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**IT'S A WAR**



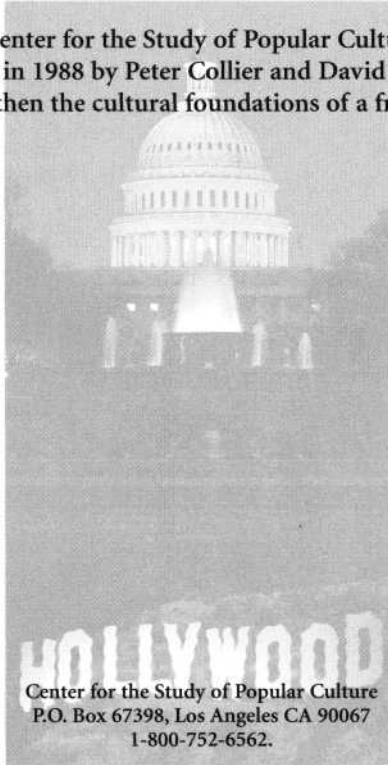
**STUPID!**



**PETER COLLIER &  
DAVID HOROWITZ**

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The Center for the Study of Popular Culture was  
founded in 1988 by Peter Collier and David Horowitz  
to strengthen the cultural foundations of a free society.



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IT'S A WAR, STUPID!

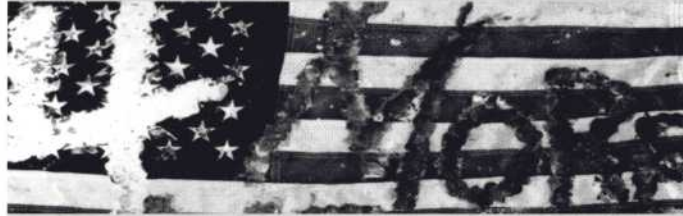
Peter Collier & David Horowitz

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**IT'S A WAR**



**STUPID!**



**PETER COLLIER &  
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**T**he good news is that the election of 1996 was a vindication of conservative principles—smaller government and greater individual responsibility. The bad news is that Republicans so bungled the political battle—before and during the campaign—that the electorate didn't trust a conservative to preside over conservative programs. And so, instead of a satisfying victory, the best conservatives can look forward to is four years of *schadenfreude* as the Clinton Administration attempts to cope with a national inquiry into its vulgar venality and penny-ante larceny.

It should have been otherwise. Instead of an ambiguous interregnum, these should have been the best of times for the conservative movement. After something close to a two hundred years' war with the Left, the Right has won a verdict so complete that (with the exception of some hermetically sealed offices of the American university) Marxism has disappeared as a political, economic and even intellectual rival of free market individualism. With the exception of Havana, Pyongyang, and a few other blighted precincts around the globe, the principles of private property, individual rights and the economic market—cornerstones of the conservative worldview—are everywhere triumphant, in principle if not always in practice.

Conservatism is so clearly victorious in the battle of

ideas that the only frisson of interest in liberal circles is how to plagiarize conservative policies and still present what seems to be a choice rather than an echo. So discredited are the programs of the Left that its candidates compete, as if in a *Saturday Night Live* routine, for the title of who is least liberal. They can contend electorally only by posing as tough on the criminals their orthodox views as socially oppressed rather than personally guilty, faithful in defending the nuclear family they would like to implode, pessimistic about the principles of social entitlement and economic leveling that always have been and still are at the core of their social engineering project.

Conservative ideas are calling the tune so insistently on the basic issues of our civic and political life that even the hardcore liberals have no choice but to do the dance. Yet instead of the dance of the dead, the left-wing corpse does the macarena. The skeleton smiles! And this raises the question: How does the Left appear to win battle after battle even though its war is lost? Why do conservatives so often feel like losers even though they've won? Or, as the old Bessie Smith song asks, what did we ever do to get so black and blue?

The Left's hardy survivorship comes almost wholly from its recognition that, in an ideological age, politics is war conducted by other means. The Left understands this in the marrow of its bones but the Right understands it only with the tip of its brain. The Right mobilizes like an army only during elections, and not a particularly good army at that (unless shooting oneself in the foot ranks as a warlike act). Otherwise its troops are like the sunshine soldiers of a bygone day—doing their couple of weeks annually with the National Guard every summer and otherwise enjoying the

ease and freedom of civilian life.

Indeed, despite lip service to the idea of a cultural conflict, most conservatives do not believe that we live any longer in an "ideological age." ("Would that it were," the editor of a leading conservative magazine commented upon reading a draft of this article. "By now, aren't we post-post ideological?" To which we replied, "Would that it were.") The head of the Republican Party, Haley Barbour, summed up conservative smugness in this post-election comment: "You see, Clinton campaigned as if he were a Republican:... In the United States and around the world, the battle of ideas is over. The 1996 campaign is living proof; the Left has thrown in the towel." Conservatives have so unconsciously absorbed the polyannaisms of Fukuyama's "end of history" that they fail to see that history is happening right at home in the paradox of their own movement, unrequited and out of power after the victory has been won.

Part of the reason for this failure of vision is that the Right is taken in by the Left's most subversive stratagem (which can be seen in Clinton's '96 campaign)—which is to join the ranks of the hated opponent, to pose as the Other and cover your tracks by calling yourself "liberal." The Right doesn't seem to believe that its opponent is the Left in all its antagonistic and alien malice, shape-shifting like a creature from an episode of *X-Files*. Instead, conservatives think of America's cornucopia of present ills as the result of a liberalism gone overboard, not a liberalism subverted.

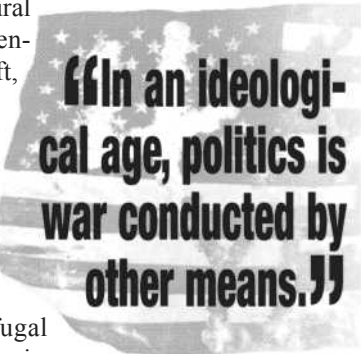
This is the argument, in fact, of Robert Bork's new (and otherwise indispensable) book, *Slouching Towards Gomorrah*, which explores the unnerving dimensions of the national plight. "The enemy within," writes Bork, "is modern liberalism, a corrosive agent carrying a very different mood

and agenda than that of classical or traditional liberalism." He sees the country's mood as one in which there are no restraints on individualism and self-interest; the agenda is that of equality without limit.

But is this really all that is going on? The transformational crucible of liberalism, Bork rightly observes, was the '60s, "a politicized decade.. whose activists saw all of culture and life as political. The consequence is that our culture is now politicized... We have a new extremely divisive politics of personal identity. We have invented a range of new or newly savage political-cultural battlegrounds." But this mentality has a name: it is Left, not liberal.

Liberalism has a long and honorable pedigree, but since the 1960s it has just not been able to say no to the Left. Today liberalism often finds itself stuck in the political equivalent of a fugal state, supporting anti-American and anti-democratic ideas such as racial- and gender-preferences and the feminist assault on the family with which it is—or should in theory be—wholly at odds.

Unlike traditional liberals, even those who have sometimes embraced its excesses, the Left is permanently at war with America—day in and day out, year in and year out, on every front and every issue, no matter how moderately it disguises its aims, nor how modestly it announces its objectives. The Left's agenda is to consolidate its parasitic hold on the liberal host and then to create a world in which conservatives



**“In an ideological age, politics is war conducted by other means.”**



and conservative values have no place. What it envisions is the political equivalent of an ethnic cleansing.

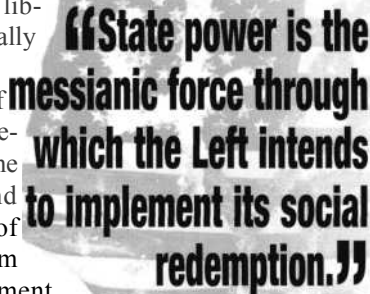
And so the Right fundamentally misunderstands the situation it faces when it accepts the Left's public self-image as a fragmented, disorganized and ad-hoc remnant. In its private mirror, the Left views itself as an army—one that may temporarily have its back to the wall, but is still the proud bearer of a code that forbids surrender. What the Right regards as a victory in the battle of ideas, the Left sees as yet another contested ground. A small but potent illustration of this mentality was given on the morning after the California election, when conservatives were savoring the victory of their anti-racial preference initiative, Prop. 209. Television cameras turned to feminist Eleanor Smeal, in the "No on 209" headquarters did not see a gracious concession, or an acknowledgment that the people had spoken. Instead, they recorded her confident dismissal of the outcome as "only round one" in the larger war, as she and her supporters vowed never to accept the voters' decision. Even as she spoke, the Left's legal battalions were putting the finishing touches on their suits to block the initiative in the courts.

Judge Bork is right in saying that the radical break in our political tradition that occurred during the '60s is at the root of our present moral chaos. In opening his book about America's troubles with a memory of student activists burning law books in the Yale law library thirty years ago, he draws the appropriate parallel between the student fascism of the '60s (and '90s) and the radical totalitarians of the 1930s. He could have gone further. He could have drawn the parallels between an earlier socialist defeat in 1914, and the birth of "identity politics" (the cult of the *volk* or nation)

midwifed by one-time Leninist, Benito Mussolini. He could have shown how the radical rebellion against traditional liberal values and "bourgeois society" is a recurrent theme of the modern history of the West, and how these revolts have regularly resulted in episodes of Communist and fascist tyranny. But in his attempt to see the destructive developments as an outgrowth of liberal rather than left-wing ideas, Bork fails to grasp the movement he deplores as a logical extension of radical totalitarianism and its destructive agendas into the domestic arena, and portrays it rather as the development of philosophical tendencies inherent in the liberal tradition itself, specifically liberty and equality.

There is a way, of course, in which this presentation makes sense. The ideas of Rousseau and Marx which lie at the root of modern totalitarianism share many Enlightenment elements with liberalism. But to make the one a mere extension or exacerbation of the other is to deny the two hundred years of civil and cultural conflict, culminating in the Cold War, that have shaped our world.

The radical passion goes far beyond extremist forms of egalitarianism and individualism. Consider the crusade of the Left and its liberal allies to dismantle the nuclear family. The crusade does not always take the form of a frontal assault, but pursues many avenues—from no-fault divorce to opposition to parental consent for abortion, to same sex marriage, to rainbow curricula in the schools. It is possible to



**“State power is the messianic force through which the Left intends to implement its social redemption.”**

see all this as an outgrowth of radical individualism (as Bork does)—the desire to be free of all restraints. But in fact it has a more powerful impetus—the desire of Leftism to break down all resistance to its totalizing agenda and to deconstruct all social institutions that stand in its way. State power is the messianic force through which the Left intends to implement its social redemption, and the family is the last bulwark against the power of the state. And thus, in the malicious syllogism at the heart of the Left's strategy, the family is the enemy of progress and progressives everywhere.

Moreover, the egalitarian principle in itself would not explain the anti-white racism that pervades the thinking and rhetoric of the Left, the attack on the culture of "dead white males," the preference for particular minorities—Indians, blacks, Hispanics and "Pacific Islanders." These, of course, are the four groups most "alienated," most "dominated," most "oppressed" according to the Left's version of the American narrative. To understand the pecking order of grievance reflected in official affirmative action policies, it is necessary to enter the Left's world-view, and ultimately its vision of history itself.

It was in the aftermath of the '60s, in a desperate effort to find a host that would support their parasitism, that radicals, having spent the decade tormenting liberalism and provoking it into a deep crisis of faith, appropriated the liberal identity. By succeeding in this audacious political sex-change operation, radicals were able to fool others into thinking they shared the same agenda with the liberalism they had displaced. But radicals do not want an equal opportunity society, the hallmark of traditional liberalism. They want socialism—a society of equal results—even if they have to dress it up in the clothing of liberalism to make it palatable. The "lib-

erals" they have become over the last 30 years are not distinguished from conservatives because they choose different means to the same social ends. They aspire to different ends altogether. That is why we live in an ideological age and are engaged in an ideological war.

Conservatives are not unaware that a cultural conflict is under way. Nor do they fail to understand, for the most part, that it is often more subtle than the one envisioned by Pat Buchanan involving pitchfork populists marching on government and taking potshots at the black helicopters overhead. In fact, conservatives talk constantly about the culture wars, often quite knowledgeably. But while they can talk the talk, they don't feel comfortable when it comes to walking the walk.

Even more disastrously, they don't pull the trigger when the enemy is clearly in their sights. Consider the battles over Supreme Court nominees—a series of skirmishes that conservatives have lost so badly that the Court is now poised to drive the first tanks over that bridge to the 21st century as soon as the next justice retires. Some conservatives, Judge Bork most notable among them, are now suggesting a change in the Constitutional system to reduce the power of the Court, so alarming does the future appear.

Judge Bork's own nomination to the Court was a pivotal point in preparing this future. Yet the effort not just to discredit but to destroy Bork achieved critical mass long before conservatives even understood they were in a battle. Partially because they believed that their opponents' philosophy was somehow related to the liberalism of Harry Truman and Hubert Humphrey, they expected them to observe tradition and respect an obviously qualified nominee.

Conservatives didn't understand they were in a war that for the other side was total, and take-no-prisoners. They still don't understand it. After Bork's nomination was killed, after Clarence Thomas was bloodied and tainted, conservatives turned the other cheek when Clinton nominated an ideological leftist—Ruth Bader Ginsburg—to the bench. Instead of staging an inquiry into Ginsburg's views that would at least dramatize what was happening, even if it didn't prevent her confirmation, Republicans on the judiciary committee fell over themselves in the attempt to be gracious by "taking politics out of the process." Of course, all they were doing was taking politics out of the process until the next conservative is nominated, whereupon the Left will once again unleash the dogs of war.


The recent response of some Republicans to the Democrats' *blitzkrieg* against the Speaker of the House, shows the persistence of the myopia. "Newt is the nerve center and the energy source," one Democratic strategist wrote. "Going after him is like taking out command and control." Yet, despite the military metaphor that makes the war mentality clear, there has been no counter-assault on Gingrich's antagonist and opposite number, David Bonior, from the conservative quarter. Yet Bonior's politics, although tarted up as Gucci Marxism, are nothing if not classically Left. Throughout the '80s, he consistently opposed America's attempts to put the Soviet empire out of business, and supported the Marxist dictatorship in Nicaragua and the Communist guerrilla front in El Salvador, pawns of Castro's empire in the hemisphere. The question, however, is not so much why Bonior embraced these comrades then and continues to push his "populist" version of class warfare now, but why Republicans have allowed his leftism to be no-fault

and why they allow him to bash Gingrich with spurious ethics charges without launching a counter-offensive.

Although experience should have caused conservatives to realize the nature of the conflict in which they are engaged, the flaws in the conservative posture—an air of superiority that leaves them speechless when their opponents point it out, a psychological remoteness that leads at times to blunted intellectual affect and the appearance of chilly indifference to the fate of the Other—make them reluctant to get into the trenches with the Left, or to use the same weapons in contesting for ground on which the Left has no hesitancy to plant its red and black flag. While the Right dithers over a military code of conduct, however, the Left prosecutes its war with a fierce evangelical commitment captured so well by the old Guevarist sign-off—*Hasta la victoria siempre*, until the ultimate victory.

Every day, the Left's warriors go into battle in a war that for them is not about this particular bill or that particular issue, but about the total transformation of existing social institutions, values, psychologies; about transforming "human nature," which the post-modern Left believes is waiting to be "socially reconstructed" for the greater social good.

For the Left, it is permissible—even inevitable—to lose all battles except the last one. For the Right, war interferes with commerce.



**“Bonior's politics, although tarted up as Gucci Marxism, are nothing if not classically Left.”**

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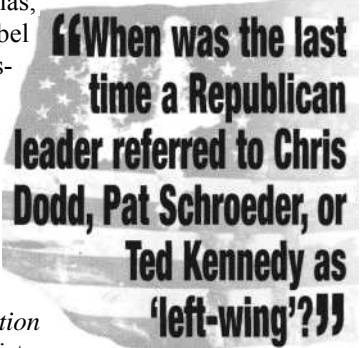
As the Cold War unraveled, the Left, sensing subliminally what conservatives dared not hope—that it was going to lose everything, internationally and domestically—retreated into the guerrilla mode of the long march: dig holes deep and store much grain. It began to prepare for battle on the last ground it occupied: the elite cultural institutions involved with the production of knowledge and the manufacture of images. The campaign was one for which the Left was ideally suited by its basic character—hostile and aggressive in language and psychology; sinuously evanescent when it came to principle; always on a war-footing because that is its species-essence.

Whittaker Chambers long ago warned that the source of the Left's strength was not the appeal of its theory, but the power of its faith. It is believing in something worth dying for that makes leftists a formidable foe. Reason and experience are neutralized by the Left's preening assurance of its own rectitude and of being on the side of the angels. It never has to explain how its efforts to create economic "justice" and plan social abundance have blighted the lives of hundreds of millions of human beings and caused mass murder on an epic scale. The radical faith has outlived "the end of history" and the fall of the Berlin Wall. The ideas that inspired its odious schemes continue to thrive because there is only one law that the Left obeys, a law on which its survival is based: don't look back. Reactionary in ideology, immune to evidence, impervious to logic, the Left still sees itself as forward-looking and humane and its opponents as regressive and "mean spirited."

The remarkable aspect of all this is that it has succeeded in getting American culture as a whole to tolerate this view

of itself as idealistic and "progressive," and to forget about its past. The ultimate proof of the Left's success in dominating the culture and hiding its memories can be seen in the fact that for all intents and purposes there is no "Left" in American politics. On that side of the spectrum, there is only a group of well intentioned people working hard to neutralize the selfishness and greed of the unenlightened Right.

The Left has colonized and conditioned the media to such a degree that when describing Republican politicians, conservative academics, Christian evangelicals, libertarian publications, redneck militias, or crackpot racists, the label "right-wing" is used ritualistically to describe them all. But of course no Democratic politician, radical agitator, "progressive" publication, or environmental terrorist is ever labeled "left-wing." To the copy editors of the *New York Times*, *The Nation* magazine with its 70-year history



of supporting Communist causes is "liberal." *The Los Angeles Times* refers to the kooky New Left extremist Noam Chomsky, someone so committed to the Palestinians' cause that he romances holocaust revisionism, as a "Jewish liberal." Even national poll categories lack a true ideological ambidexterity, ranging only from "liberal" to "moderate" to "Right" and then "far Right," ignoring altogether the left-hand side of the political scale.

Conservatives are well acquainted with this asymmetry. What they don't acknowledge is their own collusion in the



charade. When was the last time a Republican leader referred to Chris Dodd, Pat Schroeder, or Ted Kennedy as "left-wing"? Conservatives allow the Left to rail about right-wing Christians, but they never challenge the left-wing Christians—if Christians they are—who operate like moles in a vintage LeCarre novel inside the National Council of Churches and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. If Newt Gingrich is not going to call David Bonior a leftist, who is?

In the first theater of combat—the war over definitions and language—the Left's armies of the night have rolled over conservatives. In the national press (and the national imagination as well) there is presumed to be a common thread of paranoia and malice connecting the Ku Klux Klan, David Duke and Timothy McVeigh to Newt Gingrich and Bob Dole. But the media chooses not to see signs of the snail trail that could be said—with equal plausibility—to link the Unabomber, Louis Farrakhan and Fidel Castro to David Bonior. Because the Right is so ready to concede the field of language to its political enemies, right-wingers like Jesse Helms are often "fascists" but left-wingers like Bonior are never "communists" (small "c" of course).

It is understandable, perhaps, that conservatives are gun-shy about using this term after what happened during Sen. Joseph McCarthy's wild ride in the 1950s. But fascists were also targets of the Un-American Activities Committee, which doesn't inhibit the Left from using that epithet. Half a century has passed and the country no longer lives in such fear of nuclear attack that the innocent are in danger of being labeled with the guilty. Most importantly, the Venona papers and evidence from internal Soviet sources have shown that reckless as he was in pursuing the red menace, if McCarthy

Republicans don't get publicly outraged, or point out that this is far worse than reverse Willie Hortonism. It is guilt-by-association-McCarthyism with a vengeance.

Seizing the moral high ground often seems, in fact, to be the last thing conservatives want to do. Recently, for example, Pete Wilson named Janice Brown to California's state Supreme Court. Daughter of an Alabama sharecropper, Brown was the first African-American woman ever appointed to the post. Did Republicans gain any political capital from this choice? If they did, it was minimal because before the choice could be celebrated, liberals attacked the nomination using a state bar commission on judicial nominees they controlled and claiming that Brown (though a highly regarded appellate court judge) was "unqualified." The Democrats' partisan attack—their real objection was that Brown was an outspoken conservative—was the pure distillation of racism. In particular, this was the currently permissible racism of the Left in which progressive whites who kow-tow slavishly to "people of color" in all other things are allowed to blast "right-wing" blacks as political minstrels, affirmative-action charity-cases and inauthentic representatives of their race. Our blacks are real, the Left is allowed to get away with saying, and yours are whites in *black face*.

But while the Left had a field day with Brown, not a single Republican legislator, leader or pundit—not even Wilson himself—responded to attacks by calling the liberals and Democrats who opposed her what they were: racists. Brown survived the attacks but Republicans missed the opportunity to inflict any wounds on the Left. By failing to call things by their right name, they gave liberals the safe conduct pass for libel they have come to rely on in our political culture.

Thanks to the bias liberals have built into the culture,

those *bien pensant* people of the Left who assassinated the character of Clarence Thomas and tried to destroy his career are still able to portray themselves as defenders of blacks. But bewildered conservatives who snicker, quite properly, when the idea of midnight basketball is presented as a serious anti-crime measure find themselves derided as racists. Better yet, conservatives who want to stigmatize illegitimacy in teenage mothers and save future generations from predictably miserable fates are racist *and* "sexist"!

In fact, the only party that has vocal racists among its elected officials is the Democratic Party, which has a forty-member caucus that recently lined up with the nation's premier race-hater, Louis Farrakhan. (It is a mark of conservatives' inability to understand their enemies—or their own principles—that Jack Kemp recently tried clumsily to line-up too.) At its Chicago convention, the Democratic Party selected its delegates by racial and gender quotas. It was a throw-back to the Democratic Party of the segregationist era. But did Bob Dole or any other Republican leader attempt to make a political point out of that?

Beyond Farrakhan, the "liberal" commitment to affirmative action preferences is not only reverse racism but also, in its bureaucratic superstructure, politically-correct Jim Crow. Yet conservatives are timid about making the charge that the Left—were the shoe on the other foot—would level in a heart beat. In the just-concluded election, the California



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Civil Rights Initiative was subjected to an obscene attack by the Left, which was so bereft of arguing points that it was forced to make David Duke the centerpiece of its campaign. ("Who supports Proposition 209?" asked the voice of Candace Bergen in one anti-209 ad. "Pete Wilson, Newt Gingrich and David Duke.") Did conservatives supporting Proposition 209 at least point out the obvious—that the racist Duke and the racist left-wing students and adult activists and administrators who participated in these smears were birds of a feather who share a commitment to racial apartheid? Hardly. What conservatives did in the face of this odious charade was to bite their tongues and hope that it would soon be over.

Affirmative action is racism. Yet Republicans avoided the word and shrank in embarrassment from the battle, as though it was they who had something to apologize for. Then, to compound their error, in the waning days of the campaign, as the Dole-Kemp effort lurched towards defeat and support for 209 swelled to landslide proportions, Republicans lunged hungrily to embrace the initiative, in an effort to appropriate its constituency. It was one of those maneuvers that gives opportunism a bad name.

Conservatives believe in definitions; the Left believes in epithets. The recently minted "mean-spirited" (which shows every sign of becoming permanent) is a good example of how effective their use of language is when conservatives don't challenge the assumptions which supply its meanings. "Mean-spirited" emanates from that Old Left melodrama perpetrated with such effectiveness by Marxists and other 19th Century romantics in which the only ones opposing their deadly schemes were bosses, slumlords, jailers,

Scrooges, plutocrats and flinty administrators of poorhouses and orphanages. These are the resonances "mean-spirited" picks up: the smug bourgeois of "I've got mine, Jack;" the "haves" who live in their gilded cages in gated communities, clipping the coupons produced by the exploited labor of the "have-nots," who toil in the dark Satanic mills and never make ends meet.

Leftist definitions, replicated by the media like a computer virus, also pre-determine the political outcome of the nation's racial debate, or at least load it so heavily as to make the conservative project a Sisphyeon task. "People of color," a term of the Left now enrolled in the general vocabulary, is designed to parallel the Marxist paradigm of "haves" and "have-nots" in the sense that there are the "people of color" and their "white oppressors." Forget for a moment that use of "people of color" conjures eerie memories of when the patronizing term of choice was "colored people." The fact is that the Japanese, the Koreans, the Indonesian friends of Bill Clinton, emigrees from the ruling castes of India, etc., hardly fit the radical schema. They are colored but they are neither "have-nots" nor oppressed. "Hispanic" covers high-achieving Cubans and European-stock Argentines, as well as lower-income Mexicans, and largely Mestizo Bolivians and Guatemalans. By incanting the magic words of the Left, those people who conquered the continent to the south become oppressed and candidates for affirmative

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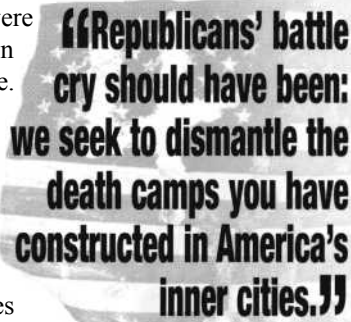
action privileges the moment they cross the border, legally or illegally, and join the other "people of color" groaning under the yoke of white oppression and racism.

The radical cartoon is a cartoon, of course. But it has enough resemblance to the big picture to make it work for the Left. "Mean-spirited" and other attack-words are able to stick because there is a tincture of truth in them. There are racists who are conservative, and conservatives often do have dismaying blind spots in their worldview. There is a willingness by more than a few proponents of welfare cuts, for example, to let the underclass stew in its awful juices. Yet if conservatives are guilty of a sin, it is one of omission: ignoring the intractable suffering and daunting structural problems created by thirty years of left-wing welfare. The Left's sin is the far greater one of commission, since it is its own policies which have sentenced the underclass to its present misery. But, with cheeky perversity, the Left successfully projects its guilt onto the mean-spirited" Right—first for pointing out the moral chaos caused by the welfare state, and secondly, for failing to produce a "humane" solution.

When the Republican congress failed to stick liberals with the crimes they had committed against the poor (a series of congressional hearings on welfare abuses, failures and frauds would have been useful), Newt Gingrich and his followers walked right into the charge of "mean-spirited." The argument they needed to make and—except sporadically—didn't, is that because welfare has addicted its wards to dependency, destroyed their families and blighted their lives, cutting welfare is not just good economics, it is morally imperative.

Republicans' battle cry should have been: we seek to dismantle the death camps you have constructed in America's

inner cities. Gingrich, who understood this and did speak about liberal culture "ruining the poor" should have prefaced his reform proposals with hearings and a press conference in which he surrounded himself with black welfare mothers crying, "You have broken up our families, driven away our husbands and fathers, destroyed our work ethic, failed to protect us against violent criminals and promoted homicidal behavior among our young. You must end a welfare system that is anti-black, anti-poor and anti-human." But instead of attacking from the high ground, conservatives mainly argued that they were not cutting welfare that much, as though welfare were the charitable institution Democrats make it out to be. In doing so, they stepped into the trap sprung for them by the Left, in which the argument revolves around the question of *How much hard-hearted-ness is enough?* In this contest whoever argues more is thereby damned.



**“Republicans' battle cry should have been: we seek to dismantle the death camps you have constructed in America's inner cities.”**

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If language is one arena where conservatives have shown the white flag, the war over historical memory is another. In the '70s, Marxist radicals overran America's liberal arts colleges and its professional intellectual associations. The Right didn't think these institutions important because they weren't inside the beltway. But the Left was following the operating manuals of Orwell's totalitarian state: "Whoever controls the past controls the future." As a result of their ■'

seizure of the academic establishment, the Left has been able to see to it that the specters of right-wing Scrooges and ruling class agendas, dark paranoid traditions and unleashed nativism are conjured daily in college classrooms, the training centers of the nation's new elites. Subtexts abound; at this point they are on automatic pilot and don't even need a teacher to explicate them.

Every movement of the Left derives its political power from the Myth of Oppression, which is for the devoted leftist what the parable of the Fall is for the conservative. Every leftist operates with an historical schema in mind—a passage from slavery to freedom, with the Left as the "chosen people" leading the way to the promised land. That is why the leftist message is as compelling to others as it is to itself. It places its adherents on the side of the victims (an unassailable position in democratic combats) as well as on the side of progress and thus of History itself.

But while the Left connects conservatives with a pseudo-history of domination and oppression, the Right fails to put forward a counter-history that connects Marxist ideas with the political gulags and economic miseries they created. Conservatives have not even begun to take credit for their successes in the Cold War. There have been few efforts to give Reagan's successful campaign to re-knit the tattered strands of Truman's containment policy its due, which means that those who want to deny it that due have carried the day.

In the writing of history, as well as in the running of states, the Left has been allowed to get away with intellectual murder. While the USSR was expiring, Princeton historian Stephen Cohen, who is still trotted out as a Soviet expert by CBS, was looking to Gorbachev to rescue the socialist regime and hoping he could reach back to a figure like Bukharin to



give it that old time moral authority Stalin had squandered! Our university faculties are filled with leftists like Cohen—and far worse. Bard College has an Alger Hiss Professorship—appropriately occupied by a small "c" communist who teaches that America is racist and that anti-Communism is a psychological disorder. The cognitive dissonance is deafening. Why not a chair named after Benedict Arnold?

An association of academic Marxists—Marxists!—claims 16,000 members. When Columbia University's history department celebrates two unrepentant Communist hacks, Angela Davis and Herbert Aptheker, the *New York Times* refers to the professors who masterminded the political event not as the ideological leftists they are but as "distinguished historians." And the only professor in America whose course is being investigated by a committee on ethics for being political is Newt Gingrich.

The irony is that while the Left lost the Cold War, it is winning the war of damage-control that allows it to explain away its defeat. Thus, the general acceptance of the left-wing cliché (which has become a cliché of the intellectual culture generally)—"We" didn't win the Cold War; "they" lost it, an outcome that would have occurred much more rapidly if "we" hadn't pursued a costly and dangerous foreign policy of opposing the Communist bloc. In this standard Left view the whole conflict stemmed from a Cold War hysteria, an unnecessary overreaction on the part of intolerant, McCarthyite, xenophobic America—exactly what the holder of the Alger Hiss Professorship teaches.

The same sort of thinking infects views of the domestic side of the Cold War: the revelation that there were spies and traitors among us. The reaction to recent revelations about

domestic Communist espionage on the part of conservatives has been a relatively complacent, "We told you so." Not only has there been no call for a war crimes tribunal, but no demand for the rehabilitation of Elizabeth Bentley, Whittaker Chambers, Elia Kazan and all the other "contemptible snitches" who preferred truth to treason and who have been vindicated as American heroes by the revelations coming from Venona and the archives in Moscow. Because conservatives have not hammered home the truth that domestic Communism was sometimes treason of the deed and invariably treason of the heart, left-wing academic historians continue to construct the Big Lie that the American Communist Party was comprised of idealists who were uninterested in international Soviet politics and concerned only in "social justice" here at home. In colluding, if only by silence, in the obliteration of the fact that the Communist Party was a foreign-directed and funded conspiracy to destroy America, conservatives allow their enemies to escape their own taint and to construct a myth in which "McCarthyism" was a greater threat to the nation than the anti-American Left.

What makes this important is that while the Communist Party is now gone, a desiccated page in the scrapbook kept by the likes of Angela Davis and Herbert Aptheker, the old time cry for "social justice," meaning a Marxist redistribution of individual income, is louder than ever. Consider an echo which sounded recently in *The New York Review of Books*. In the course of reviewing the Republican and Democratic conventions, the left-wing critic Garry Wills (notice how resonant the adjective can be) dropped the following remark: "By the standards of any other society, or of reason itself, the great and growing dis-

parity of wealth in America is a form of successful class warfare waged against the poor and the moderately well-off."

Ignore the empirical falseness of Wills' claim about the disparity of wealth and focus instead on the means by which its transfer is alleged to have been accomplished—a "successful class warfare." What possible meaning can these words have? Who has waged this war against the poor? What agency has singled out these particular individuals to hobble them in the scramble for economic rewards? What are we to make of the liberal majorities that have dominated American governments since the inception of the New Deal, instituting progressive income taxes and welfare measures that have redistributed trillions of dollars in transfer payments from the wealthy to the poor? If the wealthy are able to create the poor, in the first place, by ruthless "class warfare," why are they not able to control the state and block its redistributionist agendas?

**“The vast territories ceded by the Right in the culture have become the Golan Heights from which the Left trains its rockets on Middle America.”**

Wills' statement is just the incendiary blather of the Left. Yet in our elite culture it passes the test of high intellectual content, and echoes the sentiments of the Democratic leadership of the House. There is a continuum that links his allegations of "class warfare" to Pat Schroeder's statement that the Contract With America amounted to a "war on women" and Mario Cuomo's Democratic convention charge that "Republicans are the enemies of women, children and the

poor.

In the current cultural climate, the Left can make such charges about the Right and be portrayed as conducting a spirited debate. But when Pat Buchanan engaged in the same rhetoric from the other side of the spectrum, the liberal press easily marginalized him as a demi-fascist.

The vast territories ceded by the Right in the culture have become the Golan Heights from which the Left trains its rockets on Middle America. Not only the universities but the popular culture as well has become occupied territory, but conservatives don't have a coherent response to the terrorism that follows.

Consider the flips and flops of Republican spokesmen in addressing the issue of Hollywood, the media capital not only of America, but of the entire world. For decades, the Right saw Hollywood as vulgar and irrelevant. Then, when its importance in the struggle could no longer be denied, it decided that the entertainment industry was an implacable enemy. Bob Dole is symptomatic in his admission that he doesn't watch the movies he holds responsible for our moral decline. Even worse, when he decides to deride, out of a large number of stronger candidates, a feature starring the wife of one of the only two superstars in Hollywood who are out-of-the-closet Republicans, he shoots himself in the foot and kills an ally with friendly fire. All this to make a rhetorical point that was quickly forgotten and never particularly serious in the first place.

So ready are conservatives to be the losers in the culture wars that it seems inconceivable to them that Hollywood might actually be a *tabula rasa* on which they could inscribe their own messages. Or that there might be some conserva-

tives already there. For all its gestural liberalism, Hollywood is not Harvard. It is a big American business with no artificial barriers to entry by conservatives or anyone else. To attack Hollywood is, in effect, to think of oneself as an outsider in the most quintessentially American of geographies and to give up territory that once belonged to conservatives and ought to be reclaimed.

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**I**t is perhaps part of the conservative worldview to feel that the time is out of joint and the glass half empty. Conservatives want to believe that it's morning in America, but many feel in their hearts that because of the damage Leftism has done to the social fabric over the last thirty years we are really entering the long twilight struggle and perhaps things are beyond repair. As conservatives talk of family values, for instance, they worry that even functioning families seem, on the whole, to have become too dependent on forced feedings from the therapeutic state and lost forever their autonomy and sense of purpose. Even as conservatives try to re-instill values, they fear that in the post-modern world, a world invented by the Left, individuals have lost the instinct for a moral compass as well as the device itself, and will continue to walk through their lives like survivors of airplane disasters.

There is violence and incivility, and there are strange gender arrangements, and discordant messages from the popular culture. And it all seems inexorable, beyond comprehension, let alone change: what history feels like after history has ended. Worse yet, the Left thrives in this menacing, post-modernist, *Blade Runner* environment.

Being "progressive," the Left naturally sees progress in what conservatives know in their bones to be disintegration.

To leftists, any "progressive" change, such as that which enfranchises and entitles its designated victim groups is good—less because of the benefits that may or may not accrue to its clients (whose rising expectations the Left actually hopes will be unsatisfied and therefore turn bitter and revolutionary) than because of the way such changes perturb and (even better) deconstruct the status quo.

The Right reacts in a piecemeal, harrumphing sort of way to modern occasions, or with a libertarian obtuseness, or with a shrill millenarianism that has the appearance of maneuvering desperately to close the barn door after the horses are out. What is needed, instead, is a counter-attack that exposes the Left's support for changes in gender, family and behavior as not just misguided but as an invisible Trojan Horse which the radicals are trying to maneuver into the heart of that sanctuary of certainty and rationality in which society has traditionally lived. Not an intolerant assault on individuals and individual differences, but a firm insistence that these differences should not drive social policy and that certain norms should be maintained because they confer survivorship on society as a whole.

Conservatives, by their nature, like to be intrinsic. They like to have conventional lives of quiet achievement and hook themselves into the organic rhythms that are so much a part of their view of what life—a life of human limitations—is all about. In order to fight the Left successfully, conservatives must acknowledge that their traditional attitude is a form of complacency that can be self-destructive. Recognizing that politics is a moral equivalent of war does not mean that rules of combat, don't apply, or that there cannot be tactical detentes, or shifting coalitions, or that engagement invariably requires maximum levels of fire power. But it does mean

understanding the high stakes in the present culture conflict, and being ready to act on that understanding.

But it is not easy to feel confident that such preparedness will occur. Of all the portents suggesting that the Right just doesn't get it, consider a recent event at the Reagan Presidential Library. As the fall campaign was just starting to heat up, the Library announced that it would hold a day-long "fun-in" at the Library to celebrate the opening of a new exhibit titled "Back to the '60s." (And yes, the zero in the decade was defaced into a peace symbol).

The '60s, of course, was the moment it all came together and came apart for America, a decade whose long half-life continues to plague us today. No one recognized this better than Ronald Reagan himself, who first ran for governor of California by running against "Berkeley"—that symbol of the revolutionary decadence that had seized the day.

But that was then and this is now. Events at the Reagan Library during this "fun in" dealt with the '60s as if it were just more American graffiti, betraying an amnesia about Reagan's positions and statements during the decade that made it seem that the former President's Alzheimer's had spread to the curators as well.

Jon Wiener, an unreconstructed '60s radical who covered the fun-in for a Los Angeles paper couldn't believe his eyes. Recalling Reagan's famous 1964 speech nominating



“Being ‘progressive,’ the Left naturally sees progress in what conservatives know in their bones to be dis-integration.”

Barry Goldwater and warning of the tide of socialism that was steadily engulfing America, Wiener wrote: "Any serious exhibit about Reagan and the '60s, would put 'the speech' at its center, on a big screen in a darkened corner. Instead, Reagan's speech runs on a TV (the volume turned so low that no one was paying attention) in a room where visitors are greeted by a gigantic 'Love' poster. . . .The room is dominated by a VW Beetle painted pink and decorated with yellow flowers and butterflies, surrounded by life-size white-plaster figures wearing hippie garb, posed working on signs for a demonstration. The signs read 'Vets for Peace in Vietnam,' 'Hey, Hey LBJ—how many kids did you kill today?'"

Entering the room of the exhibit focused on Vietnam, the amazed Wiener finds no dominating imagery of POWs and MIAs; no commentary about the long totalitarian night that fell in Southeast Asia once the New Left got its way and Hanoi conquered the South. Instead, he finds a text that speaks of "a winless war. . .that weakened America's confidence and resolve," which, as he notes with pleasure, was "miles away from what Reagan was saying in the '60s."

And so it was. And so it goes.

The Reagan Library first opened as a shrine to America's victory in the Cold War. It is now rented out as the venue for a festival of feel-good memories about a decade that nearly destroyed America and threatens it still.

With a Right like this, who needs a Left?

—*Peter Collier and David Horowitz*

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