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LEFTWING FASCISM AND THE AMERICAN DREAM†

David Horowitz††

As I am sitting here, this panel strikes me as a kind of emblem of how far left the American Academy has shifted in the last generation. Here we are at a conference that is largely composed of what might be called dissidents in the current politically repressive university culture and on a panel that is devoted to the radical decade. Yet, all four of the panelists selected to discuss this decade are, in fact, veterans of the Left—three of the New Left, which dominated the sixties, and one of the Old Left, which dominated the thirties. And three of them are still men of the Left. I stand here as the only representative of a conservative perspective. I am an ex-leftist. There is no representative, for example, of that other radical movement of the sixties, which in the long run proved a lot more successful than the one represented here. That movement which began with the candidacy of Barry Goldwater and resulted first in the election of Ronald Reagan and now, with the Gingrich revolution, in the transformation of the U.S. Congress and the beginning of the end of the welfare state. This absence is a pathetic commentary on the monolithic culture that the Left has imposed on the American Academy in this generation. The intellectual dialogue of the academy is basically one in which factions of the Left speak to themselves.

I will add one more point by way of introduction. I feel the need to interject this out of a personal passion about the way the record of the sixties has been distorted by the Academic Left. I probably can agree with a lot of what Phil Altbach has to say about those years, but the idea that there was a serious repression in the sixties, and that radical organizations were heavily infiltrated by the FBI and other agencies of the state is ridiculous. I will give just two examples to show how this widely

† This article is based on a speech given by David Horowitz at the Academic Freedom Symposium.

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accepted idea is empty. My first example is that of the political terrorist cult which called itself the Weather Underground. The Weather Underground started off as a faction which took control of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). On their election to the SDS leadership in 1968, their leader, Bernadine Dohrn, declared that she was “a revolutionary communist.” One of the early acts of the new leadership was to dissolve SDS and shut down its offices announcing, “We’ve offed the pig.” They then held a “war council” in Flint, Michigan, at which Dohrn praised Charlie Manson as a revolutionary hero, and announced their intention of waging war on the United States. And they did issue a formal “declaration of war.”

After Flint, they went underground, issuing further “military communiques” and then started bombing selected targets. Their most celebrated act was a plot to blow up an army dance, which would have killed a lot of innocent young people, but which misfired and killed three of *their* “soldiers” instead. The announced intention of the Weather Underground was to start a race war, to “bring the war home.” They were, in short, a dangerous bunch of people. It took the authorities five years—*five years!*—to catch up with even a couple of these people (I believe there were three who were apprehended). The FBI and all the other instruments of the “repressive” state never did catch any of the Weather leadership or its army. In the end, they split into factions, conducted a purge among themselves, and then gave themselves up. In the five years of the Weather Underground’s guerrilla war, the FBI and other government agencies had no idea where they were or what they intended to do. Nor did anybody spend more than a few days in jail after they surfaced. This is not repression in any reasonable sense of the term. The myth of repression in the era of the New Left is just a self-serving, after-the-fact justification for a lot of adolescent mischief that in retrospect would just be embarrassing to those involved.

My second example is the riot that Tom Hayden and a few others, but mainly Hayden, organized at the Chicago Convention in 1968, in order to discredit the Hubert Humphrey liberals in the Democratic Party and elect Richard Nixon. The theory behind this strategy was “the worse the better” (i.e., the election of Richard Nixon would radicalize people whereas the election of Hubert Humphrey might “co-opt” them). Hayden’s success

in provoking the riot changed the course of American political history. But when a trial was held, the defendants were acquitted. The trial, as we all know, was an embarrassment to the prosecution and the state—not because Hayden and his co-defendants were innocent (Jerry Rubin even admitted later that they were not), but because the FBI and other police agencies were so inept in their surveillance of people who were proud of their seditious agendas, that they got the wrong conspirators in some instances and in the end did not really know the details of the conspiracy. In short, because America's safeguards against political repression were so strong, it was possible to provoke a riot in front of the television cameras of the nation with impunity.

So, the idea that there was repression in the sixties is just a sixties myth. In retrospect, if people were more honest, they would have to admit that several lives would probably have been saved and the nation itself spared a lot of grief if there had been more and better surveillance of groups like the Weather Underground and individuals like Tom Hayden who were self-proclaimed "revolutionaries" at war with America.

One more introductory point: My periodization of the sixties would be November 1963 and the assassinations of Kennedy and Diem to the truce of 1973, which ended America's military presence in Vietnam. By this time there was no significant domestic movement. Why? It is because Richard Nixon ended the draft two years earlier. At that historical moment, the so-called anti-war movement was revealed for what it was: an attempt by a lot of middle-class kids to avoid risking their lives for their country and for the cause of freedom around the world. In 1972, the Vietnamese allies of the New Left were facing their most critical crisis, but no one in the New Left gave a damn, or gave enough of a damn to go into the streets to demonstrate, because *their* lives were no longer on the line.

That is my understanding of the parameters of the sixties' New Left. But, if I am asked for the historic explanation of those developments, I really have to go back two centuries to the French Revolution and the beginning of the modern era. This was the epoch of the "bourgeois democratic" revolutions, which has defined the political spectrum ever since. These were revolutions that secularized society, that unleashed or, as Simon Schama has recently shown, consolidated an emerging capitalist

economy, created democratic polities and established philosophical individualism and the framework of civil liberty. The politics of the next two hundred years was dominated by conflicts between the proponents of democratic liberty and market economy, and the reactionary rejectionists of bourgeois liberalism—fascists on the right and socialists on the left.

Freedom, as Dostoyevsky and a library of writers have observed, is a threatening and humanly anomalous condition, as is life without a religious faith. In the wake of the French Revolution, there were two fundamental reactionary responses to these threatening conditions, which took the form of secular messianisms. J. L. Talmon has written a rich text on this history called *Political Messianism*. The two secular faiths that emerged from the crucible of the bourgeois revolution were nationalism and socialism. And, ever since, we have been facing revolts against bourgeois democracy in the name of nationalism or socialism or combinations of the two: fascism and national socialism. Our present campus ideology, multiculturalism, can be seen as intellectually in the latter tradition, incorporating the elements of socialism into a particularist vision. This particularism is called “identity politics,” as a way of sugar-coating its content, which is the politics of ethnicity and race. To name it accurately as a politics of ethnicity and race, of course, would be to draw attention to its fascist roots, which would be, well, politically incorrect.

Since history is mainly written by the Left, this entire historical reality has been obscured. This obfuscation allows leftists to identify their antecedents as having been “premature fascists.” For example, these writers forget the affinities of the fascism and socialism (Mussolini, after all, began as a Leninist) or that it was the communist Left in Germany whose alliance with Hitler in the early thirties helped to destroy the Weimar Republic. The same myopia has protected the current academic Left from recognizing its profound intellectual affinities with European fascism (a number of non-leftist academics, including Allan Bloom, Gene Veith and Stephen Holmes have corrected this oversight, but their corrections have been brushed off or simply ignored). The dominant intellectual tradition of the contemporary academy is that of Marx and Nietzsche, Heidegger and Gramsci, Derrida and Foucault. This is the intellectual tradition that spawned nazism and communism. Their common

theme, which encompasses the political agendas of both the socialist Left and fascist Right, is hostility towards bourgeois society and political liberalism.

In the American university today, which is more intellectually monolithic and less academically free than at any time since its governance by religious institutions, you would be hard put to find the teachings of free market individualists like Ludwig von Mises or Frederick Hayek represented on its faculties. They certainly would not be rammed down students' throats the way the rantings of collectivist ideologues like Angela Davis ritually are. The attack on individualism, the decentering of the individual, the elevation of group claims over individual rights, the cult of irrationality and ethnicity (including gender and sex "ethnicity")—this is the current orthodoxy of the academy.

For a brief spell between 1963 and 1965, the New Left appeared to be an aberration in the history of the totalitarian Left. From 1963 to 1965, there was a definite flowering of political openness and anarchy in its ranks, justifying its self-identification as a "new" Left. This was a useful identification after the debacle of Stalinism, just as the self-identifications "post-Marxist," "post-structuralist," "post-modern," and "post-colonial" have provided a useful linguistic tool for current leftists to distance themselves from the crimes of socialism, to which they so generously contributed, while the Cold War was regnant.

By the end of the sixties decade, however, the so-called New Left had revealed itself to be just like every other Left. Its icons were variously Vietnamese totalitarians or Cuban totalitarians or Nicaraguan totalitarians, but always totalitarians of one kind or another. How did the New Left, which prided itself on being anti-totalitarian, end up supporting Ho Chi Minh, Castro, and the Sandinistas? How did intelligent "democratic socialists" like the editors of *Dissent*, stay on the Left despite its renewed degeneration toward totalitarian agendas? Because their primary animus was against America and American institutions; against bourgeois democracy and private property. That, more than anything else, is what animates the Left, and what unifies it: the destructive agenda against liberal culture.

All people on the Left—I have said this before but it needs to be said again—are the philosophic children of Rousseau. They all believe that the root of evil is society. Leftism is a secular religion and therefore cannot accept that the fundamen-

tal problems we describe as social are rooted in our individual natures; that they are problems that arise from the human condition; that—as Solzhenitsyn put it, evil runs through the human heart and through all human hearts. As children of Rousseau they believe, rather, that social institutions are the cause of evil and injustice, and conditions like income inequality and poverty. The core of leftist belief is that if social institutions could be changed, we could usher in the millennium, or something close to it; that there could, in fact, be an end to war, poverty, “sexism,” racism, et cetera. All that stands in the way of this great transformation are people who do not think that these institutional changes should be made. In other words, what is standing in the way of human salvation, ultimately, is bad attitudes. Is it surprising that everybody on the Left, sooner or later, and despite all good intentions, has the impulse to control other people’s thoughts? All that is required to create a paradise on earth is to get these bad ideas out of people’s heads. That is the basic reason that progressives have been responsible for so much repression and bloodshed. That is why progressives invented the *gulag*. That is what sensitivity training and speech codes in the academy are all about. It is only that they have conquered English Departments and Women’s Studies courses instead of the state that makes them risible and pathetic rather than anything else. What impels progressives in power to be so ruthless and to cause such immense human suffering is that the goal itself is so great. If you can really create a world without war or poverty, what wouldn’t justify that?

What happened to the New Left in the sixties—and actually had already begun to happen in the fifties—was the decline of the belief, in fact the collapse of the belief, in the working class as the agency of revolutionary change. That is what has led to the convergence of the doctrines of socialism and fascism in the current Academic Left. The proletariat was a universal class, and socialism was a universalist doctrine. With the collapse of belief in the proletariat, there was a consequent and inevitable collapse of international socialism into a species of “national” socialism, which is to say fascism, as leftists unwilling to give up their faith in an earthly paradise, built their kingdom on an ever narrower base. We know what this narrower base is: gender, sexuality and/or race.

Today, the ersatz proletariats targeted by the Left are

women, gays, blacks and the ethnicities officially designated “oppressed.” In considering the preferences of affirmative action policies, which include blacks, women, Native Americans, Hispanics and Pacific Islanders, did you ever stop to wonder why these are the designated oppressed groups and not others? How did Hispanics qualify as a designated oppressed group? Isn’t there currently an Indian rebellion in Chiapas? Aren’t Hispanics the ruling caste throughout Latin America? But if a Mexican walks across a border, he suddenly sheds his conquistador status and becomes a designated oppressed, qualified for preferential privileges designed to redress some historical grievance. Do you ever wonder why it is Native Americans, African-Americans, Hispanics, and Pacific Islanders—*Pacific Islanders*—who are the ethnic groups whose oppression is singled out for privileged status? Well, this is the group from whom Americans stole land, and one is the group against whom Americans committed a grave historical crime, and one group harbors significant revanchist desires to take back the southwest, and the other represents the only colony America ever had: the Phillippines. Affirmative action policy expresses the continuing agenda of the radical Left, which hates America, and which hates its most characteristic institutions—the free market and private property—the foundation of all our liberties. The multiculturalism of the tenured Left is merely the old hate-America mentality of the Left wrapped in the banner of altruism that has always been the Left’s means of cloaking its hostile and destructive agendas. Hatred and resentment are the true radical passions.

In describing the legacy of the sixties, I will pick one emblem of its success. Of all the communities in which the Left was active in the sixties, nowhere was its influence as significant or as lasting as in the political leadership of the black community. October 16, 1995 was the most disgraceful day in the history of black America. It was the day of the “Million Man March”—the largest gathering of African-Americans ever assembled—behind the leadership of a rabidly racist, anti-Semitic, anti-homosexual, anti-Catholic, *kook*. Are you actually familiar with the pseudo-religion of Louis Farrakhan and his followers? It is a religion that claims that white people were invented by a mad scientist named Yacub 6,000 years ago in a science experiment that went awry. The blood of the original humans, who were black, was diluted to the point where they

turned white. According to the Nation of Islam, whites are blue-eyed devils who will be exterminated on the Day of Reckoning which is not far off. That is what they believe. That is what the most important leader of the African-American community today preaches. That is what civil rights "leaders" like Jesse Jackson got behind on October 16, 1995. Today, the African-American community is the most racist ethnic community in America. Let me put that in a more palatable way: The African-American community is the only ethnic community in America that will march *en masse* behind its own racists.

In the making of this disgrace, the New Left played a seminal role. I have not the time here to rehearse the full sordid history that led up to this event. Suffice it to say that in the early sixties, the Nation of Islam was an isolated, despised cult. It was the New Left behind Stokely Carmichael and the radicals of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) that denigrated and then discarded the leadership of Martin Luther King in favor of the racist and rejectionist Malcolm X. It was the New Left that rejected integration in favor of black power and perpetuated the libel that "institutional racism" pervades American life in order to discredit America's manifest good intentions and heritage of tolerance. But listen closely to the Farrakhanite message of hate and its white devil theory of history. Where did you hear that before? Probably in English 101: The tyranny of dead white males. In fact, the demonization of a race—the white race is the only race that now can be officially demonized in America—is the hallmark work of the New Left.

The Left used to demonize capitalists. But for the post-modern Left, class war has been supplanted by race war. In a way, Stalinism had much more integrity than current leftist ideology because it posited a universal class that was composed of blacks, whites, and women, and, in fact, of all ethnicities and genders. The idea of the Old Left was that private property was the obstacle to human progress. The proletariat was a revolutionary class because it lacked property. When the proletariat liberated itself by abolishing private property, it would liberate everyone. But now, just as the liberators themselves have become blacks and other "oppressed" minorities, the enemy has become white males. The revolutionary agenda has become a form of racism. As a result of the agitation of the Left, America

is experiencing worse racial tensions and more extreme forms of race consciousness than at any time in memory.

But, in fact, this country has had, over the last thirty years, the greatest cultural revolution in terms of the civil advancement of black Americans and all minorities, that any country has ever had in all recorded history. Yet, this tremendous achievement has been made relatively invisible by radical ideology and multicultural blather. At a UCLA forum at which I spoke earlier this year, a black student complained about the dominant white culture, saying “we’re invisible.” It is a complaint that is parallel to that of Catherine MacKinnon and other feminists who claim that women have been “silenced.” This is just as ludicrous. I said to the student: “Look, there’s only one national figure in this country who has a national holiday to honor his birthday, and that is Martin Luther King. Not only that, in order to secure this day for King, the white majority agreed to bump the father of the country, its founder, George Washington, who no longer has such an honor. Not only that, it was Ronald Reagan, a conservative president, who did this.” The level of paranoia that the Left has succeeded in creating on issues like this is hard to measure because it is so great.

In closing, I would like to point out that the group that is regularly excluded from academic platforms, including this one, is the group that made up the other radical movement of the sixties. Its exclusion, under the dispensation of the new academic McCarthyism, is fairly complete. There are whole academic libraries made up of the memoirs and oral histories of communist party hacks and New Left activists and organizations with anti-American agendas. But, one would be hard-put to identify even three memoirs written by the rank and file members of the Goldwater movement or academic inquiries into what *they* believed and what *their* agendas were.

If you look, you will find that, as a group, they were fairly libertarian; that theirs was a revolt against a welfare state created by socialists calling themselves liberals, that is even now achieving new victories with the “Contract With America.” They were the defenders of freedom against the Communist onslaught during the Cold War, and today they are the defenders of the single standard of America’s culture of individual liberty, which is under attack by the same domestic forces of the Left. Theirs is a revolt against liberal racism which holds that black Americans

cannot live up to the same moral standards as whites and cannot compete in the same intellectual and economic arenas. Liberal racism and its programs are the principle yoke on the African-American community today. The worst imposition on blacks since slavery has been the welfare state, which in many black communities has destroyed the most fundamental underpinnings of independence: the family and the moral culture of self-reliance and individual responsibility. The worst cracker could not devise a better ideology to cripple minorities than liberalism.

Today, under the leadership of liberals, the civil rights cause is reaching ever new lows. At the disgraceful Million Man March, Jesse Jackson announced the new civil rights cause: crack dealers! Jackson's complaint is that crack, being a black drug of choice, is punished with heavier penalties than powder cocaine. Listen up Jesse, if crack cocaine is bad for blacks, then the fact that the penalties are heavy is good for blacks. Jackson's rant at the March is just an index of how perverse the logic of the Left has become. According to the Left, America—the most tolerant and diverse nation on the face of the earth—is racist. This libel serves the Left but it does not serve black Americans or any other minority. It only encourages them to turn their backs on opportunity that is not available to them anywhere else. When you hear the claim that America is a racist society these days, it is usually backed up with evidence like: The police stop young black males on suspicion that is sometimes unfounded. Well, of course, police stop young black males. Of course they're suspicious of young black males. Thanks to the breakdown of the inner city black family, one in three young black males is a convicted criminal. And, thanks to the double standards established by liberal racism, nobody can bring themselves to say this. The statement is always couched in the form that one in three black males is involved in some stage of the criminal justice system—either in prison, on parole, or on probation. Now stop and think for a moment. How do you get to be in prison, on parole, or on probation? The non-Orwellian way to say this is that one in three black males is a convicted criminal.

Here is another horrifying statistic. Last year there were 100 black women raped by white men, but there were 20,000 white women raped by black men. We all know that rape is an act of hostility and anger. That will tell you more than the next ten editions of the *New York Times* about the state of mind in the

black community. This state of mind has been created in part by the endless propaganda of leftist ideologues and their fellow travelling liberal allies in the media, who have helped to convert the class war into a race war, although I am sure if you were to scratch any ten leftists they would say that they were very uncomfortable with what they have created (and would deny that they had anything to do with it).

I believe, however, that we are thankfully coming to the end of the sixties. I think that the election of 1994 is the first indication of this, although you might say it is also the triumph of the other sixties. America is a wonderful country—tolerant, despite its bigots, and ready to accept almost any idea and try it out for awhile. But, when the idea does not work, the country rejects it. And that is what is happening to all of those ideas that were promoted in the sixties; whether it is drugs that led to the drug epidemic; whether it is unlimited promiscuous sex that led to the AIDS epidemic; whether it is the idea that police are an occupying army in the ghetto (a famous sixties slogan that abetted a crime wave in the seventies and eighties); or whether it is the breakdown of the family which was encouraged in the sixties and by feminists in the seventies, and now is the primary cause of poverty in the nineties. We have come to the end of these ideas because the American people have tried them and, outside the university, the people are finally standing up and saying no, and I am very grateful for that.

