
From anarchism to neoauthoritarianism.

THE DOPE ON DANA

By Karen Lehrman

Dana Rohrabacher, a freshman representative from California, sports a beard, bodysurfs, plays the guitar, counts Van Halen lead singer Sammy Hagar as a close friend, and represents an ultraconservative part of Southern California. In this year's NEA debate he again established himself as the House's most enthusiastic critic of the supposedly obscenity-ridden arts agency, while continuing to negotiate the rights to his screenplay "The French Doctor-esse," a tale he says he'll make as steamy as it takes to sell it. He calls himself a free marketeer, yet would like the United States to threaten Japan with trade restrictions. In his early adulthood he preached anarchy, smoked pot and hash, and did LSD; these days he pushes tough anti-drug laws. "Consistency mattered to me a lot when I was young," says Rohrabacher. "Now I realize it doesn't mean very much."

You have heard of neoconservatives. Rohrabacher, 43, is more like a neoauthoritarian, traveling—with remarkably little ideological strain—from early libertarianism to an alliance with Jesse Helms. Rohrabacher began political life as a Barry Goldwater fan (a folk band he led was nicknamed "The Goldwaters"), and when Ronald Reagan ran for California governor in 1966 he signed on as Los Angeles County chairman of Youth for Reagan. The campaign high command wanted to disband the youth organization after the primary, but Rohrabacher camped out all night in Reagan's backyard, hoping to ask him to intervene. In the morning Nancy tried to shoo away the scruffy teenager, but Ron emerged, half-shaven and in a bathrobe, to hear him out. The organization stayed.

In 1967 Rohrabacher became chairman of the California chapter of the conservative Young Americans for Freedom. A couple of years later, though, he, along with some other YAFers, drifted into a less uptight crowd. Staunchly anti-Communist, they nevertheless were disillusioned with the Vietnam War and, of course, with government in general. They began to meet every other Saturday night in Rohrabacher's apartment, distinctive for a stolen Speed Limit sign with the letters "cc" scrawled in next to the number 10 (needle doses are measured in cubic centimeters). Rohrabacher won't talk about his "past personal mistakes." But according to others in the group, they would discuss politics and philosophy, listen to Steppenwolf and Jefferson Airplane, and smoke pot on the roof; American flag rolling papers

were considered choice. By April 1969 Rohrabacher had been purged as YAF state chair for being obnoxiously libertarian over the draft and drug legalization.

He announced he was an anarchist (he now says "abolitionist"), and became one of the cultish followers of Robert LeFevre, a reputedly mesmerizing anarchist-pacifist teacher who believed it was immoral for both individuals and countries to use force in self-defense, and who disapproved of voting (you would be violating the will of the people you vote against). LeFevre would preach to young libertarians at weekend seminars at his Rampart College in Santa Ana. Rohrabacher says he never really bought LeFevre's line on pacifism, though he did become one of the college's few paid speakers.

The voting theory must not have made a great impression either, because even while he was calling, in one of his numerous folk ballads, for an "Anarchist Revolution" ("First we're gonna blow it up, then we're gonna tear it down . . ."—to the tune of "Alouette"), he began talking about running for public office. He had gotten married (the ceremony was performed by a Baptist minister in a park, but no one ever sent in the license; he was "divorced" with similar lack of formality three years later) and had to find a real job. Rohrabacher says this brought him off his ideological high. In 1972, at age 25, he became a reporter for a local news service in Los Angeles, and began to speak less openly about his anarchist beliefs and to make contacts with more traditional conservatives. He announced that, as a Christian, he no longer believed he should use drugs. With the Vietnam War no longer posing a moral roadblock, fighting communism had returned as his No. 1 cause. In 1975 he worked in Reagan's first presidential campaign. His next move was to write editorials for *The Orange County Register*, a libertarian-leaning conservative daily. According to Gene Berkman, an old libertarian friend, one of Rohrabacher's editorials, written in 1979, called for the legalization of drugs. Called back to work for Reagan's 1980 presidential campaign, he landed a job as a speechwriter.

Soon after arriving at the Reagan White House, Rohrabacher acquired a reputation as the resident eccentric. He was often found working in shorts, sneakers, and a floppy hat. His office in the Old Executive Office Building looked more like a college dorm room than the working area of a young Reaganaut, with posters of Clint Eastwood on the walls and jeans, papers, and books all over the place. Rohrabacher carried around a pocketful of bullets from Afghan freedom fighters. One of the folk songs he composed during this period was called "White House Blues": "I work at the White House at the NSC. Why is everybody pickin' on me . . . ? We've been here since 1981, bombin' Qaddafi and havin' fun."

After seven years in the White House, Rohrabacher quit to run for Congress in California's 42nd district. The Republican incumbent, Daniel Lungren, was stepping down. It was a long shot: Rohrabacher was a complete unknown who hadn't lived in the district—white, middle class to affluent, and solidly Republican—for ten

years. He ran as a true-blue Reagan Republican, with the president's picture often more prominent than his own in his campaign literature. He downplayed his libertarian past as the "excessive idealism of my youth" (though he asked libertarians for money and support). At a YAF conference before the primary he said he was against drug legalization. When Berkman later asked him why he had changed his position, Rohrabacher said he wouldn't have a chance in the primary if he came out for legalization. He asked his friends not to talk about his past drug use, and they complied. Their understanding, according to Berkman, was that Rohrabacher would, at the very least, refrain from noisy anti-drug crusading. According to campaign manager and longtime friend Shawn Steel, Rohrabacher won because the district "didn't know enough about him." He also won because he disclosed that the leading primary contender, an Orange County supervisor, never received the college degree she had been claiming for twenty-five years. In that district, Republican nomination is tantamount to election. Just to make sure, though, he brought in his White House sidekick Ollie North for a couple of fund-raisers, netting more than \$100,000. In November, he won the seat with two-thirds of the vote.

Rohrabacher returned to a Washington that was very different from the one he had left only nine months before. With communism on the wane, he was a rebel in search of a cause. Jesse Helms provided one. In July 1989 Helms suggested that Rohrabacher lead the House floor fight for his amendment to the NEA appropriations bill. The Helms amendment detailed severe restrictions on the type of art the NEA could fund. Rohrabacher quickly dropped his own amendment, which sought to abolish the agency altogether, and seized the opportunity to become Helms's point man. His impassioned condemnation of government funding of obscene, offensive, or "weird" art could soon be found in nearly every news story and debate on the NEA, including on "MacNeil-Lehrer," "Face the Nation," and "Crossfire." Congress eventually passed a modified version of the Helms amendment.

But Rohrabacher didn't let up. In a campaign coordinated with the American Family Association and various other fundamentalist groups, Rohrabacher sent out a series of "Dear Colleague" letters that "exposed" the artistic sins of aberrant NEA recipients. His claims were sometimes a little misleading. One letter shows a picture of Christ with a syringe protruding from his arm. It doesn't say that this is a severely cropped image from part of a much larger work by David Wojnarowicz. Rohrabacher wrote to constituents of other districts that the specialty of John Fleck, a performance artist whose grant application was ultimately rejected, was "urinating on a picture of Jesus Christ" during his show. Fleck does in fact urinate onstage, but into a prop commode with the picture above it.

Rohrabacher's other chief tactic was implicitly or explicitly branding colleagues who supported the NEA as proponents of pornography. This culminated in his final Dear Colleague letter before the vote this year, which

came attached to a copy of a letter to Congress signed by numerous "pro-family" organizations. Quoting the attached, Rohrabacher writes that these groups "consider a vote . . . for continued funding of the NEA without Rohrabacher restrictions—to be a vote to allow taxpayer-funded pornography to continue." Rohrabacher's new amendment called for an expanded litany of no-no's, including "any part of an actual human embryo or fetus." The amendment died on the House floor.

Rohrabacher is at pains to distance himself from Helms. He says he's never even had a meeting with the senator on the subject; repeatedly states that his opposition to the NEA ("this rogue agency") is grounded on the principle of minimal government, not censorship (he says that he too, after all, is an artist); and says that he would still prefer to abolish the agency. He also believes that groups that do not receive government money, such as 2 Live Crew, should not be banned. Yet Rohrabacher has found it useful to talk about art and pornography in a self-righteous, moralistic tone that is often indistinguishable from that of Helms. "An orgy of degenerate depravity" is what he called Wojnarowicz's NEA-funded show "Tongues of Flame." "The art is sickeningly violent, sexually explicit, homoerotic, anti-religious and nihilistic."

At the same time, there's a perverse prurience in the way Rohrabacher describes the NEA-funded projects he finds distasteful—as though the Rohrabacher of the past were enjoying a good joke on the bureaucratic state. In one Dear Colleague letter, which was also entered into the *Congressional Record*, he tells his colleagues that in Annie Sprinkle's show at The Kitchen in New York, she "masturbates with various 'sex toys' until she experiences orgasms; performs oral sex with rubber penises, inviting the audience to massage her breasts," and "opens her vaginal canal . . . and invites audience members . . . to inspect her." (The NEA says its grant to The Kitchen was fully expended before Sprinkle's performance.)

As Rohrabacher tires of battling artists, there's a good chance he will take on drug users. Last year he introduced legislation that would allow his colleagues to use public funds to drug-test themselves and their staffs, the kind of proposal that would force members to support it—or be labeled pro-drug in the next election. "Once these funds are available, the public will be able to determine who's serious and who's not about the war on drugs by what policy they've introduced in their own offices," Rohrabacher told a reporter last year.

During his campaign Rohrabacher had told his old friend Berkman that if he won, he'd go along with the administration's anti-drug program for a couple of years, that interdiction would be proved ineffective, and that then maybe he'd push for legalization. (Rohrabacher confirms this account, but denies using the word legalization.) This scenario seems unlikely now: "My concern for people's lives overrides any libertarian ideal that people can do whatever they want," he told me. Last May, when he signed on to the Gramm-Gingrich Nation-

al Drug and Crime Emergency Act, several of his old friends believed he lost the immunity they had granted him during his first campaign. Rohrabacher says that he became a co-sponsor because Gingrich asked him, but that he would have supported the bill anyway. It calls for declaring a national emergency for five years during which, among other things, drug prisoners—under mandatory minimum sentences without parole—can be housed in tents and farmed out to work for private industry, and citizens would be rewarded for snitching on drug dealers. For selling pot, you would get five years in prison, no release. Universities receiving federal funds would have to “impose sanctions” on students possessing or using drugs “up to and including expulsion.”

Luckily for Dana Rohrabacher (B.A. 1969, Long Beach State), the bill's not retroactive. •

Post-apartheid's new twist.

APPLES AND ORANGES

By Christopher Hope

MORGENZON, SOUTH AFRICA

Drive a couple of hours east of the gold mines of Johannesburg and you'll find the little hamlet of Morgenzon, a rock-solid Afrikaner farming town with a population of fewer than a thousand whites. It is also a town divided against itself. On one side are the locals, who say they accept the new South Africa. “I don't care who governs this country,” says a young boy with elaborate honey locks, “as long as there is someone to clean my car.” On the other side are the Orange Workers, mostly newcomers, who have made Morgenzon their headquarters. The Orange Workers too accept the inevitability of a new South Africa, but they are advocating a sort of reverse apartheid: their own, all white, homeland.

Founded in 1980, the Orange Workers Federation is part of a loose but vital network of official and clandestine Afrikaner resistance groups that are somewhat uneasily held together by the designation the “White Right.” The name Orange Workers celebrates the memory of Dutch King William of Orange and his seventeenth-century victories over Catholics in Ireland, and the color is as powerful a symbol for extremist Afrikaners as it is for Ulster Protestants. What cements all the Afrikaner dissidents together is the belief that, as Eugene Terre'Blanche, the militant leader of the Afrikaner Resistance Movement, says, when the new South Africa is inaugurated, “We won't live in it.”

The Orange Workers wield disproportionate power in Morgenzon. Not only will they not sell to or buy from

blacks. They believe that the only way the Afrikaner can survive in Africa is to return to first principles—to withdraw, trek back into the past, establish a Boer retreat where Afrikaner customs, crafts, Calvinist faith, and tribal identity may be fostered. They are the aspirant Amish of Southern Africa.

Whatever the ethics of this position, its practicality is doubtful. At the door of the town, opposite the whites-only graveyard, lies the black township. Six years ago 2,000 black people lived here. Today there are between 6,000 and 8,000. Despite the Orange Workers' attempt to make the town an island of pure Afrikanerdom, Morgenzon is part of South Africa, and South Africa's population is doubling every thirty years, much of it black, with a thousand people entering the job market each month.

Nevertheless, now that the South Africa of classical apartheid is dead and gone, the Orange Workers insist on their right to a separate place of their own, an independent sovereign Boer state where they may live in peace. The historical parallel is the Boer War of 1899 to 1902, which the Orange Workers refer to as the “Second Freedom War” (the first was fought in the 1870s). Now Afrikaners are preparing for what they call the “Third Freedom War.”

Hendrik Verwoerd is the son of the Dutch immigrant of the same name who devised and set up apartheid as prime minister of South Africa from 1958 to 1966. I remember the old Verwoerd from my childhood, and Verwoerd Jr. does not possess his father's icy charisma. Careful and deliberate in his speech, he might be a teacher or a minister. His father's portrait dominates the wall of his living room and looks down his nose at me. The eyes are a glacial blue, the tie bold red, and his face has that look of almost frozen repose. But the younger Verwoerd has something of his father's bleak determination. I put it to him that it would have been better had the idea of an Afrikaner homeland been realized years before, an Afrikanerstan along the lines of the Bantustans set up by his father. A great opportunity lost, he agrees.

Yet the idea of a homeland for the Afrikaner is now deeper and more passionate than ever. “The Afrikaner will not suffer further humiliation. The aim of the Orange Workers is to mobilize and inspire. We *will* be given a place. The coming black unified state is something Afrikaners will not accept. It's a matter of life and death for us. I hope that other forces will recognize this.”

But whom will the Afrikaners fight? And, more pointedly, for what will they be fighting? Verwoerd shows me his map. He points to a patchwork outline of the future Afrikaner homeland, an area arcing in an incomplete crescent around Johannesburg, beginning on the west Rand and stretching up hundreds of miles northward. The new state circles Johannesburg, the industrial heartland of South Africa. It would include in its sweep gold and coal mines, power stations, iron and steel