of these incidents occurred long before the BATF attack.

The children who came out of Mount Carmel were interviewed by the chief of psychiatry at Texas Children's Hospital. He concluded that the children were physically abused, but not so severely as to warrant state intervention. He found that "the children released from Ranch Apocalypse do not appear to have been victims of sexual abuse." (This finding does not disprove that older children, such as teenagers who had become Koresh's wives, were not sexually abused, if statutory rape is considered sexual abuse.) The psychiatrist also concluded that the children were friendly, happy, likable, had good interpersonal skills, and were open to other people.

The Texas Department of Children's Protective Services also examined the children. The department found no evidence of child abuse. Instead, the children were "surprisingly happy, healthy, well adjusted, well educated, and only wanted to return as soon as they could to their friends and relatives in the compound."

As Dade County, Florida, District Attorney, Janet Reno had prosecuted several sensational child abuse cases. In one notorious case, outside specialists were enlisted by the Dade County District Attorney's Office to "help" (pester and intimidate) allegedly abused children into "disclosing" what had happened. Under pressure from the investigators, many children finally "disclosed" what the investigators apparently wanted to hear, telling lurid tales of ritual abuse, in which a 14-year-old church babysitter killed and ate babies, led naked dances around a campfire, took the children to cemeteries where Freddy Krueger came out of a grave, and introduced them to flying witches. Many of these activities supposedly took place while daytime church services were in progress at the church where Bobby Fijnje was a volunteer babysitter.

After spending 20 months in jail awaiting trial, Bobby Fijnje was acquitted on all counts. The child abuse, it turns out, was perpetrated by Janet Reno's well-meaning but misguided efforts, which jailed an innocent youth and implanted horrible false memories in several small children. At Waco, Reno was deceived into harming the very children that she had meant to help.

David Koresh, né Vernon Wayne Howell, was physically and sexually abused as a child. (Among other things, as a juvenile he was repeatedly raped by a male relative.) He, in turn, physically and sexually abused others. If Koresh had been captured, he would have been prosecuted and probably convicted of child abuse.

Yet the most egregious child abusers at Waco remain free. These abusers launched an unnecessary attack on a children's home for publicity purposes, held the children captive in miserable conditions, and then attacked them with a dangerous chemical warfare agent, knowing full well that their actions would put the children's lives at grave risk. Trapped in an inferno, children and their mothers could not flee because government tanks, in violation of all plans and orders from the Attorney General, had destroyed the escape route. If President Clinton really cares as much about children as he says he does, he will appoint a special prosecutor who will bring these child abusers to justice.

Thanksgiving Hymn

by Gail White

Upon this day of feasting
to Thee, O Lord, we pray
that our uncertain blessings
endure another day.

Today we're strong and healthy,
and of a long-lived race.
Please see that death arranges
exceptions in our case.

We see our neighbors losing
the goods they once enjoyed,
so let us not be numbered
among the unemployed.

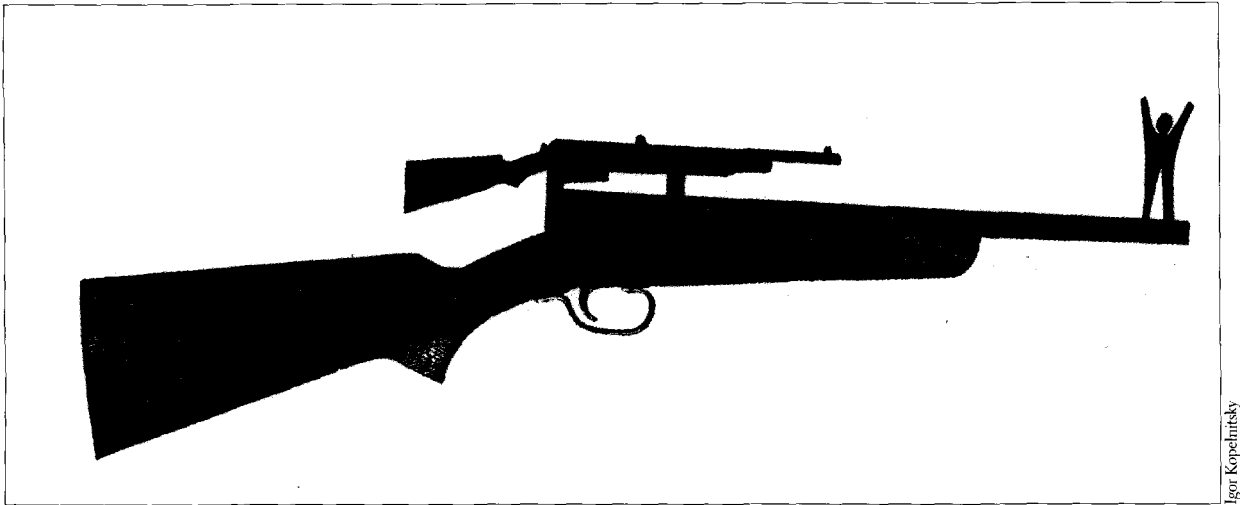
Preserve for us our loved ones
and give them happy lives
(this blessing does not cover
ex-husbands and ex-wives).

Thank You for this year's blessings,
and send the same again
next year, the next, and so on
world without end. Amen.

Back From the Brink

The Second War Against Gunowners

by Ronin Colman



Igor Kopelnitsky

During President Clinton's November 9, 1994, news conference, the White House press core dropped its usual pose of "objective, tough reporting" and adopted more of a "what's next, boss?" bleat. Not surprisingly, some of the very first questions put to the leader of the new Irrelevant Party dealt with the future of gun control.

Was all the "progress" we were making on gun control going to grind to a halt, or did the Republican landslide spell the repeal of the Brady Bill? "Not to worry," a concerned President Clinton assured them. After chewing his lower lip for a moment, he explained that one of his top aides took it upon himself to read the Constitution last night and therein found a clause about something called a "veto." The old dogs explained the concept to the young pups, and the White House press core went back to doing what any group of dogs does best.

The most annoying aspects of the pre-'89 discussions of gun control were the disingenuous arguments made by both sides. The antigun lobby generally adopted a crime-control argument. They argued that law-abiding gunowners must accept some "reasonable" restrictions or inconveniences in order to prevent guns from "falling into the hands" of criminals, children, or the Christian right. The anti-gun control camp fell into the trap of allowing the other side to frame the debate. What resulted was an endless discussion about the predicted effects on crime of a given piece of proposed legislation. The anti-gun control side would always win the *formal* debate by pointing out the obvious—criminals, by definition, do not obey the law. They would then go on to compare Vermont, a state that enjoys no gun control laws and almost no crime with some hellhole like the proposed state of New Columbia, which, as currently constituted, has the most restrictive gun laws in the country and one of the highest rates of violent crime on earth.

Unfortunately, the antigun lobby did an excellent job of numbing the hearts and minds of the electorate. They would smile and say that even if a particular law does not solve "all the problems of guns in our society," it is still a good thing if it saves

"even one child's life," and—after all—"what harm could it do?" The obvious answer, that gun control erodes the power to resist domestic tyranny—as in the case of Nazi Germany—was rarely made because most "gunnies" were reluctant to oppose either the establishment or law enforcement. After all, the "gun lobby" was, and is, made up of tens of millions of Americans who considered themselves to be the Establishment. Profoundly patriotic, pro-military and pro-law enforcement, these good folks had a hard time even conceiving of an argument that postulated a scenario in which they were at such odds with their own government that they would need their Second Amendment freedom to resist domestic tyranny.

In the absence of any philosophical base, opposition to such "reasonable" gun control laws as national waiting periods and various back-door registration schemes made one seem "irresponsible," "out of touch with the majority of gun owners," and in need of neurosurgery to correct the disorder. The exchange went something like this: "Why does anyone *need* an assault weapon, why not just ban them?" "Because, Mr. Donaldson, since you can't define an assault weapon, you might end up banning legitimate hunting guns." "We don't need to define them, Mr. Gun, we'll make a list."

Shortly after George Bush took office, the Stockton Schoolyard mass murder occurred. While this sort of horrible crime had happened before (and since), this particular incident occurred at a time when the California Attorney General was pushing for a state ban on "assault rifles." The antigun types in the media wasted no time in making this a national issue, and President Bush wasted no time in showing the electorate what he was made of. Despite the fact that he sought and received both the support of gunowners and the endorsement of the NRA during the election—without which, I'm told by my Republican friends, he would have lost to Mr. Dukakis—he went back on his word and, at the suggestion of a "conservative" Beltway think tank, banned, by executive order, the importation of a list of foreign-made semiautomatic "assault" rifles. A power his office was granted by President Nixon's 1968 Gun Control Act, which then-congressman Bush voted for.

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