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THEY SAID IT

Critical self-consciousness means, historically and politically, the creation of an elite of intellectuals. A human mass does not 'distinguish' itself, does not become independent in its own right without, in the widest sense, organising itself: and there is no organisation without intellectuals, that is without organisers and leaders... But the process of creating intellectuals is long and difficult, full of contradictions, advances and retreats, dispersal and regrouping, in which the loyalty of the masses is often sorely tried.

Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebook*, 1929-1931.

In this Issue

Obama, Ayers, and the Long March Through the Institutions.

And Lead Us Not Into Temptation.

OBAMA, AYERS, AND THE LONG MARCH THROUGH THE INSTITUTIONS.

The general consensus among the pundits, pollsters, and assorted prognosticators is that Barack Obama helped himself tremendously in the three presidential debates this fall, not because he was particularly persuasive or because he forced his opponent to err, but because he managed to "look" presidential. Apparently, among the chattering classes, the great concern about Obama was whether he'd be able to pass himself off as a normal guy to most Americans, or if he'd come across as the radical leftist that he actually is.

They needn't have worried. Obama was never going to buckle. He was never going to give McCain (or Hillary before him) the same opportunity that John Kerry gave George Bush or that Michael Dukakis gave the other George Bush. He was always going to remain the nice, respectable-seeming, moderately tempered, moderately disposed, moderate politician, the kind of guy his running mate once described as "articulate and bright and clean and a nice-looking guy."

After all, that is who Obama wants you to think he is. That is who his radical leftist friends and supporters want you to think he is. That is who both he and they have been working for roughly two decades to convince us that he is. In so many ways, Barack Obama is, in fact, "The One" whom they've been waiting for.

This is, we should note up front, a long and complicated tale. Actually, it's several long and complicated tales. But let us start with the most immediately germane particulars and work our way back, in reverse chronological order.

For Obama, our story begins not where his memoirs begin, in Indonesia or in Hawaii or in any other exotic locale. But in Chicago.

In 1987, Barack Obama had been a “community organizer” in Chicago for just about two years. And he had done the things community organizers do. He had tried to change the world, from the bottom up, defending the defenseless, helping the helpless, and working for the workers. He had done his best to start his own revolution. As he wrote in his first memoir, *Dreams of my Father*:

When classmates in college asked me just what it was that a community organizer did, I couldn’t answer them directly . . . Instead, I’d pronounce on the need for change. Change in the White House, where Reagan and his minions were carrying on their dirty deeds. Change in the Congress, compliant and corrupt. Change in the mood of the country, manic and self-absorbed. Change won’t come from the top, I would say. Change will come from a mobilized grass roots.

But it didn’t work. There was no revolution. The grass roots couldn’t be sufficiently mobilized. The country, much less the world, was resistant to change. So he decided instead, to change himself and to change his tactics. *The New Republic’s* John Judis explains:

In late October 1987, Barack Obama and Jerry Kellman took a weekend off from their jobs as community organizers in Chicago and traveled to a conference on social justice and the black church at Harvard. During an evening break in the schedule, they strolled around campus in their shirtsleeves, enjoying the unseasonably warm weather. Two-and-a-half years earlier, Kellman had hired Obama to organize residents of Chicago’s South Side. Now, Obama had something to tell his friend and mentor . . .

Obama told Kellman that he feared ending up destitute and unhappy like his dad. “He wanted to marry and have children, and to have a stable income,” Kellman recalls.

But Obama was also worried about something else. He told Kellman that he feared community organizing would never allow him “to make major changes in poverty or discrimination.” To do that, he said, “you either had to be an elected official or be influential with elected officials.” In other words, Obama believed that his chosen profession was getting him nowhere, or at least not far enough. Personally, he might end up like his father; politically, he would fail to improve the lot of those he was trying to help.

And so, Obama told Kellman, he had decided to leave community organizing and go to law school. Kellman, who was already thinking of leaving organizing himself, found no reason to argue with him. “Organizing,” Kellman tells me, as we sit in a Chicago restaurant down the street from the Catholic church where he now works as a lay minister, “is always a lost cause.” Obama, circa late 1987, might or might not have put it quite that strongly. But he had clearly developed serious doubts about the career he was pursuing.

What Obama had come to realize was the same thing that countless “revolutionaries” and activists had come to realize for generations before him, namely that it is a great deal of fun to talk about changing the world from the bottom up and creating a revolution, either real or symbolic, but it is far easier and far more practical to try to change the system from within the system, to “sell out” and become a cog in the machine. And that’s what he did.

He went to Harvard. He got his law degree. He took a job at a left-leaning law firm. He became a law school lecturer. And then he became an actual elected politician, winning his first race for a seat in the Illinois state senate.

Now, as fortune would have it, the last of these undertakings was accomplished with the aid and encouragement of a man who had traveled a similar, though admittedly far more radical and violent, road as had Obama. Bill Ayers, the infamous founder of “The Weather Underground,” also set out to change the world from the bottom up and also eventually sold out and joined the establishment.

True, the two came from vastly different circumstances: Obama the child of a series of broken homes and the saving grace of a grandparent’s love; and Ayers the very definition of a “child of privilege.” Obama’s “revolution” involved organizing protests, while Ayers’ included planting bombs and killing people, be it intentionally or accidentally. And Obama’s decision to abandon his revolution was prompted by the futility of the struggle and the desire to make a more serious, more substantial contribution to the causes he held dear, while Ayers’ was prompted by federal agents, seven years on the run from the law, and a very narrow escape from prosecution and prison on account of a technicality. Still, both followed the same road from youthful passion and fury to middle-aged pragmatism.

But while both abandoned their activist zeal and modified their tactics, there is no evidence whatsoever that either modified his ideology or his ultimate desire to remake the world in a leftist image. In fact, the evidence suggests precisely the opposite.

We have noted before the failure of the McCain campaign both to understand and to capitalize on Obama’s connection to Ayers. As we have said, the point is not that Ayers was a terrorist and remains unrepentant. The point is that Ayers despises American culture, economics, and history and continues to seek to destroy that society and replace it with a radical left wing model. *And that he has had Obama’s assistance in working to achieve that end.*

Bill Ayers, the domestic terrorist who, ironically enough, on September 11, 2001, proclaimed his regret that he “didn’t do more” damage to the nation, is today a professor of education at the University of Illinois-Chicago and a highly admired education “reformer.” He is also the very personification of the title of publisher Roger Kimball’s brilliant tome, *Tenured Radicals*.

Ayers has described himself as “a radical, Leftist, a small ‘c’ communist,” and his record as a reformer supports that description. Last week, education researcher Sol Stern detailed Ayers record as an educator in a *Wall Street Journal* piece. To wit:

As one of the leaders of a movement for bringing radical social-justice teaching into our public school classrooms, Mr. Ayers is not a school reformer. He is a school destroyer.

He still hopes for a revolutionary upheaval that will finally bring down American capitalism and imperialism, but this time around Mr. Ayers sows the seeds of resistance and rebellion in America’s future teachers. Thus, education students signing up for a course Mr. Ayers teaches at UIC, “On Urban Education,” can read these exhortations from the course description: “Homelessness, crime, racism, oppression – we have the resources and knowledge to fight and overcome these things. We need to look beyond our isolated situations, to define our problems globally. We cannot be child advocates . . . in Chicago or New York and ignore the web that links us with the children of India or Palestine.”

The readings Mr. Ayers assigns to his university students are as intellectually diverse as a political commissar’s indoctrination session in one of his favorite communist tyrannies. The list

for his urban education course includes the bible of the critical pedagogy movement, Brazilian Marxist Paulo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed"; two books by Mr. Ayers himself; and "Teaching to Transgress" by bell hooks (lower case), the radical black feminist writer.

Two years ago Mr. Ayers shared with his students a letter he wrote to a young radical friend: "I've been told to grow up from the time I was ten until this morning. Bullshit. Anyone who salutes your 'youthful idealism' is a patronizing reactionary. Resist! Don't grow up! I went to Camp Casey [Cindy Sheehan's vigil at the Bush ranch in Crawford, Texas] in August precisely because I'm an agnostic about how and where the rebellion will break out, but I know I want to be there and I know it will break out." (The letter is on his Web site, www.billayers.org.)

America's ideal of public schooling as a means of assimilating all children (and particularly the children of new immigrants) into a common civic and democratic culture is already under assault from the multiculturalists and their race- and gender-centered pedagogy. Mr. Ayers has tried to give the civic culture ideal a *coup de grace*, contemptuously dismissing it as nothing more than what the critical pedagogy theorists commonly refer to as "capitalist hegemony."

In the world of the Ed schools, Mr. Ayers's movement has established a sizeable beachhead – witness his election earlier this year as vice president for curriculum of the American Education Research Association, the nation's largest organization of education professors and researchers.

As for Obama, he is, without question, the most radically leftist mainstream presidential nominee in at least 36 years, and quite possibly in the history of the nation. Indeed, given that Obama supports "card-check" legislation that would eliminate secret ballot votes on union matters, legislation which 1972 Democratic nominee George McGovern has vocally, adamantly, and publicly repudiated, it is not hard to argue that Obama is to the left of McGovern.

On cultural issues, there is no doubt that Obama is the furthest left of any presidential nominee ever, though you'd likely not know that from listening to his supporters or the mainstream media, as if there were a difference. Obama is, by far, the most pro-choice candidate in American history, favoring both the abandonment of the Hyde Amendment, which prohibits the use of federal funds for abortions, and the repudiation of the Mexico City Policy, which forbids organizations receiving funding from the federal government to encourage, fund, or perform abortions in foreign countries. He is also, despite his campaign's insistence to the contrary, to the left of the entire U.S. Senate on matters of life, having voted as an Illinois state senator to deny care and comfort to *infants* who manage to survive botched abortion attempts. Though their language is clearly inflammatory, on the merits, those who claim that Obama supports a form of infanticide are correct.

Of course, the most obvious evidence of Obama's radicalism is his collaboration with Ayers. It is widely known that Obama and Ayers served together on the boards of two foundations, the Woods Foundation and the Chicago Annenberg Challenge (CAC), which Ayers established and Obama chaired. What isn't widely known is why Ayers sought out the little-known Obama to head up his education "reform" project at CAC. Stanley Kurtz, a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center explains:

The Chicago Annenberg Challenge was created ostensibly to improve Chicago's public schools. The funding came from a national education initiative by Ambassador Walter Annenberg. In early 1995, Mr. Obama was appointed the first

chairman of the board, which handled fiscal matters. Mr. Ayers co-chaired the foundation's other key body, the "Collaborative," which shaped education policy.

The CAC's basic functioning has long been known, because its annual reports, evaluations and some board minutes were public. But the Daley archive contains additional board minutes, the Collaborative minutes, and documentation on the groups that CAC funded and rejected. The Daley archives show that Mr. Obama and Mr. Ayers worked as a team to advance the CAC agenda.

One unsettled question is how Mr. Obama, a former community organizer fresh out of law school, could vault to the top of a new foundation? In response to my questions, the Obama campaign issued a statement saying that Mr. Ayers had nothing to do with Obama's "recruitment" to the board. The statement says Deborah Leff and Patricia Albjerg Graham (presidents of other foundations) recruited him. Yet the archives show that, along with Ms. Leff and Ms. Graham, Mr. Ayers was one of a working group of five who assembled the initial board in 1994. Mr. Ayers founded CAC and was its guiding spirit. No one would have been appointed the CAC chairman without his approval.

The CAC's agenda flowed from Mr. Ayers's educational philosophy, which called for infusing students and their parents with a radical political commitment, and which downplayed achievement tests in favor of activism.

We also know that the CAC actually put Ayers' ideology into practice. Here's Kurtz again from *The Wall Street Journal*:

Mr. Ayers is the founder of the "small schools" movement (heavily funded by CAC), in which individual schools built around specific political themes push students to "confront issues of inequity, war, and violence." He believes teacher education programs should serve as "sites of resistance" to an oppressive system. (His teacher-training programs were also CAC funded.) The point, says Mr. Ayers in his "Teaching Toward Freedom," is to "teach against oppression," against America's history of evil and racism, thereby forcing social transformation.

And from *National Review Online*:

In the winter of 1996, the Coalition for Improved Education in [Chicago's] South Shore (CIESS) announced that it had received a \$200,000 grant from the Chicago Annenberg Challenge. That made CIESS an "external partner," i.e. a community organization linked to a network of schools within the Chicago public system. This network, named the "South Shore African Village Collaborative" was thoroughly "Afrocentric" in orientation. CIESS's job was to use a combination of teacher-training, curriculum advice, and community involvement to improve academic performance in the schools it worked with. CIESS would continue to receive large Annenberg grants throughout the 1990s.

The South Shore African Village Collaborative (SSAVC) was very much a part of the Afrocentric "rites of passage

movement,” a fringe education crusade of the 1990s. SSAVC schools featured “African-Centered” curricula built around “rites of passage” ceremonies inspired by the puberty rites found in many African societies. In and of themselves, these ceremonies were harmless. Yet the philosophy that accompanied them was not . . .

We know that SSAVC was part of this movement, not only because their Annenberg proposals were filled with Afrocentric themes and references to “rites of passage,” but also because SSAVC’s faculty set up its African-centered curriculum in consultation with some of the most prominent leaders of the “rites of passage movement.” For example, a CIESS teacher conference sponsored a presentation on African-centered curricula by Jacob Carruthers, a particularly controversial Afrocentrist . . .

Carruthers’s goal is to use African-centered education to recreate a separatist universe within America, a kind of state-within-a-state. The rites of passage movement is central to the plan. Carruthers sees enemies on every part of the political spectrum, from conservatives, to liberals, to academic leftists, all of whom reject advocates of Kemetic civilization, like himself, as dangerous and academically irresponsible extremists. Carruthers sees all these groups as deluded captives of white supremacist Eurocentric culture. Therefore the only safe place for Africans living in the United States (i.e. American blacks) is outside the mental boundaries of our ineradicably racist Eurocentric civilization. As Carruthers puts it: “. . . some of us have chosen to reject the culture of our oppressors and recover our disrupted ancestral culture.” The rites of passage movement is a way

to teach young Africans in the United States how to reject America and recover their authentic African heritage . . .

Carruthers admits that Africans living in America have already been shaped by Western culture, yet compares this Americanization process to rape: “We may not be able to get our virginity back after the rape, but we do not have to marry the rapist . . .” In other words, American blacks (i.e. Africans) may have been forcibly exposed to American culture, but that doesn’t mean they need to accept it. The better option, says Carruthers, is to separate out and relearn the wisdom of Africa’s original Kemetic culture, embodied in the teachings of the ancient wise man, Ptahhotep (an historical figure traditionally identified as the author of a Fifth Dynasty wisdom book). Anything less than re-Africanization threatens the mental, and even physical, genocide of Africans living in an ineradicably white supremacist United States.

The key to understanding what both Ayers and Obama had in mind by giving up the fight and joining the system can be found in Ayers’ raging against “capitalist hegemony.” Hegemony, and specifically cultural hegemony or the “capitalist hegemony” is the principal bogeyman in the writings and teachings of Antonio Gramsci, probably the most important Marxist theorist and writer of the twentieth century and clearly an influence on Ayers. Gramsci railed against the “hegemony” of capitalism and insisted that the revolution predicted by Marx would never materialize as long as the bourgeoisie controlled the culture and thus controlled the stories, the myths, the morality tales, and the ethical parables taught to society’s children. Thus, he advocated “the long march through the institutions,” and a consequent attack on the culture and on the destruction of the capitalist hegemony, thereby preparing the ground for revolution, or better yet, making explicit revolution unnecessary.

Regular readers know that we have long argued that Washington is not where the nation's political and cultural battles are won or lost, but merely where the score is kept. In this, we too are devotees of Gramsci. We too believe that the stories, myths, parables, and fables taught to children will affect them throughout their lives and will form the foundation of their moral consciences and their political predilections. We too understand, therefore, that the education system is, in many ways, the crucial institution in maintaining the spirit and the integrity of the Founding Fathers, in maintaining American culture.

When those on the political left argue that the religious right is fighting a cultural war with them, they are absolutely, one-hundred percent correct. Both sides are struggling to control the culture, knowing full well that whoever controls the culture controls the destiny of the nation.

There is a reason that Bill Ayers decided that education was the field in which he could have the greatest impact. And it is the same reason that the first shots fired by the religious right in the culture war focused on the right to set up religiously-based schools independent of the public bureaucracy and the right to home school. There was a time when parents sent their kids to Catholic school simply because they thought the schools would provide the best education possible. And while that still affects many parents' choices, the fact that their children will be taught traditional values and traditional Western culture is undoubtedly as important a motivation today. He who controls the education of the children controls, at least in part, the cultural disposition of the children.

And that brings us, finally, back to Obama. Last week, we wrote that Obama "is, in many ways, a political creation of Ayers's." We don't want to sound conspiratorial here (largely because there is no conspiracy), but Ayers the radical educator knew well that the culmination of his efforts – and those of thousands like him – would be incomplete without the political influence to translate political ideology into policy positions. And thus he and his wife, fellow terrorist Bernadine Dohrn, took an interest in

politicians who could help advance their agenda, one of whom was Barack Obama. In a 2005 post for the *Los Angeles Times* (which has since disappeared from the *Times* web site, but which has nonetheless been preserved by blogger Patterico), Maria Warren, a leftist activist, described her introduction to Obama thusly:

When I first met Barack Obama, he was giving a standard, innocuous little talk in the livingroom of those two legends-in-their-own-minds, Bill Ayers and Bernardine Dohrn. They were launching him—introducing him to the Hyde Park community as the best thing since sliced bread.

Obama's path to power, as we have said, is similar to that taken by Ayers, i.e. the radical realizes that he can accomplish more by working through the system than against it. This is also the path to power taken by dozens of radicals before him, perhaps most prominently Joschka Fischer, the former violent radical and (natch) fire bomber, who traded his hippy garb for a nice suit and became the foreign minister and vice chancellor of Germany for seven years, ending in 2005. Like Obama, Fischer put his past behind him, put his radicalism behind him, and adopted the soothing tones of globalism, environmentalism, and diplomacy, all in an effort to further his still extremist goals.

Last week, Obama-smitten conservative columnist David Brooks wrote that "He [Obama] may be liberal, but he is never wild. His family is bourgeois. His instinct is to flee the revolutionary gesture in favor of the six-point plan." Brooks, apparently, is unaware that that's the whole idea. Be calm; be reserved; be "professorial." Obama appears to be just like any other member of the ruling establishment because he *is* like any other member of the ruling establishment. That is and always has been the plan.

If Obama is elected president in two weeks, as seems likely, then his presidency will represent an enormous victory for the Gramsci-ists of the world. It will serve as the culmination of their "long march." Whether he

will be successful in pushing the country further in the direction that Gramsci and his disciples have advocated is still an open question – and one that depends largely on the nation’s ability to maintain some semblance of cultural memory and to retain control of the cultural instruction of its children.

Should Obama win, the scoreboard in Washington will show a significant advantage for the left. That does not mean however, that the game is over. The left’s all-out attack on the culture produced a highly successful counter attack by the right. Perhaps its all-out attack on policy will do the same.

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION.

It is widely understood by even the most unenthusiastic believer in Judeo-Christian morality that patronizing a whorehouse is sinful. What isn’t as clear to many people is that building and running one is equally immoral because it facilitates the commission of sins by others. From this perspective, it seems to us that even if Hank Paulson does not personally steal any of the hundreds of billions of dollars that he is throwing onto the troubled waters of the American economy, he is still guilty of a morally questionable deed by creating multiple opportunities and temptations for others to steal.

For just as sure as fresh manure attracts flies, a pool of money of this size, residing casually in a massive, new, multi-faceted, vaguely-defined, governmental program to “help those in trouble,” is going to attract hordes upon hordes of shysters, sharpies, fibbertigibbets and fly-by-nighters, perjurers, liars, crooked real estate magnets, union thugs, shady politicians, and simple passer-bys who would normally not yield to the temptation of appropriating assets that belong

to someone else, but may not be able to resist the attraction offered by such an easy mark as a federal program run by crooks and chuckleheads. Some will seek to obtain a few crumbs from the floor around the banquet table, and others will have appetites for larger portions.

Signs of this coming period of extravagant corruption abound, not the least of which is the fact that the distribution of this governmental munificence, unequalled in size in the history of mankind, will be handled by most of the people who were involved in the shadiest aspects of the crisis that prompted it. But the most interesting omen of pending putrefaction was a statement by France’s minister of the economy, Christine Lagarde, which appeared to have gone unchallenged by both the American and European masters of global finance who met recently to “address the crisis.” It went as follows: “The moral hazards [of this program] have to be dealt with at a later stage.” Ah yes, dealt with at a later stage. Perhaps he meant to say, “After the money’s has disappeared into the maw of benevolent intentions.

In any case, the bottom line for investors on “the bailout” is to understand that the United States is entering into a period of extreme fiscal irresponsibility on the part of the federal government, accompanied by a massive amount of political and financial corruption, most of which will be charged to the account of that poor sap, “Joe the Plumber,” whose hard earned money Barack Obama wishes to use to earn a place of his own on the list of “the charitable.”

It would, we believe, behoove both Paulson and Obama to remember the wise words of their fellow liberal, John Kenneth Galbraith, who once noted that “when the horse dies in the street, the oats no longer pass through to the sparrows.”

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