



Barack Obama's Rules for Revolution The Alinsky Model

“We are five days away from fundamentally transforming the United States of America.”

- Barack Obama, election eve, 2008

Barack Obama is an enigma. He won the 2008 presidential election claiming to be a moderate and wanting to bring Americans together and govern from the center. But since he took office, his actions have been far from moderate. He has apologized to foreign dictators abroad for sins he alleges his own country committed and appointed a self-described communist (Van Jones) and an admirer of Mao Zedong to top White House posts. He has used the economic crisis to take over whole industries and has attempted to nationalize the health care system. In his first nine months in office, these actions had already made his presidency one of the most polarizing in history.

Many Americans have gone from hopefulness, through unease, to a state of alarm as the President shows a radical side that was only partially visible during his campaign. To understand Obama's presidency, Americans need to know more about the man and the nature of his political ideas. In particular, they need to become familiar with a Chicago organizer named Saul Alinsky and the strategy of deception he devised to promote social change.

Of no other occupant of the White House can it be said that he owed his understanding of the political process to a man and a philosophy so outside the American mainstream, or so explicitly dedicated to opposing it. The pages that follow provide an analysis of the political manual that Saul Alinsky wrote, which outlines his method for advancing radical agendas. The manual was originally titled "Rules for Revolution" which is an accurate description of its content. Later, Alinsky changed the title to *Rules for Radicals*. After familiarizing themselves with its ideas, readers may want to reconsider what Obama may have meant on election eve 2008 when he told his followers: "We are five days away from fundamentally transforming the United States of America."¹

¹ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_cqN4NIEtOY

Alinsky and Obama

Saul Alinsky was born in Chicago in 1909 and died in California in 1972. His preferred self-description was “rebel” and his entire life was devoted to organizing a revolution in America to destroy a system he regarded as oppressive and unjust. By profession he was a “community organizer,” the same term employed by his most famous disciple, Barack Obama, to describe himself.

Alinsky came of age in the 1930s and was drawn to the world of Chicago gangsters, whom he had encountered professionally as a sociologist. He sought out and became a social intimate of the Al Capone mob and of Capone enforcer Frank Nitti who took the reins when Capone was sent to prison for tax evasion in 1931. Later Alinsky said, “[Nitti] took me under his wing. I called him the Professor and I became his student.”² While Alinsky was not oblivious to the fact that criminals were dangerous, like a good leftist he held “society” - and capitalist society in particular - responsible for creating them. In his view, criminality was not a character problem but a result of the social environment, in particular the system of private property and individual rights,

2 Sanford Horwitt, *Let Them Call Me Rebel*, 1992, p. 20

which radicals like him were determined to change.

Alinsky's career as an organizer spanned the period in which the Communist Party was the major political force on the American left. Although he was never formally a Communist and did not share their tactical views on how to organize a revolution, his attitude towards the Communists was fraternal, and he saw them as political allies. In the 1969 "Afterword" to his book *Reveille for Radicals* he explained his attitude in these words: "Communism itself is irrelevant. The issue is whether they are on our side...."³ Alinsky's unwillingness to condemn Communists extended to the Soviet empire - a regime which murdered more leftists than all their political opponents put together. This failure to condemn communism (his biographer describes him as an "anti-anti communist") contrasts dramatically with the extreme terms in which he was willing to condemn his own country as a system worth "burning."⁴

Communists played a formative role in the creation of the CIO - the "progressive" coalition of industrial unions - led by John L. Lewis and then Walter Reuther. In the late 1940s, Reuther purged the Communists from the CIO. Reuther was a socialist

³ *Reveille for Radicals*, Vintage edition 1969, p. 227

⁴ *Rules for Radicals*, p. xiii

but, unlike Alinsky, an anti-Communist and an American patriot. In *Rules for Radicals*, Alinsky, a deracinated Jew, refers to the ferreting out of Communists who were in practice Soviet agents as a “holocaust,” even though in the McCarthy era only a handful of Communists ever went to jail.

By his own account, Alinsky was too independent to join the Communist Party but instead became a forerunner of the left that emerged in the wake of the Communist fall. Like leftists who came of age after the Soviet collapse, Alinsky understood that there was something flawed in the Communist outlook. But, also like them, he never really examined what those flaws might be. In particular he never questioned the Marxist view of society and human nature, or its goal of a utopian future, and never examined its connection to the epic crimes that Marxists had committed. He never asked himself whether the vision of a society which would be socially equal was itself the source of the totalitarian state.

Instead, Alinsky identified the problem posed by Communism as inflexibility and “dogmatism” and proposed as a solution that radicals should be “political relativists,” that they should take an agnostic view of means and ends. For Alinsky, the revolutionary’s purpose is to undermine the system

and then see what happens. The Alinsky radical has a single principle - to take power from the Haves and give it to the Have-nots. What this amounts to in practice is a political nihilism - a destructive assault on the established order in the name of the “people” (who, in the fashion common to dictators, are designated as such by the revolutionary elite). This is the classic revolutionary formula in which the goal is power for the political vanguard who get to feel good about themselves in the process.

Alinsky created several organizations, and inspired others, including his training institute for organizers, which he called the Industrial Areas Foundation. But his real influence was as the Lenin of the post-Communist left. Alinsky was the practical theorist for progressives who had supported the Communist cause to regroup after the fall of the Berlin Wall and mount a new assault on the capitalist system. It was Alinsky who wove the inchoate relativism of the post-Communist left into a coherent whole, and helped to form the coalition of communists, anarchists, liberals, Democrats, black racialists, and social justice activists who spearheaded the anti-globalization movement just before 9/11, and then created the anti-Iraq War movement, and finally positioned one of their own to enter the

White House. As Barack Obama summarized these developments at the height of his campaign: “We are the ones we’ve been waiting for.”⁵

Infiltrating the institutions of American society and government - something the “counter-cultural” radicals of the 1960s were reluctant to do - was Alinsky’s *modus operandi*. While Tom Hayden and Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin were confronting Lyndon Johnson’s Pentagon and creating riots at the Democratic convention, Alinsky’s organizers were insinuating themselves into Johnson’s War on Poverty program and directing federal funds into their own organizations and causes.

The sixties left had no connection to the labor movement. But Alinsky did. The most important radical labor organizer of the time, Cesar Chavez, who was the leader of the United Farmworkers Union, was trained by Alinsky, and worked for him for ten years. Alinsky also shaped the future of the civil rights movement after the death of Martin Luther King. When racial unrest erupted in Rochester, New York, Alinsky was called in by activists to pressure Eastman-Kodak to hire more blacks, a form of racial extortion that became a standard of the civil rights movement under the leadership of Jesse Jackson and

⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=molWTfv8TYw>

Al Sharpton.

Alinsky also pioneered the alliance of radicals with the Democratic Party, which ended two decades of confrontation climaxing in the convention riot of 1968. Through Chavez, Alinsky had met Robert Kennedy who supported his muscling of Kodak executives. But the Kennedys were only one of the avenues through which Alinsky organizers now made their way into the inner circles of the Democratic Party.

In 1969, the year that publishers reissued Alinsky's first book, *Reveille for Radicals*, a Wellesley undergraduate named Hillary Rodham submitted her 92-page senior thesis on Alinsky's theories (she interviewed him personally for the project).⁶ In her conclusion Hillary compared Alinsky to Eugene Debs, Walt Whitman and Martin Luther King.

The title of Hillary's thesis was "There Is Only the Fight: An Analysis of the Alinsky Model." In this title she had singled out the single most important Alinsky contribution to the radical cause - his embrace of political nihilism. An SDS radical once wrote, "The issue is never the issue. The issue is always the revolution." In other words the cause - whether inner city blacks or women - is never the

⁶ <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17388372/>

real cause, but only an occasion to advance the real cause which is the accumulation of *power* to make the revolution. *That* was the all consuming focus of Alinsky and his radicals.

Guided by Alinsky principles, post-Communist radicals are not idealists but Machiavellians. Their focus is on means rather than ends, and therefore they are not bound by organizational orthodoxies in the way their admired Marxist forebears were. Within the framework of their revolutionary agenda, they are flexible and opportunistic and will say anything (and pretend to be anything) to get what they want, which is resources and power.

The following anecdote about Alinsky's teachings as recounted by *The New Republic's* Ryan Lizza nicely illustrates the focus of Alinsky radicalism: "When Alinsky would ask new students why they wanted to organize, they would invariably respond with selfless bromides about wanting to help others. Alinsky would then scream back at them that there was a one-word answer: 'You want to organize for *power*!'"⁷

In *Rules for Radicals*, Alinsky wrote: "From the moment an organizer enters a community, he lives,

⁷ Ryan Lizza, "The Agitator," *The New Republic* 3/9/07. http://www.pickensdemocrats.org/info/TheAgitator_070319.htm. The source of the anecdote is Horwitt, op., cit.

dreams, eats, breathes, sleeps only one thing, and that is to build the mass power base of what he calls the army.”⁸ The issue is never the issue. The issue is always the revolution.

Unlike the Communists who identified their goal as a Soviet state - and thereby generated opposition to their schemes - Alinsky and his followers organize their power bases without naming the end game, without declaring a specific future they want to achieve - socialism, communism, a dictatorship of the proletariat, or anarchy. Without committing themselves to concrete principles or a specific future, they organize exclusively to build a power base which they can use to destroy the existing society and its economic system. By refusing to commit to principles or to identify their goal, they have been able to organize a coalition of all the elements of the left who were previously divided by disagreements over means and ends.

The demagogic standard of the revolution is “democracy” - a democracy which upends all social hierarchies, including those based on merit. This is why Alinsky built his initial power base among the underclass and the urban poor. The call to make the last ones first is a powerful religious imperative.

⁸ *Rules for Radicals*, p. 113

But in politics it functions as a lever to upset every social structure and foundation. For Alinsky radicals, policies are not important in themselves; they are instrumental - means to expanding the political base.

To Alinsky radicals, “democracy” means getting those who are in, out. Their goal is to mobilize the poor and “oppressed” as a battering ram to bring down the system. Hillary concludes her thesis with these words: “Alinsky is regarded by many as the proponent of a dangerous socio/political philosophy. As such, he has been feared - just as Eugene Debs or Walt Whitman or Martin Luther King has been feared, because each embraced the most radical of political faiths - democracy.” But democracy as understood by the American founders is *not* “the most radical of all political faiths” or, if it is, they regarded it as dangerous enough to put checks and balances in its way to restrain it.

When Hillary graduated from Wellesley in 1969, she was offered a job with Alinsky’s new training institute in Chicago. She opted instead to enroll at Yale Law School, where she met her husband, and future president, Bill Clinton. In March 2007, the *Washington Post* reported that she had kept her connections even in the White House and gave Alinsky’s army support: “As first lady, Clinton

occasionally lent her name to projects endorsed by the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), the Alinsky group that had offered her a job in 1968. She raised money and attended two events organized by the Washington Interfaith Network, an IAF affiliate.”⁹

Unlike Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama never personally met Saul Alinsky. But as a young man, he became an adept practitioner of Alinsky’s methods. In 1986, at the age of 23 and only three years out of Columbia University, Obama was hired by the Alinsky team to organize residents on the South Side [of Chicago] “while learning and applying Alinsky’s philosophy of street-level democracy.”¹⁰ The group that Obama joined was part of a network that included the Gamaliel Foundation, a religious group that operated on Alinsky principles. Obama became director of the Developing Communities Project, an affiliate of the Gamaliel Foundation, where he worked for the next three years on initiatives that ranged from job training to school reform to hazardous waste cleanup. A reporter who researched the projects sums them in these words: “the proposed solution to every problem on the South Side was a

⁹ http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/24/AR2007032401152_pf.html

¹⁰ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/24/AR2007032401152.html>

distribution of government funds ...”¹¹

Three of Obama’s mentors in Chicago were trained at the Alinsky Industrial Areas Foundation,¹² and for several years Obama himself taught workshops on the Alinsky method.¹³ One of the three, Gregory Galluzzo, shared with Ryan Lizza the actual manual for training new organizers, which he said was little different from the version he used to train Obama in the 1980s. According to Lizza, “It is filled with workshops and chapter headings on understanding power: ‘power analysis,’ ‘elements of a power organization,’ ‘the path to power.’ Galluzzo told me that many new trainees have an aversion to Alinsky’s gritty approach because they come to organizing as idealists rather than realists. The Alinsky manual instructs them to get over these hang-ups. ‘We are not virtuous by not wanting power,’ it says. ‘We are really cowards for not wanting power,’ because ‘power is good’ and ‘powerlessness is evil.’”¹⁴

According to Lizza, who interviewed both Galluzzo and Obama, “the other fundamental lesson Obama was taught was Alinsky’s maxim that self-

11 David Freddoso, *The Case Against Barack Obama*, 2008, cited in <http://www.discoverthenetworks.org/individualProfile.asp?indid=1511>

12 Ryan Lizza, “The Agitator,” *The New Republic*, 3/9/07

13 <http://www.discoverthenetworks.org/individualProfile.asp?indid=1511>

14 Ibid.

interest is the only principle around which to organize people. (Galluzzo's manual goes so far as to advise trainees in block letters: 'Get rid of do-gooders in your church and your organization.') Obama was a fan of Alinsky's realistic streak. 'The key to creating successful organizations was making sure people's self-interest was met,' he told me, 'and not just basing it on pie-in-the-sky idealism. So there were some basic principles that remained powerful then, and in fact I still believe in.'" On Barack Obama's presidential campaign website, one could see a photo of Obama in a classroom "teaching students Alinskyan methods. He stands in front of a blackboard on which he has written, 'Power Analysis' and 'Relationships Built on Self Interest,...'"¹⁵

Until he became a full-time elected legislator in 1996, the focus of Obama's political activities was the largest radical organization in the United States, Acorn, which was built on the Alinsky model of community organizing. A summary of his Acorn activities was compiled by the *Wall Street Journal*:

In 1991, he took time off from his law firm to run a voter-registration drive for Project Vote, an Acorn partner that was soon fully absorbed under the Acorn umbrella. The drive registered

¹⁵ Ibid.

135,000 voters and was considered a major factor in the upset victory of Democrat Carol Moseley Braun over incumbent Democratic Senator Alan Dixon in the 1992 Democratic Senate primary. Mr. Obama's success made him a hot commodity on the community organizing circuit. He became a top trainer at Acorn's Chicago conferences. In 1995, he became Acorn's attorney, participating in a landmark case to force the state of Illinois to implement the federal Motor Voter Law. That law's loose voter registration requirements would later be exploited by Acorn employees in an effort to flood voter rolls with fake names. In 1996, Mr. Obama filled out a questionnaire listing key supporters for his campaign for the Illinois Senate. He put Acorn first (it was not an alphabetical list).¹⁶

After Obama became a U.S. Senator, his wife, Michelle, told a reporter, "Barack is not a politician first and foremost. He's a community activist exploring the viability of politics to make change." Her husband commented: "I take that observation as a compliment."¹⁷

¹⁶ <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204488304574427041636360388.html#>

¹⁷ Lizza, op., cit.

Saul Alinsky's Rules for Radicals

Alinsky is the Sun-Tzu for today's radicals, his book a manual for their political war. As early as its dedicatory page, Alinsky provides revealing insight into the radical mind by praising Lucifer as the first rebel: "Lest we forget, an over-the-shoulder acknowledgment to the very first radical: from all our legends, mythology, and history (and who is to know where mythology leaves off and history begins - or which is which), the first radical known to man who rebelled against the establishment and did it so effectively that he at least won his own kingdom - Lucifer."

Thus Alinsky begins his text by telling readers exactly what a radical is. He is not a reformer of the system but its would-be destroyer. In his own mind the radical is building his own kingdom, which to him is a kingdom of heaven on earth. Since a kingdom of heaven built by human beings is a fantasy - an impossible dream - the radical's only real world efforts are those which are aimed at subverting the society he lives in. He is a nihilist.

This is something that conservatives generally have a hard time understanding. As a former radical, I

am constantly asked how radicals could hate America and why they would want to destroy a society that compared to others is tolerant, inclusive and open, and treats all people with a dignity and respect that is the envy of the world. The answer to this question is that radicals are not comparing America to other real world societies. They are comparing America to the heaven on earth - the kingdom of social justice and freedom - they think they are building. And compared to *this* heaven even America is hell.

In my experience conservatives are generally too decent and too civilized to match up adequately with their radical adversaries, at least in the initial stages of the battle. They are too prone to give them the benefit of the doubt, to believe there is goodness and good sense in them which will outweigh their determination to change the world. Radicals talk of justice and democracy and equality. They can't really want to destroy a society that is democratic and liberal, and more equal than others, and that has brought wealth and prosperity to so many people. Oh yes they can. There is no goodness that trumps the dream of a heaven on earth. And because America is a real world society, managed by real and problematic human beings, it will never be equal, or liberal, or democratic *enough* to satisfy radical fantasies - to

compensate them for their longing for a perfect world, and for their unhappiness in this one.

In *The 18th Brumaire*, Marx himself summed up the radical's passion by invoking a comment of Goethe's Mephistopheles: "Everything that exists deserves to perish." The essence of what it means to be a *radical* is thus summed up in Alinsky's praise for Satan: to be willing to destroy the values, structures and institutions that sustain the society in which we live.

The many names of Satan are also a model for the way radicals camouflage their agendas by calling themselves at different times Communists, socialists, new leftists, liberals, social justice activists and most consistently *progressives*. My parents, who were card-carrying Communists, never referred to themselves as Communists but always as "progressives," as did their friends and political comrades. The "Progressive Party" was created by the Communist Party to challenge Harry Truman in the 1948 election because he opposed the spread of Stalin's empire. The Progressive Party was led by Roosevelt's vice president, Henry Wallace, and was the vehicle chosen by the Communists to lead their followers out of the Democratic Party, which they had joined during the "popular front" of the 1930s.

The progressives rejoined the Democrats during the McGovern campaign of 1972 and with the formation of a hundred-plus member Progressive Caucus in the congressional party and the ascension of Barack Obama to the presidency have become its most important political force.

Alinsky's tribute to Satan as the first radical is further instructive because it reminds us that the radical illusion is an ancient one and has not changed though the millennia. Recall how Satan tempted Adam and Eve to destroy their paradise: If you will rebel against God's command then "You shall be as gods." This is the radical hubris: *We can create a new world. Through our political power we can make a new race of men and women who will live in harmony and peace and according to the principles of social justice. We can be as gods.*

And let us not forget that the kingdom the first radical "won," as Alinsky so thoughtlessly puts it, was *hell*. Typical of radicals not to notice the ruin they leave behind.

This, in a nutshell, is why conservatives are conservative and why radicals are dangerous. Because conservatives pay attention to the consequences of actions, including their own, and radicals don't.

One kind of hell or another is what radicalism has in fact achieved since the beginning of the modern age when it conducted the first modern genocide during the French Revolution. The Jacobins who led the revolution changed the name of the cathedral of Notre Dame to the “Temple of Reason” and then, in the name of Reason, proceeded to slaughter every Catholic man, woman and child in the Vendee region to purge religious “superstition” from the planet. The Jacobin attempt to liquidate Catholics and their faith was the precursor of Lenin’s destruction of 100,000 churches in the Soviet Union to purge Russia of reactionary ideas. The “Temple of Reason” was replicated by the Bolsheviks’ creation of a “People’s Church” whose mission was to usher in the “worker’s paradise.” This mission led to the murder not of 40,000 as in the Vendee, but 40 *million* before its merciful collapse - with progressives cheering its progress and mourning its demise.

The radical fantasy of an earthly redemption takes many forms, with similar results:

- The chimera of “sexual liberation” caused leftists to condemn and ban the proven public health methods for combating AIDS - testing and contact tracing - as “homophobic,”

leading directly to the preventable deaths of more than 300,000 gay men in the prime of life.¹⁸

- The crusade to rid mankind of the scourge of DDT, which was launched in the 1960s by the American environmentalist Rachel Carson, led to a global ban on the use of DDT and the return of malaria. This has resulted in the deaths of 100 million children, mainly black Africans under the age of five.¹⁹
- The left's campaign to build a welfare utopia under the umbrella of the "Great Society" destroyed the inner city black family, spawned millions of fatherless black children, and created intractable poverty and a violent underclass which is still with us today.²⁰

18 <http://www.discoverthenetworks.org/Articles/z-RADICAL%20HOLOCAUST.htm>

19 <http://www.discoverthenetworks.org/individualProfile.asp?indid=1866>

20 <http://www.discoverthenetworks.org/groupProfile.asp?grpId=7471#Poverty>

The Alinsky Strategy: Boring From Within

Conservatives think of war as a metaphor when applied to politics. For radicals, the war is real. That is why when partisans of the left go into battle, they set out to destroy their opponents by stigmatizing them as “racists,” “sexists,” “homophobes” and “Islamophobes.” It is also why they so often pretend to be what they are not (“liberals” for example) and rarely say what they mean. Deception for them is a military tactic in a war that is designed to eliminate the enemy.

Alinsky’s *Rules for Radicals* is first of all a comradely critique of the sixties’ New Left. What bothers Alinsky about these radicals is their honesty - which may have been their only redeeming feature. While the Communist Left pretended to be Jeffersonian Democrats and “progressives” and formed “popular fronts” with liberals, the New Left radicals disdained these deceptions, regarding them as a display of weakness. To distinguish themselves from such popular front politics, sixties radicals said they were *revolutionaries* and proud of it.

New Left radicals despised and attacked liberals

and created riots at Democratic Party conventions. Their typical slogans were “Up against the wall motherf-ker” and “Off the pig”, telegraphing exactly how they felt about those who opposed them. The most basic principle of Alinsky’s advice to radicals is to *lie* to their opponents and disarm them by pretending to be moderates and liberals.

Deception is the radical’s most important weapon, and it has been a prominent one since the end of the sixties. Racial arsonists such as Al Sharpton and Jeremiah Wright pose as civil rights activists; anti-American radicals such as Bill Ayers pose as patriotic progressives; socialists pose as liberals. The mark of their success is reflected in the fact that conservatives collude in the deception and call them liberals as well.

Alinsky writes of the “revolutionary force” of the 1960s that its activists were “one moment reminiscent of the idealistic early Christians yet they also urge violence and cry ‘Burn the system down.!’ They have no illusions about the system, but plenty of illusions about the way to change our world. It is to this point that I have written this book.”²¹

I once had a Trotskyist mentor named Isaac

²¹ *Rules for Radicals*, p. xiii

Deutscher who was critical of the New Left in the same way Alinsky is. He said that American radicals such as Stokely Carmichael were “radical” in form and “moderate” in content; they spoke loudly but carried a small stick. Instead, he said, they should be moderate in form and radical in content. In the same vein, Alinsky chides New Leftists for being “rhetorical radicals” rather than “realistic.” New Leftists scared people but didn’t have the power to back up their threats. The most important thing for radicals, according to Alinsky, is to deal with the world as it is, and not as they might want it to be.

As an organizer I start from the world as it is, *as it is*, not as I would like it to be. That we accept the world as it is does not in any sense weaken our desire to change it into what we believe it should be - it is necessary to begin where the world is if we are going to change it to what we think it should be. That means working in the system.²²

This is the passage from which Michelle Obama selected lines to sum up her husband’s vision at the Democratic convention that nominated him for president in August 2008. Referring to a visit he made to Chicago neighborhoods, she said, “And Barack stood up that day, and he spoke words that have stayed with me ever since. He talked about ‘the

²² *Rules for Radicals*, p. xix

world as it is' and 'the world as it should be.' And he said that, all too often, we accept the distance between the two and we settle for the world as it is, even when it doesn't reflect our values and aspirations." She concluded: "All of us are driven by a simple belief that the world as it is just won't do - that we have an obligation to fight for the world as it should be."²³

When he became president, Barack Obama named an Alinsky disciple named Van Jones to be his "special assistant" for "green jobs," a key position in the administration's plans for America's future. According to his own account, Van Jones became a "communist" during a prison term he served after being arrested during the 1992 Los Angeles race riots. For the next ten years, Jones was an activist in the Maoist organization STORM, whose acronym means "Stand Together to Organize a Revolutionary Movement." When STORM disintegrated, Jones joined the Apollo Alliance, an environmental coalition organized by Alinsky radicals. He also joined the Center for American Progress, run by John Podesta, former White House Chief of Staff in the Clinton Administration and co-chair of Obama's transition team.

²³ <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/26/us/politics/26text-obama.html?ei=5124&en=48bdd187be31e21e&ex=1377489600&partner=permalink&exprod=permalink&pagewanted=print>

In a 2005 interview, Van Jones explained to the *East Bay Express* that he still considered himself a “revolutionary, but just a more effective one.” “Before,” he told the *Express*, “we would fight anybody, any time. No concession was good enough;... Now, I put the issues and constituencies first. I’ll work with anybody, I’ll fight anybody if it will push our issues forward.... I’m willing to forgo the cheap satisfaction of the radical pose for the deep satisfaction of radical ends.”²⁴ The issue is never the issue; the issue is always the revolution. It was the Alinsky doctrine perfectly expressed.

“These rules,” writes Alinsky, “make the difference between being a realistic radical and being a rhetorical one who uses the tired old words and slogans, calls the police ‘pig’ or ‘white fascist racist’ or ‘motherf-ker and has so stereotyped himself that others react by saying, ‘Oh, he’s one of those, and then promptly turn off.’”²⁵ Instead, advance your radical goals by camouflaging them; change your style to appear to be working within the system.

Alinsky’s agenda is the same as that of the radicals who called for “Revolution Now” in the

²⁴ http://www.eastbayexpress.com/gyrobase/the_new_face_of_environmentalism/Content?oid=290098&showFullText=true

²⁵ *Rules for Radicals*, p. xviii

1960s. He just has a more clever way of achieving it. There's nothing new about radicals camouflaging their agendas as moderate in order to disarm their opposition. That was exactly what the 1930s "popular front" was designed to accomplish. It was devised by Communists, who pretended to be democrats in order to form alliances with liberals which would help them to acquire the power to shut the democracy down. It was Lenin's idea too, from whom Alinsky appropriated it in the first place.

Lenin is one of Alinsky's heroes (Castro is another). Alinsky invokes Lenin in the course of chiding the rhetorical radicals over a famous sixties slogan, which originated with the Chinese Communist dictator Mao Zedong. The slogan was "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun," and during the 1960s it was a favorite cry of the Black Panthers and other radical groups. Regarding this, Alinsky comments: "'Power comes out of the barrel of a gun' is an absurd rallying cry when the other side has all the guns. Lenin was a pragmatist; when he returned to what was then Petrograd from exile, he said that the Bolsheviks stood for getting power through the ballot but would reconsider after they got the guns."²⁶

²⁶ *Rules for Radicals*, p. 37

In other words, vote for us now, but when we become the government it will be a different story. One man, one vote, one time. This is the political credo of all modern totalitarians, including Hitler, who was elected Chancellor and then made himself Fuhrer and shut down the voting booths forever.

Despite Alinsky's description, Lenin was a pragmatist only within the revolutionary framework. As a revolutionary, he was a dogmatist in theory and a Machiavellian monster in practice. He was engaged in a total war which he used to justify every means he thought necessary to achieve his goals - including summary executions, concentration camps (which provided the model for Hitler) and the physical "liquidation" of entire social classes.

"[The] failure of many of our younger activists to understand the art of communication has been disastrous," writes Alinsky. What he really means is their honesty is disastrous, their failure to understand the art of *mis*-communication. This is the precise art that he teaches radicals who are trying impose socialism on a country whose people understand that socialism destroys freedom: Don't sell it as socialism; sell it as "progressivism," "economic democracy" and "social justice."

The strategy of working within the system until you can accumulate enough power to destroy it was what sixties radicals called “boring from within.” It was a strategy that the New Left despised even as Alinsky and his followers practiced it. Alinsky and his followers infiltrated the War on Poverty, made alliances with the Kennedys and the Democratic Party, and secured funds from the federal government. Like termites, they set about to eat away at the foundations of the building in expectation that one day they could cause it to collapse.

Alinsky’s advice can be summed up in the following way. Even though you are at war with the system, don’t confront it as an opposing army; join it and undermine it as a fifth column from within. To achieve this infiltration you must work inside the system for the time being. Alinsky spells out exactly what this means: “Any revolutionary change must be preceded by a passive, affirmative, non-challenging attitude toward change among the mass of our people.” In other words, it is first necessary to sell the people on change itself, the “audacity of hope,” and “yes we can.” You do this by proposing moderate changes which open the door to your radical agendas: “Remember: once you organize people around something as commonly agreed upon as pollution,

then an organized people is on the move. From there it's a short and natural step to political pollution, to Pentagon pollution."

It is not an accident that the Green Czar appointed by President Obama to jump-start the anti-pollution revolution was an Alinsky disciple and a self-described communist.

Revolutionary War

The first chapter of Alinsky's manual is called "The Purpose" and is designed to lay out the radical goal. Its epigraph is taken from the *Book of Job*: "The life of man upon earth is a warfare..."

This is not an invitation to democratic politics, as understood by the American Founders. The American system is about tolerance and compromise, and bringing disparate factions into a working partnership. The Founders devised a system of checks and balances to temper the passions of the people and prevent factions from going to war. It is because this is the reality of American democracy that revolutionary warfare, which is not about compromise, must be conducted through deception. Thus the rules for the organizers of revolutions, laid down by Alinsky, are

rules for deception.

Alinsky's book could easily be called *Machiavellian Rules for Radicals*, after the man who devised principles of statehood and advice for rulers in his book *The Prince*. In Alinsky's view, the difference between the unethical behavior counseled by Machiavelli and the unethical behavior he would like to see practiced by radicals lies solely in the fact that their political enemies are different. "*The Prince* was written by Machiavelli for the Haves on how to hold power," Alinsky writes, "*Rules for Radicals* is written for the Have-Nots on how to take it away."²⁷

For Alinsky, politics is a zero sum exercise, because it is war. No matter what Alinsky radicals say publicly or how moderate they appear, they are at war. This provides them with a great tactical advantage since other actors in the political arena are not at war. The other actors actually embrace the system, which commits all parties to compromise and to the peaceful resolution of conflicts. It commits them to a pragmatism of ends as well as means. Not every wish can be satisfied. By contrast, Alinsky radicals have an unwavering end, which is to attack the so-called Haves until they are finally defeated. In other words, to undermine the system that allows them to earn and

²⁷ *Rules for Radicals*, p. 3

possess more than others. Such a system, according to the radicals, is one of “social injustice,” and what they want is “social justice.” The unwavering end of such radicals is a communism of results.

For tactical reasons radicals will make many compromises along the way; but their unfailing purpose - the vision that guides them - is to conduct a war against the system that in their view that makes social injustice possible.

When you are in a war - when you think of yourself as in a war - there is no middle ground. Radicals perceive opponents of their causes as enemies on a battlefield, and they set out to destroy them by demonizing and discrediting them. Personally. The politics of personal destruction is an inevitable weapon of choice for radicals. If your goal is a just world, then the moral code you live by requires you to wage war without quarter.

Because conservatives embrace the system they believe in its rules of fairness and inclusion. But these rules can also be used by its cynical enemies to destroy it. As Alinsky’s hero Lenin put it, “The capitalists will sell us the rope to hang them.” Or as Alinsky’s own “fourth rule of power tactics” puts it: “Make the enemy live up to their own rules.”

There is no real parallelism in the war which radicals have declared. One side is fighting with a no-holds-barred, take-no-prisoners battle plan against the system, while the other is trying to enforce its rules of fairness and pluralism. This is the Achilles' heel of democracies and all radical spears are aimed in its direction.

At first it might seem paradoxical that an American president who has been the beneficiary of an electoral process second to none in its openness and inclusion should have been a veteran advocate and functionary of an organization like Acorn, which has been convicted of the most extensive election fraud in American history. But this is perfectly intelligible once the Alinsky method is understood. Acorn activists have contempt for the election process because they don't believe in the electoral system as it is constituted in a capitalist democracy. To them, elections are already a fraud - an instrument of the rich, or as Alinsky prefers to call them, the Haves. If the electoral system doesn't serve "the people," but is only an instrument of the Haves, then election fraud is justified as the path to a future that will serve the Have-Nots. Only when a true representative of "the people" is elected can someone like Michelle Obama express pride in her country.

Until conservatives begin to understand exactly how dishonest radicals are - and why - it will be hard to defend the system under attack. For radicals the noble end - creating a new world - justifies any means. And if one actually believed, as they do, that it is possible to create heaven on earth, what institution would one not be justified in destroying to realize that future?

The Radicals' Enemy

What makes radical politics a war is the existence of an enemy who must be eliminated. For Alinsky radicals, that enemy is the “Haves,” who “oppress” and rule the “Have-Nots.”

The Haves sit on the top of “hierarchies” of class, race and gender. From the radicals’ viewpoint, although America is called a democracy, it is really a “Have society.” Alinsky explains: “The setting for the drama of change has never varied. Mankind has been and is divided into the Haves, the Have-Nots, and Have-a-Little, Want Mores.” (p.18) This maxim is just another Alinsky theft, in this case from Karl Marx whose *Communist Manifesto* famously begins: “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.”

This was rubbish when Marx wrote it - deadly rubbish considering the tens of millions of individuals slaughtered by those who believed it - and it is still rubbish. But it remains the bedrock of radical belief, the foundation of all its destructive agendas. The idea that the world is divided into the Haves and the Have Nots, the exploiters and the exploited, the oppressors and the oppressed, leads directly to the idea that liberation lies in the elimination of the former and the dissolution of the conflict. This, according to radicals, will lead to the liberation of mankind. In fact, it led directly to the deaths of 100 million people in the last century murdered by radicals in power on the way to their dream.

“In this book,” Alinsky explains, “we are concerned with how to create mass organizations to seize power and give it to the people.”²⁸ Power is to be “seized” - the word is revealing. The present system will not allow justice to be realized, so sooner or later immoral, illegal, even violent means are required to achieve it.

In the myth created by Marx, which all radicals continue to believe, the market system is a zero sum game where one man’s gain is another’s loss. Because the Haves will defend what they have and

²⁸ *Rules for Radicals*, p. 3

thus deprive the Have-Nots of what they want, they must be destroyed before justice can be achieved. That is why radicals are organized for war - a deceptive guerilla war to begin, and a total war to end.

Take another look at the opening of the *Communist Manifesto*. The history of all previous societies, Marx claims, is the history of “class struggle,” of war between the Haves and the Have Nots. Marx names them through time: freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, oppressor and oppressed. In Marx’s schema the capitalists in our era are the new oppressors, and wage-workers the new oppressed. Post-communist radicals have added women, racial minorities and even sexual minorities to the list. But to compare women and minorities in a democracy to slaves and serfs, or capitalists to slave-owners and feudal lords, as Marx and his disciples do, is delusional.

There are tens of millions of capitalists in America and they rise and fall with every economic wave. Where are the Enrons of yesteryear and where are their bosses? If proletarians can become capitalists and capitalists can be ruined, there is no class struggle in the sense that Marx and his disciples claim, no system of oppression, no Haves and Have-Nots and no need for revolution. The same is truer and even

more obvious where racial minorities and women are concerned. In the last decade America has had a black president, two black secretaries of state, three women secretaries of state, a chief law enforcement officer who is black and so forth, and so on. No slave or serf ever held such positions, or could. The radical creed is a religious myth - the most destructive religious myth in the history of mankind.

In a democracy like ours the notion that there are Haves and Have-Nots is akin to the particular religious myth advanced by Manicheans who viewed the world as ruled by the devil and who saw history as a struggle between the ruling forces of evil and the liberating forces of light. In the radicals' religion, the "Haves" are also a category identical to that of "witches" in the Puritan faith - agents of the devil - and they serve the same purpose. The purpose is to identify one's political enemies as instruments of evil to justify the war against them.

It is true that there are *some* Haves - that is individuals who have inherited wealth and merely *have* it. In other words, there are individuals who are not active investors creating more wealth for themselves and others. There are also *some* have-nots - people who were born to nothing and because of character or social dysfunction have no way of changing their

circumstances. But it is false to describe our social and economic divisions in these terms, or to imply that there are immovable barriers to individuals that prevent them from bettering themselves and increasing their wealth. If there is social mobility, if a person can move from one rung of the economic or social ladder to the next, there is no hierarchy and there is no justification for the radical war.

In the real world of American democracy, social and economic divisions are between the Cans and the Can-Nots, the Dos and the Do-Nots, the Wills and the Will-Nots. The vast majority of wealthy Americans, as a matter of empirical fact, are first generation wealthy and have created what they possess. In the process of creating wealth for themselves, they have created wealth for hundreds and sometimes thousands and sometimes hundreds of thousands of others. But to describe the wealthy as wealth earners and wealth creators - that is, to describe them accurately - is to explode the whole religious fantasy that gives meaning to radical lives, inspires the radicals' war, and has been the source of the most repressive regimes and the greatest social disasters in the history of mankind.

Because the radical agenda is based on a religious myth, a reader of any radical text, including Alinsky's,

will constantly come across statements which are so absurd that only a co-religionist could read them without laughing. Thus, according to Alinsky, “All societies discourage and penalize ideas and writings that threaten the status quo.” The statement, of course, is again lifted directly from Marx, this time from his *German Ideology*, which claims that “the ruling ideas are the ideas of the ruling class.” From this false claim, Alinsky proceeds to the following howler: “It is understandable therefore, that the literature of a Have society is a veritable desert whenever we look for writings on social change.” According to Alinsky this is particularly true of American society which “has given us few words of advice, few suggestions on how to fertilize social change.”²⁹

On what planet did this man live and do his disciples now agitate that they could miss the narratives of “resistance” and “change” which have been familiar themes of our culture and dominant themes of our school curriculums, our media and our political discourse since the 1960s? But Alinsky presses on: “From the Haves, on the other hand, there has come an unceasing flood of literature justifying the status quo.”

Really? Curricula in virtually every liberal arts

²⁹ *Rules for Radicals*, p. 7

college are dedicated precisely to social change.³⁰ The explicit goal of our most prestigious schools of education is promoting “social change,” and even more specifically “social justice.” The mission statements of entire universities express a devotion to social change, which is also the routine subject of commencement addresses, often given by anti-capitalist radicals such as Angela Davis and unrepentant terrorists such as Bernadine Dohrn. The newest mass medium - the Internet - features heavily trafficked websites such as Huffington Post and Daily Kos and MoveOn.org dedicated to promoting the Alinsky program of taking wealth and power from the so-called Haves in the name of “Have-nots.” Finally there is the inconvenient fact - for this particular myth - that America’s first black president, a community organizer and leader of an Alinsky organization himself, and a lifelong associate of political radicals, was able to run a successful campaign on a platform of changing the *status quo*, not defending it.

30 http://www.discoverthenetworks.org/viewSubCategory.asp?id=522#Curricular_Studies

Revolutionary Means and Ends

Sanford Horwitt prefaces his biography of Alinsky, *Let Them Call Me Rebel*, with an anecdote he felt illuminated Alinsky's method. In this anecdote, Alinsky shares his wisdom with students wishing to protest the appearance on their campus of the first George Bush, then America's representative to the UN during the Vietnam War:

College student activists in the 1960s and 1970s sought out Alinsky for advice about tactics and strategy. On one such occasion in the spring of 1972 at Tulane University's annual week-long series of events featuring leading public figures, students asked Alinsky to help plan a protest of a scheduled speech by George Bush, then U.S. representative to the United Nations, a speech likely to be a defense of the Nixon Administration's Vietnam War policies [Note: the Nixon Administration was then negotiating with the North Vietnamese Communists to arrive at a peace agreement- DH] The students told Alinsky that they were thinking about picketing or disrupting Bush's address. That's the wrong approach, he rejoined - not very creative and besides, causing a disruption might get them thrown out of school. [Not very likely-DH] He told them, instead, to go

hear the speech dressed up as members of the Ku Klux Klan, and whenever Bush said something in defense of the Vietnam War, they should cheer and wave placards, reading ‘The K.K.K. supports Bush.’ And that is what the students did with very successful, attention-getting results.³¹

This vignette tells you everything you really need to know about Alinsky’s ethics and his attitude towards means and ends. Lenin once said that the purpose of a political argument is not to refute your opponent “but to wipe him from the face of the earth.” The mission of Alinsky radicals is a mission of destruction. It didn’t matter to Alinsky that the Vietnam War was not a race war, that millions of South Vietnamese opposed the Communists. It didn’t matter to Alinsky who George Bush actually was or what he believed because in a war the objective is to kill the enemy and destroy the system he represents. Therefore seize on any weapon, in this case a symbol of one of the greatest evil that any Americans were ever associated with, and use it to obliterate everything good America ever did. If America’s cause in Vietnam is the Ku Klux Klan, then its cause is evil and America is evil. If George Bush is the Ku Klux Klan, no more needs to be said. He has been rendered by this tactic a non-person. These are the methods of political discourse

³¹ *Let Them Call Me Rebel*, pp. xv-xvi

that Stalinists perfected and that radicals (often described as liberals) continue to use to this day.

The most important chapter of Alinsky's manual is called "Means and Ends," and is designed to address Alinsky's biggest problem: How to explain to radicals who think of themselves as creating a world of perfect justice and harmony, that the means they must use to get there are Machiavellian - deceitful, conniving, and ruthless?

The radical organizer, Alinsky explains, "does not have a fixed truth - truth to him is relative and changing; *everything* to him is relative and changing. He is a political relativist."³² And that will do it. Being a radical in the service of the higher good is a license to do anything that is required to achieve that good.

Liberals share radicals' utopian agendas of a just and peaceful world but are hampered because they have scruples. They support radical ends but because they are principled they don't like the means radicals use to get to their ends. As a result, Alinsky's contempt for them is boundless. In his first book, *Reveille for Radicals* he wrote: "While liberals are most adept at breaking their own necks with their tongues, radicals are most adept at breaking the necks

³² *Rules for Radicals*, pp. 10-11

of conservatives.”³³

In contrast to liberals, who in Alinsky’s eyes are constantly tripping over their principles, the rule for radicals is that the ends justify the means. This was true for the Jacobins, for the Communists, for the fascists and now for the post-Communist left. This is not because radicals begin by being unethical people. On the contrary, their passion for a future that is ethically perfect is what drives their political agendas and causes many to mistake them for idealists. But the very nature of this future - a world without poverty, without war, without racism, and without “sexism” - is so desirable, so noble, so perfect in contrast to everything that exists as to justify any and every means to achieve it.

If the radicals’ utopia were actually possible, it would be criminal *not* to deceive, lie, and murder to advance the radical cause which is, in effect, a redemption of mankind. If it were possible to provide every man, woman and child on the planet with food, shelter and clothing as a right, if it were possible to end bigotry and human conflict, what sacrifice would not be worth it?

The German philosopher Nietzsche had a phrase for

³³ *Reveille for Radicals*, p. 21

this: "Idealism kills." And of course the great atrocities of the modern era, whether Nazi or Communist, were committed by people who believed in a future that would save mankind. When you are overthrowing the existing order, you must break the rules to do it. The nobler the end the easier it is to justify breaking the rules to get there. Thus to be really committed to being a radical is to be committed to being an outlaw. During the sixties, SDS leader Tom Hayden once described the utility of the drug culture to me, although he claimed he was not a part of it. Once you get a middle class person to break the law, he said (and he was thinking of students), they are on their way to becoming revolutionaries.

In the sixties, radicals were generally proud of the idea that they were linked to criminals. Gangsters such as John Dillinger and films such as *The Wild Bunch* and *Bonnie and Clyde* which celebrated American outlaws were popular among them. Abbie Hoffman's *Steal This Book* was a manifesto of the creed and Obama friend and Weatherman leader Bernadine Dohrn's tribute to the murderer Charles Manson was its extreme expression. This romance continues to be expressed in radicals' affinity for criminals and their causes at home and abroad, as it was in Alinsky's early attraction to Capone's enforcer

Frank Nitti.

The Stalinist historian Eric Hobsbawm gave the radicals' romance an academic veneer in a book about Sicilian criminals, whom he described as "primitive rebels," in other words, revolutionaries *avant la lettre*. Among the chapters of *Primitive Rebels* is one titled "Social Bandits." In Hobsbawm's description these criminals were avatars of "social justice," their activity "little more than endemic peasant protest against oppression and poverty."³⁴ Hobsbawm claimed that the activity of the "mob" was "always directed against the rich" (in other words okay).³⁵ The French radical Pierre-Joseph Proudhon gave license to radicals to steal and destroy in socialism's most famous epigraph: "Property is Theft." In reality, of course, it is socialism that is theft.

Another reason why radicals believe that their goals justify criminal means and also why they can be relied on to lie, steal votes and justify murder when committed by their political friends, is because they are engaged in a permanent war whose goal is the salvation of mankind. In *this* context restraint of means can easily seem finicky.

³⁴ *Primitive Rebels*, p.5 Google edition

³⁵ *Primitive Rebels*, op., cit. p. 7

Alinsky's entire argument is an effort to answer liberals who refuse to join the radical cause, with the objection "I agree with your ends but not your means." To this Alinsky replies that the very question of whether "the end justifies the means?" is "meaningless." The real question according to Alinsky is "Does this particular end justify this particular means?"³⁶ But this is disingenuous, since radicals are in a permanent war and "The third rule of the ethics of means and ends is that in war the end justifies almost any means."³⁷

Writes Alinsky: "The man of action views the issue of means and ends in pragmatic and strategic terms. He has no other problem." In other words, Alinsky's radical is not going to worry about the legality or morality of his actions, only their practical effects. If they advance the cause they are justified. "He asks of ends only whether they are achievable and worth the cost; of means, only whether they will work."

If one proceeds by criminal and immoral means, one may ask, won't that corrupt one's cause and determine its outcome? After all, Marxists killed 100 million of their own citizens, in peacetime, justifying every step of the way by the end they were attempting

³⁶ *Rules for Radicals*, p. 24

³⁷ *Rules for Radicals*, p. 29

to achieve - a just world.

Here is how Alinsky answers the question about immoral means: *Everybody does it*. “To say that corrupt means corrupt the ends is to believe in the immaculate conception of ends and principles. The real arena is corrupt and bloody. Life is a corrupting process ... he who fears corruption fears life.” Since life is corrupt everyone is corrupt and corruption is just business as usual - “Chicago style.” “In action”, Alinsky writes, “one does not always enjoy the luxury of a decision that is consistent both with one’s individual conscience and the good of mankind. The choice must always be for the latter.”³⁸ But who is to determine what is good for mankind?

Dostoevsky famously wrote that “if God does not exist then everything is permitted.” What he meant was that if human beings do not have a conception of the good that is outside themselves, then they will act as gods with nothing to restrain them. Alinsky is already there: “Action is for mass salvation and not for the individual’s personal salvation. He who sacrifices the mass good for his personal salvation has a peculiar conception of ‘personal salvation;’ he doesn’t care enough for people to be ‘corrupted’ for

³⁸ *Rules for Radicals*, p. 25

them.”³⁹ In other words, the evil that radicals may do is already justified by the fact that they do it for the salvation of mankind.

Note the scare quotes Alinsky puts around the verb “corrupted,” a signal that he does not believe in moral corruption, because he does not believe in morality. Or, more precisely, his morality begins and ends with the radical cause. The sadistic dictator, Fidel Castro, one of Alinsky’s radical heroes, summarized this principle in a famous formulation: “Within the revolution everything is possible; outside the revolution nothing is possible.” The revolution - the radical cause - is the way, the truth and the life.

The singer John Lennon understood that the end was in fact the crucial missing element in these calculations. “You say you want a revolution,” he wrote, “well, you know, we’d all like to see your plan.” The fact is that, going back to Rousseau and Marx, revolutionaries have never had a plan. The ones who did and who tried to build utopian communities failed. But the really serious revolutionaries, the ones prepared to burn down the system and put their opponents up against the wall, have never had a plan.

What they had - and still have - is a vague idea

³⁹ Ibid.

of the kingdom of heaven they propose to create, in Marx's case "the kingdom of freedom," in Alinsky's "the open society" in the case of the current left, "social justice." These ideas are sentimental and seductive enough to persuade their followers that it is all right to commit fraud, mayhem and murder - usually in epic doses - to enter the promised land. But otherwise, revolutionaries never spend two seconds thinking about how to make an actual society work. How to keep people from committing crimes against each other; how to get them to put their shoulder to the wheel; how to provide incentives that will motivate individuals to produce wealth.

But if there is no viable plan, then it is the means used to get there that make the revolution what it is. Each step of the way creates the revolutionary world. What radicals like Saul Alinsky create is not salvation but chaos. And presidential disciples of Alinsky, what will they create?



*The David Horowitz Freedom Center
thanks Doctor Bob for helping to
finance this publication*

