

AMERICA'S CULTURAL REVOLUTION: HOW THE RADICAL LEFT CONQUERED EVERYTHING

(CHRISTOPHER RUFO)

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Christopher Rufo has earned a stellar reputation as both analyst of, and strategist against, the poison of “critical theory.” In *America's Cultural Revolution*, with verve, precision, and clarity, he explains what critical theory is, where it came from, and how, over the past fifty years, it was used by the Left to conquer America. His real target, however, is much older, because critical theory is merely the latest iteration of Left ideology, inevitably corrosive and parasitical, conceived in the Enlightenment and birthed in 1789. And, no surprise, the fruit of the Left's latest conquest has been the same as always—the extreme degradation of a decent, productive society.

Rufo's explicit purpose is to inspire a counter-revolution. This is a tall order. After all, despite successes Rufo and his allies have had in several quarters, the Left today utterly dominates all areas of American life, not only all levels of government, directly or indirectly, but also private enterprise, education, media, culture, the military, and religious institutions. That this has led America to a dead end is irrelevant to whether Left hegemony will continue. The Left always ignores its perfect record of failure in its efforts to create a new society; they will only drop the power they have grasped if they are forced.

Nobody voted for any of this, so how did it happen? In Rufo's telling, the updated Left project began with Herbert Marcuse. Of the four individuals Rufo profiles, Marcuse was the smartest, and his theories formed the bridge between the class-focused pre-1960s Left and the race-focused Left which spawned in the Age of Aquarius. Marcuse was a German Marxist, who emigrated to America in the 1930s along with other members of the so-called Frankfurt School (a term Rufo does not use), and immediately began injecting their venom into America (and back into Germany—Marcuse was one of the chief architects of the Allies' postwar denazification program, which he used to try to usher in Communist domination).

What did Marcuse, and all the modern Left, want? The same thing the Left has always wanted, ever since the serpent in Eden, the first

leftist, spoke to Eve. (If I had an objection to this book, it would be its subtitle, "How the Radical Left Conquered Everything." There is no radical Left; there is only the Left, always and everywhere the enemy of mankind.) They wanted to destroy the deep structures of the West, the most successful society the world had ever known, in order to achieve total emancipation from all unchosen bonds, combined with forced total equality of individuals, in order to usher in utopia. It cannot be overemphasized that the philosophical, or rather psychological, goal behind Left evil is the belief that the perfection of mankind is not only achievable, but just ahead, glimpsable around the next bend in the road. This necessarily implies that no price is too high to pay, right now, to reach this goal—especially if the price paid is merely the lives of men and women who oppose this glorious future, as shown by their refusal to worship the new gods on offer.

However, a necessary, and historically unique, ingredient for the triumph of the Left in modern America was tension between blacks and whites. Without this history, Left advances would have been far less likely. The white man, or at least white elites, had long flagellated himself over the bad treatment, real or imagined, of black men and women by America and Americans. Simultaneously, the black man often felt he had always gotten a raw deal, and the Left fanned the flames of resentment and envy, encouraging black people to reject personal responsibility and self-examination in favor of cultivating grievances, which justified never-ending demands. The Left thus used both white guilt and black resentment as essential tools; if those did not exist, it is not clear anything else could have carried the Left to such total dominance.

But that is jumping ahead. In the early 1960s, the Left was retrenching. They had failed, despite their best efforts, to conquer America for "traditional" Communism. Therefore, in 1964, Marcuse wrote *One-Dimensional Man*, an updating of Marxist theory, responding to the working class's universal rejection of Marxism. Marcuse claimed workers had failed to serve the revolution because they had been seduced by "an ever-more-comfortable life." Certainly, they remained alienated and unfree, but could not, and could not be brought to, recognize their own sad situation. The solution was to ignore the workers, to substitute emancipation of the supposedly marginalized for emancipation of the worker, and to call for rule by an intellectual elite, composed of

men such as Marcuse, which would “educate” the rest of society. This was to be achieved by violent revolution—nothing new there, but the engine of the revolution was now to be “ghettoized” underclass blacks, rather than workers.

Marcuse’s plan seemed like a pipe dream at the time, but five years later it roared to life and became the engine of the New Left, and Marcuse became a global superstar. Even though he was now old, he wrote prolifically, aiming to assist in creating the “total rupture” that would initiate the Millennium, including a “qualitative change” in human nature “in accordance with the new sensitivity and the new consciousness.” To this end, Marcuse famously openly advocated violent repression, by the state in cooperation with private entities, of any person or belief opposed to the Left, casting repression as “liberating tolerance” and necessary to bring the masses to a state of true consciousness. This is and always has been a standard Left tactic; Marcuse’s innovation was to bring repression out of the darkness into the light, and celebrate it, while providing a bogus intellectual justification. This made the implementation of, and maintenance of, violent repression much more feasible, with the results on display all around us in America today.

At a different time in history, Marcuse and his work would quickly have been forgotten. But at the point of decision for America, the 1960s, his influence became all-pervasive, the spark which lit gunpowder trails that collectively destroyed America. Why the Left became ascendant at this point is a good question, but it is undeniable that the Left has been gaining ground steadily throughout the West for fifty years, whereas prior to that time it had made significant inroads, but was far from dominant, and had been unable to fracture the foundations of American society. In a different forum, Rufo notes that “The man who can discover, shape, and distribute information has an enormous amount of power. The currency in our postmodern knowledge-regime is language, fact, image, and emotion. Learning how to wield these is the whole game.” In other words, Rufo believes controlling the narrative, in all organizations and forums, is what matters, and in his book this is largely what he outlines as the Left’s path to dominance.

For the Left’s project, facts are always irrelevant. Most important is emotional manipulation, which in the West has always been a key tool, maybe the key tool, in the Left’s attempt to rule the narrative. It

is worth noting, and it may explain much of the past fifty years, that emotional arguments are far more effective at changing public opinion in a feminized society, and nobody can doubt that America is a vastly more feminized society than it was in 1960. But feminization leading to narrative control is not the entire explanation. The great wealth accruing to the nation, the result of hundreds of years of hard work by white men, allowed parasitism to flourish—in any sensible society, a man such as Marcuse would not have been able to feed himself, yet he and millions of others became full-time freeloaders on the productive. The Left was able to get traction by selling the idea that we could all have our cake and eat it too—if you support the Left, you get meaning in your life, you don't have to work, and you can do whatever you want all day long.

Regardless of why Marcuse caught fire, the thought of Marcuse, of various disciples, and of others, especially a grab-bag of charismatic black thugs who were seen as saviors by credulous and self-loathing whites, was all thrown into a cauldron to cook up a noxious stew. The result was several years of Left extreme violence, thousands of bombings and scores of murders, in service of the idea that killing would immediately bring on the revolution, which would, with total certainty, usher in a permanent heaven on earth. The memory of this violence has been wholly suppressed, and those who led it, such as the Weathermen Bernardine Dohrn and Bill Ayers, along with Angela Davis (the second of the four figures Rufo specifically profiles), richly rewarded instead of being punished. Yet the revolution failed to arrive, and as always with propaganda of the deed, the perpetrators isolated themselves and lost, rather than gained, support for their cause.

Marcuse and his circle saw in this not any failure of their ideology, but rather a “Thermidorian reaction”—that is, that the forces against which the revolution was to be fought had won the battle. The sensible realized that the violent, cultish behavior of the Weathermen and the Black Panthers had been counterproductive; the not-sensible died in shootouts or with heroin needles in their arms. The considered response, the next iteration of the Left wheel, in the early 1970s, was to turn to the famous “long march through the institutions,” a phrase originated by the German Rudi Dutschke, and modeled on Mao's Long March during the Chinese Civil War (though the term came from Antonio Gramsci, who died in 1937).

In painstaking and masterful detail Rufo shows how, though it took nearly fifty years, this process first infiltrated, then dominated, the universities (led by Paulo Freire, the third figure Rufo analyzes), and from there spread into every segment of American society. He pulls together the several threads which over decades wove this poisonous web. These include, most importantly, critical race theory (the creation of Derrick Bell, the fourth figure Rufo profiles) and intersectionality. Again, race was crucial—it was, and is, the tentpole of intersectionality, the clever, and largely new, Left claim that the supposedly oppressed, ranging from women to sexual deviants, form a unity, who by acting together can seize power and distribute stolen goodies on the basis of supposed oppression.

Given Left premises and the power granted to the Left by a complacent ruling class that shared many assumptions with the Left and refused to act to counter the Left at any point, some variation on the American present was probably inevitable. But Rufo does us a great service by expertly tracing exactly how we got here. For example, he demonstrates how very early on this latest iteration adopted language now in common currency, such as “white privilege” and “institutionalized racism.” New language was deliberately designed both to mold public consciousness and to “precondition the population for left-wing political conclusions.” The strategy was less violence; more manipulation. The result, at every level of American society, is the total implementation of Marcuse’s vision of a society where wrongthink is suppressed by force, and propaganda is utterly ubiquitous.

As always, always, when the Left gains power, the actual results are repugnant to anyone who does not obtain his life’s meaning from living and breathing Left politics. The Left can point to no place they have not ruined when given the chance, but this never stops them trying again. Rufo refers to where we are, at what is hopefully the peak of Left hegemony, as the “new nihilism,” and this is a good way of putting it. Nihilism is most visible in the demand to destroy everything in our society, from the family to statues of heroes, that might contradict or slow down the march to total Left victory, or remind us of our glorious past. It is also visible, though perhaps less dramatically, in the Left’s massive program of theft. A great deal of Left organization and effort revolves around stealing money and goods, to be transferred from the

productive to the parasitical, as well as honors and privileges, to be transferred from those who earned them to those who could never earn them.

The goal of Marcuse and his successors was to “reshape every domain of human life.” If by “reshape” you mean “ruin,” they succeeded spectacularly. But we are not the first. Quite a few societies have been here before, on the greased slide to chaos and destruction. It inevitably gets worse, until the counter-revolution (though past counter-revolutions have not been nearly thorough enough, a mistake we should not make). As always when the Left gains power, nothing new, good, or original is or can be created, and the institutions taken over no longer are able to function to achieve their original goals. Stupidities and horrors abound. California mandates the worship of Aztec gods. New York pays billions to those who failed objective tests for teacher competency. BLM steals millions in money donated by morons and suckers. And in Seattle, we get the warlordism of CHAZ, what the Left wants for the entire country, the Left-ruled free-fire zone briefly conjured in central Seattle in 2020, which would have been laughable if it hadn't been so evil (but which would have lasted a maximum of minutes if five tough men from Appalachia had showed up with guns).

That total chaos is not yet the norm in today's America is merely the result of still being able to consume what remains of our seed corn; wait a few years and check back in. We are just travelling along the rainbow to see where it ends. If we are honest, we already know where it ends—not with a pot of intersectional gold, but with a charnel house drenched in raw sewage, after which we will have to pick up the pieces and scrub our societies clean again. It is past time to end these iterations once and for all, if we can.

So what does Rufo tell us to do? Rufo's aim in writing this book is, I think, two-fold. First, to educate, in opposition to the Left propaganda machine. And second, to recommend action. What action? Counter-revolution. What does that mean, though? Here, Rufo is a little opaque, and I suspect, esoteric. He recommends “ruthlessly” fighting back, he says we should not “assume control over the centralized bureaucratic apparatus, but smash it.” Still, he puts no real meat on those bones, probably because what that means will have to be determined by opportunity and circumstance.

The core realization one comes to from this book is that we need to accept we can't live with these people, the five or ten percent of our nation who lead or are most active in supporting the Left. Leaving aside actual war, the best strategy is pitilessly breaking the back of Left capability in every place that we can. In practice, this means mostly on the local and state level, for now at least. Yes, the Left has enormous power to reverse such gains, and to persecute leaders in such efforts, as we see in the terroristic machinations of the Department of "Justice." But that is no reason not to try, and if history is any guide, a relatively small critical mass of such victories will encourage a Left overreaction that can be used to destroy the Left, with a (metaphorical, perhaps) whiff of grapeshot.

Rufo's book has a crucial role in this process, because it is perfectly pitched to those who are not fully aware. He wants people to get angry, and they should be angry. Anger is necessary to make changes. Knowledge is power, the ability to know how to translate anger into action, and to make sure the Left is never permitted to rise again.

Rufo wisely does not recommend adopting Left tactics. He wants citizens to be informed and to grasp how they have been lied to. But he rejects that we should lie or rely on propaganda. We don't need to, because the great advantage of the Right is that reality is on our side, and merely showing the truth is enough, at least for anybody not blinded by ideology. Nor does Rufo, unlike some putatively on the Right, recommend that we try to implement our own version of the long march. That strategy was successful for the Left because they took advantage of the naivete and good faith of the average American; they will never make the mistake of extending the same to us. Less obvious is that we could never have done it in the first place, because unlike those on the Left, those on the Right generally do not define their life goals, do not achieve meaning, through trying to change mankind into something it is not. This is the great disadvantage of the Right. We prefer to simply lead our lives, to form families, to build, to grill. In a society where the average person is encouraged to be politically active, those on the Left who dedicate their lives to that project will always greatly outnumber those on the Right—even more so if, as today, billions of dollars are dedicated to pay those on the Left to do so. There are today millions of total losers, people with no meaning in their lives other than political

action, who live for nothing but advancing the Left. The counter-revolution must restore the balance.

Rufo does not here list his narrow, specific political goals, although he has in other forums. His basic message is that this is a struggle for power, and that the Right needs to step up to the plate. But I can think of several specific goals that should be part of the counter-revolution. We should fully restore the right to free association. The so-called Civil Rights Act, and all its myriad progeny, is the root cause of a great deal of the Left's power. We should choke off the Left's supply of money, whether by Bud Light-type actions, or, ultimately, more direct methods (defunding is, I should note, one of Rufo's explicit recommendations). We should ensure that in every place and time our friends are rewarded and our enemies punished; the Right has never done either. We should re-masculinize our society; this is always an inoculation against the Left, which is why they fear and loathe, with seemingly strange vigor, young men improving themselves through diet and exercise. No doubt there is much more, but we can start with these.

Whatever the specifics we will adopt, Rufo's book will be extremely valuable in making them possible. Very often, books such as this are written merely to satisfy the author's vanity, and to curry favor within his small circle. *America's Cultural Revolution* is a shining exception, a book made for, and suitable for, everyone. This book, perfectly pitched to educate and inspire, may just help turn the tide. Buy ten copies and distribute them to your friends, even your friends on the Left. You'll be doing America a favor.