

## The White Wolves: The Terrorist Manifesto That Wasn't?

by Paul Stott

### Abstract

*In 2019, both the Christchurch and Poway Synagogue terrorist attacks saw the alleged gunman produce a pre-attack manifesto, posted online, detailing immediate motivations and broader political strategy. This development is far from unique – the 2011 bombing and shootings by Anders Behring Breivik were presaged by a 1,500-page statement outlining his world view. Far right manifestos of this type seek to influence and direct opinion and have come to form part of the contested aftermath of terrorist attacks. Some of the dangers posed by such declarations can be seen in a much earlier document entitled 'The White Wolves'.*

*The White Wolves circulated in the United Kingdom in the 1990s, and gained notoriety during a series of nail bombings in London, for which David Copeland, a member of a small far-right group called the National Socialist Movement (NSM) was eventually convicted. It seems unlikely Copeland was the author of the White Wolves; to this day it is unclear who is. The first contribution of this Research Note is to point to the risks inherent in assessing extremist materials where authorship has not been fully established. Dissemination of the White Wolves on the far-right, and media speculation about it, heightened ultimately inaccurate fears a violent separatist group had been established that was about to start a terrorist campaign. The White Wolves sense of urgency and desire for blood however, are recurring themes in both fascist and terrorist declarations, and this text also serves as a contribution to the study of terrorist tropes.*

**Keywords:** United Kingdom, terrorism, fascism, Nazism, manifestos, racial separatism.

### Introduction

The *White Wolves* document was a 14-page statement calling for a campaign of racial attacks which the authors hoped would lead to an ethnically segregated Britain in the style of the divided communities in Northern Ireland. From there, it was expected the authorities would begin a programme of repatriation, thus ensuring the goal of an ethnically homogenous Britain. It was circulated anonymously on the British far-right, along with an accompanying two-page leaflet, even more vituperative in its tone. Judging by its contents, the *White Wolves* was written in 1993 and the anonymous authors claimed to be “all long standing members of Nationalist groups.” [1]

Methodologically, this Research Note relies upon a detailed analysis of the original statement, and an accompanying leaflet and communiques bearing the name *White Wolves* which appeared either in 1993-94, or immediately prior to and during the 1999 nail bomb attacks in London. As will be seen in subsequent sections, some of the themes and techniques therein are persistent. These include the need for imminent action, of being at the eleventh hour, and what the authors see as the power of the Jews. It is breaking this alleged Jewish domination that is all important - anti-Semitism is the central aspect of their worldview, and the problems facing white Britons flow from the actions of the Jews. The *White Wolves* sense of urgency, and call to sacrifice, have considerable similarities to contemporary justifications of violence and serve as a reminder that recurring themes can echo within terrorist literature. However, the type of attacks suggested – small squads of racist attackers targeting ethnic minorities in order to provoke tit-for-tat violence - proved to be very different from how far-right terrorism has evolved in Britain since the 1990s.

Although the *White Wolves* has been largely forgotten in an era of readily accessible online activism, this Research Note argues that the pre-Internet *White Wolves* document is important. Firstly, for what it tells us about the far-right, and additionally for the questions it raises about terrorist manifestos. It contributes to debates about the ideological nature of far-right terrorism, by pointing to the importance given in this historical material, not to anti-Muslim attitudes, but to racial homogeneity and to anti-Semitism. Indeed, anti-Semitism

forms the structural base from which the *White Wolves* broader positions evolve. A second feature is to provide a new perspective to the debate concerning the response of liberal democratic societies to terrorist manifestos. Instead of discussing the case for or against proscription of such literature, a warning is given here about the risk of material which emerges at the time of terrorist attacks, when there may be a heightened atmosphere of fear and agitation. Although the *White Wolves* document was popularly linked to a series of terrorist attacks, ultimately that connection, more than twenty years later, remains unproven.

### ***Historical Material***

Whoever wrote the *White Wolves* had a clear interest in history, and a detailed knowledge of the British far-right. It opens and ends with an old Norse poem, the *Havamal*, reminding the reader that the coward shall know no peace, whilst the glory of the great dead shall never die. It also quotes Rudyard Kipling, that most English of writers, and to the modern ear, perhaps one of the more problematic. Kipling's '*The Beginnings*' (1917), with its lines about '*when the English began to hate*' [2] lead into a historical case study of what the manifesto considers to be violence working as a political tool. This is the little known riots of 1919 when racial violence broke out between early non-white migrants and the majority community in nine towns and cities in England and Wales – mostly those with docks where labourers and seaman contested for jobs. "The government was forced to act and to order the repatriation of thousands of Blacks who hadn't already fled for their lives". [3]

Where the far-right subsequently took part in racial violence, for example in the Notting Hill riots in the 1950s, the failure to sustain and broaden this conflict to other towns and cities is portrayed as a decisive failing. [4] The *White Wolves* quote disapprovingly from a 1973 *Spearhead* article where the National Front (NF) condemned racist fire bombings in the London Borough of Wandsworth. Instead of continuing such actions, activists were neutralised by the dull political routines of electoralism, where it is argued the NF could never win in a system rigged against it. [5] *Spearhead* was a privately owned magazine published by John Tyndall, then leader of the NF, and later leader of the British National Party (BNP). Such a reference does place the *White Wolves* authors either within the far-right milieu for some years, or with a very good working knowledge of it. Few in the pre-internet era would readily have knowledge of, or be able to access, *Spearhead* from twenty years earlier and be able to incorporate it into arguments against right-wing political reformism.

### ***Theoretical Basis***

The *White Wolves* were coy about declaring their ideological adherences. This is a call to arms, but it is one rooted in an examination of the failure of what it refers to as 'nationalist' groups in the UK. [6] Here we see a strong degree of euphemism, indeed caution, being deployed. Even in a document dedicated to Robert Jay Matthews, a neo-Nazi who established the American terrorist group 'The Order' and was killed in 1984 after committing a series of attacks, the authors stop short of referring to themselves as fascists or neo-Nazis. [7] Such euphemisms are a reminder of the difficulty of openly organising as National Socialists in the United Kingdom, where patriotic sentiments frequently pivot on Britain's historical role in fighting, not for Nazism or fascism, but against it.

Despite these contradictions, the *White Wolves* possesses an overtly racist message, which has much in common with classical Nazism. There's is an approach characterised by anti-Semitism, and the need for violence in order to bring about an all-white Britain. The Jews are seen as holding power in society [8] and there is a liberal/Jewish conspiracy to destroy the white population. [9] Under this conspiratorial framework, Jews regard the white race as their only opposition, [10] and an element of defeatism leads to a position where political change will come only through violence: "The race war is not about to happen, so we must start it ourselves" [11] and, similarly, "We do not believe that we alone can win the Race War, but we can start it" [12]. As well as ambition, a sense of urgency and finality is present "This really is our last chance," [13] and "Only a blood sacrifice can now save our nation." [14] The *White Wolves* is a narrative of demographic Armageddon.

Some of these are familiar far-right and indeed terrorist tropes. John Tyndall titled his main political statement “The Eleventh Hour: A Call for British Rebirth” [15] - the concept of living in a defining era where there is a duty upon individuals to act is not unusual among the politically dissatisfied. There is also an overlap with concepts expressed by jihadist actors. The idea of the need for blood is to be found in Mohammed Siddique Khan’s suicide video, which emerged shortly after the 7/7 bombings “Our words are dead until we give them life with our blood”. [16] Whilst far-right and Islamist terrorists differ dramatically in the type of world they seek to create, there appear to be certain interesting parallels in the expressions they deploy to explain violence.

### ***Aims and Tactics***

Stripped of any adherence to electoral politics or democratic engagement, the *White Wolves* aim is initially to invoke physical conflict. Attacks by active cells such as the random stabbing of British residents of Pakistani origin are expected to provoke minorities into indiscriminate violence, so as to force white ‘native’ communities ‘off the fence’. A recurring theme is the need for a “tit for tat war which is the only thing which can force ordinary Whites to stand up and fight.” [17] The majority community has proved immune to the far-right’s political arguments, and must be shocked from its stupor. Once serious divisions have been stoked, segregation, in the style of the deeply divided communities in Northern Ireland, is the next aim. [18] From there, they hope to force the establishment’s hand and to see repatriation of all non-whites to their perceived countries of origin.

In order to facilitate conflict, the use of simple, everyday weapons such as bricks, catapults, petrol bombs and knives is stressed [19]. A rudimentary bomb making guide, with several diagrams, is also included [20]. There are parallels here with some of the Al-Qaeda and Islamic State English language publications we have seen in recent years, such as the Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) magazine *Inspire*, and *Dabiq* from Islamic State, which stress the importance of simplicity in selecting weapons. [21] Some very distinct organisational tactics are also declared in the *White Wolves*. These centre on a recruitment process rooted in gradually escalating actions involving no more than five people [22] These should be independent cells and individuals should not leave existing far-right groups that they are members of, as to do so would attract attention.

### ***Events***

The *White Wolves* manifesto ensured that in 1994 and again in 1995 it received substantive media coverage after it was posted to both regional and national newspapers. [23] Attention to the *White Wolves* re-surfaced in 1999, following a nail bomb attack in Brixton, an area associated with London’s black community on 17 April 1999, and another on Brick Lane, where many people of Bangladeshi origin lived, on 24 April. These incidents, on successive Saturday afternoons, led to considerable fear of a sustained far-right terrorist campaign. Amidst high-profile policing of migrant communities, the next attack, on Friday 30 April was aimed at a gay bar in Soho, killing three customers. Three days before the Brixton bomb, a stencilled *White Wolves* communique had been posted in central London, one of five such statements to appear. [24] From the *Command Council of the White Wolves*, this called on all Jews and non-whites to leave Britain by the end of the year as “when the clock strikes midnight on 31/12/99 the White Wolves will begin to howl, & when the wolves begin to howl, the wolves begin to hunt.” [25] There were also claims of responsibility to emerge after Brixton from ‘*The White Wolves*’, and a separate claim in the name of *Combat 18*, a neo-Nazi group who openly deployed terrorist rhetoric. [26]

### ***The White Wolves: Assessment***

This section seeks to assess to what extent the *White Wolves* publication influenced subsequent far-right terrorist attacks in Britain, examine what such tactics tell us about the far-right generally, and also to consider the author of these materials.

Notable, when viewed through the prism of 2019 and contemporary far-right agitation, is what is absent, and the extent to which British far-right terrorism eventually developed in a different direction to that signposted by the *White Wolves*. The document serves as a reminder that anti-Muslim attitudes have not always been predominant on the British far-right – across 14 pages, Islam and Muslims are not mentioned in the main text at all (and only once, in passing, in the accompanying leaflet). The *White Wolves* document certainly presages an era where a small number of those on the far-right, politically isolated and unable to effect change by other methods, turn to violence. Yet its tactical suggestions - of small groups of no more than five racist attackers, conducting direct actions in order to provoke an extreme response - is different to what we have seen in practice from far-right terrorists in Britain. The 2017 terrorist attack at Finsbury Park mosque, [27] the 2016 killing of the Member of Parliament Jo Cox, [28] and the murder and bombings conducted by Ukrainian fascist Pavlo Lapshyn in the West Midlands in 2013, [29] were all carried out by ostensibly lone actors. Two of the three attacks were specifically targeted at Muslims.

The term lone actor is selected above, ahead of lone wolf, as those convicted appear to have acted alone at the time of their attack, but arguably have come through a process of radicalisation where they have then acted upon their political positions. David Copeland, who carried out three nail bombings at the time the *White Wolves* communiqués and manifesto were circulating, was himself convicted as a lone attacker, but trial evidence showed he had been through two fascist organisations – the British National Party, and then the National Socialist Movement, a small splinter from the better known *Combat 18*. The NSM disbanded on 4 May 1999, within days of his arrest. [30] This trend, of single actor rather than group based violence, has arguably continued. In 2016 Britain proscribed the neo-Nazi group National Action under counter-terrorism legislation. [31] In a subsequent trial one of its members, Jack Renshaw, was convicted of plotting to kill the Labour MP Rosie Cooper; however the organisation's leader, Chris Lythgoe, was cleared of encouraging Renshaw. [32]

There is no conclusive evidence the *White Wolves*, as an organisation, ever existed. Nor was authorship of the text, or any of the communiqués, established. What evidence we have concerning the *White Wolves* is inconclusive and sporadic – a document written in 1993, circulated by persons' unknown in 1994. In 1999, when Copeland was conducting his bombings, *Command Council of the White Wolves* communiqués appeared. When in custody, Copeland claimed to be a member of the *White Wolves*. Yet his modus operandi differed from the template proscribed – he seemingly acted on his own, rather than in a band of up to five, and his schedule of weekly attacks was of an intensity they specifically cautioned against, warning it would swiftly lead to discovery and arrest. [33]

The date of writing, plus the range and scope of the *White Wolves* document, mitigate against Copeland being the author. Aged just 17 when it was written, and 22 during the nail bomb campaign, he hardly fits the authors self-description of a collaborative effort penned by world weary veterans of British 'nationalism'. Nor is he likely to have developed a take on debates within the pages of *Spearhead* in 1973 – three years before he was born. Whilst names such as long-term fascist Dave Myatt have been put forward as potential authors, [34] to this day the writer or writers of the text remain(s) publicly unknown. This takes us to a position where the *White Wolves* document and communiqués should serve as a reminder to approach with caution statements and reports which appear after, or shortly before, terrorist attacks. They could come from literally anyone and may, or may not, be the definitive words of the perpetrators.

Far from signposting radical political change or a route to power for the far-right, in many ways the *White Wolves* is an admission of failure. For all the media attention it briefly gained, it is today largely forgotten. Internet searches for it draw little response, even on far-right websites such as Stormfront or Blood and Honour. It is eclipsed by older calls to arms such as *The Turner Diaries* or *Hunter*, [35] and, in the internet era, by manifestos such as Breivik's or that in Christchurch, which possess the added gravitas of being closely connected to contemporary outrages. The *White Wolves* document could also fade into obscurity far more easily, being pre-internet, than recent statements uploaded to file sharing sites as pdfs, and examined within short periods of time by sympathisers, ideological foes and law enforcement agencies alike.

In terms of political impact, it is worth stressing the *White Wolves* authors appear marginal figures, responding to decades of political failure by a far-right repeatedly rejected at the ballot box. Here we reach perhaps the ultimate irony. Unknown to its writers, by the time the *White Wolves* manifesto achieved concerted media attention in 1999, the British far-right was about to enter into its greatest period of electoral success, as Nick Griffin took over from John Tyndall, modernising the BNP and attempting to inch it towards the mainstream. In obtaining approximately 50 local authority councillors, representation in the Greater London Assembly and two members of the European Parliament, Griffin's BNP was to give the British far-right its high water mark, albeit from a comparatively low base. [36]

## Conclusion

The *White Wolves* document serves as a reminder of a section of the far-right which rejects democratic engagement and seeks instead to achieve political objectives through violence. Within the *White Wolves*, a deeply anti-Semitic worldview is evident while the contemporary opposition to Islam is broadly absent. In its rejection of the political process it foreshadows more recent trends, even though it appears to have had no direct influence upon the far-right terrorist attacks to occur in Britain this century. Its ideological base, in racial separatism and anti-Semitism, is one that brooks little compromise and is politically limiting, although it was not necessarily anti-intellectual. Yet in approaching the failures of British fascism via a historiographical critique, the authors of the *White Wolves* unintentionally remind readers of their own weaknesses and the British far-right's inability to make substantive political progress. In proposing a strategy of violence that would pressure the British state towards beginning a programme of repatriation, the *White Wolves* position themselves, not as seeking to take control of the levers of power in society, but as permanent outsiders, hoping to shock both the inert masses and those in office, into change.

Some of the similarities between the rhetoric in the *White Wolves* manifesto and that of later, jihadist actors are a subject worthy of further research. Comparisons can certainly be made in terms of their shared sense of duty and their attitudes to shedding blood. That very different terrorist currents have more in common than they may care to admit may not be a surprise to terrorism researchers, but is a potential tool for those involved in countering radicalisation. More importantly, the incomplete lineage and lack of clarity as to the authorship of the *White Wolves* should strike a note of caution for those rushing to comment on material emerging in the wake of contemporary terrorist attacks.

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## Notes

[1]. The *White Wolves* is neither dated nor paginated. However, a stop press addition on the final page refers to both a BNP election victory, their first, which occurred on 17 September 1993, and praises a racist attack in London the same year. There is no event in the text which can be dated later than 1993. All page references are taken on the basis of counting the pages from the front cover onwards, giving 14 pages. The quote here is thus from p.2, and all quotes are from a copy in the authors possession.

[2] The full poem can be read at [http://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/poems\\_beginnings.htm](http://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/poems_beginnings.htm)

[3] The *White Wolves*, p.4.

Chapter 10 of Peter Fryer's *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 1984) gives a more sober account of these events, but one that also stresses the racial nature of the violence. By September 1919, at least 600 black men had been repatriated from Cardiff alone.

- [4] The White Wolves, p.10.
- [5] The White Wolves, p.3.
- [6] The opening paragraph, on p. 2 of The White Wolves, refers to 'Nationalist groups,' 'Nationalism' and 'Nationalists' – all in the space of just five lines.
- [7] On Matthews and The Order, see Kevin Flynn and Gary Gerhardt, *The Silent Brotherhood* (New York: Signet Books, 1995).
- [8] The White Wolves, p. 4.
- [9] The White Wolves, p.5.
- [10] The White Wolves, p.10.
- [11] The White Wolves, p.2.
- [12] The White Wolves, p.8.
- [13] The White Wolves, p.11.
- [14] The White Wolves, p. 13.
- [15] John Tyndall, *The Eleventh Hour: A Call for British Rebirth* (Hove: Albion Press, 1988).
- [16] BBC News, "London Bomber Text in Full," 1 September 2005, accessed 4 June 2016; URL: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4206800.stm>
- [17] The White Wolves, p. 6.
- [18] The White Wolves, p. 5.
- [19] The White Wolves, p. 7.
- [20] The White Wolves, p.12.
- [21] As examples, consider The AQ Chef, "Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom", *Inspire*, Issue 1, 2010, pp. 33 – 40; or Islamic State's reminder to wage jihad, even by yourself, with all resources such as knives and guns, in *Dabiq*, Issue 14, 2016 "Kill the Imams of Kufr in the West" p. 17.
- [22] The White Wolves, p. 8.
- [23] Ray Hill, Hill Street News, *Searchlight*, April 1995, p. 6.
- [24] Four of the communiqués are reproduced by Larry O'Hara, "David Copeland, The White Wolves and the State – Some Unanswered Questions (Part One)", *Notes from the Borderland*, Issue 3, Autumn 2000, p.33.
- [25] Statement by the command council of the White Wolves, n.d. Copy in the authors possession.
- [26] Nick Lowles, Neo-nazis claim Brixton bomb, *Searchlight*, May 1999, pp. 4 – 5.
- [27] Crown Prosecution Service, "Man given life for Finsbury Park terror attack", 1 February 2018, accessed 5 June 2019; URL: <https://www.cps.gov.uk/cps-london-north-london-south/news/man-given-life-finsbury-park-terror-attack>
- [28] Raffaello Pantucci, 'A View from the CT Foxhole: Neil Basu, Senior National Coordinator for Counterterrorism Policing in the United Kingdom,' *CTC Sentinel*, Vol 11, Issue 2, February 2018, accessed 5 June 2019; URL: <https://ctc.usma.edu/view-ct-foxhole-neil-basu-senior-national-coordinator-counterterrorism-policing-united-kingdom/>
- [29] Crown Prosecution Service, "Man jailed for mosque explosions and murder of elderly Muslim man," 25 October 2013, accessed 5 June 2019; URL: <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20161003113705/http://blog.cps.gov.uk/2013/10/man-jailed-for-mosque-explosions-and-murder-of-elderly-muslim-man.html>
- [30] The letter NSM leader Tony Williams sent to members and supporters, closing the organisation, is reproduced in Larry O'Hara, "David Copeland, The White Wolves and the State – Some Unanswered Questions (Part One)", *Notes from the Borderland*, Issue 3, Autumn 2000, p.31.
- [31] Graham Macklin, Only Bullets Will Stop Us! The Banning of National Action, *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol 12 No 6, pp. 104 – 122 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26544646>
- [32] The Law Pages, Case of Christopher John Lythgoe, 18 July 2018, accessed 5 July 2019; URL: <https://www.thelawpages.com/court->

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[cases/Christopher-John-Lythgoe-23435-1.law](#)

[33] Larry O'Hara, "David Copeland, The White Wolves and the State – Some Unanswered Questions (Part One)", *Notes from the Borderland*, Issue 3, Autumn 2000, p.35.

[34] Graeme McLagan and Nick Lowles, *Mr Evil: The Secret Life of Racist Bomber and Killer David Copeland*, (London: John Blake, 2000), p. 147

[35] Both books were written under the pseudonym Andrew Macdonald by the late American Nazi William Pierce (1933 – 2002).

[36] Matthew J Goodwin, *New British Fascism: Rise of the British National Party*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).