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Helmut Schelsky: The New Strategy of Revolution: The "Long March" Through the Institutions Study Guide, 2014

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Epigraph

Saul D. Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals: A Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals* (New York: Random House, 1971). "Lest we forget at least an over-the-shoulder acknowledgment to the very first radical: from all our legends, mythology, and history. . . . 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."

Abstract

The sociologist Edward Shils translated and published (1974) the German sociologist Helmut Schelsky's summary of the political strategy of left-wing radicals in West Germany and the West generally. It is directed towards the "conquest of the system" by destroying the most significant features of political democracy. Underlying this strategy is the intention to root out the fundamental political and social ideals and the corresponding patterns of life of the major groups within the system. This is to be accomplished by discrediting [and replacing] the values and intellectual outlook of the institutional foundations of these groups, their ideals, and their patterns of life. This strategy is carried out by a vague "revolutionary state of mind" [a Nietzschean transvaluation of all values] rather than by direct assault. Its purpose is to transfer the decisive means of exercising power out of the hands of the system's most capable trustees or custodians [see Kenneth Minogue's "How Civilizations Fall"]. This strategy for a Western cultural revolution is directed at three separate targets through the use of three different sets of means. The strategy aims, first, at the conquest of universities and teachers colleges (the cultural sector) in order to staff these institutions and run them; second, at disrupting the functions of the state or crippling it through the destruction of its self-confidence [cf. David P. Goldman's *How Civilizations Die*]; and, third, at the intensification of demands placed on the economy, social security, and welfare without regard to the functional and productive capacities of the institutional system in order to dominate those who run them. Schelsky contends that this strategy was already largely successful in West Germany and was establishing a new ruling class. He cites Simone Weil to the effect that, "since the freedom of the individual and social justice are the bases of our society, all that has to be done is to idolize them in order to discredit them and the human reality in which they are embodied," thus clearing space for a new hierocracy: "the rule of a new priesthood" [cf. Milovan Djilas's *The New Class*].

Outline

A.	CONQUEST OF THE SYSTEM (*SYSTEMÜBERWINDUNG*) (345-37)
	1.	Left-Wing Strategy Is Directed toward **Conquest of the System**
		a.	This strategic aim accounts for its political unity more than any explicit agreement [cf. the Communist Party's United Front strategy]
			1)	Differences are mere surface phenomena [cf. Garet Garrett's *The Revolution Was* in noting that the revolutionaries make no mistake]
			2)	Unity of "left-wing radicalism" resides in this consensus concerning strategy ["Birds of a feather flock together"]
	2.	Strategic Target: Destroy the Most Significant Features of Political Democracy
		a.	Method: **Discredit values** and intellectual outlook of the institutional foundations of Western society [cf. Antonio Gramsci and the Cloward-Piven strategy; David Kupelian on desensitization, jamming, and conversion]

   b. Strategic idea is carried by a vague "revolutionary state of mind" [cf. Roger Scruton's culture of repudiation and Michael Polanyi's moral inversion]

   c. Motives of the participants—whether humanitarian and ethical *or* demagogic and tactical—matter little to the strategy [cf. Snowball and Napoleon in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*]

     1) The strategy is only concerned with the effects of the expression of attitudes (*Gesinnungen*)—particularly a mixture of idealistic convictions and demagogic phraseology—on the antagonists (the "enemy")

     2) Need for the presence of enough convinced and convincing idealists to establish credibility

     3) But a preponderance of idealists would lead to recurrent disorder and indiscipline [United Front strategy ending by purging "fellow travelers"]

  3. The Strategy Is Thoroughly Revolutionary

   a. Strategic Aim: **Transfer decisive power** into other hands

   b. Main prospect for success rests on an analysis of the **mode of domination** characteristic of modern Western industrial and bureaucratic society

   c. Inadequacy of antiquated direct-action revolutionary tactics [cf. Robert Strausz-Hupé's *The Protracted Conflict*]

     1) Overcoming the military and police by force

     2) Trotskyite *coup d'etat*

     3) Malaparte's fascist takeover of the centers of technological power

   d. Greater complexity of present-day society and state

     1) They are protected by a network of institutions [cf. subsidiarity] that rest on opinion rather than force [the idea of civil society]

   e. **Rudi Dutschke**: What is required is a **long march** through the institutional structure [ref. Mao's long march in the 1920s]

  4. The Enemy as Defined by the Neo-revolutionary Strategy [cf. *The Matrix*]

   a. The enemy is "the system," personified in its "rulers," who form the "establishment" [other epithets are continuously invented and reinvented]

     1) Use of defamatory and polemic concepts

     2) The "authorities" are discredited

   b. Purpose of this mode of characterization: Dissolution or enfeeblement of the entire group [Bertholt Brecht expressed this idea ironically in "The Solution"]

   c. This common designation makes possible a collective "decoupling" of generations

     1) It spares young persons the slow and achievement-demanding path [the Roman *cursus honorum*] of ascent through integration into the path

   d. The triumphant culmination of this strategy is only a new system

  5. Summary: The Common Element of This Strategy Is to Pervert the System's Fundamental Moral and Political Values into Weapons to Destabilize It [cf. Saul Alinsky]

B. THE WESTERN CULTURAL REVOLUTION (347-49)

  1. The Targets

   a. Educational and opinion-forming institutions [Samuel Taylor Coleridge's clerisy; cf. Julien Benda's *La Trahison des clercs*]

   b. Churches and political parties

  2. Strategic Goal: Seizure of Power

   a. Occupation of crucial positions of authority in order to determine their policies [cf. Gary North's "Capturing the Robes" of priestly authority]

   b. **Partial autonomy** is enjoyed by these institutions on the basis of certain fundamental rights

     1) This is the point of entry through which power may be gained [consider the role played by tax-exempt foundations as charitable public trusts]

   c. This autonomy provides an opportunity for the seizure of these institutions

     1) The government and other institutions are unable to prevent this seizure without suspending that fundamental autonomy

   d. Result: **Cultural revolution** with a Western tinge

3. Decisive Element in the Authority and Stability of an Advanced and Complex Society
    a. Interpretation of the meaning of events [hermeneutics]
        1) Crucial importance of the incumbency [tenure, accreditation] of the key positions in which interpretations are made
    b. Information has become the decisive instrument of production
        1) The monopoly of this factor of production offers the most promising means for the seizure of political authority
    c. Educational revolution
        1) Plato, Rousseau, Karl Mannheim
        2) Analogy to Lord Beaverbook's and Goebbels' use of the news
        3) Together, the educational revolution is moved from merely academic claims and information policy is moved from a merely supporting role into a major objective of the revolution

4. Masters of Communications Assume the Role of a Dominant Class [cf. Joel Kotkin's Oligarchs]
    a. The structure of a large-scale, specialized society provides an opportunity to attribute and communicate its meaning without being checked by the audience's experience [Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn expressed the dilemma and vulnerability created by such specialization in "Scita and Scienda": "As modern life becomes increasingly complicated across many different socio-political levels, Kuehnelt-Leddihn submits that the Scita — political, economic, technological, scientific, military, geographical, psychological knowledge of the masses and their representatives — and the Scienda — the knowledge of these matters that is necessary to reach logical-rational-moral conclusions – are separated by an incessantly and cruelly widening gap and that democratic governments are inadequate to the task." Source: http://pedia.nodeworks.com/E/ER/ERI/Erik Ritter von Kuehnelt-Leddihn
        1) Reason: Specialization of necessary information through a highly differentiated division of labor
        2) Result: The individual is increasingly affected by influences flowing from an unprecedentedly wide and inaccessible structure [cf. Hobbes's *Leviathan*, *The Matrix*]

5. Additional Strategic Opportunity: Institutional Provision for the Communication of Ideals or Normative Ideas
    a. These ideals and ideas possess a certain conceptual distance from directly experienced reality [making them fungible and manipulable like currencies]
        1) They must do so in order to fulfill their role in the guidance of moral conduct
    b. The most effective line of this strategy: The construction and communication of fundamental ethical convictions disconnected from actual conduct or particular events [cf. political correctness]

6. Systematic Attack on the Real World through Moral Arguments Is a Perversion of the Human Aspiration to Perfection [cf. Lee Harris's "Al-Qaeda's Fantasy Ideology," Benedict XVI's *Regensburg Lecture*, and B. B. Warfield's *Perfectionism*]
    a. Arnold Gehlen and Gerhard Szczesny
    b. G. W. F. Hegel: The **terrorism of virtue** as embodied in **Maximilien Robespierre**
        1) Professionalized revolutionary political strategy that calls moralists into service as auxiliaries
        2) It can be most successfully applied in the case of institutions that serve the function of interpreting events and moral rules and giving them meaning [*e.g.*, the Boycott Divest Sanction (BDS) movement to get universities, governments, and businesses to break ties with Israel]
        3) The strategy places the noose of their own moral convictions around the necks of those who are ostensibly served by those institutions [through shaming, ostracizing, and finger-pointing at alleged hypocrisy]

          4)   These moralistic and idealistic convictions are only a tactical façade for the strategists of the conquest of power

C.   THE SELF-DECEPTION OF THE LIBERALS (349)

    1.   First Strategic Key: Conquest of Universities and Teacher Colleges

        a.   Revolutionaries insist that the autonomy of these institutions be protected [Among more than a dozen members of the SDS, Black Panthers, and other '60s radical groups who subsequently taught college (inc. teachers colleges and law schools) are Bill Ayers, Bernadine Dohrn, Kathy Boudin, Mark Rudd, Eleanor Raskin, Ericka Huggins, Angela Davis, and Howard Machtinger]

        b.   Purpose: Staffing and eventual takeover of these institutions, given the rapid growth of occupations filled by university graduates [something comparable took place the last decades of tsarist Russia] [cf. David Gelernter's *America-Lite*]

        c.   These socializing institutions constitute the operational field of what has been called "extra-parliamentary action"

        d.   Negative attitude toward the parliamentary and party system is only a polemical veil to cover the plan to take control [Orwell's *Animal Farm* depicts this well]

    2.   Transformation of Other People's Moral Standards into Strategic Weapons

        a.   A "**thinking minority**" of liberals into the **role of accomplice** making someone complicit in a crime is an effective recruitment device]

        b.   This thinking minority is forced into the role [*e.g.*, in a United Front] because its strengths cannot be sustained in severe revolutionary crises [Liberals lend their prestige to the cause but are purged once they become a liability] [The Egyptian army in 2013 prevented the Muslim Brotherhood from consolidating power; Turkey's ruling AKP has imprisoned military officers and journalists to keep from being ousted]

            1)   Liberals are forced to take sides in an extreme, polarized situation; they then lock themselves out of their own house [see Gregorio Marañón's *Liberal in the Looking-Glass* concerning the author's dilemmas during the Spanish Civil War]

            2)   Critical aim of the revolutionary strategy: Precipitate **ideological polarization** in liberal-democratic societies [Politics works through persuasion, despotism through force; polarization effectively suspends politics]

    3.   The Success of This Strategy

        a.   Defensiveness and resignation of groups that have been attacked

D.   DESTROYING THE SELF-CONFIDENCE OF THE STATE (349-51)

    1.   Second Group of Targets: Institutions Which Perform the Classical Functions of the State

        a.   The new strategy believes that once the revolution is successful, these institutions will fall into place [via disrupting the state's functioning or crippling it]

            1)   This view is based on the belief that the security and stability of modern society are not primarily dependent on the powers of the state that represent the general welfare

                a)   The assumption is that stability depends on the cooperation of large-scale organizations acting on behalf of particular group interests [crony capitalism and rent-seeking play a role]

                b)   This is an insight that is obscured in the traditional German academic theory of the state

        b.   The goal of the revolutionary strategy is to render the functional organs of the state insecure through discrediting them

        c.   The aim is to weaken their capacity for self-defense through the use of techniques that entail the manipulation of particularistic (special) interests

        d.   The state must be rendered suspect; it must be shown to be incapable of standing up to or coping with a flood of demands [cf. Saul Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals* and the Peter Principle on rising to the level of one's incompetence]

    2.   Most Appropriate Means of Achieving This End: Exacerbation of Demands for Individual Freedom and Constitutional Rights

a. Individual rights are transformed into weapons for attacking the legitimate activities of the state

b. The judicial designed for protection of the individual against abuses by the state is probably incapable of resisting this strategic transformation of its political function and thus is in danger of becoming an involuntary accomplice

3. In Order to Disguise Their Strategy and Tactics, the Revolutionaries Attempt to Portray the State and Its Organs as Authoritarian and Oppressive

    a. This systematic discrediting campaign shakes the **state's self-confidence** and compels its various institutions to observe an extremely strict interpretation of constitutional rights and adhere to them with pedantic rigor [cf. Saul Alinsky's Fourth Rule: "Make the enemy live up to their own book of rules."

        1) Result: The state hampers itself in the performance of its legitimate functions and it leaves lower officials in the lurch [cf. Tom Wolfe's "Mau-mauing the Flak Catchers"]

    b. Alternatively, this revolutionary tactic forces the government to resort to legally questionable measures, thereby vindicating the discrediting agitation

        1) Officials can now no longer count on the present "policy" of his political superiors [who, in effect, run for cover while passing the blame down the chain]

4. The Role of Violence in This Strategy

    a. Classical Revolutionary strategy: Use revolutionary counter-violence to break the state's power to impose sanctions by means of its legitimate coercive powers

    b. New revolutionary strategy: Violence has only two functions

        1) It is either the carefully managed and apparently trifling harassment and threatening of the personal security of individual antagonists (**Psychoterror**) [cf. Alinsky's Ninth Rule: "The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself"]

        2) Or it takes the form of specific acts of violence committed with the intention of provoking the police to respond by excessive, authoritarian countermeasures [cf. Alinsky's Thirteenth Rule: "Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, and polarize it"]

    c. Result: State's legal monopoly of force is discredited and its representatives are deprived of the self-confidence in their own legitimacy

E. THE MISUSE OF CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS (351-52)

[Instances of This Transformation of Rights into Weapons Are Too Numerous to Describe]

1. **De-legitimation** of the Armed Forces through the Extension Conscientious Objection to Patently Political Beliefs

2. De-legitimation of the Police Whose Powers Are Subordinated to Measures Which "Guarantee the Personal Rights of the Criminal"

3. A deliberately Discrediting Sociology of the Legal Profession

4. Extremist Interpretation of the Right to Assembly

    a. Demonstrations are now only rarely occasions on which ordinary people and minorities make representations to public officials; they have instead become effort to gain attention on television and in the press, "thereby to gain publicity for expressions of sentiment without rational argument"

        1) Objective: Transform public opinion into a swirl of emotions and hence to block rational political discussion

5. This Revolutionary Strategy Repeats the Process by Which the Weimar Republic Was Brought to Its End

    a. Only a small group of intellectuals vainly attempts to protect the foundations of the present state

    b. The "end of the intellectual legitimation of the state" is being brought about by ministers of culture [cf. Jürgen Habermas's *The Legitimation Crisis*]

F. THE EXPLOITATION OF THE WORKING CLASS (352-53)

1. Third Group of Targets: The Economy and the Fields of Social Security and Welfare

    a. The revolutionary strategy aims to dominate those who run these institutions

          1)   The goal is to exploit the labor of those who operate these institutions

      b.   Plausible strategic device for attaining this goal: The **intensification of demands** for social justice beyond the system's functional and productive capacities

          1)   The further raising of demands is apt to win the effective support of those who do not have responsibility for fulfilling or paying for them

          2)   Examples

  2.   To Make These Demands Plausible: Discredit Those Who Insist That the Ability to Provide Services Is Determined by the Productivity of the Economy

      a.   The **discrediting campaign** is aimed at the entrepreneurial sector of the market economy and responsible trade union responses

          1)   Invocation of the class struggle ideology [This has been especially effective in all forms of identity politics, what Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn called identitarianism]

  3.   Twofold Danger Inherent in This Strategy

      a.   It makes every unworldly idealist a potential supporter of the revolutionary strategy—using the ideals of the system as a weapon for its destruction

      b.   Every justified conflict of interest is immediately aggravated to a level of confrontation which endangers the system

      c.   One consequence of this "functional transformation" of legitimate social conflict is to provoke an unrealistic defensiveness [cf. Alinsky's Third Rule: "Whenever possible, go outside the expertise of the enemy"]

  4.   How the Strategy Works: The Negative Consequences of Accepting Unrealistic Demands Damage the Stability of the "System" and Ostensibly Demonstrate Its Incapacity to Function Effectively

G.   THE EXACERBATION OF DEMANDS (353-54)

  1.   This Social-Psychological Strategy Is Largely a Tactic for Acquiring Power

      a.   it involves use of a technique of democratic cooperation developed for the purposes of taking over power

      b.   This strategy entails the use of "**co-detemination**" (*Mitbestimmung*) [by management and labor] as a surrogate solution for political revolution in the economic sphere [cf. J.-J. Rousseau's general will]

      c.   The revolutionary strategy would establish the social supremacy of politicians who are essentially university intellectuals [cf. Tony Blair's New Labour]

  2.   The Principle of Revolution by Procedure

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      a.   The use of "legal formalism" against antagonists who are one-sidedly bound by these rules

      b.   This is a refinement of the Young Socialists' "**dual strategy**" [Alinsky's Fourth Rule again]

      c.   To observe this with indignation is pointless and ineffective

          1)   Otto von Bismarck: "Indignation is not a category of political action"

H.   THE IDOLS OF THE SYSTEM (355)

  1.   The Strategy of the "Conquest of the System" Is Already Largely Successful

      a.   The ideological components of this strategy are "only a façade which hides a purposeful and realistic **Machiavellian political strategy** of the pursuit of power"

      b.   Its fundamental principle consists in turning the basic values of the system into a weapon against it, so its inherent defense mechanisms cannot work effectively [cf. the way cancer takes control over healthy cells]

      c.   Neither can an idealistic value-orientation nor the institutional defenses be effective because these strategists work "legally"

  2.   **Simone Weil**: "Both the Ego and the Social Are Idols"

      a.   They discredit themselves when they are absolutized

      b.   This revolutionary strategy is opening up a great future for a **new hierocracy**, the rule of a new priesthood [cf. Kotkin's Clerisy]

Review

conquest of the system	discredit values	transfer decisive power
mode of domination	Rudi Dutschke	partial autonomy
cultural revolution	terrorism of virtue	Maximilien Robespierre
thinking minority	role of accomplice	ideological polarization
state's self-confidence	psychoterror	de-legitimation
intensification of demands	discrediting campaign	co-determination
dual strategy	Machiavellian political strategy	Simone Weil
new hierocracy		

APPENDIX: FROM *OBITER DICTA*, JANUARY 9, 2010

Western universities play a vital role as the great incubators of the "culture of repudiation," as Roger Scruton calls it, that infests the intellectual classes. What we are witnessing is a pulsing intensification of radical ideologies that were set in motion two centuries ago when revolutionary fevers burst out of Paris in 1789. Such "fire in the minds of men" has been fanned to greater levels of intensity through the convergence of subsequent ideologies and movements: Hegelianism, Marxism, Russian nihilism, the Pan- movements, the Black Hand, Bolshevism, Fascism, National Socialism, racial eugenics, the Khmer Rouge, and radical Islam. Each "avatar" of what James Billington has called "the revolutionary faith" represents new "genetic" information programmed into existing strains of the disease. The writings of men like Adolf Hitler, Antonio Gramsci, and Sayyid Qutb burst through prison walls with a propulsive force [that] continues to shake the world to this day.

Ideas have consequences. One of the consequences of our idolatry of the beneficent state is that our social and political institutions are being reprogrammed into instruments with which disdainful social engineers contrive to reorder the world. The Fabian stained-glass window of a century ago depicted Sidney Webb and George Bernard Shaw as two blacksmiths who had placed the world on an anvil and "work their good will" upon it underneath a banner that says "Remould It Nearer to the Heart's Desire." The caption on a nearby shield reads "Pray Devoutly Hammer Stoutly." On the wall behind the scene is another shield with the initials of the Fabian Society (F. S.) and a wolf in sheep's clothing as its heraldic beast.

During the Second World War Friedrich Hayek, an émigré scholar from Austria, witnessed an earlier phase of the revolutionary social dynamic at close hand. At the time he published *The Road to Serfdom* (1944), Hayek taught at the Fabian-inspired London School of Economics. Near the end of a chapter entitled "Who, Whom?" (a phrase attributed to Lenin), Hayek observed:

"The old socialist leaders, who had always regarded their parties as the natural spearhead of the future general movement toward socialism, found it difficult to understand that with every extension in the use of socialist methods the resentment of large poor classes should turn against them." Today, what Hayek then observed and Edward Banfield later described as a lower-class culture type (which resembles that of the refugee camps) has spread to what Marx might have called a *Lumpenintelligentsia* composed of the estranged and resentful scions of privilege who have adopted a revolutionary mindset.

"The resentment of the lower middle class, from which fascism and National Socialism recruited so large a proportion of their supporters, was intensified by the fact that their education and training had in many instances made them aspire to directing positions and that they regarded themselves as entitled to be members of the directing class." Thomas Hobbes had noted much the same among the leaders of popular movements during the English Civil War.

"While the younger generation, out of that contempt for profit-making fostered by socialist teaching, spurned independent positions which involved risk and flocked in ever increasing numbers into

salaried positions which promised security, they demanded a place yielding them the income and power to which in their opinion their training entitled them." What could be a more precise description of our New Class of college-educated *apparatchiks*? Like Milton's Lucifer, they seek to reign if not rule. Such are the pipe dreams of the revolutionary manqué.

"The movement was able to attract all those who, while they agreed on the desirability of the state controlling all economic activity, disagreed with the ends for which the aristocracy of the industrial workers used their political strength." Here we can detect one of the oldest stories in the world: what René Girard has called mimetic rivalry. We see it in the stories of Cain murdering Abel, Jacob supplanting Esau, Romulus slaying a defiant Remus, the scapegoating of designated "enemies of the people."

"They [the fascists and National Socialists] knew that the strongest group which rallied enough supporters in favor of a new hierarchical order of society, and which frankly promised privileges to the classes to which it appealed, was likely to obtain the support of those who were disappointed because they had been promised equality but found that they had merely furthered the interest of a particular class. Above all, they were successful because they offered a theory, a Weltanschauung, which seemed to justify the privileges they promised to their supporters."

The phenomenon that Hayek so ably summarizes is yet another collective manifestation of what Augustine called the *libido dominandi*, the lust to rule. Whether the initiates or adherents of such movements are promised an earthly or a heavenly paradise, their founders, leaders, and true believers are enabled to draw strength and sustenance from the visions they conjure and the passions they loose. But in the end, as always, such revolutions devour their children.

As Edmund Burke understood, civilization must be renewed and strengthened in each generation. Too often we elect leaders who kill us with their kindness because they fail to protect and defend their flocks from ravening wolves. Our malady today seems to be that the sins of lust and sloth are tangled together. Our leaders have permitted murderous threats to fester in our midst, unchallenged.

Perhaps it is most appropriate to conclude here by citing Solomon's wisdom concerning the fires of raging lust. His words are equally applicable to our own sloth in the face of ravaging firebrands. Paraphrasing Prov. 6:27: Can a man press fire to his bosom and not be burnt?