

SOWING HATE AND CHAOS

How Propaganda is Used
to Destroy Democracies

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Marchant Books

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Paperback ISBN: 979-8-9914813-0-4

E-Book ISBN: 979-8-9914813-1-1

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Cover Photo by Kirstine Rosas on Pixabay

PREVIEW SAMPLE

Chapter 1

HOW DEMOCRACIES ARE UNDONE

As I am working on the final edits for this book, it has been more than two years since I moved from California, and two and a half years since I discovered Roger Mucchielli's *Psychologie de la publicité et de la propagande*, the outline of the methods for creating hatred and violent chaos in nations. In that time, I have been writing, securing the rights to the book, having it professionally translated, making the language of a French intellectual neuropsychiatrist understandable, connecting the dots between events of our last century, Mucchielli's book, and what is happening today, and finally, with the help of two top level editors, producing a final work.

In those two plus years, there have been moments when my heart has raced while typing on the keyboard;

there have been many nights when I have had trouble sleeping after walking away from my computer. I have friends who had trouble sleeping after reading some of the chapters. Reading Mucchielli, and where the road of research has taken me from there, shines a light on the mass manipulation that has been happening right under our noses --- things we have seen but didn't understand. When you understand them, they can be uncomfortable and at times frightening to view.

The most unsettling thing about reading and writing about this is that everything around us is unfolding in pretty much the exact progression Roger Mucchielli wrote about, 50 years ago. Where this progression ends, if he is right, is ugly beyond what we see on the road head of us today. I so want him to be wrong.

Fortunately, Mucchielli also gave us some clues on how to deflate the power of these techniques, meaning the dark clouds ahead of us are not an inevitability. But to deflate them, we have to know about them and understand them.

It is important to know that Roger Mucchielli was no conspiracy theorist writing in a cabin in the woods. He was a French psychologist, a psycho-sociologist, educational psychologist, and neuropsychiatrist. He founded three centers of psychology study and two international journals and was president of the International Institute of Psychotherapeutic Syntheses in France. At the time that he wrote *Psychologie de la publicité et de la propagande*, his son later told me, he was writing a book a year. He wrote this one because he was deeply concerned about the civil conflict in France in 1968, which sent millions into the streets

in protest, virtually shut the nation down, and resulted in people being killed in violent clashes. As it does in the US today, the threat of civil war had loomed over their heads. Mucchielli knew what had been done to bring them into the streets and incite them to violence, to get them to try to collapse their own government. He wrote to expose how it was done, in hopes of changing its course.

The techniques Mucchielli describes are not what we normally think of when we hear the word propaganda. This is not the kind of propaganda that selects facts and twists the news, or even the disinformation campaigns that forward lies in national media, documentaries, or books to advance the narrative of leaders. His is a far narrower form of propaganda. It is not working just to change opinions or even votes. It is using psychological techniques to alter thought and behavior. It seeks to shut down the process of reason itself in the person receiving it, and to ignite and inflame a different “mind” in the individual, a much more primitive mind that is driven by old instincts, such as the instincts that cause a herd to stampede or a hive of bees to swarm when they feel the group is being attacked. It lights the fire of these instincts to create a swelling of fear, hatred, aggression, and a thirst for violence, and to then tip that hatred and thirst into violent attack.

These techniques have been used more than once in the last century, in different parts of the globe. Where they have been used, the mobs have been directed toward their fellow countrymen and women, resulting in violent civil conflict.

The ultimate goal of the propaganda is to spin a nation

into chaos, to collapse a system of government, and in the middle of that chaos, to install a new regime. Because it deals with parts of the mind of which we are not aware, our “unconscious” drives, this gets accomplished, according to Mucchielli, with the subjects (us) being completely unaware of the manipulation.

You want to think this sounds like science fiction. But when he describes the steps, they are far too recognizable.

Mucchielli lays out the tools to bring about the collapse, and the installation of the new regime, in three phases. Phase 1 is the Propaganda of Indoctrination and Recruitment. This is the recruitment of the followers, which is done through rallies and through mass communication (in the past radio, today social media), through demonstrations of size and force, hate speech, and scapegoating. Opponents, he says, are mocked, impugned, and accused of presenting malicious, false, or scandalous news. The speeches build the temperature of the hatred by painting a constant threat of destruction waiting outside one’s door.

It does not matter if the speech is truthful. In fact, he says that one of the hallmarks of propaganda in Phase 1 is the use of lies that can be easily discredited but continue to be repeated. In Phase 2, the Propaganda of Agitation, the hatred is moved from a thirst for violence to the physical attack. This is accomplished by painting and continuing to reinforce the “reality” around the group members that the forces of evil are gathering, that the battle between good and evil is coming, the ultimate settling of the future, whether it will be in hands of the good and the Godly or collapse into dark at the hands of the evil. It instills the fear

of the complete destruction of one's culture, perhaps their religion, the fear that one's values, and all that one holds precious, will be strangled. Once they are fully enmeshed in the "new reality," all that is needed then is to unleash them and direct them where to go. Historically, this has been accompanied by a "catastrophic event" (a fire, an attack, etc.) that has been blamed on the opposition, starting the mass violence. When the violence is sufficient to collapse the nation, the new regime deposes the government and steps in to "restore order."

Phase 3 is after the overthrow, when the new regime is in place. It creates the necessary "uniformity" to cement control by the new leaders, and keep the new regime in power. In this phase the voices of dissent are silenced. Media, the arts, and education are reshaped to fit the narrative of the new regime. Certainly there are no protests in the streets.

There are at least four clear examples where these techniques have been used successfully in the last century: Nazi Germany, Indonesia in 1965-66, Rwanda in 1994, and Myanmar (formerly Burma) from 2012-2017. Of these, the rise of Nazi Germany and Hitler's use of propaganda are the most familiar. Many people don't even know that in Indonesia in 1965-66, roughly 600,000 Indonesians were killed by their own countrymen. A new pro-Western dictator, Suharto, was installed and would remain in power for 30 years.

Between 2012 and 2017 in Myanmar, Buddhist mobs viciously attacked the nation's tiny Muslim minority, the Rohingya, ultimately killing tens of thousands in 2017 and driving more than 600,000 from the country into squalid

refugee camps in Bangladesh. The Myanmar violence was engineered by the Tatmadaw, the nation's military, using fake Facebook accounts to incite the hatred and violence. Four years later, when the same generals staged a brutal coup, killing more than 3000 protesters, democracy in Myanmar was dead.

I have included more data on each of these examples in the Appendix for those wanting to do a deeper dive into how they happened. In each case virtually identical techniques were used to incite the mobs and ignite the violence and murder. They used the techniques that Mucchielli laid out in 1970. In Rwanda, the perpetrators of the genocide actually used Mucchielli's book. It was through the work of a Human Rights Watch researcher, Alison Des Forges, that I found the book myself.

Roger Mucchielli did not invent the techniques of creating hatred, division, and violence for the purpose of overthrowing a government. We can see by the techniques and the results that there have been others who certainly knew them well, beginning with Hitler and Goebbels.

Documents declassified by the British government in 2021 revealed that the British Foreign Office's cold war propaganda arm, the Information Research Department (IRD), co-operating with right-wing military leaders in the country, had planned and executed the campaign to instigate the mass killings in Indonesia in 1965-66. (See Appendix for more detail). When it was over, celebrating the "elimination" of the Left in Indonesia, the team's leaders boasted that, using limited tactical "psywar measures" and black propaganda, they had pulled off "one of

the most successful propaganda operations in postwar British history.”

A note in the *New York Times* on October 15, 2018 noted that the officers involved in the Myanmar operation had studied psychological warfare in Moscow. When they came back, they had delivered lectures to others on what they had learned. Myanmar’s military had been sending groups of its officers to Russia for military training since 2000.

These examples share another common denominator: in each case the violent mobs attacking their fellow citizens fervently and feverishly believed they were being patriots and saving their nation. They did not use the word “patriot” lightly. In the reality that had been woven around them, they were saving their nations from imminent destruction.

The reason for my racing heart at the keyboard, and my sleepless nights? In the time I have been working on this book, I have watched as the United States has moved from Phase 1 to Phase 2; events in the United States have followed the steps Mucchielli described nearly exactly. The Republican Party has been overtaken by a new regime that has now begun implementing many of the steps for Phase 3, creating “integration” and uniformity of thought within the party, including the banishing and “destruction” of critics within the party, the attempted smashing of candidates who have not pledged allegiance and moved into step behind the leader. (This is easier to do in a political party than a nation). Other areas of society, including some of the nation’s largest media outlets, are already in the preliminary steps of Phase 3, and have already begun voluntarily reshaping themselves to the new regime.

As you watch these events unfold in the US through the prism of Mucchielli's work, it presents a very different view. On January 6, 2021, I knew that the mob in the Capitol had been expertly cultivated, primarily through social media, to believe their government was in the throes of an overthrow by the Left, that if they were to save the nation, they must attack. That group was formed and organized by precise steps, not so different from the mobs of violent Buddhists that descended on the Rohingya villages of Myanmar. Some of the language at the rallies could have been lifted out of Mucchielli's book.

That they were attempting to save democracy by destroying one of its bedrocks, the peaceful transition of power, did not occur to those on the rotunda on January 6. Neither did the fact that the claims of voter fraud underlying the "Stop the Steal" campaign had been thrown out in more than 60 court cases. They had been played, skillfully manipulated by people who knew exactly what they were doing. People who knew how to do this had used psychological "tricks" to create a stampeding herd. And stampeding herds don't stop to have their logic questioned.

January 6 was not successful in stopping the transition of power to the elected President. But when you know what to listen for, it becomes very clear—the drumbeat behind the march on the Capitol is growing louder around us every day. Election or no, it will not stop until the new regime is in place.

Does that mean the organizers of January 6 have read Roger Mucchielli? Doubtful. But the fact that you won't find books on Amazon about this kind of propaganda doesn't

mean it's not known elsewhere. There are people, both inside and outside the United States, who know what Mucchielli knew. This is more than evident by their actions. The fact that most have a current or past connection to military intelligence, here or abroad, and that virtually every military intelligence department hires psychiatrists and psychologists, should provide a clue. And now social media has handed them a platform far more powerful than anything their predecessors have known.

The violent mobs created via social media have not been limited to Proud Boys and QAnon shamans. Conflict needs at least two sides. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests began as massive, peaceful protests. They devolved into violence, destruction, and looting. There are videos showing people starting the violence in different locations in the United States at virtually the same time, under the cover of night. We can see some of them in the videos, covered head to toe to conceal their identities, while they smashed windows (often with skateboards) and set the violence in motion. Rocks had been stashed nearby for use by the protesters.

In two cases you could see the wrists of the instigators as they smashed windows. They were white. A friend of mine who marched with BLM in Los Angeles saw a group of young men smashing windows and using lighters to try to ignite fires. They were wearing Black Lives Matter t-shirts and masks. They also were white. This friend is a six foot tall Latina, and fearless. She approached one of the group and told him to stop, saying "You know you are hurting the movement." His response? "I don't give a f--- about your movement."

A colleague of mine was in the thick of the BLM protests in Portland, Oregon, when violence erupted. He told me that the protests began, and continued, as peaceful protests in the park, a fact that was almost never covered by the media. At approximately 11:00 p.m., those protesters would go home, he said, and a new crowd would arrive. The 11:00 arrivals were the ones attempting to burn down courthouses and police stations. They also were largely white.

So who were they? You can say they were “Antifa.” But who are Antifa? And who has been organizing and directing these people, who were mostly young, to even call themselves Antifa? Some will tell you it’s George Soros trying to destroy the US. Some will tell you it’s the Right trying to spin the country into martial law to affect a military takeover. We may never know who it actually is. The violence and the mobs were instigated and organized on social media platforms, which provide a cloak of anonymity to the instigators.

The only thing you can say with certainty is that whoever organized these actions, in spots across the United States, knew how to create violent mobs, not so different from the mobs smashing Jewish businesses during *Kristallnacht*, the night of anti-Jewish violence across Germany in November 1938. Not so different from the rioters in France in 1968, smashing windows and burning cars, who would inspire Roger Mucchielli to write *Psychologie de la publicité et de la propaganda*.

Between October 2023 and June 2024, there were more than 1300 demonstrations in the United States protesting the Hamas attacks in Israel and the Israeli invasion of Gaza;

over 40% of the protesters were students. More than 94% of those demonstrations showed support for the Palestinians. These also started as peaceful protests until—seeming to spring from the middle of the crowds—someone flashed a swastika to a TV camera. People dressed as Hamas militants with their faces covered called for violence, signs were put up calling for the eradication of Israel. The narrative changed from standing up for the rights, and the lives, of Palestinian citizens, to support for a terrorist group.

On some college campuses this devolved further, into ripping mezuzahs off the doors of Jewish students, smashing the windows of Jewish centers on campus and urinating on the floors. In some cities mobs protested outside of Jewish businesses, or protesters physically attacked Jewish businesspeople. Predictably these have created counter protests and attacks by the Jewish communities, including an incident at UCLA where masked men, who we assume were Jewish, attacked the pro-Palestine students with sticks.

Like the BLM protests, when the violence started, the peaceful protesters would go home. It was two different groups of people. And like the Black Lives Matter violence, the violence and antisemitism that infiltrated the movement to defend the human rights of Palestinian citizens were coordinated and organized on social media, by people who operate anonymously, through accounts that are more likely than not fake identities. Fox News has said, with no evidence, that Soros and other “left wing billionaires” were behind it. The only evidence it showed with the story was a set of figures on contributions to the Biden campaign.

The fact that Soros is Jewish was explained on Fox News recently as his “playing both sides of the conflict.” The left has accused the right of engineering the violence to discredit the movement and sway Jewish voters to Trump, also without evidence. All we can say with certainty is that we don’t know what the real truth is.

As long as they are allowed to operate with anonymity, we may never know who the actual instigators behind the violence are. There are certainly instigators within the United States. There are also powerful groups and governments outside our borders who stand to benefit on many fronts by conflict or chaos in the United States. China and Russia both stand to benefit geopolitically by conflict or chaos in the US. Both have been credibly found to be using fake social media accounts to sow disinformation to influence American elections. It is well-documented in the 2019 Mueller Report that Russian operatives used fake American identities to not only spread influence campaigns and falsehoods on the US election, but even to organize political events in the US through covert operatives. Senator Mark Warner, Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said in April 2024 that the threat against US elections by Russia and other foreign powers is far greater today than it was in 2020, as adversarial countries have become more adept at creating and disseminating false information, aided by the use of Artificial Intelligence.

In May 2024, *NewsGuard* and the *New York Times* reported on a network of 167 Russian disinformation sites—many with names that mimic American news organizations but forwarding Russian propaganda and fabricated

stories—run by a former deputy sheriff in Florida who has now been granted asylum in Russia.

Also in May, Tik Tok released a statement saying they had disrupted 15 “influence operations” working to influence political discourse in target audiences and influence elections, just in the first four months of 2024. The company reportedly removed more than 3000 fake accounts being run by the operators.

Israel’s military has admitted to using fake social media accounts to forward the Israeli narrative since at least 2021; in June 2024 the *New York Times* reported that Israel’s Ministry of Diaspora Affairs had ordered an operation that used hundreds of fake social media accounts to influence US lawmakers and targeted American audiences with pro-Israel messaging. The campaign also created three fake English-language news sites featuring pro-Israel articles.

At the same time, Iranian operators have distributed fake or falsely attributed videos and antisemitic posts glorifying and excusing heinous war crimes against Israeli citizens that have reached tens of millions of viewers on social media, spurring and forwarding even more antisemitic comments and agreement.

In June 2024, five months before the US 2024 election, Nate Fick, The State Department’s top digital and cyber policy official, said that most Americans are seemingly unaware of how much of their day-to-day social media content is actually made up of veiled foreign operatives. “One thing that strikes me is—after a couple of years in this role—I don’t think most American citizens really viscerally understand how much of the content they see on social

platforms is actually a foreign intelligence operation.”

Further obfuscating the source, as you will see in the following chapters, there are agencies abroad that perform “propaganda for hire,” that have worked to influence elections within the US and in other parts of the world. One of these, “Strategic Communications Lab Elections,” or SCL Elections, in the UK, was formed by people who had been previously contracted to provide “psyops” for British intelligence. They boasted that they had used online propaganda and psychological manipulation to interfere in elections in more than 60 countries. Another, established and run by a former Israeli military official, brags that his company has 30,000 bots and has interfered in 30 elections worldwide, “27 of them successfully.”

I don’t know how many agencies there are like these, and of course they are not forthcoming with the details of their operations. The two above were exposed, one by two whistle blowers, the other by a group of industrious European journalists operating undercover. Both agencies were established by men who took “skills” learned through connections and access to military intelligence into the private arena. Both were funded or hired by billionaires who had no compunctions about using dirty psychological tricks to install governments that would be favorable to their private agendas. The most obvious of these was Cambridge Analytica (there is more on them in Chapter 8), which was started by the men behind SCL Elections, with Steve Bannon, and a \$15 million investment by hedge fund billionaire Robert Mercer, to influence the American election in 2016 in favor of Donald Trump.

What do the people using these tools have in common? From autocratic governments to libertarian billionaires, they share a contempt for democracy, for the power of the individual citizen. They prefer the top-down power or autocracy over the bottom-up power of democracy. They are all served by the weakening and undermining of the American government. And the man who in his last term in office appointed a secretary of energy who campaigned to get rid of the Energy Department, a Secretary of Education who advocated against the public schools system, a head of the Environmental Protection Agency who had a record of suing the EPA, who has weakened America's traditional military alliances and threatens to unravel NATO, is just the man for the job. They all stand to benefit in concrete ways if he brings it all down.

So how do we protect our democracy from the onslaught? As a first action, we can begin to understand the shape of this new weapon being used against us, to recognize it when it comes across our plate, and not be swept into its vector. We need to learn the language and know what is behind it; to know, for example, that when a politician repeats easily discredited lies, it is not evidence that the speaker has a "psychological disorder." It is entirely deliberate. They are painting an entirely new and different reality around the individuals listening to them, one where they and those who echo them are the sole source of truth, where being the dictator of reality makes it possible for the propagandist to direct their reactions and behavior. While from the outside it may sound preposterous, this language is not an anomaly. It is a technique, with a purpose.

Know that when the slogan changes from an ideal, such as “Make America Great Again,” to a watchword, a call to action such as “Save America,” as it did on January 6, the propaganda campaign has shifted from Phase 1, Recruitment and Indoctrination, to Phase 2, Agitation. Violence is coming. And know, the end of Phase 2 is not an election. It is an overthrow.

You may find your heart racing, as I did, as you read some of this material, as the realization settles in of what has been happening in the United States, and the road our country has traveled for more than a decade. There is too much that is too familiar. And where this road goes is unlike anything we have seen or even envisioned in our lifetimes.

I believe it is important to add that the conflict that is being set up in the United States is not a conflict of Democrats vs. Republicans. It is not a conflict of conservatives vs. liberals. Many lifelong Republicans have watched their party disappear, only to be replaced by extremists, as the rhetoric of conservatism and fiscal responsibility has been replaced by denigration, hate, and incitement to violence. The history of their party has been virtually erased, along with its former heroes, including Ronald Reagan. Similarly, lifelong Democrats have been horrified to see people, in the name of “the Left,” attack Jewish businessmen or burn and loot stores. The struggle today is not Right against Left. It is democracy against chaos, hatred, and violence.

I am encouraged by the fact that the psychologists who understood and wrote the bases for this virulent form of propaganda also said, more than once, that its power lies in its being undetected, that it works on people who are

unaware of the techniques being used. They said that when people know the techniques, that they will reject the manipulation. We can deflate its power by shining the light of day on it. How we do that will be up to us.