

**COLLATERAL DAMAGE: ANTI-COMMUNISM  
& U.S. CULTURAL POLICY**

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by  
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COLLATERAL DAMAGE: ANTI-COMMUNISM  
& U.S. CULTURAL POLICY

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**ABSTRACT**

The United States of America has never formally declared a cultural policy nor established a Cabinet-level department of cultural affairs, as many other nations have in the post–World War II era — depriving the American people a foundation and context for transparent, open deliberation over the nature and priorities of public cultural policy. The values that constitute our *de facto* policy must be discerned through the aggregate of specialized policymaking and action taken by federal, state, and local governments.

Our reluctance to declare formal policy is partly due to the nation’s stance in conducting the Cold War — focused around an exaggerated Soviet threat —and its associated domestic anti-communist campaigning. In examining the historic record, “Collateral Damage” tells the story of anti-communism through much of the twentieth century, focusing on its cultural impact. The historical narrative follows from the first mass expression of anti-communist sentiment nationally, in the Red Scare of 1919, through its later expression in the “McCarthy era” of the Fifties, and its legacy since. Various

approaches to cultural policy emerge throughout; but I focus especially on the contrasting federal cultural programs of the New Deal and those of domestic cultural agencies established in the 1960's.

This story reveals how politicians and policymakers relied upon religious values were for Cold War purposes, rather than crafting secular statements of national cultural values. The study identifies six other significant impacts of anti-communism on U.S. cultural policy since the Sixties: the primacy of the private sector; Euro-centric bias in defining the cultural field; an approach to cultural diversity that marginalizes voices from outside traditional fine-arts contexts; a proscription against engagement with social issues in the arts and humanities; the replacement of democracy with “free enterprise” as the driving spirit in cultural policy; and a U.S. stance in international cultural-policy deliberations that tends to interpret transnational cultural issues in terms of commerce and national security.

The study concludes with a suggestion of what a secular statement of national cultural policy might resemble, using First Lady Michelle Obama's address to the Democratic National Convention in 2012 as an example.

## **APPROVAL PAGE**

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, have examined a thesis titled “Collateral Damage: Anti-communism & U.S. Cultural Policy,” presented by Donald Elwin Adams, candidate for the Master of Arts degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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UMKC's History Department gave me strong grounding in historiography through its cycle of doctoral seminars. Thanks especially to Drs. Gary Ebersole and Carla Klausner for welcoming me in, and to Dr. Miriam Forman-Brunell, who took her role as advisor very seriously and was great help in launching my historical research, also sharing my avid interest in the problem of U.S. anti-communism. Dr. Dennis Merrill's international relations seminar brought me up to date with current historiography surrounding U.S. cultural imperialism, an increasing concern in cultural policy internationally through much of the twentieth century, but receiving scholarly attention in the U.S. itself only in recent decades.

Living as a fulltime graduate student for the first time in thirty-four years has been more difficult than I imagined. For simple survival, I must thank my sister Audrey, without whose help this study would not have been possible: you have supported my unusual interest in cultural activism — in fact, you helped recruit me — for decades. Life-saving help also came from longtime friends Marc Weiss and Tom Mandel and my wisest and most faithful supporter in Kansas City, Phil Bohlander.

Finally, having been schooled by transnationally networking cultural policymakers and activists, I must thank all of those people, all over the world, who responded to queries from a teenager in South Dakota — and a curious and demanding student ever since — for providing my decades-long education in cultural policy and community cultural development. International relations “realists” pooh-pooh non-state actors, and transnational networking generally, as effective forces in to global politics. I could not have learned about my field without perspectives from abroad.

And here at home, I could not have learned what we are all up against without the openness and commitment of my many cultural development colleagues throughout the United States. You know who you are, and that you stand among too many others for me to single you out here. But what a blessing it has been to learn at your feet.

## **PREFACE**

The 2009 upsurge of political reaction, following Barack Obama's election to the White House, convinced me of the urgent need for us Americans to find a way to talk intelligently and compassionately about cultural issues. Cultural policy, to my way of thinking, is not a specialist interest for cultural professionals — artists, teachers, or community organizers. It is the matrix of common concern for all citizens, from every cultural background, belief, and way of life, and in every community, geographic or otherwise.

I've always thought of this as "collateral damage" of the Cold War: ways in which our conceptions of public values and the public interest have been set by the ideological stance assumed by the most powerful U.S. economic interests, and encouraged upon us, though running directly contrary to the nation's democratic values. Diversity demands that we discuss public issues in secular terms, yet we have been plagued by problems in doing so. The disproportionate power held by moralists interested in using state power to enforce their convictions upon others is rooted in Cold War constructions, never reexamined since the Cold War was presumably won.

My research focused on the many obstacles and rationales behind our historic failure to welcome the other, as defined by nationality, race, or other cultural attributes or interests. For much of the past century, our fear of the other has been expressed in the lexicon of anti-communism and manifest in periodic efforts to villainize forces cast as "un-American."

These constructions aided powerful capitalists to work steadily to contain the democratic force of government and create a public cultural consensus that favored the interests of the richest Americans. Slowly and subtly, democracy has been replaced by an ideology of capitalism that has effectively become our national cultural policy.

These past four years of fulltime study has been a very dark passage. Much more than I had previously realized, our confusion about national politics has been cultivated. Wild contradictions abound in predominant rightwing cries for freedom while urging greater state control. Having suppressed domestic public service functions of government for more than a generation, the corporate-driven agenda established in 1936 has substantially achieved its goal of destroying our collective faith in democratic government. Following the many interwoven strands of U.S. cultural history that have led us to this condition, and studying the work, thought, and action undertaken by domestic enemies of cultural democracy, has been profoundly challenging. I would not wish anyone else to have to plow through the ground I've been churning over, yet this history needs to be exposed and understood. I have attempted here to simplify the separate strands of this history, in order to illuminate the polarized political culture that holds sway at present.

I regret that I could not be more directly propositional on this occasion. My focus has been on elucidating how historic forces conjoined to lead us to our present situation. I hope that by more clearly understanding how our dilemma was set up, we will find our way forward as a whole people, dedicated to the dream of cultural democracy, more clearly and deliberately than in in any earlier stage in our national history.

## DEDICATION

To my sister AUDREY LEE ADAMS —  
to my most steadfast Kansas City friend and ally PHIL BOHLANDER —  
and to all those everywhere who are dreaming  
and working toward cultural democracy.





## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Everything creative, fine, and imaginative in American thought has been splattered and soured by anti-communist vitriol. Anti-communism has narrowed the American mind and has been responsible for the incredibly shrinking American heart. It has polluted our discourse; destroyed our national credibility; vitiated our democracy. After decades of Red Scares and Red Squads, ... we stand morally isolated before the world, ... on the wrong side of every movement for human justice and national liberation ...

— Blanche Wiesen Cook<sup>1</sup>

Early in 1988, my consulting firm received a call for help from the chair of the steering group for a Harvard conference being planned for the following fall. The group had been working for well over a year; but so eager were its participants to discuss the subject, their meetings had effectively become rehearsals of the discussions that the host group — New York's Institute for Media Analysis — wanted to take place at this milestone event, examining the impact of anti-communism on American life. Suddenly, planning time was growing short: could we help?

By the end of a marathon weekend in a Greenwich Village apartment a few weeks later, the job was done: subjects enumerated, panels assembled, speakers chosen, and prospects assigned for eleventh-hour fundraising. That November, 1,300 people gathered in Cambridge to take part in dozens of plenary sessions and breakout groups to discuss various

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<sup>1</sup> “The Impact of Anti-communism in American Life,” *Science & Society*, 53, no. 4 (Winter 1989/1990), 470.

aspects of the subject.<sup>2</sup> Between sessions, I stationed myself at the foot of a stairway to help participants find their next meeting room, where an aged woman approached me, grasping my hand in hers: “I am so glad,” she wept, “that this conference took place in my lifetime!”

I will never forget that moment. This woman’s tearful words and trembling hands brought home to me the depth of pent-up feelings carried for so many decades by those who were already adults when the anti-communist fever reached its peak in the 1950s. For me, born the month after Ethel and Julius Rosenberg were executed at Sing Sing, anti-communism had been a confusing, pervasive presence — overheard in inscrutable adult conversations — coloring the world into which I had awakened, hard to parse and rooted in a murky past. Like many in my generation, I rejected anti-communism with righteous indignation as a false threat; but I had not yet suffered its impact, nor would I ever, in the direct, devastating ways that older generations had.

One year after that conference, as jubilant crowds began tearing down the wall that divided Berlin since my childhood, I expected we would all turn back at last to assess the collateral damage of the decades-long Cold War. What emerged, as the Soviet Union finally collapsed under its own weight, has fallen far short of my apparently idealistic expectation.

All too quickly, different kinds of terror took the place of Communism in our anxious imaginations. The mental and emotional damage to which Blanche Wiesen Cook, a participant in the Harvard conference and its planning group, referred in my epigraph (based

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<sup>2</sup> “Anticommunism and the U.S.: History and Consequences — An International Conference,” Harvard University, November 11-13, 1988. See also Ross Gelbspan and Charles A. Radin, “Charges of communism cloud debate, conferees say,” *The Boston Globe*, November 14, 1988.

on her remarks at a conference panel on “The Rise of the American Empire”), remains largely unexamined to this day. What collateral damage did we suffer in the decades-long Cold War against communism?

### **THE IMPACT OF ANTI-COMMUNISM ON U.S. CULTURAL POLICY**

My present aim is to relate the history and to trace the impact of anti-communism on American cultural policy. Since these impacts are diverse, and culture is itself an all-encompassing and multifaceted phenomenon, this story has many dimensions.

Anti-communism was at work in both domestic and international arenas, in complex and often contradictory ways. The Cold War story challenges any neat divisions international-relations “realists” might like to enforce. Anti-communist vitriol was interwoven with other politically significant impulses: anti-alien feeling, for example, and efforts to defend the racist status quo. Both church and state, presumably separated in our constitutional regime, became implicated with each one other throughout the anti-communist crusade that defined and delimited so much of American life in the twentieth century. Though the dismantling of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the former Soviet Union seemed to end the Cold War, the fabric of consensus its strategists created remains central to Twenty-first Century American political fashion. For nearly a century, anti-communist influence has undermined democratic values and aspirations in favor of “national security” against one or another perceived threat.

Cultural policy provides the missing framework for understanding the divisive forces that came into play in American anti-communism, in contrast to the unity and cooperative

spirit that policy might provide. The arts, uniquely revealing of cultural values, came not only to symbolize the cultural struggle, but also became a battleground for its opposing camps. In each arena — international and domestic, national and local — this battle has been waged in stages, with anti-communism coming to the fore at certain points, altering adherents' strategies and responses, as well as the national cultural consensus, then receding into the background of our changed and changing national consciousness.

Fortunately for my purpose, history has left us with two contrasting comparative cases in cultural policy: the policies that inspired and guided New Deal federal cultural programs in the 1930s, and those of the federal cultural agencies that were created in the Sixties. There could not be any clearer examples of how the cultural policy of the United States was transformed and shaped by anti-communism.

Patience is required to allow the story of Twentieth Century U.S. cultural policy to emerge. A great deal happened before and between the Thirties and the Sixties that was critical to the rise and fall of the New Deal programs and to the creation of the second, culminating in the Reagan era. A roadmap is required to help orient the reader for the journey ahead.

### **THE HISTORIC ARC OF U.S. ANTI-COMMUNISM**

Our roadmap follows the arc of American anti-communism from World War I on. But because the idea is not well understood in this country, I will begin with a short definition of cultural policy. I learned early on in my own cultural development work, in the 1970's, that simply to speak in terms of cultural policy was considered un-American by the

U.S. cultural establishment. Cultural policy had been associated with alien influence, at best, in the post–World War II United States, and worse, with the evils of communism itself. This has short-circuited focused debate of the principles that our national cultural policy embodies.

From this brief definition, I will proceed with the story of anti-communism in the United States, starting with its first massive public expression in the Red Scare of 1919.<sup>3</sup> Due to a lifelong obsession with racism, I already knew about the horrifying resurgence of violent racism in that year. Anti-racist activists and historians have long described the period from May through October as “the Red Summer,” in remembrance of 1919’s bloody race riots; but I had not previously appreciated the larger context of national hysteria from which that specific aspect of national unrest arose. It was in this fever that the armature of anti-communism was built.

Our story quickly shifts, as the Roaring Twenties submerge the first Red Scare. Diverted by gadgets, fads, and new media — first radio, then film — and ignorant of the consequences of unregulated capitalism, the nation largely ignored the forces that would lead into the Great Depression. That national emergency inspired President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal and the wider cultural movements that grew out of our struggle to understand and recover from national economic crisis. Among the innovations introduced in the Thirties were the first federal cultural programs, providing a benchmark for democratic values in cultural policy.

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<sup>3</sup> Thanks to Dr. Max Skidmore for suggesting that I look into the Palmer raids, the Red Scare’s climactic event, in tracing the origins of American anti-communism.

These programs became the first victim of the primary Congressional vehicle for anti-communist action, which eventually became known as HUAC, the House Committee on Un-American Activities. This era also birthed a less visible but arguably more lasting effort to counter New Deal values, an ideological construction friendly to other anti-New Deal interests: the doctrine of “the American Way,” which I will also take up at this stage of our story.

Postwar events become considerably more complex, as the United States’ wartime alliance with the Soviet Union quickly collapsed into what we call the Cold War, locking the nation into a longstanding, bipolar global struggle. At this point, foreign-policy leaders’ cultural-policy thinking laid the foundation not only for international relations, but for subsequent domestic policy, too. In aid of their polarized vision of global struggle, Senator Joe McCarthy and various agents and agencies in both public and private sectors joined HUAC’s resurgent domestic campaign. The nation’s foreign-policy apparatus required some definition of what American culture might offer the world, beyond capitalism and its vast array of gadgetry. This story manifest most clearly (in the illuminated view made possible by later historic study) in the covert cultural activities of the newly created Central Intelligence Agency, as well as in the more public programs of the U.S. State Department. Ironically, these global campaigns wound up requiring domestic reform, to bring American cultural practice in line with our global propaganda. This was most notable in the realm of civil rights, where the realities of racial segregation undermined U.S. claims that our society offered equal rights for all.

Finally, we will arrive at the contrasting example to the federal cultural policies of the New Deal, in the domestic cultural apparatus created in the 1960's. Cold War definitions of American culture became the consensus that has defined the *de facto* policies of federal cultural agencies and their state and local counterparts since the establishment of the National Foundation on the Art and Humanities in 1965. The elites who shaped American cultural identity for Cold War purposes deployed these same values in creating our new federal cultural apparatus.

Social movements since the Sixties have succeeded in enlarging our collective definitions of national culture, especially within institutional contexts like the academy where progressive forces have been able to hold sway. But the foundations of American cultural policy have not yet substantially changed. We have yet to articulate a cultural policy as generously democratic and inclusive as that of the New Deal.

My purpose in examining this history is to restore perspective and an understanding of the choices that underlie cultural policy in the United States. Lest we be discouraged by weight of the Cold War's collateral damage, I will close with a simple suggestion of what progressive cultural policy might look like today, drawing on Michelle Obama's address to the 2012 Democratic National Convention. On that occasion, the First Lady made the kind of plain-English statement of democratic cultural policy needed to unify such a diverse society as ours.

Can the West Wing learn from the East? Might a better collective understanding of cultural policy enable us to live up to the promise expressed in *E pluribus unum* — to become a nation more perfectly united in our diversity? This is my hope as our story begins.

But first we need working definition of cultural policy — the deep phenomenon we'll trace as it emerges and is transformed through Twentieth Century U.S. history.



## CHAPTER 2

### CULTURAL POLICY: BRINGING CULTURE IN

My favorite statement of the dominant attitude held by mainstream American political thinkers in the extended Cold War era wound up on a cutting-room floor. It was a strong opening statement meant to short-circuit discussion of the topic at hand in a 1982 *New York Times* editorial round-table on cultural policy. Right at the start, historian and librarian of Congress Daniel Boorstin asserted, “The countries that *have* cultural policies on the whole are, of course, totalitarian countries.”<sup>1</sup>

The fact is that no state operates without a cultural policy. Its aims and purposes might be obscured for strategic reasons, as has been consistently the case in the post–New Deal United States, but policy can still be discerned by examining the state’s actions. Through much of recorded world history, the tastes and interests of monarchs and ruling classes set the tone and established the priorities of cultural investment, direction, and restriction. As the modern nation-state began to emerge, more intentional statements began to shape national identity. These opened the way for explicit consideration of cultural policy.

In fact, values and principles of state organization began to be articulated as ways of justifying innovations in the social order and of mobilizing constituencies for change. Such foundational national documents as the colonial Declaration of Independence, the Articles of

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Boorstin in an unpublished portion of the editors’ “NWR Culture Roundtable File,” March 17, 1982 (Institute for Cultural Democracy papers, Kansas City, MO), p. 7. The resulting article was published in the *New York Times*, April 25, 1982, 6-E.

Confederation and the Constitution of the newly independent United States, and the two *Déclarations des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* of 1798 and 1793, following the French revolution, can be understood as more or less successful attempts to formally articulate principles and describe processes of government that define some fundamental reordering of state arrangements and cultural policies. Similarly, the kinds of principles, aims, and objectives incorporated into countless acts of legislative bodies bring principled guidelines explicitly into the realm of state action. The less explicit traditions maintained in common law and oral tradition, and the evolving interpretations made in judicial systems can be — and increasingly have been — viewed, analyzed, and understood in similar terms since the nineteenth century.

Throughout this time, implicitly and explicitly, state policies have dynamically engaged with changing understandings of the values, roles, and relationships that underlie, guide, promote, and restrict action by non-state actors, including non-state institutions, social movements, cultural sub-groups, families or clans, and even individuals. The policies and actions of this wide array of non-state actors can also be examined and understood by similar lights and standards as public cultural policy can be. Though lacking the coercive authority of the state, private-sector stances wield substantial influence and even exert power in private terrains and contexts.

These manifestations and ways of understanding the idea of “cultural policy” — combining the actions and interactions of state and non-state actors — are especially relevant to domestic political-science analysis as well as to what have recently been called “constructivist” understandings of international relations, in which transnational activism

matters — admitting the reality of non-state action and influence, even in realms dominated by nation-state interests. Though such positions will be taken up throughout our examination, my primary purpose here is to focus on the changes these have produced in public-sector cultural policy, where the power of the state has the potential to enforce principles and regulate action throughout the nation's culture, with multiple impacts upon the private and personal.

More conscious consideration of public cultural policy, focused primarily upon nation-state apparatus, has arisen largely since the end of World War II, most formally through international discussion of the practical significance of one of the new rights enumerated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the United Nations in 1948. Article 27 of that Declaration states, “Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community.”<sup>2</sup> This ideal shone brightly against the stark backdrop of recently defeated fascist forces that had demonstrated all too well the horrors of its sinister opposite — the imposition of some singular idea about cultural values; but the practical meaning of this new way of thinking about cultural affairs in terms of public policy and action was not so clear. Its meaning was substantially clarified through international dialogue since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was made.

The meaning, issues, and implications of this “right to culture” were pursued most actively under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). UNESCO's own constitution was adopted at a 1945 conference in

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<sup>2</sup> M. Glen Johnson and Janusz Symonides, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: A History of Its Creation and Implementation, 1948-1998* (Paris: UNESCO, 1998), 16.

London, and one of its early projects was drafting the UDHR. Over twenty years later, at a 1970 Intergovernmental Conference on Institutional, Administrative and Financial Aspects of Cultural Policies in Venice, UNESCO's director-general René Maheu observed,

It is not certain that the full significance of this text, proclaiming a new human right, the right to culture, was entirely appreciated at the time. If everyone ... has the right to share in the cultural heritage and cultural activities of the community ... it follows that the authorities ... have a duty ... to provide him [*sic*] with the means for such participation. This is as true of what we call social rights, of which the new right to culture is one, as of political rights. This is the basis and first purpose of cultural policy.<sup>3</sup>

Recognizing inequalities in cultural participation within and among nation-states and providing the means to correct and counterbalance them have fueled UNESCO dialogue and inspired member-state action ever since. Postwar liberation movements in former colonies and social movements addressing inequities among diverse cultural traditions present within multicultural states like the United States brought heightened international awareness of cultural diversity as an issue. How to undo the damage done by colonial suppression of local cultures and by racist or elitist cultural domestic authorities became perennial topics for international forums like UNESCO, the Council of Europe, and the Organization of African Unity, as well as for our nation-states' own executive, legislative, and judicial bodies.

Postwar cultural policymakers also wanted to address and redirect the cultural forces that had so recently given rise to disasters of fascism. They focused in on citizen passivity, as against the active cultural participation that characterizes democratic communal life. Social

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<sup>3</sup> Augustin Girard, *Cultural Development: Experience and Policies* (Paris: UNESCO, 1972), 139-140.

phenomena being experienced throughout the postwar world, the cultural ministers agreed with some alarm, were exacerbating tendencies toward increasing passivity on the part of their nations' citizens. Primary among these concerning global trends were the displacement of substantial proportions of the population by industrialization and war, urbanization, and the proliferation of mass-produced electronic-media products that increasingly absorbed leisure time formerly invested in participatory cultural activities.

By discussing these transnational trends, UNESCO's definition of cultural policy was sharpened in the late 1960s, at first to facilitate cross-national comparison and international discussion of these issues, and then to support the efforts of state cultural policy-makers in countering these forces domestically. Out of UNESCO's discussion came a fairly concise definition of the topic at hand as it related to the general social context:

“[C]ultural policy” should be taken to mean the sum total of the conscious and deliberate usages, action or lack of action in society, aimed at meeting certain cultural needs through the optimum utilization of all the physical and human resources available at a given time.

UNESCO soon offered this more focused definition of public cultural policy to focus its subsequent series of studies of the cultural policies of its member-states:

“[C]ultural policy” is taken to mean a body of operational principles, administrative and budgetary practices and procedures which form a basis for cultural action by the State.<sup>4</sup>

This definition informed an extended series of UNESCO documents summarizing the national cultural policies of its member nations, more or less accepting of how these policies

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<sup>4</sup> UNESCO, *Cultural Policy: A Preliminary Study*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Studies and Documents on Cultural Policies, no. 1 (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1969), 5, and 10.

were presented by the members themselves. The United States' official contribution to UNESCO's series on national cultural policies opened with this assertion, locating our disability ("almost") in the Constitution's construction of the federal system:

"The United States has no official cultural position, either public or private" ... This is simply a statement of fact affecting a federation form of government. It is not possible for the United States to adopt officially a policy to govern any social enterprise without enormous effort involving almost the modification of the Constitution.<sup>5</sup>

To cultural policymakers in other countries, the suggestion that cultural policy could not be articulated without constitutional amendment would become just one laughable (or deplorable) aspect of the ill-informed U.S. non-participation in international cultural-policy dialogue — or domestic dialogue about cultural policy, for that matter.

I will use UNESCO's working definition in analyzing New Deal and postwar cultural policy in the United States, so dramatically altered by anti-communism. But we must start farther back in time, to discover the roots of anti-communism in this country

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<sup>5</sup> Charles C. Mark, *A Study of Cultural Policy in the United States*, Studies and Documents on Cultural Policies, no. 2 (Paris: Unesco, 1969), 9.

### CHAPTER 3

#### THE BIRTH OF AMERICAN COMMUNISM

The drama of American anti-communism originates with the Nineteenth Century emergence of communism itself. The first volume of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' milestone critique of capitalism, *Capital: Critique of Political Economy* (1867), appeared just as the United States was emerging from its Civil War and embarking upon what came to be known as the Gilded Age of capitalist expansion. Engels published *The Circulation Process of Capital* (1885) after Marx's 1883 death, followed by *The Overall Process of Capitalist Production* (1894), the three volumes together comprising what we know as *Das Kapital*. Marx and Engels' work, hugely influential as the textual, theoretical basis of socialism and communism, have provided critical tools for analyzing the significance of economic relations, even for those not subscribing to socialist ideologies. But Marxist influence failed to gain any substantial foothold in a United States surging ahead in its Nineteenth Century project of national expansion.

The agrarian revolt and the rise of populism in the U.S. of the 1890's brought forward significant critiques of the predominant capitalist order, and these continued to gain traction into the twentieth century, even after the demise of the populist movement itself.<sup>1</sup> Reflections of Marxist thought can be seen among American idealists, populists, and Progressives of the

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<sup>1</sup> Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

era, who spoke to the many excesses associated with unbridled capitalist growth and helped lay on the first federal regulatory bridles before the Great War.

These late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century trends gave rise to the growth of socialist political formations, though these never achieved substantial numbers on a national scale, and therefore raised relatively little concern — at least until the nation entered World War I. The most successful of these early formations was the Socialist Party, founded in 1901, whose members numbered just over 100,000 by 1912. In that year, 897,000 votes were cast for the Socialist presidential candidate Eugene V. Debs, whose defeat was accompanied by scattered electoral victories in state and municipal contests: by 1914, thirty Party members had been elected to the legislatures of twelve states, and more than a thousand Party members held various municipal offices.<sup>2</sup>

One historian of the American left saw the socialism of this era as being more involved with the “regenerating force of culture and the imaginative power of poetry” than with “the ‘science’ of Marxism,” labeling this first period of the American left’s political history as the “Lyrical Left.”<sup>3</sup> This spirit is exemplified by Max Eastman, self-described as an “American lyrical Socialist — a child of Walt Whitman reared by Karl Marx.” Eastman waxed rhapsodic about his bohemian socialist companions:

Our eyes trained for every seeing, our ears catching the first  
murmur of a new experience, we ran after the world in our

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<sup>2</sup> Robert K. Murray, *Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), 19.

<sup>3</sup> John Patrick Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), 41.



eagerness, not to learn about it, but to taste the flavor of its being.<sup>4</sup>

### AWAKENING ANTI-RADICALISM

Despite this idealistic spirit, and however “soft” in comparison to later left ideologies, Socialists and others identified as “radicals” soon got into trouble for their opposition to American intervention in the European war that had broken out in 1914. As general isolationist feeling gradually came to be replaced by growing consensus to enter the war,

The Socialists’ opposition to the war was universally regarded as irrefutable proof that they were either spies or pro-German and wanted the enemy to win. In view of their opposition to the war even before the United States intervened, these charges were utterly ridiculous. But under the influence of wartime emotionalism the public was not thinking clearly and the net result was vigorous repression. ... Socialist headquarters were raided by mobs and sacked by soldiers, while individual Socialists were treated shamefully. ...

From time to time, federal and state authorities made official raids ... The postal department denied mailing privileges to many Socialist publications. The courts applied the Espionage Law so stringently in Socialist cases that only a few were decided in favor of the defendants.<sup>5</sup>

Similar repression arose during World War I against the other primary radical political formation of the opening decades of the twentieth century, the International Workers of the World (IWW), or “Wobblies,” as they were popularly known. Founded by William S. (“Big Bill”) Haywood in 1905, with encouragement and material aid from the Socialist Party, the IWW “suffered an even greater concentration of public wrath and created more fear than

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>5</sup> Murray, 20-21.

did the Socialists. ... Drawing together all the dissident elements within the American labor movement,” the IWW ascribed to an “anarcho-syndicalist philosophy with Marxist trimmings,” striving to organize “direct economic pressure to overthrow the capitalistic system.”<sup>6</sup>

The Wobblies’ “disregard for political activity and ... professed belief in violence” provided an even more fearsome focal point for the “wartime emotionalism” described above, and the IWW was targeted in a series of federal raids in September 1917, through which most of its leaders were apprehended. Haywood and 165 other Wobbly defendants were convicted and sentenced for terms ranging from ten days to twenty years, and slapped with aggregate fines of \$2.3 million. The IWW’s estimated membership fell by half, and the organization was effectively driven underground.<sup>7</sup>

But it was not until the Bolshevik Revolution in November 1917 and Russia’s subsequent withdrawal from the Great War that the United States had only recently joined that American alarm at the threat of communism (more commonly referred to at the time as “Bolshevism”) became significant, and true American anti-communism was born.

The Bolsheviks’ 1917 seizure of power in Russia sparked new anti-radical hysteria. ... In March 1919, the Bolsheviks established the Third International, the Comintern, to promote revolution throughout the world. This external menace, plus turmoil at home, stoked anxieties that culminated in America’s first Red Scare.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 26, 27.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>8</sup> Richard M. Fried, *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 39.

On the practical level of geopolitics, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918 meant the loss of Russia as an eastern-front ally, just as American troops were being deployed to Western Europe. That Germany had helped Lenin return to Russia from his Swiss exile further conflated wartime antipathy toward this enemy with U.S. concern over the eventual Bolshevik overthrow of the Kerensky government. Even worse, the victorious Bolsheviks “impertinently called for the immediate cessation of hostilities everywhere through universal proletarian revolution and the dissolution of all capitalistic governments.”<sup>9</sup> Thus was a global drama established that widened a breach already present within U.S. society.

#### **BOLSHEVISM AND PARTY REALIGNMENTS**

Historian Robert K. Murray describes how the “October Revolution” (named for the November event’s position on the Eastern Orthodox calendar) catalyzed further polarization of domestic political conflict.

[B]olshevism’s unyielding emphasis of the world-wide overthrow of capitalism and the complete abolition of private property ... ran counter to all accepted American traditions of political philosophy and economy and struck terror into the hearts of the average American conservative. Already harassed by domestic radicals who advocated big changes, the nation viewed the emergence of Russian bolshevism with extremely grave concern and feared it might portend serious domestic consequences.

The press fanned these flames, with “horror stories of every kind” (including a specious report of an electric guillotine that lopped off five hundred heads an hour), with editorial

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<sup>9</sup> Murray, 33.

cartoons to match. Domestic connections were drawn between Bolshevik rule as a “compound of slaughter, confiscation, anarchy and universal disorder” that writers depicted as “the paradise of IWW’s and the superlative heaven of anarchists and direct-action Socialists.”<sup>10</sup>

With the IWW itself already driven underground, the Socialist Party provided the primary stage upon which radicals battled over the relevance, significance, and strategic wisdom of defending the Bolshevik government against virulent mainstream American condemnation. Intentionally or not, response from its members and some other domestic radicals seemed to confirm the threat perceived in Bolshevik influence:

American radicals ... were enthralled by the events taking place in Russia. Persecuted on all sides for their opposition to the war and to capitalism ... [t]he Russian experiment immediately gave the domestic radical movement all the things it currently lacked — a fresh idea, new enthusiasm, and an example of success. ... The Bolshevik revolutionary philosophy contained the elements of a grand strategy ... To the American radical, the very sweep of the program was breathtaking.<sup>11</sup>

Encouraged by the founding of the Third International in March 1919, after the Great War had ended, Socialist Party locals organized actively, bringing the number of members openly affiliated with the Left Wing faction to 30,000 by May and to 60,000 by the end of the summer, ninety percent of whom were affiliated with the Party’s foreign-language federations. The latter quickly fell into factional fights with the native-born, English-speaking minority of the Socialist Party’s Left Wing, which held out for taking over the main

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 33-34, 36.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 36-37.

party rather than acting on the foreign federations' wish to coalesce immediately into a new party. The foreign federations did decide over the summer to bolt the Socialist Party altogether, thus splitting the Party's Left Wing, and resolved to meet separately in Chicago, at the same time as the Socialists planned to convene there, to form their own party.<sup>12</sup>

The Right Wing Socialists, ignoring the Debs' pleas for unity from his federal prison cell in Atlanta, closed ranks against the native-born Left Wingers when the Party convened in Chicago's Machinists Hall on August 30<sup>th</sup>, denouncing them as "anarchists" and ejecting them before any further business was undertaken. Undaunted, those ejected adjourned to another room in the Hall and immediately formed the Communist Labor Party (CLP), boldly declared themselves to be "in full harmony with the revolutionary working class parties of all countries" in accordance with "the principles stated by the Third International. ... The Communist Labor Party proposes the organization of the workers as a class, the overthrow of capitalist rule and the conquest of political power by the workers." Thus was the first actual "communist" party born in the United States, led by such native-born Socialist Left Wingers as John Reed, Benjamin Gitlow (former New York state legislator), and William B. Lloyd (millionaire son of the early muckraking journalist Henry Demarest Lloyd and Jessie Bross Lloyd, heir to the *Chicago Tribune* publishing fortune).

Meeting separately in Chicago the next day, the foreign-language federation members formed a second new party, simply entitled the American Communist Party. Styled even more closely after the Third International, the ACP's Manifesto declared it to be "fundamentally a party of action" that would "keep in the foreground its consistent appeal for

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 49-50.

proletarian revolution, the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.”<sup>13</sup>

Sapped of its left-wing majority, Socialist Party membership immediately plummeted from 108,000 to 30,000. Many leaders of the IWW also migrated to the Communist parties — including not only Bill Haywood, but also Earl Browder and James P. Cannon, who would figure prominently in communist life for decades to come. The two new communist parties, in contrast, numbered 70,000, with 10,000 in the Communist Labor Party and 60,000 in the American Communist Party — still comprising in all less than 0.1 percent of the adult population in the U.S. at that time. “Under normal conditions,” Murray points out, “the existence of a radical minority such as was present in 1919 would not have caused public alarm.”<sup>14</sup>

But conditions were hardly normal, and patterns emerged from the beginning of that year that anticipate patterns of response that would recur from the late Thirties through the Cold War, and arguably again in response to terrorist threats and the polarization of political culture in Twenty-first Century America.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 50-51.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 57.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE RED SCARE OF 1919: “NO COMPROMISE!”

Writing in 1955, at the height of what has come to be known as the McCarthy era, historian Robert K. Murray concludes in his “Study in National Hysteria” — which he diagnoses as a “national psychoneurosis” —that “in probing into the causes” of the Red Scare of 1919, a thoughtful person

is likely to discover one factor which more than any other that acts as the trigger mechanism that throws the whole complex reaction of stimulus and response into operation. By mid-1919 there was one such factor in the American scene which did act as the prime mover ... the position of organized labor.

It was not simply the “position” of the union movement itself at the time, which was profoundly and explicitly conservative, that was brought to forefront of public attention; but the fact that the public’s

concern over domestic radicalism centered around organized labor. It was generally agreed that if domestic radicalism would succeed at all it would succeed first within the ranks of the laboring man; hence the activities of labor were watched carefully as a barometer to the real extent of radicalism in the nation.

In these days before industrial unionism was more widely accepted, Samuel Gompers’ American Federation of Labor (AFL), extremely conservative and organized along craft lines, dominated the culture of the union movement. Contrary to the fears driving public

response, Murray notes, “Organized labor tried from the beginning to entrench itself in the public mind as one of the nation’s chief bulwarks against the philosophy of bolshevism.”<sup>1</sup>

It is important to emphasize Murray’s conclusion before proceeding to the succession of events through which the national hysteria of the Red Scare was built, because so much of what followed effectively diverted attention away from the conditions against which labor was organizing and also away from its fairly conventional aims in doing so: to secure improved pay and working conditions for the AFL’s worker-members.

Detailed treatment of the events of 1919 lies beyond the bounds of my current enterprise, and my summary draws upon several accounts of what happened: Murray’s especially painstaking reconstruction provides chilling detail of the astounding sequence of events of that year. He argues convincingly that

the Great Red Scare ... provides us with a concrete example of what happens in a democratic nation when faith and reason are supplanted with fear. ... [I]t demonstrates clearly how easily the seeds of excessive hate and intolerance, which for the most part have remained dormant in modern American society, can suddenly develop into dangerous malignancies that spread with lightning rapidity through the whole social system.<sup>2</sup>

Through Murray’s account, three primary forces emerged to terrorize and sway the nation in its first fever of anti-communism: a sensationalist press, ambitious conservative politicians, and self-interested captains of capitalist enterprise. Together these dominant forces incited citizen mobs and created a polity ready to authorize — even to demand — antidemocratic

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<sup>1</sup> Murray, 105, 106.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., ix.



cultural policies that chilled everything remaining of the progressive movement, at least until the next great national emergency arose: the Great Depression.<sup>3</sup>

### **POSTWAR ANXIETY AND THE SEATTLE GENERAL STRIKE**

As our story so far suggests, the original Armistice Day did not find the people of the United States fully at peace. Wartime patriotism had already produced mobs of citizens and soldiers bent on quashing opposition to the War's transaction, along with federal raids against those "radical" organizations that were seen as violating wartime espionage and sedition acts or otherwise perceived as constituting "a clear and present danger" to the nation.<sup>4</sup> The press and politicians further inflamed fear of Bolshevism following the Russian revolution. Postwar economic pressures quickly produced an unprecedented wave of strikes across in the United States, though "communists remained on the sidelines, scorning the reforms demanded by workers."<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, those who saw advantage in stirring up trouble themselves targeted Bolsheviks (as they continued to be known through most of 1919, since the two American communist parties were not yet formed) as the key troublemakers.

The volatile climate and the reaction it inspired were quickly established in January 1919, just two months after the Armistice, as local unions planned February's Seattle General

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<sup>3</sup> See also Ann Hagedorn, *Savage Peace: Hope and Fear in America, 1919* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> Associate Justice Oliver W. Holmes, Jr. coined the rubric in his opinion in the Supreme Court's unanimous March 1919 ruling to uphold conviction in the distribution of 15,000 anti-war flyers discouraging enlistment during World War I. See Murray, 23.

<sup>5</sup> Diggins, 111.

Strike.<sup>6</sup> Wartime shipbuilding had distorted Seattle's local economy, dislocating normal industry and causing housing shortages, extremely high prices, and general discontent, especially as the war emergency ended. The decision by 35,000 shipyard workers (in a city numbering only 315,000) to strike for higher wages and shorter hours on January 21<sup>st</sup> attracted support from the Seattle Central Labor Council, headed by aggressive leaders schooled in the Pacific Northwest's unusually radical regional labor culture influenced by the IWW. The Committee of Fifteen who spearheaded planning convinced Council members that the General Strike would be the fastest way to secure shipyard workers' demands: one hundred local unions decided to join the effort on February 6<sup>th</sup>, bringing the total number of strikers to 60,000.

Seattle Mayor Ole Hanson, who "had an intense hatred for the IWW ... declared it was not a strike at all, but a Wobbly plan to establish a soviet and start the flame of revolution" in the United States. He publicized his account of what was happening in Seattle through a telegram to the *New York Times*:

The sympathetic revolution was called in the exact manner as was the revolution in Petrograd. Labor tried to run everything. ... This was an attempted revolution which they expected to spread all over the United States. It never got to first base, and it never will if the men in control will tell all traitors and anarchists that death will be their portion if they start anything. Law and order are supreme ... Let the national government stop pandering and conciliating the men who talk against it. Let us clean up the United States of America. Let all men stand up and be counted. If the majority of the people in this country are disloyal and owe superior allegiance to some other country, or some other cause, now is the time to find it out. We refuse to

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<sup>6</sup> Except where otherwise noted, this summary of the Seattle General Strike and all quoted material are drawn from Murray, 58-66.

deal with these revolutionists. Unconditional surrender are  
*[sic]* our only terms.<sup>7</sup>

The mayor's theme was immediately taken up by shrill coverage in local papers, amplified even further in the national press. Seattle's *Union-Record*, the Labor Council's press outlet, tried to reassure the public that strikers would ensure that food, childcare, medical services, utilities, and other essentials would remain available throughout the planned General Strike; but the paper's account also attempted to rouse enthusiasm for the effort by trumpeting, "*We are undertaking the most tremendous move ever made by LABOR in this country ... starting on a road that leads — NO ONE KNOWS WHERE!*" Together, the mayor's warnings and press coverage electrified the city, and citizens stripped the shelves of local stores, laying in supplies for the coming siege.

Riding in a car draped by a huge American flag, Mayor Hanson personally led 1,500 federal troops into the city on the first day of the strike, to supplement an equal number of police. He demanded the strike's end within twenty-four hours, declaring, "The time has come for the people in Seattle to show their Americanism. ... The anarchists in this community shall not rule its affairs." Olson's demand was echoed by nonunion newspapers' headlines demanding "*NO COMPROMISE! ... Now — Or EVER!*" National press coverage omitted any discussion of the local conditions that had inspired the strike, featuring headlines that screamed "*REDS DIRECTING SEATTLE STRIKE — TO TEST CHANCE FOR*

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<sup>7</sup> First quoted in "Ole Hanson and the Undesirables," *New York Times*, February 11, 1919; this more complete citation was drawn from "Ole Hanson Quits as Seattle Mayor," *NYT*, August 29, 1919.

*REVOLUTION.*” Anti-radical national political voices joined the condemnatory chorus, explicitly identifying the action as “Marxian” and “Bolshevik.”

Having joined the shipyard workers in a show of solidarity, Strike Committee members began to back away from the enterprise in the face of a clearly frightened non-union citizenry and under extreme pressure to do so by their more conservative national AFL overlords. Union locals ended the strike within days, and the shipyard workers were defeated. Though their decisions primarily resulted from union regrets at what even such a friendly historian as Murray, writing decades later, bluntly sums up as “an extremely stupid mistake,” Mayor Hanson claimed and was given full credit for defeating the strikers: he soon abandoned his \$7,500 *per annum* mayoral post, saying he was tired of his municipal responsibilities and was “going fishing.”<sup>8</sup> He made quite a catch on this euphemistic fishing trip, publishing his book *Americanism versus Bolshevism* in January 1920, then immediately embarking on a national lecture tour that netted him \$38,000 in just seven months’ time.

Interpretations of the General Strike by politicians and the press at the time refocused national attention away from the inevitable postwar economic and social disruptions so strongly evident in Seattle in favor of anti-radical anxiety. Employers clearly took advantage of redbaiting tactics to suppress union pressure. And the national press found a sensational theme to replace headlines previously focused on the war. All three groups would continue to emphasize it as they tracked and amplified the series of extraordinary events that unfolded through January 1920.

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<sup>8</sup> “Ole Hanson Quits as Seattle Mayor,” *New York Times*, August 29, 1919.

## SUSPICIOUS AND SPECTACULAR EVENTS

What followed throughout 1919 and continued into January 1920 was truly extraordinary — what Murray calls “a series of highly suspicious and spectacular events.” In February, someone the press identified as a “Bolshevik agent” wounded French Premier Clemenceau, and the Secret Service arrested four Wobblies in New York for “an alleged world-wide plot to kill Allied and American officials.” In March, short-lived Communist regimes arose in Bavaria and Hungary, arousing fear amplified by press warnings of “Communist gains” in France and Italy; meanwhile, in Russia, the Third International was declared.

In late April came alarming reports of the delivery of two letter bombs: one merely leaked out on Mayor Hanson’s desk while he was away on a speaking tour in Colorado, appearing as the “Savior of Seattle”; but the other one exploded away the hands of former Senator Thomas Hardwick’s maid as she opened his letter in his Atlanta home, also burning his wife, who was standing beside her. Reading news accounts about these incidents on April 30<sup>th</sup>, a postal inspector in New York got suspicious and found sixteen more packages being held for insufficient postage; eighteen more were retrieved from the mail, bringing the total to thirty-six. That this happened just before May 1<sup>st</sup> strongly implied a radical-worker connection, though no evidence was ever found, nor charges made.<sup>9</sup>

While this last news was breaking in the nation’s dailies, numerous angry mobs in several major American cities, notably Boston, New York, and Cleveland, attacked peaceful

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<sup>9</sup> Murray, 68-73.

but enthusiastic May Day workers' demonstrations. In one such incident among several in New York City that day, four hundred soldiers invaded an indoor reception with seven hundred guests. The hundreds arrested nationwide on May Day were all drawn from among the worker-demonstrators who were first attacked, not their anti-radical attackers; and the press focused on the need to "curb bolshevism," with editors like those at the *Salt Lake Tribune* warning that "Free speech has been carried to the point where it is an unrestrained menace." Core cultural values enshrined in the First Amendment were thus sublimated to perceived threats to security, and victims were targeted for arrest instead of their attackers.

The extended sequence of events that ensued seemed to climax on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, when ten explosions occurred within a single hour in eight U.S. cities, killing two. The most publicized of these explosions damaged the Washington, D.C., home of Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer. (Assistant secretary of the navy Franklin D. Roosevelt, who lived across the street, put in the first police call.) Again, no clues were found nor charges brought, though Palmer reacted by readying his department for a frontal assault on radicalism. He appointed William J. Flynn of the Secret Service as head of the new Bureau of Investigation and assigned assistant attorney general Francis A. Garvan to head up all work connected with "ferreting out Reds."<sup>10</sup>

On August 1<sup>st</sup>, 24-year-old J. Edgar Hoover was named to head up the Bureau's new General Intelligence Division (GID), using his experience in working with the Library of Congress's card catalog to create an elaborate system of over 200,000 cards to inventory radical organizations, associations and publications and listing over 60,000 "dangerous

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 74-77, 81.

radicals.” The GID also became the Justice Department’s propaganda bureau, a role increasingly emphasized after the two new communist parties were formed in September. Press mailings summarizing these new parties’ manifestos were issued by the Bureau, warning editors to be on the lookout for targeted groups and radical leaders, and explicitly connecting the summer’s race riots and fall strikes with communism.<sup>11</sup>

### **LEGISLATING HYSTERIA**

The legislative branches of government were also swept up in the national obsession with antiradicalism. Responding to press demands that the government investigate American radicalism, the Senate established a Judiciary subcommittee the day after the Seattle General Strike was announced, headed up by Senator Lee S. Overman. The Overman committee met speedily, from February 11<sup>th</sup> through March 10<sup>th</sup>, before issuing its 1,200-page report, based on testimony from two dozen witnesses, two-thirds of whom were “violently anti-Bolshevik.” The report described the Russian revolution as having been “conducted largely by former East-Side New York Jews,” on the one hand, and asserted that “Lenin was merely a tool of the Germans,” on the other. The committee’s proceedings generated substantial alarmist press coverage, emphasizing the immediacy of the threat.<sup>12</sup>

Just days after the Overman report was released, the New York State Legislature appointed Senator Clayton R. Lusk to “investigate the scope, tendencies, and ramifications of ... seditious activities.” Originally scheduled to start on July 1<sup>st</sup>, the timeline accelerated after

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 193-194.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 94-99.

the May and June bombings, and the Lusk Committee launched its work on June 12<sup>th</sup>. On the day of its first meeting, with the Committee's sponsorship and at the suggestion of its assistant counsel Archibald Stevenson (whose shrill private report on the Bolshevik threat had already received extensive media attention), New York State police and federal agents jointly raided the Russian Soviet Bureau, seizing two tons of propaganda material, all placed at the Committee's disposal.<sup>13</sup> The draconian nature of the raid was criticized in the press, but Senator Lusk got more attention than criticism as he declared that the raid had established there to be at least fifty radical publications in New York City alone, spreading Bolshevik doctrine to "at least 500,000 adherents." Though the Committee's hearings had only begun, Lusk and Newton expressed to the press their conclusion that a Bolshevik revolution was definitely in the making. Additional Committee-sanctioned raids targeted the Left Wing Socialists, the Rand School (a Socialist and labor college with an enrollment of 6,000), and IWW headquarters. The Committee began steadily feeding materials from these raids to the press, stating that Rand in particular was the nerve center of national Bolshevik activity to bring about "a complete bolshevizing of American labor," and "to propagandize the Negro." Senator Lusk's pronouncements were in turn taken up by a "rigorous campaign of employer groups, patriotic societies, the Klan and the Legion," in full swing by the summer of 1919.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The committee's chief counsel was the state Attorney General himself, Charles D. Newton.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 98-103.



## **THE RED SUMMER: RACE AND RADICALISM**

The Lusk Committee's fear of "propagandizing the Negro" reveals the deep connection between racism and anti-communism. The linkage forged by racists and anti-communists between civil rights activism and radicalism in 1919 would last for well more than a generation, even after Cold War propaganda considerations ironically compelled the federal government to protect civil rights activists under attack by local authorities in the Fifties.

Black servicemen returning from the Great War were acutely aware of racist policies of segregation and continuing racist violence. Such violence exploded in late July 1919 in Chicago, where five days of white-against-black violence was sparked by the drowning death of an adolescent black boy. But this was neither the only, nor the first such incident that year:

[R]ace riots ... bloodied the streets of twenty-five towns and cities in the six-month period from April to early October 1919. One of these riots was a massacre, with an undetermined number of people slaughtered in rural Arkansas, and it is impossible to know how many died in race riots that summer.

No fewer than 120 were killed in the rural Arkansas riots alone. The NAACP collected a statement from an Arkansas man who had paid death benefits for 103 black Masons killed in the Pine City area alone, and that he knew of another seventy-three blacks who were not Masons who had also died, and "fully 250 white men." Thirty-eight (twenty-three of whom were black) died in Chicago's racial violence, in which at least 537 were injured (342 of whom were black).

Civil rights leaders and scholars call this period the “Red Summer” not because of communist influence, but due to of the violent bloodshed resulting from racial incidents.<sup>15</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, then editor of the NAACP’s *The Crisis*, counted seventy-seven lynchings that year, resulting in the deaths of eleven returned soldiers and (unusually) one woman: of these, fourteen of these mobs’ victims were publicly burned — eleven while still alive. Du Bois called 1919 “the worst experience of mob law and race hate that the United States had seen since Reconstruction.”<sup>16</sup>

As the terrible summer of 1919 turned to fall, the anti-Bolshevik Red Scare carried lynching across the racial divide, when a citizen mob stormed a jail in Centralia, Washington. The local American Legion routed its Armistice Day parade directly past one of only two surviving IWW halls in Washington state, created a tinderbox situation that ignited into gunfire when the parade unaccountably reversed course and approached the hall a second time. Who shot first remains contested, but three Legionnaires were killed, and an angry mob set upon the Wobblies, capturing all but one. That one, pursued by a posse, used his last remaining bullets to kill a fourth Legionnaire, then was beaten unmercifully and deposited in the jail with his fellows. Later that night, another angry mob dragged him back out of his jail cell to administer a second horrifying beating before he was thrown into a car and brutally

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<sup>15</sup> William M. Tuttle, Jr., *Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919* (New York: Atheneum, 1985) 14, 64.

<sup>16</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1940; reprint Millwood, NY: Kraus-Thomson Organization, Ltd., 1975), 264, 246. Du Bois’s assessment was apparently not based on death tolls alone: more blacks were lynched in the U.S. in twenty-one of the thirty years summarized in “Lynchings by Years 1885-1914,” *The Crisis*, IX (February 1915), 198. The death toll from lynching peaked at 155 in 1892, according to this account.

emasculated. Begging to be shot, rather than face further torture, the victim was instead hanged twice, unsuccessfully, from a bridge outside of town, before the lynch mob finally succeeded in their third attempt. Only then did the crowd shower their victim's dead body with fusillades of bullets, before leaving it hanging from the bridge for several days. After a final display of the distended and abused body in town, in view of the jailed Wobblies, these inmates were ordered finally to bury it.

The Centralia coroner ultimately ruled this death a suicide. Mob violence and raids spurred by the Centralia violence exploded in cities and towns up and down the West Coast. The following spring, two of the surviving Wobblies were acquitted and one declared insane, but the remaining seven were convicted for the Legionnaires' killings and sentenced to prison terms of twenty-five to forty years.

By the time these convictions were delivered, mob violence against political radicals had virtually disappeared. This was not so with racist violence: the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921 was a shocking two-day assault against that city's black community by mobs of whites inflamed by rumors that a black man had threatened a white female elevator attendant on May 31<sup>st</sup>. National Guardsmen called in to quell the violence joined the mobs on June 1<sup>st</sup> in killing more than 300 African Americans and looting and burning more than thirty-five blocks to the ground, destroying 1,265 African American homes along with hospitals, schools, churches, and 150 businesses, arresting and detaining 6,000 black Tulsans while most of the rest fled the city. Writing in the first official query into the incident in 2001, State

Rep. Don Ross wrote, "The mob torched the soul of the city, an evil from which neither whites nor blacks have fully recovered."<sup>17</sup>

### **“NO STRIKE AGAINST THE PUBLIC SAFETY”**

Meanwhile, strike actions had continued to sweep the nation throughout 1919, all predictably interpreted in keeping with the anti-Bolshevik fever still building. Especially pivotal was a strike by the Boston police. Tension had built throughout the year, with police upset over low wages, long hours, and poor working conditions. In May, a \$200 raise brought annual wages to a maximum of \$1,600.<sup>18</sup> Still unsatisfied, the toothless policemen’s association — tellingly named the Boston Social Club — sought clearance to create a union affiliated with the conservative AFL. Police Commissioner (and former Republican mayor) Edwin U. Curtis rejected this proposal out of hand early that summer. Angry Social Club members decided to defy his order, and the Commissioner responded by charging nineteen leaders of the unionization drive for the violation: they were convicted in late August, but received only suspended sentences. Meanwhile, Democratic Mayor Andrew J. Peters appointed a Citizen’s Committee that recommended an independent union be allowed, but not affiliation with the AFL.

Curtis ignored the Citizen’s Committee’s recommendation and rejected any form of unionization. Supported by the press, he revoked the leaders’ suspended sentences and

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<sup>17</sup> “Tulsa Race Riot: A Report by the Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921,” February 28, 2001, p. viii. Retrieved from <http://www.okhistory.org/research/forms/freport.pdf> on June 5, 2013.

<sup>18</sup> Elsewhere, in his account of the coal strike, Murray reports that the estimated minimum subsistence wage for a family of five in 1919 was at least \$1,575. See Murray, 137.

summarily fired them. The police swiftly voted by the nearly unanimous margin of 1,134–2 to walk off the job the next night.

The press exploded with accusations that the announced strike was “Bolshevistic.” The simple demand of AFL-affiliated unionization and the concrete issues of wages and working conditions both disappeared amidst charges that police-union promoters were “agents of Lenin.” Banks and businesses quickly mustered voluntary security forces to supplement the 427 officers who ultimately decided not to strike. Though the City made no plans of its own, Curtis told the press, “I am ready for anything.” But as soon as 1,117 of the City’s 1,544 police stopped work on Tuesday evening, September 9<sup>th</sup>, widespread lawlessness and rioting broke out in several sections of the city, involving bands of hoodlums and excited citizens.

Commissioner Curtis got the blessing of Republican governor Calvin Coolidge to refuse any negotiation and take charge of the city, urging volunteers to support the remnant of the police force not on strike. Meanwhile, Mayor Peters held out for arbitration and called in 5,000 soldiers to support the volunteer force in keeping order. Two people were killed in machine-gun fire from inexperienced troops the next night, and additional rioting claimed one more life.<sup>19</sup>

By Thursday, September 11<sup>th</sup>, however, the City had quieted, and no significant further violence occurred. That night the Central Labor Council voted down a general-strike proposal, abandoning its earlier commitment to support police unionization. In all, the cost to the City was afterwards estimated at only \$34,000, with three dead. Nevertheless, the tone of

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 123-127.

national press coverage was suggested by the *Wall Street Journal*'s warning that "*Lenin and Trotsky are on their way,*" and by this Pittsburgh headline: "*BOSTON STRIKE CAUSES GRAVE WASHINGTON FEAR — Senators Think Effort to Sovietize the Government Is Started.*"<sup>20</sup>

With Boston's Mayor and Police Commissioner still at loggerheads, Governor Coolidge took personal charge of the city on September 11<sup>th</sup>. Samuel Gompers, just returned from a European labor summit, realized the great liability the Boston situation represented to the labor movement and urged the strikers to return to work with his promise of mediation. The police voted unanimously to accept his request, and Gompers appealed to Peters and Coolidge to reinstate the strikers. But a majority of the national press called for no compromise, and on September 13<sup>th</sup>, Curtis announced there would be none. Governor Coolidge notified Gompers that the police chief had his backing, saying, "There is no right to strike against the public safety by anybody, anywhere, any time."

Flooded by 70,000 letters of support from citizens throughout the nation, Coolidge was thus catapulted to national fame, becoming what Murray describes as "a Jack-the-Giant-Killer, ... another Ole Hanson ... the new savior of the country." He was elected Vice President of the United States the following year, and moved into the White House after President Warren G. Harding's death in 1923.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 128-130.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 132.

## STRIKING STEEL AND COAL

Just two days into the Boston debacle, a national steel strike was called for September 22<sup>nd</sup>, ignoring President Wilson's Labor Day call for "bettering the relationship between capital and labor," and on the appointed day, 275,000 steelworkers abandoned their posts. By the end of the week, the number of strikers had swollen to 365,000, signifying to alarmists what one newspaper described as "another experiment in the way of Bolshevizing American industry." As in Seattle, even supporters fed this popular perception, flushed with excitement over the recent formation of the two new Communist parties: "*HALF MILLION WORKERS IN OPEN CLASS WAR*," exclaimed the Cleveland *Socialist News* in excited solidarity.

The steel companies deployed labor spies, purposefully arousing racial and inter-ethnic tensions between strikers and strikebreakers. They employed black strikebreakers wherever possible, to excite racist opposition as well anti-radical sentiment. Brutal riots broke out, but politicians and press blamed the strikers, saying the companies were simply defending their interests. State militias and federal troops were called in to quell violence, and raids were directed against organizations identified as radical. Many of these organizations exacerbated the situation with further strident calls to support the strikers by resisting the troops.

The President's National Industrial Conference, announced on Labor Day as part of Wilson's effort to allay industrial unrest, convened in Washington on October 6<sup>th</sup> — the same day martial law was declared in Gary, Indiana, due to strike-related violence — but this conference broke down after two weeks, when public representatives decided to side with capital against the unions' October 21<sup>st</sup> resolution that the right of workers to bargain

collectively be recognized, and labor walked out in defeat the next day. By this time President Wilson himself had been laid low by a disabling stroke, described by some historians as also involving a nervous breakdown.

Amidst widespread charges of Bolshevism, a Senate committee soon released a report that accused the steel companies of industrial despotism, but also concluded that the strike had been backed by “a considerable element of IWW’s, anarchists, revolutionists, and Russian Soviets ... as a means of elevating themselves to power.” A preliminary summary report on the steel strike issued at the same time by the Interchurch World Movement reached opposite conclusions, minimizing radical influence within labor and squarely blaming the steel companies for the violence, attacking their use of strikebreakers, spies and “undercover men.” The latter report, not released in full until the fall of 1920, was much closer to the truth than the Senate’s report, in historian Robert Murray’s view of the evidence available in 1955. But with only 100,000 workers still out on strike, steel production had already returned to seventy percent of normal. With twenty lives and \$112 million in wages already lost, dispirited union members voted to end their strike on January 8, 1920, without a single demand met nor concession made by the steel companies.<sup>22</sup>

Six weeks into the steel strike, on November 1<sup>st</sup>, a strike began among coal-industry workers. The United Mine Workers (UMW), under leadership of the staunchly anti-communist John L. Lewis, signed a wartime contract barring any wage increases until the war’s end, but no later than April 1, 1920. Despite widespread celebration of the U.S.’s allies’ victory in November 1918, the coal operators insisted that the war had not officially

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 135, 138, 140, 145-149, and 151-152.



ended, since not all the treaties had been signed. They declared that no new agreement would be negotiated until the April 1920 deadline. Wildcat strikes broke out immediately upon this announcement, with miners calling for nationalization of the industry.<sup>23</sup> The UMW declared its contract ended with the start of the November 1919 strike, emphasizing that their sole object was to secure a fair wage and proper working conditions: “No other issue is involved and there must be no attempt to inject into the strike any extraneous purposes.”

Lewis’s declaration could hardly have received a clear reading, with the steel strike already at its peak and public condemnation of strikers so widespread. The press was already swirling with charges of Bolshevism in labor, and with winter fast approaching, even moderate editorial writers registered concern about the disruption of a vital commodity. More typical, though, was the immoderate tone struck by the New York *Tribune*: “Thousands of them, red-soaked in the doctrines of Bolshevism, clamor for the strike as a means of syndicalizing the coal mines ... and even as starting a general revolution in America.”<sup>24</sup>

A clear reading was especially unlikely in light of the campaign already being orchestrated by the coal operators. Industry spokesman T.T. Brewster’s press statements asserted that the strike was being undertaken under direct orders and financing from Lenin and Trotsky. Super-patriotic and anti-labor groups had been encouraged weeks in advance to inundate Congress with letters begging that the “Bolshevik revolution” threatening the coal industry be stopped. Politicians took up the cry of “radicalism,” charging in the

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<sup>23</sup> Miners’ pre-strike proposal that coal operations be nationalized was less radical than it might seem today, as this had already happened for purposes of conducting the war.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 153-154 and 156.

*Congressional Record* that radical labor had “a stranglehold upon the throat of the country.”

President Wilson condemned the planned strike from his sickbed as “a grave moral and legal wrong.”

## **RIGHTS AND ASSOCIATIONS**

In an undocumented bedside meeting between the President and Attorney General Palmer on October 29<sup>th</sup>, “the Chief Executive reactivated the wartime Field Administration” (by which the federal government had taken control of the coal industry, through the Lever Act of 1917<sup>25</sup>) so quickly that by the next day — October 20<sup>th</sup> — Attorney General Palmer was able to secure a federal court order from an Indiana judge enjoining the UMW from any participation in the proposed coal miners’ strike.<sup>26</sup>

This is a fascinating and mysterious sequence in federal policymaking. Murray states that the ailing President, at the insistence of his wife and doctor, was “permitting most domestic matters to be settled directly by the department head concerned.”<sup>27</sup> That the coal strike would not have been understood as lying primarily within the domain of the Secretary of Labor, but rather within that of the Attorney General, implies that the situation was seen (at least by Palmer and an acquiescent president) as primarily an issue of radical threat than one of workers’ rights. Murray’s account of the coal strike skips over this question, though Murray does raise similar concerns in regard to the Justice Department attempts to deport

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<sup>25</sup> My characterization of the Lever Act is drawn from [http://www.eoearth.org/article/Lever\\_Act\\_of\\_1917,\\_United\\_States](http://www.eoearth.org/article/Lever_Act_of_1917,_United_States).

<sup>26</sup> Murray, 155-156.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

alien radicals over Labor's objections later on in his account of the Red Scare. Murray does footnote his narrative, however, to mention objections raised by Secretary of State Robert Lansing to Palmer's process in these two days, after the October 30<sup>th</sup> injunction against the UMW was announced as a *fait accompli* at a meeting of the full Cabinet held later that day: this meeting had been purposely rescheduled for that date so as to allow full Cabinet discussion of alternative responses to the impending coal strike.

Palmer's end run is especially significant since the Secretary of Labor then in office was William Bauchop Wilson, a coal miner's son who had served as a UMW official from 1900-08. During the war, Secretary Wilson's rulings that the IWW should not be automatically implicated or held accountable for the opinions or actions of any of its radical members had revealed a stricter interpretation of the law than that asserted by Attorney General Palmer after he took office at the beginning of 1919. Assistant Secretary of Labor Louis Post later spelled out his superior's stance, in considering Palmer's roles in the climactic events yet to come:

Secretary Wilson was of the opinion that no member of an organization can be held responsible for the lawless acts of other members without proof of actual participation or guilty knowledge, unless the lawless acts are authorized, in general terms at least, by the organic documents of the organization. On the question of law here, he was in complete accord with Attorney General Gregory, Mr. Palmer's immediate predecessor, who had been faced by precisely the same question under the espionage law. The enforcement of ... this War-time law having become especially difficult on account of conflicting sentiments in different parts of the country as to the "I.W.W." and similar bodies, Attorney General Gregory, declaring and holding to the principle that "guilt is always personal," determined upon a policy under which "no person should be prosecuted or interned solely by reason of his membership in any such organization." ...

After Secretary Wilson had announced his conclusion as to the law of 1917, the forest-region influences of the Pacific Northwest thrust through Congress the comprehensive law of 1918 ... [t]he private object of [which] was to compel the Secretary of Labor to deport aliens for mere membership in the I.W.W. without any proof of individual culpability.<sup>28</sup>

This, in an inversion of the usual relationship among executive agencies in regard to enforcing evidentiary standards and constitutional rights, it was the Department of Labor that tried to insist that the Attorney General respect the need for “proof of probable cause as a condition precedent to ... arrest under the alien-expulsion laws.” These positions suggest the enmity that would have caused Palmer’s avoiding Cabinet discussion of federal intervention in the coal strike.

Benefiting from hindsight as he wrote in 1923, Post observed that the Labor Department’s lonely defense of this legal principle “made little difference,” especially to the Bureau of Investigation:

The detective auxiliary to the Department of Justice soon turned this Constitutional prerequisite into a farcical formality. Nor in doing so was there much difficulty. The proceedings were on a scale so monstrous, the details were so numerous and so confused and confusing, the arrogance of the detectives was so aggressive, that the Department of Labor ... became hardly more than a mechanical toy for the Department of Justice. ... [which] thrust aside all respect for lawful process, and ... the difficulty of maintaining regularity and preventing oppression rose to the level of the impossible.<sup>29</sup>

The monstrous events to which Post refers followed very quickly: the Palmer Raids.

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<sup>28</sup> Louis F. Post, *The Deportations Delirium of Nineteen-Twenty: A Personal Narrative of an Historic Official Experience* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Co., 1923; repr. New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 64-65.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

## JUSTICE AND THE PALMER RAIDS

Public agency participation in the Red Scare of 1919 peaked in the closing months of 1919, bridging briefly into the new year of 1920, with the Palmer Raids. This nationwide police action was named for the Attorney General, but conducted primarily under the direction of the Bureau of Investigation's General Intelligence Division. In fact, it could be said that the raids' greatest long-term impact was the rapid ascendance of its young director:

[J. Edgar Hoover's] rise through the ranks was unprecedented, sparked by his leadership during the Red Scare of 1919. Hoover managed the Palmer Raids with a boldness and efficiency that stunned both supporters and opponents, staging the largest mass arrest in U.S. history and sending 249 radicals on a one-way trip to the Soviet Union.<sup>30</sup>

Federal police action first exploded into the headlines on November 7<sup>th</sup> — the second anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution — when agents raided the headquarters and outposts of the Union of Russian Workers, in what are seen as among the first notable U.S. government actions fueled by anti-communist sentiment. Through raids conducted in eleven U.S. cities, 250 officers and members of the Union were arrested from its New York City headquarters alone: 200 men and women were “badly beaten” according to the New York *Times* and corralled into ill-equipped Justice Department headquarters downtown. Only thirty-nine of those seized in this first round of federal raids were finally detained, but some

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<sup>30</sup> Jonathan P. Herzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex: America's Religious Battle against Communism in the Early Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 84-85.

were held for extended periods of time: in Hartford, Connecticut, some arrested Union members were held for five months before their first hearing.<sup>31</sup>

It cannot be said that these raids arose entirely at the initiative of the Justice Department. In fact, the Department had shown some restraint after the rounding up of aliens in February's Seattle General Strike, arousing some concern in the press that the government might be "beginning to over-do it," as Duluth *Herald* editors put it; or as the New York *Herald* warned, "To-day it is the IWW; tomorrow the Socialist Party" — making a distinction that many mobs, politicians, and journalists would overlook as the year wore on. Ultimately, of the fifty-four Seattle radicals shipped east to Ellis Island, only three were actually deported.

But escalating public animosity toward perceived radicals eventually resulted in charges that the Department was not doing its job. On October 19<sup>th</sup>, the Senate passed a unanimous resolution demanding that the Attorney General "inform the Senate whether or not the Department of Justice has taken legal proceedings, and if not, why not ... for the arrest and punishment ... of the various persons within the United States ... who have attempted to bring about the forcible overthrow of the Government ..."<sup>32</sup> With the president sidelined by poor health, Palmer was apparently spurred to take a more aggressive stance in the series of raids that began in November.

Realizing that in view of the cessation of hostilities with Germany it would be extremely difficult to proceed against radical citizens on grounds of either espionage or sedition, he

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<sup>31</sup> Murray, 196-197.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 195-196.

centered his efforts on the apprehension of radical aliens who would be subject to the deportation provisions of the Alien Law of 1918. ... most expedient anyway since [Hoover's] General Intelligence Division estimated that about 90 per cent of all domestic radicals were aliens ...

Federal raids were quickly followed by similar state and local agency action. New York State's Lusk Committee ordered raids the following day by 700 police against seventy-three "radical centers," arresting more than 500 people in that state and seizing further tons of files and literature. Of these hundreds, only thirty-five detainees were charged — all for violation of state criminal anarchy statutes. But all others who were aliens were handed over to federal officials, and from among these, 246 were judged to be deportable, mostly members of the Union of Russian Workers.<sup>33</sup>

Palmer's raids immediately added the attorney general to the pantheon of saviors sought by the anti-radical public, alongside Seattle Mayor Hanson and Massachusetts Governor Coolidge. The Senate that had questioned Palmer's bona fides in October applauded his response one week after the first round of raids. With the President sidelines, apparently dreaming only of a League of Nations, Palmer was "running the administration," "a lion-hearted man [who] had brought order out of chaos," bringing every American "thrills of joy."<sup>34</sup>

More thrills were quickly delivered as federal agents raided the Russian People's House another week later, reporting afterwards to the press that its agents had discovered "material for 100 bombs" — "the most deadly and dangerous assortment of explosives and

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 197.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 198.

bomb ingredients ... seen in many years.” (Quite a statement, so soon after the Great War.) The press then swarmed around the December 21<sup>st</sup> send-off of the *Buford*, an army transport laden with 249 alien deportees. When the deportees’ panicking wives and children tried to break into Ellis Island, attempting to join their husbands and fathers in their journey to destinations yet unknown, this was framed by headlines screaming “*REDS STORM FERRY GATES TO FREE PALS*.”<sup>35</sup>

This fast sequence from raid to deportation (albeit of detainees from earlier actions) gave Palmer the strategy for another round: he convinced pliant underlings of Secretary Wilson and Assistant Secretary Post in the Department of Labor who dissented from their bosses’ stance, instead ascribing to Justice’s anti-radical convictions and willing to order warrants at Justice’s command. Labor employees issued three thousand such warrants on December 27<sup>th</sup>, focused resolutely on the alien membership of the two new American Communist parties.<sup>36</sup>

The advantage, from the Attorney General’s perspective, was that the Labor Department’s process was not considered a criminal proceeding, nor was deportation considered a punishment. No judge nor jury was involved in what was considered an administrative procedure, and the accused were not considered protected under the Constitution’s prohibition of *ex post facto* laws: rules could be changed administratively and applied to anyone then in custody. Labor solicitor John W. Abercrombie revised his

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 207.

<sup>36</sup> “Secretary [of Labor] Wilson was ... absent ... on account of family illnesses and a tedious illness of his own.” Post, 149.



department's appeal procedures to accommodate Justice's preferences: the accused individual was not entitled to see the warrant upon which he or she had been arrested until such point in the ultimate, post-detention hearing when it had produced enough facts "to protect the Government's interests" — and only then "may he be represented by counsel."<sup>37</sup>

With the standard for legitimate arrest thus lowered, the way was open for the Justice department's Bureau of Investigation agents to descend upon more than four thousand suspected radicals in thirty-three American cities, in twenty-three states, on January 2, 1920.

Virtually every Communist organization in the country was affected; practically every leader of the movement, national or local, was put under arrest. Often such arrests were made without the formality of warrants as bureau agents entered bowling alleys, pool halls, cafés, club rooms, and even homes, and seized everyone in sight. Families were separated; prisoners were held incommunicado and deprived of their right to legal counsel. According to the plan, those suspected radicals who were American citizens were not detained by federal agents, but were turned over to state officials for prosecution under state syndicalist laws. All aliens, of course, were incarcerated by the federal authorities ...<sup>38</sup>

Historian Robert Murray records that "The January raids dazzled the public." One of the Justice Department's press releases touted the discovery of four "bombs" — iron balls exhibited briefly to the press in a pail of water (presumably for their "disarmament"), but which disappeared without explanation and were never used for evidence nor referred to in testimony in any subsequent official proceeding.<sup>39</sup> No other evidence of criminal intentions

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<sup>37</sup> Murray, 210-211.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 212-213.

<sup>39</sup> Post, 93-94.

was found in these aggressive and widespread raids, but “Palmer ... [w]ith the aid of Flynn and Hoover, ... intensified the department’s propaganda campaign until it reached its peak in late January 1920,” featuring distribution of ready-to-print antiradical articles and cartoons, as “Palmer vigorously continued his drive to secure some kind of peacetime sedition legislation ... to give the federal government the power necessary to deal with citizen radicals effectively.” Palmer declared the government would soon conduct “at least 2,720 deportations.”<sup>40</sup>

### IN THE PINK

Surprisingly, however, the national hysteria quickly began to dissipate as the new year unfolded. As Murray wrote in 1955, “The month of January 1920 marked the height of the Great Red Scare. ... Then, suddenly, the crest of hysteria passed.” Why? Murray credited a number of factors:

There was the dawning realization, for one thing, that there never had been any real cause for alarm ... and a growing number of citizens, among them certain prominent and respected public figures, became increasingly disgusted with the excesses of the Scare hysteria and worked actively to bring it to a halt. For another thing, there was the localization of bolshevism in Europe. Moreover, many domestic radicals had been so scared by the aggressive action of those like Palmer that they had lapsed into a sort of pinkishness that made them less conspicuous to a Red-conscious public.

But Murray credits even greater importance to the fact that the “temper of war was giving way to the temper of peace.” Americans relaxed into a fascination with “new fads, fashions

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<sup>40</sup> Murray, 220, 222.

and gadgets — radio, cars, sports, Prohibition-inspired crime, beauty pageants, mah-jongg, and numerous other popular passions associated with the Roaring Twenties.<sup>41</sup>

More concretely, wrenches were soon thrown into Palmer's imagined deportation machine by the Labor Department. In late January, Secretary Wilson reversed Abercrombie's rule revision — though too late to benefit those swept up earlier in the month. On these cases, already in the works, Assistant Secretary Louis F. Post's later intercession became especially controversial. In a memoir of the experience published in 1923, Post describes his responsibility in the Palmer raid cases:

I was [for] approximately two months, Secretary of Labor by operation of law for all administrative functioning; and as the solicitor did not return after the Secretary's return, I was all the time without an official substitute for any purpose ... I was plunged into responsibility for the aftermath of this crusade to the full.<sup>42</sup>

Post reached a "probable estimate" that "somewhat within 6,000 warrants of arrest" had been issued by Labor "at the insistence of Department of Justice detectives," from which "somewhat within 4,000 arrests were made": "about 3,000 were cancelled after hearings, nearly if not quite all by myself." Even so, Post ordered "more than 500" deportations.<sup>43</sup>

For his action, the House of Representatives impeached Post in April 1920. The House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, chaired by Albert Johnson of Washington state (later chief author of the Emergency Immigration Act of 1921 and the

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 239-241.

<sup>42</sup> Post, 149.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 167.

Immigration Act of 1924), accused Post of unlawfully undoing lawfully taken actions by his department. The House impeachment stirred what Post described as a “cyclone of newspaper misrepresentation,” but one that quickly cooled as the facts came to light and moderate voices, expressing concern at the extra-legal measures being used, began to be heard.<sup>44</sup> In May, Post’s “forthrightness, wit, and intelligence ... completely confounded his accusers” in his own defense before the House Committee, which abruptly dropped its impeachment effort. Labor Secretary Lewis declared that month that membership in the Communist Labor Party would not be considered a deportable defense. A federal court ruled in June to the same effect in *Colyer et al v. Skeffington*, but with much broader effect.<sup>45</sup>

Other events in 1920 focused greater attention on the damage being done to public institutions by Red Scare tactics. The Supreme Court ruled out evidence based on the illegal seizure of papers (*Silverthorne v. U.S*) in late January. Widespread public condemnation followed when the New York state legislature refused for the third time to seat popularly elected assemblymen belonging to the Socialist Party, which in this iteration began to be widely seen as a blow of the American principle of representative government: the thus-disenfranchised citizens of their districts had, after all, confirmed their choice in three elections. At the same time, prominent citizens (Justice Holmes, Samuel Gompers, and leading clergy) and influential journals expressed opposition to newly proposed peacetime sedition laws, none of which were ever enacted.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 223-226.

<sup>45</sup> Murray, 249-250.

<sup>46</sup> Murray, 242-243, 245, 247.

The key event, however, was perhaps a non-event. Late in April, Attorney General Palmer issued stern warnings to state and local authorities that violent May Day agitation was being planned nationwide, Palmer's warning prompted emergency mobilization of police forces and the military, but "not a single disturbance occurred in the entire nation." Though claiming Justice's warnings had helped head off such incidents, Palmer was ridiculed by the press and immediately fell under Congressional scrutiny, thus killing his presidential ambitions, even as Governor Coolidge's star continued to rise.

The most damaging bombing of the era actually took place months later — in September 1920, on Wall Street. Though Palmer and Flynn rushed to New York to proclaim that this was part of gigantic plot to overthrow capitalism, the press again merely ridiculed the notion. Clearly, the national hysteria had calmed. Senator Warren G. Harding, that fall's victorious presidential candidate, carrying Coolidge on his coattails, called on this occasion for "not heroics but healing; not nostrums but normalcy ... not surgery but serenity." Ultimately, Murray concluded, "It was [growing] indifference that was the real key to the rapid decline in Red Scare hysteria."<sup>47</sup>

The Red Scare died down, but left a political landscape significantly changed as a result, as has been true at a number of paradigm-shifting historical moments in U.S. history. The pumped-up prosperity of Twenties and the minuscule political influence wielded by socialist parties after the Red Scare of 1919 relegated this concern to the bumper seat of the American political roadster — until the 1929 market crash and the ensuing Great Depression brought the entire nation more in line with the rest of the industrialized world.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 252-259, 261.

## CHAPTER 5

### ***ENTR'ACTE: CULTURAL POLICY IN THE ROARING TWENTIES***

The Twenties are remembered as a roaring celebration of capitalism in the States. Though Prohibition had taken effect, it is a decade remembered more for flappers, speakeasies, and police agencies looking the other way than as a time of sober restraint. Anti-communism receded from the foreground during this period, and so cannot be said the primary driver of policy formation. In this sense, it represents the first of two *entr'actes* in our dramatic story.

Nevertheless, patterns important to anti-communism's impact on U.S. cultural policy were established during this time in four realms: immigration policy; mass media — primarily comprising radio and film at the time; private philanthropy as the foundation for work undertaken for motives other than profit-making; and an emphasis upon private interests in international relations and foreign policy. Immigration carried the closest link with the Red Scare's fears of alien influence. In mass media, the organization and drive of corporate interests elevated them above the early efforts of idealistic amateurs and numerous public-sector players. Private philanthropy emerged out of the federal income tax, originally seen (before World War I effectively ended the Progressive era) as a way to recoup some portion of enormous profits for the public good. And official isolationism left the foreign policy field open for exploration by wealthy American interests operating abroad. Patterns

set during Twenties in each of these realms remained in force for decades — in some respects, to this day.

### **IMMIGRATION RESTRICTION**

The anti-alien feeling generated during the Red Scare finally led to legislative action that had been discussed for decades without resolution, as “the United States loudly proclaimed to the world its determination to cease being a nation of immigrants.” At first — and during the Red Scare itself — immigration stood at a standstill: in 1919, most ships bound for America were loaded with returning troops, not immigrants; and for a time, over half as many foreign-born workers left the U.S. as arrived: having landed here before the War’s outbreak, they found themselves stranded in a country that was not to their liking. But in 1920, a quarter-million arrived from Europe, and in 1921, the number leaped to 652,364. While still substantially lower than the record level of 1.3 million who arrived in the peak immigration year of 1907, such alarmists as the immigration commissioner in New York warned that another ten-million were waiting to embark. Inflaming the spirit of alien fear so recently manifest in mob violence, the head of the U.S. consular service lent a frightening face to this abstract exaggeration, warning that these included rafts of Polish Jews who were “filthy, un-American, and often dangerous in their habits.” It was in defensive response to this perceived threat that legislative action in the Twenties would reduce the flow of immigrants into the United States to only 158,598 by 1929 — “merely one-seventh of the 1907 level and a marginal one-tenth of 1 percent of America’s continental population. ... [And] Asian immigration was in effect extinguished altogether...” This required the

institution of state apparatus within the U.S. to control movement across borders as well as measures in embassies and consulates abroad to discourage emigrants from leaving their countries of origin in the first place.<sup>1</sup>

Popular opposition to immigration was heightened in the summer of 1920 by the first serious economic recession since the 1890s, which lasted through the spring of 1922. Representative Albert Johnson introduced the first “emergency” bill at the end of 1920. Legislation emerged from conference later that winter as the first comprehensive federal limitation on immigration based on national origin — capping permissible levels to five percent of foreign-born national enumerated in the 1910 census. A more severe measure — the Immigration Act of 1924 — reduced immigration levels even further, to two percent of the even-earlier 1890 census, before “undesirable” Eastern and Southern European nationalities began arriving in numbers. This regime remained in effect for four decades, until the Sixties.<sup>2</sup>

Even as immigration declined, anti-immigrant feeling fed popular frenzy around the federal case brought against Sacco and Vanzetti, leading to their execution in 1927. And patriotic feeling such as that inflamed by the Red Scare showed up in resurgent popular movements led by prominent “civic” organizations whose charters enshrined many of the values epitomized by Red Scare mobs and official state action: prominent among them in the early Twenties was the Ku Klux Klan, whose own estimates of membership peaked in 1924

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<sup>1</sup> Aristide R. Zilberg, *A Nation by Design: Immigration Policy in the Fashioning of America* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 230, 243-244, and 246.

<sup>2</sup> Zilberg, 252-254.



at more than four million, before the organization's outrageous rhetoric and actions caused this number to shrivel to just 45,000 by 1930.<sup>3</sup>

### **ELECTRONIC MASS MEDIA**

The Twenties brought the explosion of America's first true mass media into public life, the commercial film industry and radio. Not since Gutenberg's press had technology enabled the amplification and extension of particular voices and versions of reality and phantasm to such an extent. Unlike publishing, which required literacy, these new media of film and radio reached everyone with a ticket or a receiver.

This is not the place for an extensive history of film, but its exploding popularity in the Twenties is an important backdrop to our story for three primary reasons. First, audiences abandoned vaudeville and other live entertainment in favor of the movies, throwing many performing artists into a state of industrial unemployment, even before the Great Depression hit. This produced a considerable pool of unemployed professional workers that would become significant when New Deal programs to keep U.S. talent alive came forward in themed-Thirties.

Second, Hollywood's obsession with boffo box office made Hollywood honchos hypersensitive to anything that might alienate elements of the mass market — notably controversial politics or anything else that might be read as “un-American.” Emerging from Victorian assumptions that live theater was questionable and risqué, respectable commercial

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<sup>3</sup> For Sacco and Vanzetti, see <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/saccov/saccov.htm> (retrieved June 3, 2013). See also Zilberg, 248-251; and Wyn Craig Wade, *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America* (New York: Touchstone, 1988), 253.

interests avoided film in its early days; but the cinema's emergence in an era of unprecedented immigration from Eastern Europe offered ripe commercial opportunities for outsiders to the American mainstream — especially a core group of Jewish entrepreneurs, who carried moving-image media out of sideshows and nickelodeons and into theaters. A critical mass of these entrepreneurs from the urban east colonized Hollywood and developed the industry along lines now familiar to audiences and competing national industries all over the world. The creation of production, distribution, and audiences for film was established almost entirely outside the public sector, and so came to be treated largely as elements of commercial policy.<sup>4</sup>

And third, the film industry's hunger for global markets made it the primary agent of what came to be called "American cultural imperialism." The U.S. film industry — "Hollywood" — would play a unique role in global cultural politics after World War II, mainly as an opponent to any measures taken by foreign governments to shore up their own domestic film industries against the flood of cheap American product. It would also play a central part in Cold War propaganda campaigns, trimming its sails to suit the anti-communist wind blowing in the late Forties and Fifties. To this we will return.

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<sup>4</sup> Neal Gabler, *An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1988). On the déclassé origins of the industry, see Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies* (New York: Random House, 1975), 18-32. On industry regulation from within the industry and limited public sources, see Garth Jowett, *Film: The Democratic Art* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1976), 108-207 and Ruth Inglis, "Self-Regulation in Operation," *The American Film Industry*, Tino Balio, ed., Rev. ed. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976, 1985), 377-400. On the standardization of patented technologies that enabled the industry to develop, see Robert Anderson, "The Motion Picture Patents Company: A Reevaluation," in *The American Film Industry*, 133-152.

Broadcasting presented a special case, as it required the use of a common resource: the airwaves. Their unfettered use caused problems from the earliest days of radio. The Radio Act of 1912 was passed at the urging of the Department of the Navy, concerned with interference in its use of broadcast channels by growing numbers of amateur (or “ham”) operators, of which there were over a thousand even before World War I. By 1920, some 15,000 amateur broadcasters were active, transmitting to a quarter-million receivers. These broadcasters bore little similarity to radio stations that would soon emerge. Fifteen times as many amateurs were transmitting as any other type of “broadcast entity”: these others included colleges and universities, often operating with state subsidy (over seventy such stations had been licensed by 1923); and municipalities had also entered the field, since radio was still imagined as a democratizing element in American life — multiplying and extending opportunities for information and entertainment, promoting mutual understanding among diverse regional and local cultures, and strengthening the social fabric.<sup>5</sup>

A confused flurry of national legislation was proposed during the 67<sup>th</sup> Congress (1921-23) — some twenty bills in all, attempting to tame the chaotic development of radio in its early days, including some proposing to nationalize radio development. But none of these passed, leaving the field open for the strongest commercial endeavors to prevail. Concerned about this vacuum, Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover convened four national radio conferences from 1922-25 in an effort to focus the picture. After the second conference, in 1923, Hoover proposed a three-tier hierarchy of stations: “clear-channel” stations with

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<sup>5</sup> Ralph Engelman, *Public Radio and Television in America: A Political History* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1996), 13-14 and 16-17.

maximum power and reach; mid-size regionals; and local stations. An important precedent was set when WEAJ, an RCA station from New York was deemed “clear-channel,” while educational stations as a class were labeled secondary, “special-interest” entities.<sup>6</sup>

Commercial interests at first assumed that radio equipment was where money could be made, not programming: the medium was still understood mainly a means of transmitting messages. Some measure of standardization was needed, which led to formation of the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) in 1919, a joint initiative of General Electric and Westinghouse (which manufactured receivers) and AT&T (which produced transmitters), underpinned by their agreements to share patents. Over time, the RCA family of corporations fell into jealous concern over AT&T’s power, as the provider of telephone links among commercial stations. AT&T’s early forays into business “sponsorship” of programs (not yet involving the concept of selling of time for advertising) triggered threats of Fair Trade Commission hearings. This was headed off by AT&T’s agreement to divest itself of WEAJ and WCAP (a Washington, DC station) and by the formation of a new National Broadcast Corporation (NBC) to link stations owned by RCA, GE and Westinghouse, launched in 1926.

CBS followed one year later, as did a piece of emergency, one-year legislation — the Radio Act of 1927 — that was renewed the following year. The Federal Radio Commission called into being by the Act issued General Order No. 40, allocating the national spectrum in a pattern worked out with the networks and the National Association of Radio Broadcasters, an advocate of commercial broadcasters established in 1922. Forty of the ninety available channels went to 50,000-watt broadcasters, while the remaining 600 stations shared the other

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<sup>6</sup> Engelman, 18-20.

fifty, operating under low-power restrictions that kept them regional or local in reach. The Commission declared in 1929 that “There is no room in the broadcast band for every school of thought ... each to have its own ... mouthpiece in the ether.” By that time, advertising had also become the very foundation of radio economics, led by the aggressive pro-advertising policies of CBS’s president William Paley — though ads were banned from 7-11 p.m., now called “prime time,” but then still considered “inviolable family hours.” By 1933, NBC followed the CBS model and removed its bar against direct advertising.

As public-media historian Ralph Engelman sums up this history,

The radio trust was thus able to co-opt the amateur vision of how radio should be used, and to use the airwaves for commercial ends, ... to promote cultural homogeneity, to ...screen out diversity ..., and to advance ... consumer capitalism.<sup>7</sup>

Though the New Deal seemed to offer some hope for radio reform, the Communications Act of 1934 that created the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) won Roosevelt’s support contained no guarantees for educational or other noncommercial programming, which was reduced after 1934. In contrast to the British model that in 1927 foregrounded broadcasting in the public interest through the public British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC, financed by license fees from radio owners), Engelman concludes, “the state’s role in the American broadcasting system was to engage in regulation limited to ensuring an orderly marketplace” driven by commercial interests. The 1934 legislation “remains the fundamental law of American telecommunications,” he argues: “Never again

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<sup>7</sup> Engelman, 20-24.

would a fundamental restructuring of American broadcasting be seriously considered by a government body.”<sup>8</sup>

### **THE PRIMACY OF PRIVATE PHILANTHROPY**

U.S. government economics established a centerpiece of American cultural policy that was also not directly related to anti-communism, though in a sense it realized its ideal: enhancing private-sector discretion over public-sector action. Continuously since the tax-deductibility of charitable contributions was incorporated into the federal income tax in 1917, public policy has effectively encouraged citizens with disposable income to contribute to tax-exempt, not-for-profit organizations by making these contributions tax-deductible. This constitutes a kind of short-circuit on the public purse: each deduction from taxable income costs the federal government revenues it might otherwise have collected. The Congressional Budget Office estimate of federal revenues effectively diverted through personal philanthropy in 2006 was \$40.9 billion.

The donor’s tax savings reflect the “marginal rate” applied to upper echelons of income. When marginal rates have been set at 90 percent, a top-earner’s contribution of \$1 “cost” the donor just a dime, for the full dollar’s worth of personal appreciation and prestige associated with patronage. When top-earners’ rates drop to 28 percent — as they did under presidents Reagan and Bush from 1988-91 — each dollar represents an effective outlay of 72 cents, arguably reducing incentive, though the windfall savings for upper-echelon earners of lower tax rates render the question largely moot for these richest Americans.

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<sup>8</sup> Engelman, 33, 35 and 38-39.

Except for a brief time in the mid-Eighties, the tax benefits of charitable donations have applied only to those taxpayers itemizing deductions, rather than taking the standard deduction (which was introduced during World War II), effectively focusing the benefit on wealthier citizens. People reporting incomes of at least \$100,000 in 2008, fewer than 13 percent of those filing tax returns, accounted for about 58 percent of taxpayers' charitable giving.<sup>9</sup>

For most of the history of the income tax, marginal tax rates have been quite high and applied only to those whose income was also quite high: in 1917, the top rate was 67 percent, for those earning astronomical incomes of more than \$42 million; the top tax rate stood at 91 percent from 1946-1963, for incomes ranging from \$1.7–3 million or more, then was lowered to 70 percent from 1965-1981. The Reagan administration cut top tax rates to 50 percent in 1982, then to 28 percent in 1988, simultaneously reducing the thresholds beyond which these rates would apply to \$203,661 and \$57,738 respectively, releasing those in the upper echelons of income from any greater obligation than those making much less, and reducing the practical benefit of philanthropic giving. Top rates have ranged from 31–39.6 percent since 1991, with income thresholds since 1993 of around \$400,000.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Congressional Budget Office, "Options for Changing the Tax Treatment of Charitable Giving," May 2011, 1 and 3-4. Accessed September 15, 2013 at <http://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/cbofiles/ftpdocs/121xx/doc12167/charitablecontributions.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> "U.S. Federal Individual Income Tax Rates History, 1862-2013 (Nominal and Inflation-Adjusted Brackets)," accessed September 15, 2013 at <http://taxfoundation.org/article/us-federal-individual-income-tax-rates-history-1913-2013-nominal-and-inflation-adjusted-brackets>.

For the nonprofit cultural sector, emphasizing private donations privileges those institutions, artists and art forms favored by wealthier individuals. Apart from tax incentives, underwriting major arts institutions, universities, and philanthropies makes donors visible within their own society as well as to the general public, especially when their names are literally carved into their walls. Non-elite institutions, and those which serve lower-income communities, whose members often lack discretionary income, tend not to benefit from these policies. People's contribution patterns also differ significantly, depending upon income:

[A]mong households with AGI below \$100,000, 67 percent of giving was directed toward religious organizations, and only 7 percent went to institutions that focus on health, education, or the arts ... Among households that reported at least \$1 million in income, the situation was reversed: Just 17 percent of donations were made to religious organizations, and 65 percent were made to support health-, education-, or arts-related activities.<sup>11</sup>

Emphasizing private philanthropy in cultural policy thus privileges the interests, tastes, and connections of the wealthier element of society.

Until the 1960s, the Great Depression was the only time when substantial, outright federal investments were made in cultural work. Policymakers considered the possibility of channeling public funds through existing cultural institutions, but rejected this option. Their rationale was that these institutions were, by definition, already taken care of by their private patrons, and that public funding should be directed toward those not involved nor served by these institutions. The public impact resulting from this policy was what drew the attention of the new House Committee on Un-American Activities in the first place. Postwar cultural

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<sup>11</sup> CBO, 3-4, citing Center on Philanthropy, *Patterns of Household Charitable Giving by Income Group, 2005* (Indianapolis: Indiana University–Purdue University, 2007).



support would follow a radically different course — one in which the public sector would play roles largely subsidiary to private philanthropy.

### PRIVATE INTERESTS AND FOREIGN POLICY

American anti-communism was crucially involved with ideas about international relations, as we will consider the hectic third act of our anti-communist drama — the Forties and Fifties. The *entr'acte* of the Twenties set a tone that would explode on the main stage on anti-communism, however. International tourism, largely comprising the growing aggregate of trips taken by upper-income Americans, played the main part here.

Improvements in steam-powered ships and rising discretionary income for upper- and middle-class Americans helped boost travel to Europe from 35,000 trips in 1870 to ... a peak [of] 359,000 trips in 1930.

These private passages took on some public dimension — at least for the citizenry of France — when at the American Legion's initiative in 1927 “thousands of World War I veterans descended on Paris for a pilgrimage that became famous for its raucous [Prohibition era] drinking and patriotic speeches.” Club life featured prominently in the significant Jazz Age expatriate community that sprang up there, as “the U.S. dollar rode high over European currencies weakened by World War I,” making American tourists a ripe plum for the French tourist industry — though also a target, as when a right-wing mob attacked a “Paris By

Night” entourage. Presumably more sober were the growing number of U.S. students taking advantage of the junior-year-abroad programs, which proliferated in the Twenties.<sup>12</sup>

Civic idealism also became a force in America’s private army of foreign diplomacy. The U.S.-based International Association of Rotary Clubs convened its first meeting abroad in Edinburgh in 1921, enthusiastically rechristening itself as Rotary International. Six years later, May 1927, four thousand U.S and Canadian Rotarians boarded six Cunard ocean liners in as “the largest [crossing] ... since the launch of the American Expeditionary Force in 1917.” They were joined by three thousand more at their June landing in Antwerp to make the symbolic return to Ostend, Belgium, a “chief victim of the Great War.” Historian Victoria de Grazia offers such an excellent account of how incursions of civic organizations like Rotary International, corporate advertising, Hollywood, and U.S. chain stores, supermarkets and consumerism created an Irresistible Empire outside the bounds and officially beyond the reach of formal State Department apparatus.<sup>13</sup>

Not all Americans abroad had simple tourism or commerce as their motives. One such American bears special mention: Father Edmund Walsh, S.J., who ascended (like E. Edgar Hoover, at a tender age) to the directorship of Georgetown University’s new School of Foreign Service in 1918 became one of the most dedicated U.S. anti-communists. The SFS claimed to be the first academic program for the education of diplomats (though barely, as

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<sup>12</sup> Christopher Endy, *Cold War Holidays: American Tourism in France*, The New Cold War History series, John Lewis Gaddis, ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 15-17.

<sup>13</sup> Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America’s Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 36-37.

several others started around the same time), inspired in part by the wish to establish Georgetown's standing in the nation's capital despite the widespread anti-Catholic sentiment prevalent at the time. Never schooled in politics or international relations, Father Walsh was immediately granted an honorary doctorate by Georgetown, as its customs required one for appointments at this level. From then on, Walsh routinely listed this Ph.D. behind his Jesuit suffix.<sup>14</sup>

Walsh's standing was enhanced by a 1922 assignment from the Vatican to examine the need for a special relief mission to the USSR, which he then returned to head up in 1923. He first set foot on Soviet soil just one month after the impoverished and famine-ravaged state had announced confiscation of all church property, allowing Father Walsh to witness the specter of troops stripping Russia's churches of their possessions, hauling them off by the wagonload. Church confiscations were soon followed by the arrest and trial of Orthodox bishops, priests, and laity. Twenty-eight bishops and over 1,200 priests were murdered or executed in 1922 alone. Antireligious processions popped up, lampooning Christian liturgies, and plays were staged that attacked religion's place in Russian life. (28) Though not under the Vatican's authority, the fate of so many Orthodox adherents brought Walsh to "fear for the consequences in the economic, the political, the social, the religious, educational orders — of [the] *entire* world," making Soviet communism "the most reactionary and savage

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<sup>14</sup> Patrick McNamara, *A Catholic Cold War: Edmund A. Walsh, S.J., and the Politics of American Anticommunism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 28 and 51-52.

school of thought known to history ... a reign of terror that makes the French Revolution insignificant.”<sup>15</sup>

Walsh’s initial characterization of the Soviet’s regime’s official stance vis-à-vis religion anticipated his later positions, in the darkest hours of Stalin’s dictatorship, but it was not an accurate depiction of official Soviet policy in the early Twenties, when he was there. The “Decree of Separation of Church from State and School from Church,” issued as a departure from the former Tsarist regime in 1918, had staked out a position no more radical than that established by the U.S. Constitution — privatizing, not prohibiting, religious observance.<sup>16</sup>

Quickly enough, however, Walsh’s worst fears were confirmed by measures taken in response to Roman Catholic resistance. By the end of 1922, Russian troops closed all of Petrograd’s and three of Moscow’s Catholic churches, striking at the center of the Vatican’s ecclesiastical authority in Russia. In 1923, a number of Catholic leaders were tried for obstructing the prior year’s confiscation and one — Monsignor Constantine Budkiewicz — was summarily executed. Walsh wrote the Vatican, “The issue here is clear enough; it is atheism against Christianity.”<sup>17</sup>

Walsh returned to the U.S. as an active public critic of communism, not only through his offices as director of the School of Foreign Service, but in a wider public arena: he delivered some 1,500 public lectures from 1924-52, visiting every state of the Union. He

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<sup>15</sup> McNamara, 29.

<sup>16</sup> McNamara, 28.

<sup>17</sup> McNamara, 36.

lectured regularly at various military educational institutions and, from 1925-42, offered an annual public lecture series called the “Washington 10,” attracting an influential public in the nation’s capital. After the U.S. entered World War II, Walsh trained military and intelligence personnel in the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP), which brought 1,800 ASTP members to the Georgetown campus. Geopolitics thereafter became the centerpiece of Walsh’s curriculum.<sup>18</sup>

Father Walsh reappears in our story, at a legendary 1950 dinner that inspired Senator Joe McCarthy’s hallmark campaign of domestic anti-communism. But already in the Twenties, we find in this one American tourist an important architect and promoter of the ideology that drove domestic and international anti-communism for much of the twentieth century.<sup>19</sup>

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What went up in the Roaring Twenties was apparently destined to come down, quite unhappily, in the Crash of 1929. The Great Depression shook the nation’s faith in unbridled capitalism, altering our cultural consensus for decades to come. Marxist thought suddenly came to the fore as a tool for understanding the dynamics that had not only brought capitalism to its knees, but also into disrepute as a simple prescription for securing the welfare of the nation.

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<sup>18</sup> McNamara, 54 and 113-114.

<sup>19</sup> McNamara, 159.

## CHAPTER 6

### A NEW DEAL IN FEDERAL CULTURAL POLICY

The onset of the Great Depression and the arrival of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal offer a picture of federal cultural policy that for a limited time showcased the principal values of cultural democracy in the United States.

Widespread perceptions of the "failure of capitalism," and the peculiar reticence and ineptitude of the Hoover administration in meeting the challenge it represented, laid the foundation for Roosevelt's 1932 election and the flotilla of experimental programs his new administration launched. FDR described the new political consensus that swept him into office in a 1932 campaign speech before San Francisco's Commonwealth Club:

[T]oday ... equality of opportunity as we have known it no longer exists. ... We are now providing a drab living for our own people. ... [T]his calls for a re-appraisal of values. ... Every man has a right to life; ... a right to make a comfortable living. ... [O]ur industrial and agricultural mechanism can produce enough and to spare. Our government ... owes to every one an avenue to possess himself of a portion of that plenty sufficient for his needs, through his own work. ... [W]e must do so, lest a rising tide of misery engendered by our common failure, engulf us all. ... [I]n the strength of great hope we must all shoulder our common load.

Belief was suddenly widespread that the 600 large combines that owned two-thirds of the nation's wealth had not been operating in the public interest and that a "new deal" was needed.<sup>1</sup> Many American citizens and leading intellectuals turned to Marxist thought and

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<sup>1</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Every Man Has a Right to Life" in Howard Zinn, ed., *New Deal Thought*, The American Heritage Series (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1966), 48-52.

other political philosophies calling for new ways of regulating public affairs in order to achieve democratic ends. All were too easily cast as “radical,” if not Bolshevik, as they had been in the wake of the Great War.

The economically privileged new president was no socialist ideologue. Rather, the New Deal comprised a series of more or less successful experiments in public action — some notably failed and limited — that placed FDR more solidly in the tradition of American pragmatism. Still, the New Deal years to this day represent the high-water mark of socialist ideas of economic democracy upon the political thought of the general American population in the twentieth century.

As with so many moments of flooding in American political thought — the victory of suffragists over the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on behalf of American women, for instance, the flood of racist violence around the turn of the century that led to Jim Crow policies of segregation, and the anti-radical violence of the Red Scare of 1919 — the New Deal shifted the political consensus in lasting ways. The United States reopened its eyes to values beyond capitalism: the wish to provide social security for Twentieth Century Americans, for example, lay beyond the means of simple market mechanisms. FDR’s stirring invocations that we not succumb to “the fear of fear itself” — effectively urging responses opposite to those that had incited the Red Scare — empowered civic idealism in meeting the challenges laid bare by the Depression.

The Roosevelt administration attempted many new initiatives from 1933 through the 1938 Congressional mid-term elections, when anti-New Deal political forces came to the fore. Desperate economic straits cleared the way for massive new programs of public

spending and regulation in these five years, the first round winning Congressional approval in the “Hundred Days” from March through June of 1933. These included the Federal Emergency Relief Act (FERA) and the Public Works Administration (PWA), followed in November by the Civil Works Administration (CWA), which employed millions of Americans then on the relief rolls in a wide variety of public-works and community-service projects. Among these public-service workers were thousands of artists. And among the idealists heading up these initiatives stood the creators of the New Deal’s cultural programs.<sup>2</sup>

### **NEW DEAL CULTURE & THE BIRTH OF HUAC**

The New Deal’s federal cultural projects remain unique in U.S. history. In the decade following Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s inauguration in 1933, substantial public investments were made to employ artists in public projects conceived in the spirit of cultural democracy, embodying each primary aspect of this approach to cultural policymaking:

1. They focused on the broadest possible audiences — the entire American public, not only an elite — incorporating popular and new forms of cultural creation and often addressing subjects of wide public interest.
2. They focused on stimulating broad, inclusive, and active participation in community cultural life.

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<sup>2</sup> Zinn, ed., *New Deal Thought*, xxxix. For more information on FERA, PWA and CWA arts projects, see Belisario R. Contreras, *Tradition and Innovation in New Deal Art* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1983), 29-31.



3. They sought to include the widest possible diversity in American culture, at the same time consciously striving to identify and present art forms characteristic of the United States.
4. And in addressing these goals, they sought to encourage decentralization of decision-making, to accommodate regionalism and localism within broad national cultural aims.<sup>3</sup>

Among the earliest and longest-lasting of New Deal cultural programs was the Section of Painting & Sculpture (after 1938, simply the Section of Fine Arts) created within the Department of the Treasury in 1934.<sup>4</sup> The “Treasury Section,” as it came to be known, commissioned many of the best-known works of public art from the Depression era, all in federal buildings, including the widely known Post Office murals. Treasury Section commissions were drawn from a fund comprising the one percent of construction costs already earmarked for the “embellishment” of federal buildings. Instead of focusing entirely on marble and other lavish construction materials, as federal administrators had previously done, artists were commissioned to create murals, sculpture, and other works of art. Unlike other New Deal programs, these artists did not have to be hired from relief rolls. Treasury Section director Edward Bruce instead oversaw a system that emphasized the quality of the

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<sup>3</sup> Girard, 17-19, 129-131, 134-136, and 139-140.

<sup>4</sup> After 1940, this program was transferred to the Public Buildings Administration of the Federal Works Agency before it quietly ended in 1943, in the midst of World War II.

artists' work and the appropriateness of the proposed artwork for public commission and display.<sup>5</sup>

The largest, most visible, and best known of the New Deal cultural programs — and the most controversial politically — was not established until what became known as the “Second New Deal.” At this stage, earlier relief programs (FERA, PWA, and CWA) were replaced by the consolidated Works Progress Administration (WPA), established by Congress in April 1935 to provide public-service employment to millions still on the relief rolls.

The lion's share of WPA funding was administered and disbursed through state and local governments, the main exception being Federal Project Number One — popularly known as “Federal One” — which comprised the Federal Art Project, the Federal Music Project, the Federal Theatre Project, and the Federal Writers' Project, along with the smaller Historical Records Survey. These projects were nationally directed from their launch in fall of 1935 through June of 1939, though administered through regional, state and municipal WPA offices. After that time, the surviving projects were deprived by Congress of their national direction and fell to state and local authorities. Surviving programs were redeployed toward war priorities after Pearl Harbor, and finally terminated in 1943.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> For detailed discussion of the Treasury Section, see Karal Ann Marling, *Wall-to-Wall America: A Cultural History of Post Office Murals in the Great Depression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982); and Marlene Park and Gerald E. Markowitz, *Democratic Vistas: Post Offices and Public Art in the New Deal* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984).

<sup>6</sup> For a succinct overview of Federal One overall, see Milton Meltzer, *Violins & Shovels: The WPA Arts Projects* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1976).

Federal One attracted a great deal of press coverage, much of it positive; but substantial press attention also went to allegations that the WPA was employing “Reds,” especially in its professional division, of which Federal One was the most visible part. The Writers’ Project, especially its New York City division, was attacked as a “hotbed” of Communist influence, both in the press and in hearings of the House of Representatives’ newly created Special Committee to Investigate Un-American Activities.<sup>7</sup> But ultimately, only the Federal Theatre Project was terminated by Congress in June of 1939. The FTP therefore offers the best case both to represent New Deal cultural policies in action and to contextualize Congressional reaction against the federal cultural programs.

### ***The Federal Theatre Project***

The Federal Theatre Project (FTP) was conceived and directed by a leading experimental theater person, Hallie Flanagan, who happened to have attended elementary school with WPA chief Harry Hopkins in Grinnell, Iowa. Announcing the new program at a national theater conference in August, Hopkins both posed a challenge and made a promise:

I am asked whether a theatre subsidized by the government can be kept free from censorship, and I say, yes, it is going to be kept free from censorship. What we want is a free, adult, uncensored theatre.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Jerre Mangione, *The Dream and the Deal: The Federal Writers’ Project, 1935-1943* (New York: Avon, 1972). See Chapter 5, “Manhattan Hotbed,” on the New York City project (153-190) and Chapter 8, “Congress Sees Red,” on the HUAC hearings (287-326).

<sup>8</sup> Hallie Flanagan, *Arena* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1940), 28. Data and program summaries that follow come primarily from this source.

At Hopkins' request, and after extensive consultation with the theater community in the spring and summer of 1935, Flanagan quickly conceived then launched a massive and varied national program built around locally based units. The FTP operated in thirty-three states and employed nearly 12,400 personnel at its peak in May 1936, just nine months after Flanagan's plan was approved in late August 1935.

Required by the WPA's enabling legislation to draw most of its personnel from relief rolls, the FTP was most active in regions where the greatest numbers of theater people lived and were unemployed. By far the largest concentration was in New York City, where in less than four years of operation, upwards of 3,–5,000 FTP workers (varying from year to year) presented nearly 19,000 performances before an aggregate audience of more than 12.5 million people. Where theater workers were scarce, state units or smaller city units were launched: such units in California, Boston, and Chicago, Florida, Indiana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York state, Ohio, Oklahoma and Pennsylvania each produced in excess of 1,000 performances.

Theater of every imaginable variety — including forms not previously imagined — came into being under Federal Theatre auspices. The rapid proliferation of film and radio in the Twenties had displaced large numbers vaudevillians and other performers formerly employed in live venues, so the plurality of WPA productions nationwide were “variety acts”: assemblages of mostly ageing performers, many impoverished, ill, and “rusty” from long-term unemployment. Flanagan and her state and city directors were challenged to rehabilitate these artists, all grateful for a means of earning their living once again, and FTP directors created entertainment formats to harness and showcase their skills. Touring

companies were assembled to present free performances in Civilian Conservation Corps camps, community centers, schools, public parks and playgrounds, hospitals and every conceivable gathering place. Marionette and minstrel shows were common, and a large and popular WPA circus based in New York City toured widely in the Northeast.

In larger cities and states, where theatrical talent was more diverse and numerous and underutilized resources more available (no more than ten percent of FTP labor funds could be used for sets, costumes, lighting and theater rental), actual theater companies were formed: their numbers and variety were in constant flux, as performing companies came and went, and new productions were planned. The quality and variety of FTP productions were most evident in such locales, and commercial producers picked up a substantial number of these shows for longer runs. (Over 2,600 FTP workers successfully attained private-sector employment and left the Project.) Some specialized troupes (all “units” in FTP parlance) concentrated on presenting theater classics, others on experimental work, others on new plays, and still others on musical theater. Foreign-language companies performed plays in German, Spanish, and Yiddish.

In addition to local units, several Federal Theatre initiatives based mainly in New York served audiences and WPA personnel nationally. The main national performance initiative was the National Negro Theater, headquartered in New York, but operating separate companies in ten U.S. cities. Also based in New York was the Bureau of Research and Publication, which reviewed scripts and provided research support for FTP units and many other independent American theaters nationwide. A *Federal Theatre Magazine* was

published there, too: not just a house organ, the magazine served as a vehicle for criticism and discussion of public theater issues generally.

Federal Theatre Project activity was staggering: two months before its sudden termination in 1939 — the last time a systematic statistical update could be made — over 63,700 performances had been presented, reaching an aggregate audience of 30.4 million.<sup>9</sup> (The national population then stood at 120 million.) The FTP made itself visible not only through thousands of isolated local performances, but through a number of unique, high-profile national theater events. The Theatre Project was able to stage simultaneous premieres of a number of plays in multiple U.S. cities, resulting in visibility and exposure to theater never equaled before or since. Sinclair Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here* — a new play on the dangers of fascism — was rushed into production by Flanagan's agency, premiering simultaneously in twenty-one theaters in seventeen states, including one production each in Spanish and Yiddish. The obsessive Lewis was sequestered in a Manhattan hotel, feverishly rewriting the script two days before the nationwide opening. This further complicated the formidable production challenges faced by the twenty-one separate companies involved, but the show was a smashing critical and audience success. *It Can't Happen Here* enjoyed extended runs, subsequent new productions in additional cities, and even wider public exposure through touring. Before the Federal Theatre was ended, the play had run a cumulative total of 260 weeks.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 435.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 115-129.

Many more multi-city feats were accomplished. Seventy-seven new plays were produced in more than one city. Complete cycles of plays by George Bernard Shaw and by American playwrights Eugene O'Neill, Maxwell Anderson, and Elmer Rice were staged in multiple cities. Seventeen new productions and twenty-eight pre-existing shows were mounted for touring. In all, some 830 major plays were mounted, in an estimated 1,200 separate productions. And these figures did not include radio: FTP producers averaged 3,000 programs a year for three years, broadcast multiple times throughout the country, reaching an estimated audience of 10 million listeners every week.<sup>11</sup>

One wholly new form invented by Flanagan and her collaborating directors, also opening and running in multiple cities at once, epitomized the social engagement of the Federal Theatre: the Living Newspaper. Featuring huge casts and minimalist sets — mainly relying on the innovative use of lighting and sound, to keep production costs in line — these carefully researched, purpose-built shows focused on pressing social issues of the day. Mussolini's invasion was the subject of *Ethiopia*, the first single-issue Living Newspaper, fully produced but never shown to the public. Despite Harry Hopkins' original promise, *Ethiopia* was censored: shut down by the White House on the eve of its premiere, due to its unflattering portrayal of Italian fascism, years before war was eventually declared.

Subsequent Living Newspaper productions fared better, each produced by separate companies in five-to-ten American cities and addressing a range of subjects: *Triple-A Plowed Under* explored agricultural issues, following the Supreme Court's termination of FDR's Agricultural Aid Administration; *Power* focused on the need for affordable electrification;

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 396, 431-433, 269.

*One-Third of a Nation* dealt with poverty in Depression-struck America, drawing its title from FDR's second inaugural address; and *Spirochete* drew unprecedented public attention to epidemic venereal disease. These innovative productions broke new ground both aesthetically and politically and, like most Federal Theatre productions, attracted wholly new and different audiences than those who had comprised theater audiences prior to the appearance of this grand national experiment in public theater.<sup>12</sup>

Summing up her programming philosophy as FTP director and that of her national policy board, Flanagan wrote,

We had to bar out material which seemed inappropriate or dangerous for a public theatre to do. We did this constantly on questions of public taste and policy. But in this matter of selection we were motivated by the general principles of a theatre as vigorous and varied as possible, a theatre belonging to no one region or political party but to the country as a whole. We were never actuated by the thought of coming elections, national or local. Any theatre subsidized by public funds which had to concern itself with partisan politics might not end after four years as violently as did Federal Theatre, but it is probable that long before that it would die of yawning.<sup>13</sup>

Far from putting people to sleep, the Federal Theatre awakened and activated an entirely new audience, quickly attracting widespread popular interest and enthusiasm. The groundbreaking quality of its productions won over the same influential school of leading professional drama critics who had been quick to express skepticism, disdain, and contempt when the Project was first announced, skeptically expecting that only bad theater would result from casting actors on relief. Local authorities and audiences also embraced their own

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 65-67, 70-73, 207-222, and 390.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 289.



new professional theaters, and some began to build theater facilities and to make local funds available to help in their support.

### ***Congressional Opposition***

But significantly, the Theatre Project began to attract attention from enemies of the New Deal in the press and anti-communists in Congress just as quickly as it was launched. Some charged that theater was being used by the administration as a means of propaganda. Most Congressional critics were responding to hearsay, press stories, and often merely to the implications of show titles listed in FTP reports rather than to the productions themselves, which most had never seen.<sup>14</sup>

New Deal themes were undeniably present in many productions, and unemployed actors naturally represented a workforce critical of capitalism-as-usual, however disengaged they might otherwise be from traditional politics, much less political economics. As their campaigning unfolded, Congressional opponents focused mainly on these theater workers themselves, as well as an even greater number of artists employed in other Federal One projects. They focused less on the content of the FTP's work, instead becoming increasingly obsessed with charges that WPA cultural projects were a hotbed of Communist organizing. This eventually, but in fairly short historic time, carried the FTP to its early grave.

In 1938, Representative Martin Dies of Texas got himself appointed chair of a brand-new Congressional committee, through a resolution calling on the Speaker of the House to

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<sup>14</sup> Walter Goodman, *The Committee: The Extraordinary Career of the House Committee on Un-American Activities* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1968), 45n.

create a temporary Special Committee to Investigate Un-American Activities. The Special Committee was to look into

the extent, character, and objects of un-American propaganda activities in the United States; the diffusion within the United States of subversive and un-American propaganda that is instigated from foreign countries or of a domestic origin and attacks the principle of the form of government as guaranteed by our Constitution; and all other questions in relation thereto that would aid Congress in any necessary remedial legislation.<sup>15</sup>

Renewed five times before being made permanent in 1945, HUAC<sup>16</sup> became the centerpiece of Congressional anti-communist organizing through 1975, when it was finally terminated.<sup>17</sup>

### ***HUAC Targets Federal One***

Commonly known in its early days as the Dies Committee, HUAC quickly set its sights on the Federal Theatre Project, the most highly visible expression of New Deal culture, and on the WPA's Federal Writer's Project, where Committee members found the greater supply of "friendly" witnesses. Committee member J. Parnell Thomas (later imprisoned for defrauding the United States government in a kickback scheme<sup>18</sup>) announced on July 26,

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<sup>15</sup> *Congressional Record*, 75<sup>th</sup> Congress, 3<sup>rd</sup> session, May 10, 1938, 6562.

<sup>16</sup> Despite the fact that this committee's name changed in its various deployments, I use "HUAC" throughout to minimize confusion.

<sup>17</sup> Robert K. Carr, *The House Committee on Un-American Activities, 1945-1950* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952), 17; Jerrold Simmons, *Operation Abolition: The Campaign to Abolish the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1938-1975* (New York: Garland, 1986), 303.

<sup>18</sup> Jane DeHart Mathews, *The Federal Theatre, 1935-1939: Plays, Relief, and Politics* (New York: Octagon, 1980), 199.

1938, that he would have these two projects investigated as soon as the Committee began its hearings, saying,

It is apparent from the startling evidence received thus far that the Federal Theatre Project not only is serving as a branch of the communistic organization but is also one more link in the vast and unparalleled New Deal propaganda machine.<sup>19</sup>

On August 12<sup>th</sup>, as HUAC's closed hearings were about to begin, Chairman Dies delivered a press statement promising that

this Committee is determined to conduct its investigation upon a dignified plane and to adopt and maintain throughout the course of the hearings a judicial attitude. ... This Committee will not permit any "character assassination" of any "smearing" of innocent people ... It is easy to "smear" someone's name or reputation by unsupported charges or an unjustified attack, but it is difficult to repair the damage that has been done ... [W]hen any individual or organization is involved in any charge or attack made in the course of the hearings, that individual or organization will be accorded an opportunity to refute such charge or attack.

Dies warned reporters against labeling anyone un-American based merely on "an honest difference of opinion with respect to some economic, political or social question."<sup>20</sup> The Chairman clearly understood the damaging potential of rumor and innuendo. This was a potential the Committee realized relentlessly in decades to come, in its assault on democratic cultural projects in the name of anti-communism.

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<sup>19</sup> "Theatre Project Faces an Inquiry; Representative Thomas Will Tell House Committee It Is 'Communist Hot-Bed,'" *New York Times*, July 27, 1938.

<sup>20</sup> Goodman, 27.

The Committee immediately proceeded to generate over 500 column inches of copy in the *New York Times* alone in its first six weeks of operation.<sup>21</sup> After devoting its first day of hearings to the German-American Bund, a radical right-wing organization, HUAC moved to what would prove to be its primary subject, receiving three days of blunt testimony from an American Federation of Labor union president who cited the establishment of the Congress of Industrial Organizations as a turning point in labor: “since then the Communist Party has become a definite factor in the American labor movement” and was training members “for the day when the signal for revolution is given.” He delivered a list of 284 names. None were called before the Committee in their own defense.<sup>22</sup>

A parade of like-minded witnesses followed, publicized in ample press coverage, though journalists themselves privately questioned the fairness of the Committee’s process. A poll taken by two New York *Daily News* columnists of the eighteen journalists who had regularly covered the investigation — and they were the only outsiders permitted to enter the Committee’s closed chambers — revealed that only two thought the hearings had been conducted fairly; eleven thought their conduct unfair; and the remaining five declined to comment either way. Supporting evidence was not being requested, and challenges to press accounts trumpeted in Page One headlines “came late and were relegated to back pages.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> D.A. Saunders, “The Dies Committee: First Phase,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 3, no. 2 (April 1939), 224.

<sup>22</sup> “Communists Rule the C.I.O., Frey of A. F. L. Testifies,” *New York Times*, August 14, 1938.

<sup>23</sup> Goodman, 29-31.

A 1939 study of the hearings, based on the only accounts available — press coverage and the Committee’s own edited report — included a revealing description of HUAC’s primary witness from the Federal One payroll, Edwin P. Banta, who testified before a subcommittee meeting held in New York. His background casts doubt upon the complexion of the Committee’s main informants:

Mr. Banta had secured a job on the Federal Writers Project in New York, and while there employed had joined the Communist Party. He appears to have been a member for about two years, until a short time before his appearance as a witness. His testimony contained very unusual passages, which received full publicity, to the effect that young women were used to lure men into serving in the army of the Spanish Government, and that the Central Committee of the Communist Party (its governing body) had ordered one of the writers to proceed post-haste to Jersey City “to bring on a state of revolution.” Mr. Banta’s testimony is, however, open to question ... He did not join the Communist Party in order to protect his position, as he testified, but rather as an informer. For a number of years he had been active in the work of various Nazi groups in New York, and had contributed numerous articles to their newspapers and other publications. In fact, Banta was scheduled to address a large meeting of the German-American Bund in New York less than a week after he testified before the Committee. When it came time for the speech, however, the chairman of the meeting announced that Banta had been mistakenly scheduled to appear.<sup>24</sup>

Hallie Flanagan followed the Dies Committee’s hearings as closely as she could through press reports, the only source available to her. After reading in a New York newspaper that another former employee had asserted that “Federal Theatre was dominated by Communists,” and that “you had to belong to the Workers’ Alliance [allegedly a

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<sup>24</sup> Saunders, 231-232.

Communist front organization] in order to get on the project,” Flanagan responded publicly, earning herself a scolding from her higher-ups in the WPA:

I released an immediate and unequivocal denial. This was an infraction of the rule that only the WPA information division answered press stories. I was told by WPA officials that on no account was I to reply to these charges. It was the fashion at that time ... to laugh at the Dies Committee; but it never seemed funny to me.<sup>25</sup>

Such charges continued appearing in the press throughout the summer and fall of 1938. Growing increasingly concerned for the welfare of her program, Flanagan wrote directly to Chairman Dies to ask that she and FTP National Policy Board members be given a hearing by the Committee. She pointed out that the half-dozen witnesses addressing the FTP to date had not been in a position to know about the “broad sweep of project operation or administration” and “were making statements which, as the Committee could easily ascertain, were biased, prejudiced, and often completely false.” Her letter to the Chairman went unacknowledged and unanswered, as did a second one she sent a few months later. Flanagan recorded her growing anxiety as time wore on:

The WPA still refused to take the continued attacks seriously. Many people believed that this was because the organization had already decided that the Federal Theatre Project was a political liability and wanted to end it before 1940 [the next presidential election year]. I do not think, however, that the appeasement policy, in the air on Washington in the spring and summer of 1939, started as early as this.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Flanagan, 335.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 336.

Finally, in November 1938, WPA officials themselves became concerned about the level of press being generated by HUAC hearings and asked that Flanagan appear before the Committee. She prepared affidavits responding to allegations reported in the press, including a comprehensive summary of FTP programs to date.<sup>27</sup> In December, the day before her scheduled hearing, Flanagan and Writers' Project director Henry Alsberg were called to a meeting in the office of Ellen Woodward, director of the WPA's Women's and Professional division, where Project One was housed. There, David Niles of the WPA's information division announced that only Mrs. Woodward would be allowed to speak for the projects. After expressing heated objections, Flanagan and Alsberg briefed Woodward as best they could.

### ***Federal One Responds***

Mrs. Woodward appeared before the Committee the next day. She angered Committee members by calling their procedures themselves "un-American" and making an unfortunate additional reference to the "capitalistic" press, which Chairman Dies pointed out to his presumably perplexed colleagues was "a Communistic term." Ultimately, a rattled Woodward couldn't answer Committee members' questions, and Flanagan herself was finally asked to appear late the following morning. From her account:

I wanted to talk about the Federal Theatre, but the Committee apparently did not. Wasn't it true I ... went to Russia [as a 1926 Guggenheim fellow while on Vassar's faculty]? ... Praised the Russian theatre? ... Was it true that we "couldn't get any audiences for anything except communist plays"? ...

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<sup>27</sup> Flanagan's report, never published by Congress, appears as an appendix to *Arena*, 375-436.

Was I in sympathy with Communistic doctrines? I said: "I am an American and I believe in American democracy. ... I believe the Federal Theatre ... is honestly trying in every way possible to interpret the best interests of the people of this democracy. I am not in sympathy with any other form of government."<sup>28</sup>

More questions followed about Workers' Alliance membership among FTP workers in New York, which Flanagan explained she could not answer, since WPA regulations forbade Project administrators from asking. She assured the Committee that it was in any case decidedly a minority, since each of the dozen or so professional entertainment unions involved with the WPA had forbidden FTP workers' membership in any other workers' association. Her fleeting mention of Christopher Marlowe spurred Representative Starnes of Alabama (who'd bullied Woodward the day before for calling the Committee's process "un-American") to ask, "Is he a Communist?" Flanagan's explanation that said Marlowe was an English playwright who lived just before the time of Shakespeare drew gales of laughter.

Having maintained equanimity throughout her grilling, Flanagan was speedily dispatched by Committee members in favor of lunch and then was not invited back into their chamber, despite her pleas not to be dismissed before delivering her prepared presentation. Congressional and WPA staff assured the FTP director that her full affidavit would be entered into the record and distributed directly to five-hundred senators and representatives; but neither ever happened. When the Committee's report was issued in January 1939, much attention went to condemning the Writers' Project, but only this single, short paragraph, bereft of any supporting evidence, mentioned the Theatre Project:

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<sup>28</sup> Flanagan, 341-343.



We are convinced that a rather large number of the employees on the Federal Theatre Project are either members of the Communist Party or are sympathetic with the Communist Party. It is also clear that certain employees felt under compulsion to join the Workers' Alliance in order to retain their jobs.<sup>29</sup>

Four months later, in May 1939, hearings on the Federal Theatre were held by House Appropriations Committee chair Clifton Woodrum of Virginia, who had publicly stated he was going to put the government out of show business if it was the last thing he ever did. Woodrum's Committee did little fact-finding, relying instead on hearsay by then widely circulated in HUAC's press coverage and the one-paragraph conclusion in its report. On June 14<sup>th</sup>, with funding set to expire in just over two weeks, Woodrum declared from the floor of the House that "every theater critic of note has expressed his disapproval of projects of this type." Woodrum's assertion was immediately refuted by leading New York and national theater critics in a collective telegram expressing their emphatic contrary belief in the Theatre Project's "great value to the life of the community." Nevertheless, in a June 20<sup>th</sup> vote, the House recommended full funding for the WPA — \$1.78 billion — but specifically banning the use of federal money for theater projects. The restriction could not have been based on fiscal grounds, since theater projects were budgeted at just \$17 million, less than one percent of the total WPA budget.<sup>30</sup> With the close of the fiscal year rapidly approaching, and the

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 347.

<sup>30</sup> For detailed discussion of Woodrum's part in the appropriations fight and anti-communism in the WPA, see James E. Sargent, "Woodrum's Economy Bloc: The Attack on Roosevelt's WPA, 1937-1939," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 93, no. 2 (April 1985), 175-207.

entire WPA appropriation hanging in the balance, the House decision was immediately conveyed to the Senate.

The national theater community and other civic and political groups, mobilized throughout House proceedings, had little time to appeal to the Senate. Nevertheless, its Budget Committee voted that same day to overrule the House's abolition of the FTP, though reducing its appropriation to no more than 0.75% of the budget (\$13.3 million). For a moment, it seemed the Theatre Project might be saved, but that moment quickly passed. Writing of the joint conference committee convened the following day, a Senate conferee later confided to Flanagan,

I was somewhat surprised at the attitude of the House conferees. ... For some reason or other, regardless of political or economic views, they were all most determined to eliminate the theatre projects. The theatre project was the last concession made by the Senate conferees ... made only as the last resort to secure an agreement. It really seemed that if the Senate refused to yield in its efforts to protect the eight thousand employees on theatre projects, that we would have the entire two and a half million WPA relief workers thrown out of employment.

Federal funding was thus explicitly denied "after June 30, 1939, for the operation of any Theatre Project."<sup>31</sup>

The WPA was rechristened with the less stirring name, "Work Projects Administration" and placed under the federal administrative oversight of the Federal Works Agency. The surviving components of Federal One — the art, music, and writers' projects and the historical records survey — continued on under the FWA's bureaucratic umbrella, but were deprived of professional direction at the national level. After Pearl Harbor, the

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<sup>31</sup> Flanagan, 354-362.

WPA was redeployed to serve war priorities, producing local recreation guides for servicemen in military training centers, for instance, before being officially terminated in 1943.

The most telling indicator of how far the program veered from its national leaders' original visions, however, is the agency's largely unrecognized role in planning, building, equipping, and staffing relocation centers and internment camps for the Wartime Civilian Control Agency, which detained 120,000 Japanese American citizens and resident aliens during World War II. The WPA contributed more to the cost of internment than the Army or any other civilian agency. In drawing attention to this largely unacknowledged legacy of the WPA, scholar Jason Scott Smith disputed the common contention that

World War II witnessed a weakened New Deal state that crumbled and gave way to a vigorous wartime state. Rather, the role played by the WPA in internment illustrates the considerable strengths of the New Deal state while at the same time calling into question its potential always to act as a force for social justice.<sup>32</sup>

Clearly, the nation's New Deal commitment to the policy goals of cultural democracy was shallow and contingent, to say the least.

### ***The HUAC Playbook***

The confrontation between the Dies Committee and the Federal Theatre is rich in paradox and contradiction, providing a dress rehearsal for what was to follow from HUAC in the late Forties and early Fifties. The first and still most extensive effort to create a genuinely

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<sup>32</sup> Jason Scott Smith, "New Deal Public Works at War: The WPA and Japanese American Internment," *Pacific Historical Review*, 72:1 (Feb. 2003), 64 and 91-92.

American national theater had become the target of politicians interested in constructing a realm they could label un-American by alleging a communist connection. A Congressional body created to investigate situations that might call for legislative action instead conducted a kind of trial behind closed doors, freeing itself not only from judicial rules of evidence, but even those that might govern conduct in an open public hearing. Inside its chambers, the Committee's line-up of selected witnesses found a stage for expressing personal opinion and feeling to an audience of decision-makers that in many cases offered not only receptive attention, but encouragement — even goading.

Advocates of the Federal Theatre meanwhile found themselves deprived of any effective voice, and those accused by Committee witnesses were prevented by procedural rules and Congressional immunity from responding to charges made. Presumption of guilt accompanied accusation, the burden of proof landing heavily on the accused, who were effectively convicted in newspaper headlines. None were granted any recourse in the Committee's chambers, nor could they find any in the court of public opinion.

Thus was the pattern set for even more public witch-hunts to come.

### **ANTI-COMMUNISM & RACE IN THE THIRTIES**

The linkage between radicalism and race forged in 1919 reappeared in the Thirties. Reading the words and considering the identities of early HUAC leaders in the late Thirties reveals the resonance of anti-communist and racist rhetoric, though race was not foregrounded in most historical accounts of their reaction against the New Deal cultural projects. The New Deal itself has been criticized for its silence and inaction on racial issues

in recent decades' historical examination; but recent historiography has also exposed HUAC's racist nature, both in its criticism of the cultural programs and of the New Deal in general.

Since the Civil War and Reconstruction, American blacks had identified strongly with the Republican Party — the party of Lincoln, as it was frequently called. The long period between what is known in some parts of the South as “The Redemption” — the end of Reconstruction, when white power structures reasserted themselves throughout the South — brought countless horrors and relentless suppression to black communities in the United States. Political disenfranchisement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries resulted in making this Republican identification more theoretical and sentimental than effective. White racist activism created a pervasive pattern of cultural segregation throughout the South and in other parts of the country that came to known as Jim Crow. The project of racial division was effectively completed with President Wilson's segregation of federal government facilities and programs.<sup>33</sup>

This historical alignment of black voters with the Republican Party began to shift significantly during the New Deal, however. Historian Harvard Sitkoff addressed both the profound impact of the Great Depression, and the relative lack of political attention in response to it, when he wrote,

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<sup>33</sup> See Harvard Sitkoff's summary of this era in Chapter One, “The Dusk of Dawn,” in *A New Deal for Blacks: The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue — Volume I: The Depression Decade* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), to which I will refer below. On the construction of racism in the United States, my own study of the issue crystallized with Joel Williamson's overview and analysis in *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

Neither the Great Depression nor the New Deal initially innervated [*sic*] the struggle for black rights. The continuity of racism in American life and thought early in the 1930s overshadowed any portents of change. The plight of Afro-Americans, however, did change — for the worse. The depression dealt a staggering blow to blacks. It magnified all their traditional economic liabilities. It created newer and harsher ones. No group could less afford the precipitous decline that followed the stock market crash of 1929. None suffered more from it.<sup>34</sup>

Nevertheless, the traditional connection blacks felt with the Republican Party remained undisturbed in the 1932 Presidential election: “... most blacks who could vote ... rallied around the slogan ‘who but Hoover.’ The GOP still appeared the lesser evil.”<sup>35</sup> Southern Democrats had been a dominating force in the Democratic Party, and Roosevelt’s disinclination to disturb his Party’s status quo offers the most charitable interpretation of his administration’s failure to address racial issues.

In fact, few concrete benefits were extended to black Americans through most early New Deal programs, due largely to their reliance upon local delivery systems. This failure encouraged radical analysis, in the spirit of the times. Ample criticism flowed in a 1935 Washington conference on “The Position of the Negro in the Present Economic Crisis,” in which John P. Davis’s keynote “focused on capitalism as the root of the problem and on the necessity of discarding the existing economic system to give blacks a truly new deal.” A. Philip Randolph essentially agreed, as did Ralph Bunche, chair of Howard University’s political science department, who said that FDR’s “state capitalism,” like Italy’s and

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<sup>34</sup> Sitkoff, 34.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 38.

Germany's under fascism, "can at best only fix the disadvantages, the differentials, the discriminations, under which the Negro population has labored all along." Clearly, these black intellectuals' remarks provided plenty of material for anti-communists, though according to Sitkoff, "few Negroes, or their leaders, accepted such left analyses and prescriptions." Still, "far fewer disagreed with the overall conclusion that discrimination ran rampant through the New Deal."<sup>36</sup>

### ***Civil Rights Progress During the New Deal***

Nevertheless, Sitkoff traces significant lines of change in the larger story of civil rights activism in the Thirties. He attributes much of the leadership to such key New Deal figures as Mary McLeod Bethune, Harry Hopkins, and WPA director assistant Aubrey Williams, but most especially to the First Lady. Sitkoff credits Eleanor Roosevelt with influencing the FTP's Hallie Flanagan as well as top officials the U.S. Housing Authority, the Rural Electrification Administration, and the Farm Security Administration to undertake special efforts to serve black Americans.

Harold Ickes, as Interior secretary, officially announced the end of segregation in his department, required hiring in PWA construction projects proportional to the population, in skilled as well as unskilled categories. This led to similar quota systems in the Housing Authority, the Federal Works Agency, and the President's Committee on Fair Employment Practices. "Because of Ickes, Negroes occupied at least one-third of all the housing units built by the PWA," and the Secretary also began desegregating national parks in the South. Ickes'

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 55-56.

leadership made him a frequent target as anti-communism took shape toward the end of the decade.

Spurred by such administration action, Northern Democratic congressman wrote into more than a score of New Deal statutes the stipulation barring any “discrimination on account of race, creed or color,” enforced by fines as high as \$2,000 and prison terms of up to two years. Sitkoff observes, “the half century–long tradition of congressional indifference to white racism in the administration of federal programs had begun to end.”<sup>37</sup>

The cultural diversity described earlier throughout WPA cultural programs must be understood as a hallmark expression of this new trend in New Deal administration, which began around 1934. “By mid- 1935, about forty-five blacks had taken posts in most of the cabinet departments and New Deal agencies,” Sitkoff reported, and this trend accelerated with the “Second New Deal,” following FDR’s 1936 re-election. In that year, a group of these appointees began meeting every Friday night along with representatives of the Urban League and the NAACP at Bethune’s home, designating themselves the Federal Council on Negro Affairs — usually called the Black Cabinet or the Black Brain Trust by the press. The Black Cabinet began to focus awareness on civil rights issues throughout the government and focused fresh attention to political issues in the wider black community, forging links between the government and the civil rights movement.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 59-69.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 78-79.



### ***Racial Realignment***

As the Thirties wore on, voter registration increasingly became a priority within the black community and in the civil rights movement generally. Organizers emphasized the importance of independent voting to assure party response, after the GOP rebuffed overtures made early in the decade. Defections from the Party of Lincoln accelerated in the 1934 election, and in 1936, both national parties began trying to attract support from the estimated 1 million black voters. (The national black population was estimated at 4 million at the time.) The Democratic Party responded much more favorably than the GOP, admitting black delegates to its nominating convention for the first time in history. The First Lady campaigned actively, and the consciousness raised of federal issues by the Black Cabinet resulted in Roosevelt winning seventy-six percent of the black vote in the North, an epochal shift in black voting. *The Crisis*, the NAACP's house organ, explained this as reflecting "a feeling that Mr. Roosevelt represented a kind of philosophy of government which will mean much to their race." Black activism was stirred even in the South, where voter registration drives doubled the number of black voters in more progressive cities like Raleigh and Atlanta. Still, even by 1940, only about 250,000 black voters cast ballots in the eleven states of the former Confederacy, just five percent of the voting-age population. Renewed interest in the issue of voting rights nevertheless helped prepare the ground for postwar civil-right activism.<sup>39</sup>

These developments predictably drove a wedge between Southern Democrats, whose states had actually benefited disproportionately from New Deal programs, and those in the

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<sup>39</sup> Sitkoff, 84-101.

North. This began the decades-long transition in regional party politics that culminated in Reagan's election in 1980.

In 1937, the first hints of a conservative coalition of Republicans and anti-New Deal Southern Democrats took shape around issues of increased federal power, opposition to labor unions, and welfare spending. This cooperation was sparked by FDR's controversial "court-packing" scheme. ... In response, a small group of senators from both parties who had been meeting privately to discuss what they considered excesses of the New Deal created what became known as the *Conservative Manifesto*.<sup>40</sup>

A sense of threat sharpened among Southern Democrats. Southern opposition to New Deal programs increased, and FDR's grew frustrated with their abandonment of the national Party's liberal platform. Even when they ultimately voted in the affirmative, Democrats from the South

fought against [Roosevelt's] program in their respective committees, in conference committees, in supporting crippling amendments, in maneuvers to block consideration of certain measures, and in their private attempts to put pressure on the White House.<sup>41</sup>

As Democrats in the North continued to cultivate support among black voters, union members, Jews, and other constituencies outside the white-supremacist order prevailing in the South, this cleavage widened. In the run-up to the 1944 election, Southern politicians began to speak openly about the possibility of abandoning the national party.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Joseph E. Lowndes, *From the New Deal to the New Right: Race and the Southern Origins of Modern Conservatism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 14.

<sup>41</sup> Sitkoff, 112.

<sup>42</sup> Lowndes, 15.

This fusion of economic and racial justice issues among Southern Democrats strengthened a linkage already present during World War I and the Red Scare of 1919. Sitkoff documents the process through which “by the end of the [Thirties] racism and economic reaction had become interwoven.” Generally, however, “when [Southern Democrats] did make their aversion to the New Deal public, they resorted to racial and sectional rhetoric” rather than invocations of anti-communism per se — referring to the “nigger-loving New Deal,” “race-meddling,” and “the rights of States”: they “preached states’ rights as the ark of their covenant, the Tenth Amendment as their First Commandment.” References to international politics in fact sometimes veered in an opposite direction. “The Man Bilbo,” as he stiltedly referred to himself — Senator Theodore Bilbo of Mississippi, formally and officially a Klansman, who introduced an amendment to the relief bill in 1938 to deport all American blacks to Liberia — delivered this sinister perspective on “cultural development,” in defense of America’s racist status quo and its relation to European fascism:

Race consciousness is developing in all parts of the world. Consider Italy, consider Germany. It is beginning to be realized by the thoughtful minds of our age that the conservation of racial values is the only hope for future civilization. It will be recalled that Hitler ... gave as the basis of his program to unite Germany and Austria “German blood ties.” The Germans appreciate the importance of race values.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Sitkoff, 112, 114, and 117.

History has certainly proven Bilbo right about our recollections of Hitler and Germany, though it is not for their thoughtfulness that we remember the European fascists.<sup>44</sup>

To demonstrate the suddenness and biliousness of the split between Southern Democrats and the rest, Sitkoff contrasts the filibusters imposed by Southern opponents in two debates over proposed anti-lynching legislation. He describes these as a revealing indicator of “the epidemic of Bilboism contaminating North-South congressional relations after 1937” — laughed off by liberal wags as the “Bilbonic Plague”:

The 1935 talkathon had been a gentlemanly tea party. Neither Northern nor Southern Democrats considered civil rights important enough to risk splitting the party or jeopardizing Roosevelt’s program. ... It ended calmly after six days. But not in 1938. For nearly seven weeks the Northerners refused to give in ... Almost every Southern senator took the floor to blame Roosevelt for alienating the South from the Democratic party and to link the demands for civil rights legislation with the pro-leftist, pro-CIO, and pro-Negro forces that had supplanted them in the party hierarchy. Not since the filibusters of the 1890s had the Senate witnessed such a barrage of explicit, overt Negrophobia.

And here, the linkage between racism and anti-communism reappears with real vengeance.

Sitkoff singles out Chairman Dies of HUAC as the personification of this fusion, noting his

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<sup>44</sup> I spare the reader of a sampling of Bilbo’s outrageous rhetoric and public actions, though he is an iconic example of traditional Southern white racism of the era. This can be sampled at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodore\\_G.\\_Bilbo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodore_G._Bilbo). Dr. Max Skidmore directed me to the irony of Bilbo’s death in 1947 of cancer of the mouth, by most accounts: in Robert L. Flegler’s interesting analysis, “Theodore G. Bilbo and the Decline of Public Racism, 1938-1947,” describes Bilbo as having succumbed to cancer of the throat (*The Journal of Mississippi History*, accessed at <http://www.mshistoricalsociety.org/pubs/bilbo.pdf>).

committee's emphasis on communist linkages not only to the New Deal cultural programs, but also to the New Deal as a whole, as well the labor and civil rights movements.<sup>45</sup>

The proximate cause of division in the Democratic Party — the threat posed to the white-supremacist order of the South — would not come to a head until after World War II, and we will revisit this element of our story later. But a powerful valence was already well established between agitation for racial justice and the threat perceived from communism.

### THE TROJAN HORSE IN AMERICA

One year after the demise of the Federal Theatre, and just months before Roosevelt's 1940 election to his third term, Martin Dies published *The Trojan Horse in America*, ghost-written by HUAC research director J.B. Matthews.<sup>46</sup> Entirely free of front and back matter, and featuring only one footnote (identifying the source of a cozy chat between Hitler and an unnamed lieutenant) in its 366 increasingly histrionic pages, this book maps the mental landscape of the man who had engineered the Federal Theatre hearing process, also providing a postwar playbook for HUAC's continuing witch-hunts.

Hardly a paragraph goes by without mention of Dies' (and Matthews') central motif: the image of Trojan Horse organizations rolled into our midst and unlocked by insinuating outsiders, posing as friends at the clever design of Hitler and Stalin (more threateningly, the latter). The author opens with reasoned, calming reassurance:

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<sup>45</sup> Sitkoff, 112, 114 and 118-121.

<sup>46</sup> Texas State Historical Association, *The Handbook of Texas Online*, "Dies, Martin [1900-1972]," <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fdi13>.

It is of vital importance that we neither exaggerate nor underestimate the menace of the dictators' declared intentions. The Trojan Horse may be viewed with hysterical alarm. Such an attitude is both dangerous and ineffective. On the other hand, the Trojan Horse may be viewed with indifference or complaisance. That is equally or more dangerous. Between undue excitement on the one hand and calm acquiescence on the other, we must follow a course of prompt and courageous action to guard against the extension of totalitarian rule on our shores.

First, let us look at the facts. ...<sup>47</sup>

The authors' enumeration of these facts begins with a set of eighteen criteria to help the reader identify "stooges," "dupes," and knowing conspirators in our midst.<sup>48</sup> These criteria include the use a particular, named New York City printing firm; renting office space in one of several specific Manhattan buildings, listed by street address; or including the singing of particular patriotic songs at organizational events. Having First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt or Secretary of the Interior Ickes speak at your convention was an especially reliable indicator of groups with sinister intentions, the author(s) warned.

The catalog of facts that *The Trojan Horse* mainly comprises then begins to unfold. The book is mainly a tedious list of named suspects, each name accompanied by an inventory of past and present personal connections to Trojan Horse organizations. The reader trudges through chapters focusing on youth, the unemployed, the courts, Negroes, and labor unions, amplified with unsubstantiated implications that Moscow ran the show in each arena,

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<sup>47</sup> Martin Dies, *The Trojan Horse in America: A Report to the Nation* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1940), 11-12.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 15-20.

preaching violence and perpetrating crimes as severe as treason. Communism, we are informed, is a Big Business distributing “the Opiate of the People.”

After nearly three hundred pages of increasing avoidance of “calm acquiescence,” we arrive at this excited summary of “The Trojan Horse in Government,” where once again the WPA —and the Federal Theatre especially — provided a stocked pond for Chairman Dies to take a metaphorical fishing trip:

Stalin baited his hook with a “progressive” worm, and New Deal suckers swallowed bait, hook, line, and sinker. ... Several thousand federal government officials and employees have been involved in the support of Communist Trojan Horses in recent years. ... W.P.A. was the greatest financial boon which ever came to the Communists in the United States. ... Relief projects swarmed with Communists ... entrusted by New Deal officials with high administrative positions ... In one Federal Writers’ Project [*sic*] in New York, one third of the writers were members of the Communist Party. ... Several hundred Communists held advisory or administrative positions ... All over the United States, the Federal Theatre Project produced plays which were nothing but Communist propaganda. ... [S]cores of plays ... freighted with Moscow’s propaganda were what the American people spent millions of dollars to produce. ... The situation became so intolerable that the Congress of the United States stepped into the picture and made an end of the whole shameful use of the taxpayers’ money to spread Communist propaganda. The Communists and their fellow travelers are, of course, clamoring for the restoration of the Federal Theatre Project. Naturally they want the feed-bag put back on the mouth of their Trojan Horse, but they also want the Government of the United States to pay for Stalin’s propaganda. ... Fifth columnists ... have already landed in the federal government. They await the “zero hour” when Stalin will give the command to attack. ... [T]heir present duty [is] to work at the “softening process” on our national spirit and determination to preserve American institutions from their planned assault.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 285, 297-303.

Thus climaxes the author's discourse on domestic Communism. A relatively slim forty-two pages of material on the fascist threat of Hitler and Mussolini follow, before the reader is urged to awaken to the threat and drive these Trojan Horses out.

*The Trojan Horse in America* prefigures the tone of the better-known McCarthy era yet to come. Chairman Dies and his Committee can be said to have invented its method. Primary attention went to generating front-page headlines in newspapers across the land. Hidden away in the Op-Ed pages inside, and in political journals and forums, were reasoned statements expressing concern about the dangers perceived in the Dies Committee's methods. Typical of the latter was this statement by Representative Horace Jeremiah "Jerry" Voorhis of California, the one-man minority of HUAC itself, officially recording his dissent to a majority report railroaded through the committee with no prior notice in June 1942:

The Dies committee is supposed to investigate subversive activities. ... Once the committee undertakes to accuse people of un-American activities because they criticize certain features of our economy or say unkind things about finance capitalism, or because they come out for a greater degree of cooperation in our economic life, it is in danger of becoming an agency that arrogates to itself the right to censor other people's ideas. That in itself is un-American.<sup>50</sup>

Widespread press and political concern about these methods is summarized in William Gellerman's 1944 book *Martin Dies*, which the author introduces with his own conclusion, having weighed the facts:

There is little evidence in this man's public career that he either understands or believes in American democracy. On the

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<sup>50</sup> William Gellerman, *Martin Dies* (New York: John Day, 1944; repr. New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), 163-164.



contrary, the evidence indicates that he is a spearhead of a native American reaction.

The essence of totalitarianism is the conception that there are certain areas of human thought in which there are “right” answers which should be accepted by all as above and beyond criticism. Having dignified his own peculiar social philosophy as “Americanism,” Dies demands that all others accept this creed, or be accused of “un-Americanism.” This is diametrically opposed to the pluralism of American democracy...<sup>51</sup>

The connection between the Dies Committee of the Thirties and HUAC in the postwar era was direct. Very soon after World War II ended, the Committee produced a public information piece that invoked the reality of “Trojan Horses” already situated in the United States government, amplifying what they had written at the time of the Federal Theatre’s termination into the following presentation of “facts” about Federal One:

Immediately upon recognition of Soviet Russia[,] Communists, fellow travelers, and front agents promptly flooded Washington, and began to worm their way into the Government of the United States. ... The Federal Arts [*sic*] Project, Federal Writers’ Project, Federal Theatre Project, and such organizations introduced them in large numbers. ... How did the Communists use the federal theatre, writers, and other such projects? To present Communist propaganda plays, to feature Communist actors, to distribute Communist propaganda in Government books, pamphlets, and art work. ... In numerous communities, after post offices and other federal buildings had been decorated at considerable expense to the taxpayers, paintings were covered over or removed upon public demand. Communist-corrupted art work, however, can still be found in many public places to this day.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>52</sup> U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Un-American Activities, “100 Things You Should Know About Communism and Government: The fifth of a series on the Communist conspiracy and its influence in this country as a whole, on religion, on education, on labor,

Thus were Dies Committee's paranoid conclusions inflated and reintroduced into the postwar period of domestic witch-hunting.

### INVENTING THE "AMERICAN WAY"

Historian Wendy Wall has looked back to the time of the Dies Committee's first bombardments on the un-American to trace the roots of a parallel, but apparently opposite campaign: the invention of the "American Way."<sup>53</sup> More diverse in its constituency, content, and impacts than overt anti-communist crusading, this ideologically constructive effort clearly complemented HUAC's attacks on its accused un-American outliers. In its less alarmist and dramatic nature, this campaign was far more subtle and seemingly positive, though no less profound in its effects. In the climate that was to emerge by the time it reached full flower in the late Forties and Fifties, the American Way campaign proved impossible to counter without singling oneself out as "un-American" at one of the riskiest times to do so in the United States' cultural history.

The emerging field of "public relations" and the slippery science of opinion polling formed the foundation of this initiative. In the Twenties, Sigmund Freud's nephew, Edward Bernays — who had participated in the Wilson administration's Committee on Public Information (CPI, also known as the Creel Committee, after its chairman, George Creel) — argued that that "corporate leaders and other elites could discreetly manipulate public

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and on our government" (1948),  
<http://www.lexisnexis.com.proxy.library.umkc.edu/congcomp/getdoc?CRDC-ID=CMP-1948-UAH-0012>.

<sup>53</sup> Wendy Wall, *Inventing the "American Way": The Politics of Consensus from the New Deal to the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

emotions using slogans, symbols and images.” Aided by the rapid proliferation of broadcast media that could reach even the illiterate, beginning with radio in the Twenties, pioneers in the field began to use the tools previously negatively associated with “propaganda” to sway public opinion not only on behalf of government, but for corporate clients.<sup>54</sup>

Wall pays scant attention to the Federal Theatre Project saga: her only mention of it is a fleeting reference to an Earl Robinson song, “Ballad for Americans,” written for an FTP musical review,<sup>55</sup> whose use in political rallies is cited as point eleven in *The Trojan Horse*’s eighteen danger signs of Stalinist influence.<sup>56</sup> Nor does racism figure as a central tenet of belief here: indeed, the corporate liberals involved worked actively to replace the widespread popular anti-Semitism of the time with a “Judeo-Christian” consensus.<sup>57</sup> The ideological construction she describes might be called “affirmative action” initiated during the New Deal by economically privileged players with a diverse audience in mind.

The intellectual leadership that created this corporate coalition came from McGraw-Hill, publisher of *Business Week* and various trade publications, which surveyed the various industries it served in the wake of the 1936 landslide re-election of a president who had attacked “economic royalists,” concluding that the public was “bewildered and confused by the efforts industry was making to tell its story and to defend itself” against charges that it did not respect the public interest. The publishing company convened a series of “Public

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<sup>54</sup> Wall, 51.

<sup>55</sup> Wall, 69.

<sup>56</sup> Dies, 18.

<sup>57</sup> Wall, 7-8.

Relations Forums” around the country to “give industry a common approach to the problem.”

The National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) quickly emerged as the primary vehicle for a multifaceted media campaign built around consensual concepts favorable to corporate interests — notably “free enterprise” and the “American way of life.” These were the core concepts that drove the ensuing decades-long campaign. Wall characterizes this campaign as

a broad-based defense of laissez-faire capitalism ... to convince the American public that their interests and those of the nation’s largest corporations were virtually indistinguishable ... emphasizing individual rights and the libertarian dimensions of “freedom.”<sup>58</sup>

Implicitly challenging the democratic notion of competing interests, their messages emphasized the notion of social harmony, arguing that “Prosperity Dwells Where Harmony Reigns,” asserting a “loyal partnership” among labor, management, and capital, and depicting laborers friendly with limousine-driven executives (“I knew *him* when he pushed a wheelbarrow”). (55) Their messaging was often explicitly anti-government, as in this NAM pamphlet:

When we give any Government increasing power to regulate our daily lives we are giving away one of the most sacred liberties any American can possess. Governments love power! Don't give any Government the right to dictate where you shall work, when you shall work and what your wages shall be!<sup>59</sup>

As World War II approached in Europe, NAM campaign staff saw an opportunity to strengthen allegiance to their “free enterprise” concept through association to growing

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<sup>58</sup> Wall, 49 and 53-54.

<sup>59</sup> Wall, 55-56.

patriotic concern over the preservation of democracy. This was spelled out in a strategic think piece:

Free enterprise [will not] be saved as the result of appeals in the name of free enterprise alone ... The public must be convinced that (58) free enterprise is as much an indivisible part of democracy and the source of as many blessings and benefits as are our other freedoms of speech, press and religion. [If the NAM's program can] emphasize effectively the inseparability of "democracy" and "free enterprise," it may well be that the wave of enthusiasm and support for the former will carry the latter to unprecedented heights in public esteem.

Corporate executives' nervousness about the idea and implications of democracy was handled by NAM staff's insistent use of "representative democracy" in its campaigns.<sup>60</sup>

The replacement of democracy — a political idea — with "free enterprise" — having more to do with economics, albeit *political* economics — is itself a crucial piece of what would become Cold War collateral damage. Anti-communist campaigners rarely referred cleanly to there being distinct left-right contests between communism and capitalism in the economic realm, and between democracy and authoritarianism (or totalitarianism) in the political one. Instead, the distinct, though related spheres of economics and politics were consistently collapsed into a single contest between communism and "freedom," complicating the possibility of intelligent discussion.

The National Association of Manufacturers' pre-war message matured and crystallized in a 1939-41 campaign entitled "The Tripod of Freedom," whose three inseparable legs were "representative democracy," "civil and religious liberties," and "economic freedom, the institution of private enterprise." Of these, the third leg was

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<sup>60</sup> Wall, 58-59.

presented as the most vulnerable of all. NAM president H.W. Prentis, Jr., explained why, in touting the campaign to an audience of manufacturers:

Even the Communist and Fascist and Socialist groups among us prate about their devotion to representative democracy and insist upon the preservation of civil and religious liberties, at least so long as they themselves are not in power. ... The attack always is against that other leg of the tripod, economic freedom.<sup>61</sup>

Issues of cultural policy are complicated here. Wall argues that

The NAM's emphasis on individual freedom ... contrasted sharply with the vision of Americanism offered by both the CIO and New Dealers. Although neither the CIO nor FDR neglected individual freedom, both put their faith in majoritarian democracy and saw the greatest danger to America coming from a selfish and powerful minority.<sup>62</sup>

NAM's messages may thus have appeared to respect cultural minorities still marginalized under the New Deal regime's majoritarian will. But its imagery, viewed from the multicultural perspective of today, clearly did not. In fact, the contradiction between NAM rhetoric and Great Depression reality was eloquently captured in Margaret Bourke-White's famous image of black Americans displaced by a flood lined up in front of a NAM campaign billboard in hopes of securing public benefits. That rhetoric repeated as the NAM-originated campaign wore on, transferred first to the War Advertising Council, rechristened later simply as the Advertising Council: "[M]anufacturers, not politicians, were the working people's true friends."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Wall, 59-61.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 52.

National unity became an important theme as the Thirties drew to a close. This issue linked capitalist concerns with those of social commentators from farther to the Left, who were disturbed at a trend they saw in U.S. political culture:

The Depression intensified social divisions in the U.S. and called into question many of the verities that had long guided American society and policymaking. The New Deal united millions of Americans in a sweeping reform coalition, but it also triggered intense ideological debates about the proper contours of the nation's political economy. Strains or open hostilities between the ancestral homes of millions of Americans amplified group tensions in the U.S. as well. Finally, the challenge posed by the "alien" ideologies of fascism and communism intensified Americans' sense of unease.<sup>64</sup>

Wall's analysis demonstrates the ambivalent sources and significance of these concerns as they manifest in the late Thirties and early Forties. Driving fears on the left were upwellings of nativism, red-baiting, union-busting and anti-Semitism, which figured prominently in the speaking and writing of anthropologists like Margaret Mead, cultural commentators like Louis Adamic and Horace Kallen,<sup>65</sup> and sociologists like the Myrdals, who all focused increasingly on the need for unity. From the other end of the political spectrum, Wall asserts that

Economic conservatives, meanwhile, worried that the New Deal and the amorphous left-wing movement that supported it foretold the arrival in the U.S. of "state socialism." ... [I]ndustry, public relations, and advertising executives worked to reassert the authority of business, to halt or roll back the

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 279.

<sup>65</sup> Wall's quick summary of Kallen's advocacy of cultural pluralism (see p. 70), based on a secondary source published in 2000, oversimplifies his considerable work on the subject, which spans the entire period from 1914 through the 1950's.

New Deal, and to restore a political culture conducive to the exercise of corporate power with minimal government control.<sup>66</sup>

Noting the conflicting roots of the decades-long construction project she describes, naturally still embryonic in the late Thirties, Wall notes that

Diverse as they were, all these individuals and groups invoked national unity and shared values, largely rejecting the language of progressive struggle that had propelled social movements for decades. For divergent reasons, they also emphasized individual freedoms rather than majoritarian democracy. Business groups stressed individual rights in order to shore up free enterprise, while many intergroup liberals did so to protect religious and ethnic minorities ...<sup>67</sup>

Despite this diversity of impulse, Wall argues that the ultimate outcome favored corporate interests, who successfully reinvented their own image during and after World War II through the American Way initiative. Their message, broadcast widely through “public service” media campaigns, advertising, and public organizing, was intensified by the complementary headline-grabbing anti-communist crusade: “By marginalizing dissenters — by casting those who disrupted national unity as somehow un-American — they shored up the social, economic and political status quo.”<sup>68</sup> They also produced the bland, banal pictures — quite literally — of the typical “American”: the iconic Anglo-American family of father, mother, son, and daughter (in order of their perceived importance at the time) that has embodied status quo perceptions of American national identity ever since. This was not a

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<sup>66</sup> Wall, 279-280.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 280-281.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 282.



“natural” picture, however, even at the time of its creation, but one crafted in the emergent “consciousness industry” of Madison Avenue and Hollywood.<sup>69</sup>

### **CULTURAL POLICY AND AMERICAN IDENTITY**

The social forces and phenomena described here were undeniably real, as the intense conflicts around New Deal cultural programs and civil rights demonstrate. Such conflicts are inherent in a free, diverse, democratic cultural milieu, and therefore are to be expected by the cultural democrat to appear as signs of success and progress in cultural development. But the political Right, the timid Center, and even much of the theoretical Left view these same developments with alarm — in the Thirties as in the twenty-first century.

Part of the romance of the Depression era, for its survivors as well as for many of the post-Sixties scholars who have exhumed its history, is the tremendous ferment that characterized national cultural life at that time. The success of New Deal cultural projects in harnessing these forces was precisely what created the backlash that was used to suppress these movements, most obviously in the case of the Federal Theatre and the WPA as a whole, as anti-communism and militarism kicked in.

The American Way campaign embodied a more reasoned and reasonable approach; but from a cultural-policy point of view, this corporate-financed campaign posed no less serious a threat to the goals of cultural democracy than did naked political repression, once

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<sup>69</sup> I use Hans Magnus Enzensberger’s phrase to describe the complex of interests that shape public perception through media.

opposing categories of thinking and expression came commonly to be designated as “un-American.”

The idea that a unified and unifying national culture can be identified is not incorrect. Indeed, cultural policy requires and at least implicitly constitutes a statement of national identity. And in relation to issues of racism, the American Way campaign was not with progressive utility, since it undermined the idea of that acceptance of social divisions among U.S. citizens had any validity. But the images it presented in advertising campaigns were not explicitly anti-racist; and to contrary effect, the American families depicted in campaign materials and normalized by them were uniformly white.

As the frenzy of anti-communism faded in the later Fifties, it was the deeper, more general brainwashing program devised by corporate interests — extolling the generally unspecified sanctity of “being American” by participating in a free enterprise system — that was to shape postwar consciousness of national identity. We will return to this enterprise in discussing postwar cultural policy.

## CHAPTER 7

### ***ENTR'ACTE: WORLD WAR II & THE EMERGENT POSTWAR ORDER***

In what other historic study would World War II be relegated to the status of an *entr'acte*? World events diverted audience attention in the United States from domestic cultural politics for a time, providing an intermission in the domestic drama Dies and his fellow travelers had been crafting.

The Hitler-Stalin Pact had shaken U.S. support for Stalin's Soviet Union all across the political spectrum; but Hitler's later brutal Eastern Front invasions and the subsequent Japanese air raid on the U.S. fleet in Pearl Harbor transformed the Russian state into a beleaguered wartime ally. This standing was not to last, yielding quickly to suspicions that created a chilling bipolar perception of global power, carrying the United States into a Cold War more perennial than the hot one of World War II.

### **WORLD WAR II'S GRAND ALLIANCE & MULTILATERALIST VISIONS**

Wartime exigencies crowded out attention to postwar planning until quite late in the War. Nevertheless, U.S. citizens invested in FDR their hopes for a new, more stable, and peaceful postwar order. In what proved to be his final inaugural address in 1944, President Roosevelt voiced this hopeful vision:

We have learned that we cannot live alone, at peace; that our own well-being is dependent on the well-being of other nations, far away. ... [The American people] have learned to be citizens of the world, members of the human community. We have learned the simple truth. As Emerson said, that, “The only way to have a friend is to be one.”

Citing this passage, historian Elizabeth Borgwardt describes this promise as a “New Deal for the world”: “Here was the promise not only of a new American foreign policy but of a new vision for the world.”<sup>1</sup> Her studies led her to conclude that there were

connections among foreign policy, national culture, and public opinion in a democracy, in the specific historical context of mid-1940s America ... [that] worked in tandem to effect a particular kind of transformation, linking a new, integrated definition of human rights to the realization of a fuller, more robust vision of the national interest. ... [W]e might define the national interest in terms of values — including the values that we now group under the rubric of human rights.<sup>2</sup>

Borgwardt argues that this new, multilateralist perspective inhered in a number of U.S.-promoted initiatives undertaken by the Roosevelt administration during World War II, pursuant to the Atlantic Charter declaration<sup>3</sup> made by FDR and Winston Churchill to define their aspirations in its conduct and intended outcome:

The ideology of the Atlantic Charter blueprint represented a new articulation of US national interests in the 1940s, expressed concretely through three sets of contentious international negotiations. The policy architecture of the United Nations, the IMF and World Bank, and the Nuremberg trials was designed both to manage the transition from war to peace

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America's Vision for Human Rights* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 11.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 292.

<sup>3</sup> <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/atlantic.asp>.

and to shape the postwar world. These institutions set up mechanisms for promoting collective security, for stabilizing and coordinating international currency transactions and economic development, and for advancing ideas about international justice. ...

After Nuremberg, individuals would be held directly accountable to the international community, at least in theory. After the founding of the United Nations, the IMF, and the World Bank, the international community would in turn be able to reach back through the boundaries of state sovereignty to protect individuals or impose norms. The crushing impact of the war had reconfigured two of the most enduring constructions of the Enlightenment, the individual and the nation-state. Not only were traditional boundaries blurred, but new international entities would mean more players and a different playing field, as well as new rules and new goals.<sup>4</sup>

Borgwardt concludes that such new articulations of purpose

helped the major multilateral institutions of the World War II era garner the legitimacy they needed to challenge traditional conceptions of state sovereignty.<sup>5</sup>

These very challenges were soon to undermine FDR's multilateralist vision in the darkening days after his death in April 1945. Among the "new players" in the international dimensions of U.S. cultural policy were domestic political interests who saw these emerging international institutions and values as threats to sub-national "states' rights." These fears were fanned by perceptions that Stalin's Soviet Union and Communism generally continued to be central domestic threats.

Just as the Federal Theatre embodied the height of New Deal achievement in domestic cultural policy, this emerging international architecture proved to be the high-water

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<sup>4</sup> Wall, 7-8.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 6.

mark of democratic vision in global U.S. cultural policy. How it came undone — transforming from multilateral vision, to bipolar threat, then unilateral action — is a story worth exploring in some detail, as it created a false perception of threat that warped American cultural policy in both national and international contexts, defining the Cold War.

### **STRAINED BEDFELLOWS: RESURRECTING THE SOVIET THREAT**

Much has been written of the reemergence of strained relations among the World War II Allies as attention began to turn toward postwar planning. The dissolution of the Comintern during the War had reassured many that Stalin was abandoning earlier ambitions of promoting international communism: his wartime expressions of concern that Eastern European governments bordering on the Soviet Union be “friendly” seemed rational to Western leaders, in light of the Soviet Union’s recent history of repeated invasions, and not incompatible with reasonable allowance for self-determination along Western lines.

By the end of 1945, however, Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal was writing Walter Lippman of his concern regarding a report he had commissioned on the question of “whether we are dealing with a nation or a religion” in the case of the Soviet Union. His report, delivered early in 1946, was inconclusive. Less than a month later, in February 1946, Stalin delivered what historian John Lewis Gaddis describes as “a rare public speech in which he stressed the incompatibility of communism and capitalism,” setting off a public round of speculation in the U.S. press and political circles. Optimists averred Stalin was simply trying to build support in his own country for the three new Five-Year Plans he called

for in the same speech, so that “our [will] be insured against any eventuality.”<sup>6</sup> Others were less sanguine about Stalin’s intentions.

Fearful interpretations were supported by news reports one week after Stalin’s speech that Canadian authorities had made twenty-two arrests in an alleged case of espionage to convey A-bomb secrets to the Soviets. J. Edgar Hoover confirmed these reports before a Senate committee a few days later, and a fresh fever of anti-communist feeling followed. George Kennan’s famous cable from Moscow — his “long telegram” — arrived at the State Department another week further on, misread in Kennan’s later view in the passionate atmosphere of gathering anti-Soviet feeling.<sup>7</sup>

Gaddis tracks the sobering denouement in American policy *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union in the remainder of 1946, a crucial turning-point year in Cold War history. Underlying the shift in administration policy was a deeper one in American public opinion: Gaddis cites a *Fortune* poll in September 1945, in which fewer than twenty-five percent expected the Soviets to try to spread communism in Eastern Europe, in contrast to the results of one conducted in July 1946, when more than half believed the Kremlin wanted to dominate as much of the world as possible.<sup>8</sup> By March 1946, seventy-one percent of those polled expressed disapproval of the policy they saw the Soviet Union as pursuing in world affairs.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947*, Contemporary American History Series, William E. Leuchtenburg, gen. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 299.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 301-303.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 321

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 315.

This shift in public opinion occurred as U.S. Foreign Service officials hardened their positions towards Moscow, after Kennan's "long telegram" arrived. Soon after, Secretary of State Byrnes expressed a more militant stance in defending the U.N. Charter's proscription against "force or the threat of force," "station[ing] troops," "seiz[ing] enemy property before reparations agreements had been made," and other actions ascribed to the U.S.S.R. in Byrnes's February speech before the Overseas Press Club in New York. The Secretary warned his audience, "If we are to be a great power we must act as a great power, not only in order to ensure our own security but in order to preserve the peace of the world."<sup>10</sup>

Byrnes's speech was widely interpreted as a response to mounting Republican criticism of Truman's foreign policy, articulated most energetically by Senator Arthur Vandenberg, who by July 1946 was claiming to be "the *major influence* in *changing* the American attitude from 'appeasement' to *firm resistance*." But Gaddis locates the origins of this shift within the administration itself, stemming from the Moscow Conference of December 1945 and extending into March of 1946.

The period of late February and early March, 1946, marked a decisive turning point in American policy toward the Soviet Union. Prior to this time, Washington officials had frequently resisted Russian demands, but not on a consistent basis. As late as December, 1945, Byrnes was still operating on the assumption that Russia and the United States shared a common interest in settling outstanding difficulties. But by March of 1946, widespread criticism of "appeasement" had made it clear to the Truman Administration that further compromises with Moscow would mean political disaster at home. ...

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 305-306.



Contemporary observers clearly saw the period as a pivotal one.<sup>11</sup>

By the summer of 1946, internal efforts to reorient U.S. strategies had defined a new consensus laid out in the “Clifford memorandum,” which weighed in at a hefty 100,000 words compared to only 8,000 in Kennan’s “long” telegram. Issued by presidential counsel Clark Clifford, the memorandum outlining a policy that reflected the hardline “realist” orientation that was to prevail throughout the Cold War era:

The language of military power is the only language which disciples of power politics understand. The United States must use that language in order that Soviet leaders will realize that our government is determined to uphold the interests of its citizens and the rights of small nations. Compromise and concessions are considered, by the Soviets, to be evidences of weakness and they are encouraged by our “retreats” to make new and greater demands.<sup>12</sup>

Truman’s new policy came to be called “patience with firmness,” and his administration focused extensive diplomatic efforts through the balance of 1946 to securing postwar treaty agreements for Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria, Rumania, and Finland and to asserting a strong U.S. position in conflicts with the U.S.S.R. over its naval presence in Turkey and the eastern Mediterranean and occupation policies in Germany.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 312-313.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 322, quoting from Clark M. Clifford’s “American Relations with the Soviet Union” report, September 24, 1946, included as Appendix A in Arthur Krock, *Memoirs: Sixty Years on the Firing Line* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1968), 482.

## GETTING TOUGH WITH THE SOVIET UNION

Meanwhile, Kennan was trying to get the administration's attention to what he saw as official Washington's overblown interpretation of Soviet motives and of his own recommendations about U.S.-Soviet policy, in his not-long-enough telegram. As he wrote in an October 1946 to Admiral Harry Hill:

I think it is a mistake to say that the Soviet leaders wish to establish a *Communist* form of government in the ring of states surrounding the Soviet Union ... What they do wish is to establish ... governments amenable to their own influence and authority. The main thing is that these governments should follow Moscow's leadership. ... In certain countries which are already extensively under Soviet influence, as for example Poland, there has been as yet no effort to establish what we might call a Communist form of government. ... It should always be borne in mind that for the Communist leaders, power is the main thing. Form is a secondary consideration.

This memo — Kennan's effort to clarify his earlier analysis — never reached the large, attentive, influential audience that attended to his famous telegram; and even more unfortunately, no such clarifications were incorporated into the most widely read version of his original analysis, the article attributed mysteriously to "X" when it was published later on, in the July 1947 issue of *Foreign Affairs*. Gaddis's later assessment was that "[Kennan's] lack of clarity had the effect ... of confirming the growing suspicion in Washington that Stalin, like Hitler, would not stop until he dominated the entire world."<sup>13</sup>

Domestic controversies surrounding the "get tough" policy led to conflict between Secretary of Commerce Henry Wallace, who criticized the stance, and Secretary of State

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 322-323.

Byrnes, who supported it, leading to Wallace's dismissal by Truman.<sup>14</sup> Widespread feeling that the United States should effect "a return to small government, low taxes, and noninvolvement in events overseas" endangered Truman's internationalist ambitions, inherited from FDR, and fed a Republican resurgence in the 1946 Congressional mid-term elections. State Department chief of public affairs Joseph Jones sent a memo to Assistant Secretary Benton late in February 1947 expressing his worry about the constraining actions of the new Republican Congress and calling for an immediate program "to inform the people and convince the Congress adequately with respect to today's crisis ... [T]he danger should be described fully and the cost of both action and inaction estimated."<sup>15</sup>

Paradoxically, those closest to Truman found him energized, not deflated, by the apparent electoral setback of 1946. He seemed to dive into his official obligations with new vigor. Byrnes's replacement as Secretary of State by General George Marshall also released pent-up frustration and lifted morale among many State Department subordinates who had felt Byrnes ignored them. But early in 1947, when Britain announced it could no longer adequately aid Greece and Turkey, Truman was challenged to step up personally.

Congressional leaders were convened at the White House to be convinced that the U.S. should step into the breach. General Marshall's dry depiction of the crisis failed to excite concern. Only Undersecretary Dean Acheson's more impassioned impromptu plea got their attention — at least enough to convince them to invite the President to lay out an

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 340.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 346.

acceptable public justification for U.S. action before the entire Congress: if he could, they might fall in line.

[H]is advisors and Republican congressional leaders alike warned him that only a rousing, heavily rhetorical speech would win over wary legislators. As Republican Senator Arthur Vandenberg put it, Truman would have to “scare hell out of the American people.” Truman did just that ... on March 12, 1947.<sup>16</sup>

### TRUMAN’S DOCTRINE

This was the atmosphere in which Truman came to deliver the Congressional address that declared the “Truman Doctrine.” To prepare the president for the occasion, Marshall and Acheson set the State Department to work, convening information officers from State, War and the Navy to concoct the best case for military aid to the two states in question: the resulting paper recommended that Truman proclaim it to be “basic United States policy [to] support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.” A media campaign was proposed “to bring about an understanding by the American people of the world strategic situation.” A few White House personnel raised concerns that “there has been no overt action in the immediate past by the U.S.S.R. which serves as an adequate pretext for [an] ‘all-out’ speech.” Gaddis also reports that “the draft appalled Kennan ... [who] objected to placing it ‘in the framework of a universal policy rather than in that of a specific decision addressed to a specific set of circumstances.’”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb’s Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (New York: Pantheon Press, 1985), 102.

<sup>17</sup> Gaddis, *Origins*, 350.

Thus was launched a formal public-education process that led generations of Americans and others around the world to view international relations in radically binary terms. Truman opened his Congressional address by depicting the world situation in terms of a bipolar struggle that would sustain the Cold War for more than four decades to come — foreshadowing even the post–Cold War “War on Terror”:

At the present moment in world history nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. The choice too often is not a free one.

One way of life is based upon the will of the majority, and is distinguished by free institutions, representative government, free elections, guaranties of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from political oppression.

The second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio, fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms.

I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free people who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities of outside pressures.<sup>18</sup>

Gaddis describes his sense that the die were cast at this crucial crossroads in U.S. foreign policy:

By presenting aid to Greece and Turkey in terms of an ideological conflict between two ways of life, Washington officials encouraged a simplistic view of the Cold War which was, in time, to imprison American diplomacy in an ideological straitjacket almost as confining as that which restricted Soviet foreign policy. Trapped in their own rhetoric, leaders of the United States found it difficult to respond to conciliatory gestures ... following Stalin’s death and, through

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 351, citing Truman Public Papers: 1947, 178-179.

their inflexibility, may well have contributed to the perpetuation of the Cold War.<sup>19</sup>

In fact, winning specific appropriations for Turkey and Greece required assurances that the Truman Doctrine was not to be a blanket rule: the U.S. government would not thus be obliged to support every people, everywhere, without reference to specific national interests, State Department witnesses promised. Support was being withheld from Chiang Kai-shek, after all. But Gaddis notes that the “fall” of China in 1949, the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, and “the domestic onslaught of McCarthyism, would make it politically impossible for Truman and his successors to continue making such fine distinctions in formulating American foreign policy.” Instead, the public came to understand postwar geopolitics as involving an “ideological conflict between two ways of life, ... a simplistic view of the Cold War which was ... to imprison American diplomacy in an ideological straitjacket ...”<sup>20</sup>

### **THE HEGEMON INVENTS BIPOLARITY**

In 1945, Winston Churchill deployed classic British plural construction of the union in saying, “The United States stand at this moment at the summit of the world.” Where the Soviet Union was devastated by loss of life and the lion’s share of its industrial capacity, U.S. industry was primed by having supplied armaments to the allies and enjoyed truly hegemonic power. Historian David M. Kennedy described the nation’s standing at war’s end:

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 352.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 352.

Americans commanded fully half of the entire planet's manufacturing capacity and generated more than half of the world's electricity. America owned two-thirds of the world's gold stocks and half of all its monetary reserves. The United States produced two times more petroleum than the rest of the world combined; it had the world's largest merchant fleet, a near monopoly on the emerging growth industries of aerospace and electronics, and, for a season at least, an absolute monopoly on the disquieting new technology of atomic power.<sup>21</sup>

In stark contrast, the Soviet Union had weathered a devastating Nazi invasion, leaving much of its industrial capacity in ruins and its population depleted by millions of casualties, compounded by millions more lost to Stalinist purges that had not yet come to light.

Only years later would the true facts of comparative power become known. The Soviet threat was an act of stagecraft. Nikita Khrushchev's son Sergei, a rocket engineer, later revealed, "We threatened with missiles we didn't have."<sup>22</sup> Gaddis revealed decades later that the Soviets could effectively launch only six missiles, a fact that came to be known to U.S. policymakers in the early days of the Kennedy administration; but since closing the fictitious "missile gap" had been a centerpiece of Kennedy's 1960 presidential campaign (challenging Eisenhower's assertions during the campaign that no such gap existed), its disavowal was rendered impolitic, though the truth was that Soviet nuclear capabilities "had never come close to surpassing those of the United States."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 856-857.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 73-74.

Gaddis speculates about the misunderstandings and misinterpretations that became the underpinning of four decades of belief in global bipolarity.

It seems likely that Washington policy-makers mistook Stalin's determination to ensure Russian security through spheres of influence for a renewed effort to spread communism ... But the Soviet leader failed to make the limited nature of his objectives clear. ...

The United States had ... a monopoly over the world's most powerful weapon ... Convinced that technology had given them the means to shape the postwar order to their liking, Washington officials assumed that these instruments would leave the Russians no choice but to comply. ... The Russians ... refused to be impressed ...

Frustrated ... American leaders embarked on a new Russian policy during ... 1946 ... rebuilding its military forces ... launch[ing] an ambitious program of economic assistance to nations threatened by communism. Administration officials found it necessary to exaggerate the Soviet ideological challenge in order to win support for these projects ...

That significant differences existed between the United States and the Soviet Union is undeniable. Gaddis lays these out quite clearly in *The Cold War*. The American Revolution “reflected a deep distrust of concentrated authority. Liberty and justice ... could only come through constraining power.” In contrast, “The Bolshevik Revolution ... involved the embrace of concentrated authority as a means of overthrowing class enemies and consolidating a base from which a proletarian revolution would spread throughout the world.” These opposite impulses led Gaddis to describe the United States as “plausibly ... the freest society on the face of the earth” and the USSR as “the most authoritarian society on the face of the earth” at the end of World War II.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), 7-8.



Gaddis summarizes the sequence of world events that seemed to support perceptions of Communist threat in world affairs after the Truman Doctrine had been declared: the Czech coup, Tito's assertion of independence from Moscow, the Soviets' acquisition of nuclear capability, and Mao's victory in China, revelations of espionage in the United States, and North Korea's invasion of the south.<sup>25</sup> This short account portrays what Gaddis calls "an ever-deepening whirlpool of distrust" that caught national leaders whose "suspicions become self-reinforcing."<sup>26</sup>

Gaddis's account emphasizes the importance of domestic politics in shaping foreign policy on both sides of the ideological divide:

Internal influences in the Soviet Union — the search for security, the role of ideology, massive postwar reconstruction needs, the personality of Stalin — together with those in the United States — the ideal of self-determination, fear of communism, the illusion of omnipotence fostered by American economic strength and the atomic bomb — made the resulting confrontation a hostile one. Leaders of both superpowers sought peace, but in doing so yielded to considerations which, while they did not precipitate war, made a resolution of differences impossible.<sup>27</sup>

Like everyone else, Gaddis could not foresee the ultimate end of the Cold War from his 1972 desk. But by time he published his 2005 book, *The Cold War*, a certain measure of perspective had become possible: here, he concludes that the bipolar world order that had come to define the Cold War era was a politically expeditious fabrication.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 32-46

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 355-356, 361.

## THE SHADOW OF DEATH

The United States had of course unleashed a final, fatal terror in World War II that forever changed world culture: the mushrooming cloud of atomic weaponry that rose over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In its shadow blossomed bottomless fear, eroding whatever confidence might have arisen from the defeat of Asian and European fascism in World War II. Returning from a tour of ruined Berlin, Frankfurt and Darmstadt, and a presidential flyover of other devastated German cities, Truman spoke to the nation over the radio about the anxiety that his trip and fingering the atomic trigger had awakened in him:

It is an awful responsibility which has come to us. We thank God that it has come to us, instead of to our enemies; and we pray that He may guide us to use it in His ways and for His purposes.<sup>28</sup>

Even before the proliferation of these terrifying weapons lent it credibility, the nuclear threat seized humanity's darkest imagination. As historian Paul Boyer observed,

This awareness and the bone-deep fear it engendered are the fundamental psychological realities underlying the broader intellectual and cultural responses of this period. This primal fear of extinction cut across all political and ideological lines ... [and] pervaded all society ...<sup>29</sup>

But this enormous anxiety remained ungrounded without some convincing enemy. Boyer cites theologian Reinhold Niebuhr's argument, expressed in October 1945, well before fallout had become engrained in the nation's lexicon, that the attempt to panic people into

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<sup>28</sup> Harry S. Truman, "Radio Report to the American People on the Potsdam Conference," August 9, 1945. Downloaded from the Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, 13 March 2013, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=104>.

<sup>29</sup> Boyer, 15.

support for internationalist solutions was “a serious misreading of human nature.” As Niebuhr wrote, “ultimate perils, however great, have a less lively influence upon the human imagination than immediate resentments and frictions, however small by comparison.”<sup>30</sup>

Requiring a earthly enemy,

powerful figures in government, the foreign-policy elite, the media, and ultimately the American people succumbed to an intense and all-pervasive anticommunist ideology that perceived communism as a monstrous and monolithic global conspiracy centered in Moscow and bent upon world domination.<sup>31</sup>

### ***TIME FOR JOHN FOSTER DULLES***

Even while the White House continued to pursue the “Baruch plan” — an idealistic proposal to hand America’s nuclear secrets over to an international entity in the newborn United Nations structure — Cold Warrior John Foster Dulles’s two-part article in *Life* magazine focused U.S. readers’ attention on his notion of a Russia bent on world domination, driving a stake into the heart of the multilateralist Security Council at whose table this devil sat. *Life* publisher Henry Luce wrote the future Secretary of State,

I can think of no articles in my experience in journalism which so definitely accomplished a job. For a great many people, directly and indirectly, your article ended all doubts as to the inescapable reality of the Russian-Communist problem.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 102.

The devil dwelt in the mysterious, devastated plains of distant Russia. Might Americans withdraw to an older stance of isolation from the fearsome postwar world? Somehow, the threat required cultivation closer to home.

This climate of perception provided the backdrop against which Senator Joe McCarthy would make his first forays into anti-communist campaigning. Here we find the emergent force within America's own heart against which George Kennan, the architect of containment, warned in a 1947 address to a War College audience:

[T]here is a little bit of the totalitarian buried somewhere, way down deep, in each and every one of us. It is only the cheerful light of confidence and security which keep this evil genius down. ... If confidence and security were to disappear, don't think that he would not be waiting to take their place.<sup>33</sup>

This erosion of confidence and security among the American people was the centripetal force of the Cold War.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 46.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **DOMESTIC ANTI-COMMUNISM IN POSTWAR AMERICA**

Domestic anti-communists did not wait for foreign policymakers to conclude that the Soviet Union or international communism posed a threat to the United States. As mentioned earlier, what had been known as the Dies Committee in the Thirties was made a standing committee of the House of Representatives in 1945, and the House Un-American Activities Committee was thus poised to carry out its best-known work.

Significant among those in Washington who had never been duped by the U.S.S.R.'s elevation to World War II's Grand Alliance was J. Edgar Hoover.

He remained fixated on Communists rather than Nazis even during the darkest days of the war, and as Americans braced for ideological conflict with Communism after 1945, his mania began to look more like vigilance. ... Convinced that the battle would turn on public opinion, he used the FBI to fight a war of information. The Bureau trained its field agents to cultivate a nationwide anti-Communist consensus by working with local media groups. It leaked intelligence estimates to anti-Communist allies like HUAC and established liaisons with Hollywood studios, who subsequently reintroduced the image of the heroic, anti-Communist G-man to American moviegoers.

Hoover and HUAC did briefly bide their time, however, before coming together formally. Their patience eventually wore out as the White House and State Department continued to worry about postwar strategies. Hoover finally arranged an appearance before the Congressional committee on March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1947:

Upset by what he perceived as Truman's unwillingness to take the Communist threat seriously, Hoover decided to appear before some of the president's archenemies in Congress. ...

The testimony proved well timed and influential, forming a blueprint that other anti-Communists followed well into the 1950s ... Communism, he informed them, was a psychic and spiritual disease capable of quick transmission. Like a virus, it would infiltrate the American host and destroy it from the inside.<sup>1</sup>

In fairly short order, HUAC produced a series of propaganda pieces alerting teachers and civic leaders of the domestic threat of Communism through its “influence in this country as a whole, on religion, on education, on labor, and in our government.” The Committee showed its strategic hand by warning of Communist efforts to “tilt public sentiment their way by propaganda in art, literature, and music,” though pointing out “it was only a sideline to their main job. ... Espionage.”<sup>2</sup>

The following year, HUAC produced a set of five pamphlets — the first entitled “The 100 Things You Should Know About Communism in the U.S.A.,” followed by four more focusing on religion, education, labor, and government. The fifth issue in the series opened with a stark warning:

Our government is under attack. The enemy is Communism. If Communism were to win, there would be no United States Constitution, Courts, President, or Congress.

This pamphlet’s Congressional authors promised “the facts on what Communism has already done to, and aims to do to, the Government of the United States.”<sup>3</sup> HUAC produced a

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan P. Herzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex: America’s Religious Battle against Communism in the Early Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 85-86.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. House Committee on Un-American Activities, *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>3</sup> House of Representatives, Committee on Un-American Activities, “100 Things You Should Know About Communism and Government” (1948), accessed at

complementary 144-page pamphlet listing Communist and Communist Front organizations.<sup>4</sup> Answering its own Question 36, the Committee called November 16, 1933 — the date of Roosevelt’s formal recognition of the Soviet government — as the turning point “when [Communists within and without began] to invade OUR government,” which “ended the futile first phase of Communist activity in this country and a second far more deadly development got underway.” Proceeding directly to the Committee’s own leading question 37 — “What was that?” — HUAC’s pamphlet reflects Martin Dies’ earlier work by referring to “The famous ‘Trojan Horse’ or ‘United Front’ program” that encouraged Party members to avoid references to violent revolution and instead to “DO more toward corrupting from within.”<sup>5</sup>

With such marching orders as these, domestic anti-communists launched multiple campaigns that would forever change the course of American culture and history and that of the world in which the United States held hegemonic power. Their furious effect was felt quite quickly. As Boyer wrote decades later,

... [T]he horror of the atomic bomb had given way to an interval of diminished cultural attention and uneasy acquiescence in the goal of maintaining nuclear superiority over the Russians. ... With Washington setting the pace,

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<http://www.lexisnexis.com.proxy.library.umkc.edu/congcomp/getdoc?CRDC-ID=CMP-1948-UAH-0012>

<sup>4</sup>House of Representatives, Committee on Un-American Activities, “Citations by Official Government Agencies of Organizations and Publications found to be Communist or Communist Fronts” (December 18, 1948) ), accessed at <http://www.lexisnexis.com.proxy.library.umkc.edu/congcomp/getdoc?CRDC-ID=CMP-1948-UAH-0007>

<sup>5</sup> “100 Things,” 6-7.

political paranoia swept the nation. Views that seemed in any way deviant or heterodox became suspect, if not downright dangerous. Hollywood writers were blacklisted; professors were forced to sign loyalty oaths. (Over 150 faculty members at the University of California were fired in 1949 for refusing to sign.) The National Education Association voted that no Communist should be permitted to be a teacher. “Labor leaders, liberals, Democrats, Republicans, and leading newspapers,” writes historian James Gilbert, “all contributed to defining rejected ideas as treasonous acts.” ... Well before 1950 — the year the notorious Internal Security Act, the Rosenberg trial, and the emergence of Senator Joe McCarthy — what David Caute calls “the Great Fear” — not of nuclear destruction, this time, but of communism — held the nation in its grip. ... In September 1948, HUAC announced plans to investigate atomic scientists, Hollywood, and black leaders.<sup>6</sup>

### **WITCH-HUNTERS HIT HOLLYWOOD**

HUAC’s first target for show-trial treatment was the popular art of commercial cinema. With John E. Rankin of Mississippi as its chair, HUAC “began a cautious ‘probe’ of Hollywood” that continued under his successor, J. Parnell Thomas of New Jersey. Hollywood was not the committee’s sole target, however: HUAC also attacked Roosevelt and Truman and their “New Deal bureaucracy,” singling out the Fair Employment Practices Commission, the Office of Price Administration, and the Department of Agriculture for “pro-Russian propaganda.”<sup>7</sup> Thus pressured, Truman issued Executive Order 9835 on March 22, 1947, creating the federal Loyalty Review Board, which required all federal employees to

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<sup>6</sup> Boyer, 103-104.

<sup>7</sup> Alvah Bessie, *Inquisition in Eden* (New York: Seven Seas Books, 1967), 186.



make a loyalty oath.<sup>8</sup> Questioning loyalty became HUAC's most important weapon in its war against the movies.

Committee investigators traveled to Hollywood that May to question various figures in the film community about the loyalty of industry personnel. Studio honcho Jack L. Warner was alleged to have “named names” of potentially subversive personnel in an executive session at the Biltmore Hotel. Within a few days, Chairman Thomas announced that the Roosevelt administration had required “patriotic” film stars to appear on “pro-Russian” films during the war, charging that the film industry had become a “Red propaganda center” through the liaison of Joseph E. Davies, former U.S. ambassador to the U.S.S.R. The recently created Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals — which had only recently been “resoundingly condemned in public meetings by representatives of most of the studio unions as being not only anti-Semitic and anti-labor but Fascist” — called for an investigation of Hollywood. HUAC quickly obliged.<sup>9</sup>

Nineteen Hollywood professionals were summoned before Thomas's committee in late October 1947. The HUAC playbook was in full force, though in this case (unlike that of the Federal Theatre) the hearings themselves were not only open to a public audience, but also heavily covered in the media, thanks in part to the appearance of such luminaries as Lauren Bacall and Humphrey Bogart. Only eleven of those subpoenaed actually testified: playwright Bertolt Brecht and ten others who quickly became known as “The Unfriendly Ten,” and later more simply as “The Hollywood Ten.” “Friendly” witnesses had already

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<sup>8</sup> Fried, 68.

<sup>9</sup> Bessie, 187-188.

alleged that the Screen Writers' Guild was Communist-dominated. Since the Committee had further stated that the Communist Party was not a political party, but rather a Moscow-directed international conspiracy to overthrow the U.S. government by force and violence, these charges took a treasonous twist.

The “unfriendly” Ten, after extensive legal consultation and strategizing through the summer and fall, decided that the Committee’s investigation into film artists’ union and political affiliations should be attacked as an unconstitutional breach of their First Amendment freedom of association and that they would not answer any of the Committee’s questions about their affiliations. Long after all of the Hollywood Ten had served time in federal prisons for contempt of Congress, writing about the experience and its fallout in 1965, long screenwriter Alvah Bessie observed,

When I think back today, it occurs to me (as it has many times in the last seventeen years) that very few people ... understood the position we took before that Committee, despite the endless statements we issued during the years 1947-1950 ... The assertion has often been made, for example: “Any American should be proud to stand up and say what he believes in,” and the assertion has a certain specious cogency. ... But we had decided to challenge, for the first time in its sordid history, the very basis of the Committee’s existence and the validity of its mandate.

It was the Hollywood Ten’s audience that proved most unfriendly. Bessie remembered that “the Committee was not in the least interested in anything we had to say. It was interested in intimidating — and controlling — the motion-picture industry, and it succeeded.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Bessie, 16-17 and 193-194.

HUAC's hearings triggered the era of the Hollywood blacklist. Beyond the imprisonment of the Hollywood Ten (after expensive, unsuccessful appeals), no government action was required, for the industry itself had already quickly closed ranks in order to escape any public controversy over its being perceived as "un-American."<sup>11</sup> Major film producers and financiers gathered in a secret meeting of the Motion Picture Association of America in November at New York City's Waldorf-Astoria, on the very day that Rep. Thomas secured contempt of Congress citations for the Hollywood Ten (by a lopsided House vote of 346-17) for their invocation of the First Amendment in refusing to identify their associations. The MPAA's public statement the next day was simultaneously an assurance of punishment, an acknowledgement of the cost of censorship, a commitment to self-police nevertheless, and a denial of the problem:

We will forthwith discharge or suspend without compensation those in our employ, and we will not re-employ any of the ten until such time as he is acquitted, or has purged himself of contempt, and declared under oath that he is not a Communist. ... We are frank to recognize ... the danger of creating an atmosphere of fear. Creative work at its best cannot be carried on in an atmosphere of fear. To this end we will invite the Hollywood talent guilds to work with us to eliminate any subversives. ... Nothing subversive or un-American has appeared on the screen.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The irony, in the context of international cultural policy, of the motion-picture industry being identified as "un-American" could not be any thicker: it is considered abroad to be a core component of U.S. cultural imperialism. Hollywood's Motion Picture Export Association devoted decades to opposing state cultural policies devised to limit importation of American films in the interest of shoring up their own film production capabilities and assuring minimal levels of domestic distribution. See, for example, David P. Forsythe, "Reagan & Unesco: Freedom & Culture," *Cultural Democracy* 25 (Baltimore, MD: Neighborhood Arts Programs National Organizing Committee, Oct/Nov 1982), 11.

<sup>12</sup> Bessie, 246 and 248-249.

Despite their denial of any wrongdoing, and their commitment to avoid fostering an atmosphere of fear, the producers confirmed HUAC's version of present danger and enlisted all of Hollywood in rooting out subversion. The witch-hunt was on.

Meanwhile, as the Hollywood Ten exhausted their right to appeal, the U.S. Supreme Court sidestepped the First Amendment issue their squadron of lawyers raised, voting 6-2 not to hear their cases, despite the filing of more than thirty *amicus* briefs. (According to an associate of Bessie's friendly with the justice, Felix Frankfurter commended these briefs privately as "brilliant and erudite.") The Hollywood Ten were speedily dispatched to various federal penitentiaries to serve dulling, stigmatizing terms ranging from six months to a year. Ironically, HUAC Chairman Thomas soon found himself imprisoned with two of the Ten — Lester Cole and Ring Lardner, Jr. — in Danbury, Connecticut's Federal Correctional Institution. Unlike any of the Ten, however, Thomas received a full pardon before President Truman left office.<sup>13</sup>

The Supreme Court eventually did restore a measure of respect for the First Amendment. In 1957, the Court heard the case of John T. Watkins in a similar contempt-of-Congress conviction. Chief Justice Earl Warren finally wrote,

There is no general authority to expose the private affairs of individuals without justification in terms of the functions of Congress. ... Nor is the Congress a law enforcement or trial agency. ... No inquiry is an end in itself; it must be related to and in furtherance of a legitimate task of the Congress, Investigations conducted solely for the aggrandizement of the investigators or to "punish" those investigated are indefensible. ... The Bill of Rights is applicable to investigations as to all forms of government action."

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 273.

The stinger in Chief Justice Warren's opinion came in the form of an apparently rhetorical question: "Who can define the meaning of 'un-American'?"<sup>14</sup>

But by the time of the Supreme Court's 1957 ruling, a great deal more water had gone under HUAC's bridge, to enormous and ultimately incalculable effect. The Committee conducted further investigations of film and theater professionals, writers, professors and teachers, political organizers, and many others in the cultural professions. State and local witch-hunts, mirroring those on display in Washington and aided by business and nonprofit institutions, cost innumerable American families their security and livelihood throughout this feverish time. HUAC was to remain active into the 1970's, changing its name to the House Committee on Internal Security before its ultimate demise in the post-Watergate period.

Taking a visible stand against communism became popular among members on Congress: in 1953, 185 of 221 Republicans taking office requested HUAC membership. And HUAC was not alone, even within Congress, in its attempts to enforce a domestic Cold War agenda. Many more initiatives were undertaken: in the 81<sup>st</sup> Congress, twenty-four probes into the influence and impact of communism were launched; in the 82<sup>nd</sup>, thirty-four; and in the 83<sup>rd</sup>, fifty-one. Ironically, HUAC itself faded in the fever heat, shoved into the background of media attention by a master manipulator.

### **"TAILGUNNER JOE"**

Chief Justice Warren's 1957 invocation of the "aggrandizement of the investigator" must certainly have been understood by then, as now, in reference to the by-then-deceased

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 274-275, 288.

Republican Senator from Wisconsin, Joe McCarthy. McCarthy's name has ever since been used to characterize not only this era of unbridled anti-communism, but also the phenomenon and technology of witch-hunting in general. Contemporary observer Richard Rovere, writing in 1959, could barely contain his vitriol in characterizing McCarthy as the master of Multiple Untruth and documenting the actions by which he earned this epithet.

Though some have disputed this version of McCarthy's "conversion experience," Rovere recounts a generally accepted creation myth of Joe McCarthy's anti-communist crusade: McCarthy asked a convivial group of fellow Catholics at a dinner in Washington's Colony Restaurant in January 1950 to help him identify a signature issue for his 1952 re-election campaign. One fellow diner suggested the St. Lawrence Seaway, apparently too boring. But gold was struck by another — Father Walsh, founding director of Georgetown's School of Foreign Service, arguably the capital's most influential and longstanding anti-communist — who expressed his decades-long concern over the dangerous power of international communism. It was his own idea of communism's domestic threat that instantly got McCarthy lathered up, though. In Rovere's reconstruction, based on an anonymous participant's account, McCarthy exclaimed, "That's it. ... The government is full of communists. ... We can hammer away at them." Reportedly, once the dinner party adjourned to one of the participant's offices, "McCarthy was warned of the dangers of an irresponsible approach to these matters. ... Within a matter of months, all three of his companions on that evening felt called upon to repudiate him."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Richard H. Rovere, *Senator Joe McCarthy* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1959), 123.

McCarthy famously spared neither hammer nor sickle in his careening assault on the communist bogeyman. Barely one month after the Colony Restaurant dinner, he spoke first to a Republican ladies club in Wheeling, West Virginia, then immediately flew to gatherings in Salt Lake City and Reno. In all three settings, he referred to “having a list” of insiders conspiring against the U.S. government. He bandied about different numbers on each and every occasion, and in every confrontation with the press. McCarthy quickly brought his enthusiastic condemnation back to Senate floor — still less than two months after that dinner — inciting his fellow senators to launch an investigation as to “whether persons disloyal to the United States are or have been employed by the Department of State.”<sup>16</sup>

Rovere’s contempt for McCarthy’s penchant for lying, which he depicts as a lifelong pattern, could hardly have been more profound. McCarthy had won his Congressional seat with tales of wartime bravery, using the campaign moniker “Tailgunner Joe” though he never operated a tail gun. Rovere shored up his conclusion with inventories of others who shared his distrust. McCarthy’s undistinguished and questionable performance in the Senate, Rovere argues, had repelled such potential anti-communist allies as senators Karl Mundt, Owen Brewster, Robert Taft, Kenneth Wherry, and Richard Nixon, as well as crusading journalist Eugene Lyons. But as McCarthy’s bizarre public proclamations won headlines, this aversion to the junior senator rapidly changed:

McCarthy was, within a matter of weeks, to become pure gold — a partisan with a bipartisan following. ... He was crude, he was unwashed, he was unversed in the [veteran anti-Communist] theology, but what did this matter in so long [*sic*]

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 124-125, 131-134, and 145.

as he had the ear of the people and was able to be heard when he said the stables needed cleaning?

In almost no time, it became evident that he did have the ear of the people.<sup>17</sup>

In response to McCarthy's tirade on the Senate floor, Millard Tydings of Maryland, Democratic chair of the Committee on the Armed Services, quickly launched a Senate investigation that stretched on from March to July of 1950. McCarthy was sworn as the subcommittee's first witness on March 7<sup>th</sup> and devoted a day-and-a-half to a single case against a State Department employee — a woman who had in fact never worked there: Judge Dorothy Kenyon of New York, a tireless joiner of organizations, including a number of "Communist front groups," each of which she had left (though McCarthy never said so). In four more days, he named ten more people, citing no evidence. Tydings pressed him to make formal charges, so evidence could be procured; but McCarthy replied, "I am not making charges. I am giving the committee information of individuals who appear by all the rules of common sense as being very bad security risks."<sup>18</sup>

Senator Tydings implored President Truman to release federal personnel files on those accused by McCarthy, despite an executive order forbidding delivery of any such records to Congress. Truman relented, but McCarthy charged that Truman's delivery was "a phony offer of phony files" that had been "raped and rifled." J. Edgar Hoover himself attested to the files' integrity; but by this time, McCarthy had already changed his tactics, promising on Friday, March 10<sup>th</sup> that he would bring evidence against someone in "an

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 148-149.



important post” the following Monday. McCarthy tried to avoid that hearing, but pinned down by the Committee, told its members he had come with four names: one in the Navy, two in State, and one — Owen Lattimore — a professor at Johns Hopkins University (“probably the most celebrated of all of his cases”). But still, McCarthy brought no evidence, and no formal charges were made: only McCarthy’s assertion that Lattimore was “an extremely bad security risk.” Rovere outlines the pattern of innuendo that followed, taking advantage of Lattimore’s interest in Communism (though he had not been a Party member himself) and the fact that his writing on Far Eastern affairs was well-known to State Department personnel (as it was to anyone else interested in the subject at the time, as many were): this was styled by McCarthy as making Lattimore “the chief architect of our Far Eastern policy.” Through mere repetition, despite the lack of evidence or specificity, Rovere holds that McCarthy’s charges “acquired a validity.”<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, the Tydings Committee issued an “interim” report in mid-July that said McCarthy had imposed a “fraud and a hoax” upon the Senate. Was this McCarthy’s day of reckoning? Rovere calls it merely “a brief eclipse,” with all of Washington and the nation distracted by the start of the Korean War:

Starting with nothing, Senator McCarthy plunged headlong forward, desperately seeking to develop some information which colored with distortion and fanned by a blaze of bias would forestall the day of reckoning.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 150-153.

The Tydings committee's report gave the State Department a clean slate, but the Committee's two Republican members refused to sign it.<sup>20</sup>

McCarthy soon won revenge, however, working behind the scenes to assure that Tydings was defeated in that fall's mid-term election, through a campaign on behalf of his opponent, John Marshall Butler.<sup>21</sup> A phony photograph was produced, showing Tydings in a fictional tête-à-tête with Communist Party leader Earl Browder. McCarthy staff member arranged to have a half-million postcards handwritten by Baltimore housewives mailed to Maryland voters: the \$11,000 price tag, violating a Maryland law limiting campaign expenditures to \$5,000, later drew censure by the Rules Committee's Subcommittee on Privileges and Elections; but by this time, Butler had already taken Tydings' seat.<sup>22</sup>

By the fall of 1950, McCarthy returned enthusiastically to public-accusation mode, demanding Dean Acheson's resignation and Harry Truman's impeachment, and peddling false accusations of former-Communism to derail the appointment of one Anna Rosenberg as Assistant Secretary of Defense. (Her accusers had confused the accused New Yorker with a woman of the same name on the West Coast who'd attended a Communist literary gathering twenty years earlier.) McCarthy physically assaulted Drew Pearson, which led to further

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 156-157.

<sup>21</sup> Butler memorably urged that when the Soviet satellite Sputnik orbited over the U.S., we should "Shoot it down!" ([http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2001-10-07/entertainment/0110070410\\_1\\_sputnik-cosmodrome-baikonur](http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2001-10-07/entertainment/0110070410_1_sputnik-cosmodrome-baikonur)) He sponsored the Communist Control Act of 1954, outlawing the Communist Party and authorizing prosecution of Communist-infiltrated organizations, then, when the federal courts blocked some prosecutions, proposed a constitutional amendment to limit the court's jurisdiction.

<sup>22</sup> Rovere, 160-162, 167, and 170.

feuding and grew into a highly publicized libel suit. But time and again, Rovere documents McCarthy's ability to turn potentially bad press into useful publicity, taking advantage of a press that preferred "fact" to "truth," and argues that McCarthy excelled at using the "fact" of his allegations to mask the reality that they were not true. Rovere quotes Elmer Davis on the problem of keeping up with McCarthy's fact-free — that is, untrue — improvisations: "I can't afford a full-time specialist to keep up with what McCarthy has said." That McCarthy had said something became all the facts that any press would print and was certainly considered "news" worth headlining.

In 1951, McCarthy boldly attacked General George Marshall, then serving as Secretary of State, and regarded by some as the "greatest living American" of the time, due to his military leadership during World War II. McCarthy's "speech" to the Senate was never actually delivered — Rovere questioned whether McCarthy had ever read it — but arrived on its secretary's desk as a whopping 60,000-word manuscript, then entered the *Congressional Record*. (It was later published and widely circulated as a book, *America's Retreat from Victory: The Story of George Catlett Marshall*.) Rovere characterizes this assault as a massive Multiple Untruth, a revisionist history indicting Roosevelt for recognizing the U.S.S.R. in 1933 and not focusing single-mindedly on stemming Soviet power. President Truman did not defend Marshall, who resigned from public life by the end of the year. Rovere notes that in the atmosphere of the time, "Marshall was no longer unassailable. No one was."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 171, 173-175, and 179

The years from 1951 to 1954 represent the zenith of McCarthy's careening career. After the Republican victory in 1952 — which McCarthy celebrated by saying, "It will no longer be necessary for me to conduct a one-man fight" — wary Senate leaders sought to contain him with an assignment to Government Operations, rather than naming him chair of HUAC's main Senate collaborator, the Internal Security Committee. The tactic failed, though, as McCarthy's personal bully pulpit proved both portable and resilient: he effectively abandoned his own chair in favor of concentrating on a subcommittee he created to investigate homosexuality and communism in government. McCarthy hired Roy M. Cohn (not incidentally a closeted homosexual) as Chief Counsel to the subcommittee and 26-year-old David Schine (scion of a hotel fortune, since immortalized in Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*) as its Chief Consultant. Cohn and Schine essentially ran the subcommittee in 1953, starting with an investigation of the Voice of America, left hanging as the two conducted a notorious European junket, visiting International Information Administration reading centers and consorting with an odd cast of international Cold War characters.<sup>24</sup>

Two months later, back home from Europe, Schine was drafted into the Army, and an irritated McCarthy began agitating for preferential treatment, demanding that Schine be assigned back to his Senate staff position: this tactic eventually succeeded. But the conflict led to what Rovere described as "the revenge that Cohn and McCarthy took on the Army": the fateful Army-McCarthy hearings.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 187, 189, and 195-205.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 207-209, and 211.

These televised hearings attracted an overwhelming and unprecedented twenty million viewers. This national stage provided the occasion for Senator McCarthy's undoing. The climactic moment came when Army counsel Joseph Welch, frustrated by McCarthy's badgering attacks on Fred Fisher, a young lawyer in Welch's own Boston firm — and admittedly once a member of the suspect National Lawyers' Guild — complained, "Have you no sense of decency, sir? At long last, have you left no sense of decency?" Spontaneous applause burst out from the audience in the chamber. The fever had apparently somehow broken.

The Army-McCarthy hearings snapped shut on June 17<sup>th</sup> with results inconclusive. The Senate took its time to construct a proper repudiation of its junior member from Wisconsin, but finally took action on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, voting 67-22 to "condemn" McCarthy for "obstructing the constitutional processes of the Senate." Facing a similar vote at the beginning of 1954, only William Fulbright had dared be counted against McCarthy. Clearly, the climate — in the Senate at least — had rather suddenly changed.<sup>26</sup>

After his censure, McCarthy made a "public apology ... to the American people" — not for his witch-hunting campaign, but for supporting Eisenhower in the 1952 election. Rovere abandons detailing McCarthy's story at this point, as did the nation, in favor of summary statement: "In the two and half years that remained of his life, he made only a few spiritless, irresolute attempts at a comeback," finally dying in 1957 of "hepatic failure." Rovere concludes that "his last drinking bouts, ... which were said to be formidable, were fatal," then passes his final judgment: that his collapse after 1954 revealed that "McCarthy,

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 219, 221-222, 229-230, and 237.

though a demon himself, was not a man possessed by demons. His talents as a demagogue were great, but he lacked the most necessary and awesome of demagogic gifts — a belief in the sacredness of his own mission.”<sup>27</sup>

### THE MAN & THE MOVEMENT

McCarthy’s humiliation emboldened critiques by numerous contemporary commentators. Rovere conveniently summarizes a number of their theories as to why such a man as he could ignite such excitement in the American polity, arguing that he embodied several complementary movements impulses at work at that moment in U.S. history:

Obviously, it was a product of “forces” — not a single living creature. “McCarthyism was a by-product of the Cold War,” Joseph and Stewart Alsop wrote. “McCarthyism is *both* a movement supported by certain vested-interest elements and a popular revolt against the upper classes, Talcott Parsons ... explained. “McCarthyism is the revenge of the noses that for twenty years of fancy parties were pressed against the outside window pane,” Peter Vierick wrote ... Walter Lippmann and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., saw it as a resurgence of the isolationism of the thirties. Samuel Lubell saw it as an attempt to punish those whom many Americans held to be responsible for a whole host of rights and wrongs, going back to our intervention in World War I. Richard Hofstadter felt that the roots went back to Midwestern and Southern populism of the [nineteenth] century. ... Edmund R. Murrow summed up what was common to all these analyses: “Cassius was right: ‘The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars but in ourselves.’”

As to why this terrifying “tail gunner” could bring such forces into focus, Rovere explains, “When a demagogue finds a grievance of a fault, he exploits it. That is the nature of the beast. ... The grievances and discontents were all there before he came along. ... The fault,

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 242, 247, and 253.

we must surely know, was always in ourselves, but he was close to being a genius in bringing it out.”<sup>28</sup>

Rovere quotes one other commentator, Norman Thomas, who celebrated his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday in November 1954 with his own reflections on what he hopefully thought had been the end of the McCarthy era:

In spite of all this, there has been a saving common sense about our democracy. ... [The] end has always been victory for comparative reason and decency. The struggle against demagoguery scarcely fits the St. George-against-the-dragon myth. ... Our democratic St. George goes out rather reluctantly with armor awry. The struggle is confused; our knight wins by no clean thrust of lance or sword, but the dragon somehow poops out, and decent democracy is victor.

That there was no bold, clean resistance to McCarthy is clear, and Rovere’s account captures the difficulty in getting a grip on such a slippery character. But ultimately, Rovere is left to speculate about the reasons for his demise, suggesting only that “McCarthy may have suffered an interior collapse because he sensed futility.”<sup>29</sup> At long last, he might finally have shared that enormous hopelessness he so successfully engendered in his countless, helpless victims.

The televisual record makes attorney Joseph Welch appear more the sensible Everyman than Norman Thomas’s imaginary Saint George, suggesting that the drunken dragon finally felt he could lie no longer, much less breathe fire. Perhaps the unprecedented televising of the Army-McCarthy hearings gave TV’s emerging mass audience a glimpse of

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 265-267.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 270.

this sinister, blue-faced bully that even a child could understand. (This is perhaps my own earliest TV memory.) Recalling the credit given to bad makeup and a less than charismatic appearance in the televised Kennedy-Nixon debates not long after, one wonders if the American Right was thwarted more by not-enough-pancake — a problem now partially surmounted by the Fox News make-up department and better-looking running mates.

### **WITCH-HUNTING BEYOND THE SPOTLIGHTS**

However large he loomed over the landscape of American anti-communism, Joe McCarthy was unfortunately not alone. In fact, what made McCarthy so singular was his choice to step into the bright light of media attention. More often, witch-hunters operated more covertly, avoiding detection, spreading rumors in lieu of calling press conferences. McCarthy was not the only anti-communist senator, nor was HUAC the only House committee to catch the anti-communist bug. They had their own fellow travelers in state legislatures and city and county councils throughout the land, as well as in countless library and school boards, churches and religious associations, and colleges and universities. Many limited their bullying to community rooms and meeting halls where simple stage fright silenced their neighbors, fearful of the consequences even of truth-telling after reading of scriptwriters being imprisoned and suspected spies electrocuted.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation offers the clearest example of more covert executive action in the domestic cultural arena. Hardly telegenic, J. Edgar Hoover was the gruff police chief in charge, networking and securing the cooperation of police agencies in every state, city, and rural region in the country. Other federal executive agencies played a



huge role in decentralizing the witch-hunting challenge. Though some blamed populist legislators for their acquiescence — Truman, for instance, reportedly called HUAC itself un-American — acquiesce they did, not infrequently even initiating anti-communist action. Indeed, many campaigned on its platform.

### ***Promising Loyalty***

Perhaps the mightiest instrument of cultural enforcement in postwar American anti-communism was the loyalty oath. This ritual of acquiescence quickly became *de rigueur* after President Truman required it of federal employees. The requirement may sound trivial — why not sign of an oath promising not to overthrow the United States? — but much more than this simple promise was involved. Here we find what historian Richard M. Fried described as the “bureaucratic component” of anti-communism, which “coursed with inner potency.”<sup>30</sup>

In an unchecked and arbitrary executive process, the Justice Department created lists of organizations considered suspect, required employees to disclose their memberships and affiliations, then worked off these lists to identify and discharge individuals whose affiliations rendered them suspect. The requirement to disclose one’s associations was later ruled unconstitutional, but not until after the fever of anti-communism had somewhat subsided. As long as these requirements were in force, however questionable their constitutionality and the fairness of their enforcement, failure to disclose one’s associations constituted perjury, a time-tested legal offense.

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<sup>30</sup> Fried, 188.

The administration of loyalty oaths, widespread during World War I, had been exhumed in response to anti-communist reaction to the New Deal, then reinforced by the national-security necessities during World War II. The Truman administration did not refrain from bringing wartime oaths forward in peacetime, in reaction to growing anti-communist panic in the later Forties. President Truman's Executive Order 9835, issued March 22, 1947, created the federal Loyalty Review Board. Hoover's files had continued to multiply in the darkness after the Red Scare of 1919, and Attorney General Tom Clark used them to produce an official federal list of subversive organizations that spelled doom to countless Americans. Millions came quickly to regret their activism in the Thirties and even their urgings toward a peaceful postwar world in the dark days of the World War just ended, and the casualty-count was considerable.

Over the next five years, about 20,000 government workers were investigated, some 2,500 resigned "voluntarily," and 400 were fired. Between 1945 and 1952, the House Un-American Activities Committee, the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, and other legislative committees conducted over eighty inquiries into domestic subversion.<sup>31</sup>

President Eisenhower amped up the loyalty-oath apparatus after his 1952 election, issuing Executive Order 10450. His administration reported soon after that its implementation had required the dismissal of another 1,456 federal employees due to perceived loyalty issues. A kaleidoscope of state, municipal, and private-sector loyalty programs mirrored federal action: even private businesses instituted loyalty procedures, including the regional Bell companies and the Arthur Anderson financial organization. It has

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<sup>31</sup> Boyer, 103.

been estimated that 13.5 million American workers — one in five — were directly involved in loyalty programs in 1955.<sup>32</sup>

### ***Cold War Stories***

To understand the human impact of these loyalty programs, one must attend to the experience of citizens caught up in the resulting paranoid bureaucracy. Post-Sixties activism and later historic research brought many of these stories to the fore through oral history programs. World War II veteran James Kutcher's story provides one example:

Ever since I was discharged from the army, my parents and I had been living in a federal low-rent housing project in Newark ... A few days before Christmas in 1952, my father got a letter from the Newark Housing Authority directing him to sign a so-called loyalty oath within three days as a condition for living there. Congress had just passed an amendment that required all persons in federal low-rent housing to sign an oath that no one living in their apartment belonged to any of organizations on the attorney general's "subversive" list. Failure to sign would mean an eviction.

My father felt terrible. He didn't belong to any of those groups, and he was perfectly willing to sign the oath. But he could not do that without perjuring himself because of my membership in the Socialist Workers Party. The price for keeping the apartment would be to break up the family.

The Kutcher family decided to try both to comply with the law and to stay together, and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed suit on their behalf. After three long years of litigation, the New Jersey Supreme Court finally ruled that the family could not be evicted, but it refused to rule on the constitutionality of the loyalty requirements. Nevertheless, the

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<sup>32</sup> Fried, 68, 133-134, and 182.

Kutchers' unusual pursuit of litigation brought attention to what was going on behind closed doors throughout the United States:

The hearing was the first time the press was allowed to attend a loyalty proceeding. The *Washington Post* reported on December 31, 1955: "The press saw a type of proceeding unlike anything that has come into public view. In this hearing there were no rules of procedure, no witnesses (except for the accused, Jim Kutcher), nor any facts to back up the charges against him except the charges themselves." Early in 1956, the committee decided in my favor, but not in such a way as to clear me completely.

"Through all this," Kutcher pointed out, "the government never produced any evidence that I ever did anything unconstitutional."

This housing-authority process was by no means Kutcher's sole interaction with the government around loyalty-program requirements. In fact, even more serious actions had already taken place:

Just about that time, in 1955, the government decided to cut off the disability pension that was my sole income. Again, it was said there were reasonable doubts about my loyalty. Now I was faced with the difficult task of disproving statements attributed to me by persons I couldn't cross-examine. The government refused to produce them.

The Kafkaesque quality of Kutcher's experience with the loyalty program came into sharpest focus when he was asked if he had used force and violence at any time at his life. "Yes," he admitted. "In the United States Army." After landing in North Africa and "a year and a day" of combat in the Allied invasion of fascist Italy, Kutcher was wounded in a 1943 incident that took the life of a fellow soldier, earning him the Purple Heart but ending his active combat. After being released from Washington's Walter Reed Hospital, he was hired by the Veterans Administration. "And that's where I was fired from" in 1949, Kutcher later

recalled: he received a peremptory termination letter citing his membership in the Socialist Workers Party. The notice, he said, “stunned me more than anything I experienced during the war.”

Kutcher decided to fight his Veterans Administration termination, but “What I had to do was prove I was not disloyal. This,” he observed, “reversed the normal judicial procedure.” He compared it to the Salem witches’ trials — “only they didn’t execute me. They just took my job away.” Kutcher’s fight wound up taking him to various cities to speak to local committees opposing the loyalty program—even to university audiences at Harvard and Yale — with the result that he was able to mobilize such well-known supporters as Eleanor Roosevelt, who wrote on his behalf to Attorney General Tom Clark, the creator of Truman’s first list in 1947; but even this high-level support did not short-circuit his job-termination process with the VA:

After an adverse decision before the branch loyalty board, we went to the VA loyalty board of appeal in Washington; then we appealed to the VA administrator, Carl Gray, Jr.; then to the top Loyalty Review Board of the U.S. Civil Service Commission. That exhausted all the administrative procedures.

In 1950, we went to the federal district court in Washington. ... The district court ruled against me, but the three-judge court of appeals handed down a unanimous decision in my favor. They didn’t rule on the constitutionality of the loyalty program ..., but they said that on technical grounds the government had no right to fire me.

Still, Kutcher did not thereby regain his job; he was merely added to the VA’s list of “suspended employees.” Kutcher and his ACLU attorneys decided to start over, reentering the federal court system again from the district level:

And the second time we came to the court of appeal, it was a two-to-one decision in my favor. The Veterans Administration had to give me back my job. Altogether this took about eight years. It took another two years, until 1958, to get some of my back pay.<sup>33</sup>

How many other U.S. citizens found themselves in similar situations? There is no definitive count. Surely only a small percentage were able, as Kutcher was, to assemble for himself a “national nonpartisan committee” —including such luminaries as John Dewey, C. Wright Mills, and Linus Pauling — and a team of SWP legal advisors and ACLU lawyers to aid in his lengthy defense. Multiplying Kutcher’s experience by this unknown factor, the human cost, quite apart from the victims’ financial loss, is incalculable.

The Socialist Workers Party of which Kutcher was a registered member was an official political party that ran candidates in public elections. Others — like Philadelphia postal worker Arthur Drayton — had joined some local organization on Attorney General Tom Clark’s subversive-organization list for other reasons, personal and practical. Drayton had enrolled in the Philadelphia branch of the International Workers Order (IWO) in order to gain access to favorable insurance programs (as a black man in postwar America, Drayton had had difficulty finding fair and affordable life insurance, even as a federal employee), and also because he relished the kind of multi-ethnic, cross-racial socializing that went on there, all too rare at the time. The IWO was the only place where Drayton’s first plays, written after hours as a postal worker, were receiving readings before a community audience; the IWO

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<sup>33</sup> Jim Kutcher interview, “A Purple Heart Was Not Enough,” in Bud Schultz and Ruth Schultz, *It Did Happen Here: Recollections of Political Repression in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 177-180.

had also initiated an annual “Negro History Week” observance, and the Harlem Renaissance poet Langston Hughes once visited and spoken at the club.

In response to a federal requirement that affiliations be listed when signing the oath, Drayton voluntarily listed his IWO membership. To Drayton’s surprise, when his Philadelphia post office job was threatened, this organization turned out to be included on the subversive-organization list. At his first hearing,

They told me, “Well, if you got out, you wouldn’t be in this trouble,” which I took to mean that if I quite the IWO, they’d just let this thing go by. But later on I found out that if I had done that, if I hadn’t kept to my principles, I’d still be on the outside.

Drayton was not as well connected as Kutcher became through his own very public legal struggle. Drayton did not have a supportive family to house him, and so tried relocating several times during his extended unemployment, moving from Philadelphia to New York City and back again. In retrospect, he said, “[M]y ‘stubbornness’ saved me. Although I was weak at times, I had the necessary strength to survive, thank God.” Drayton worked through the entire administrative bureaucracy more than once between his 1948 dismissal and the eventual restoration of his job in 1956; but the experience soured him on government service, and he retired as soon as he was able, in 1959. Nevertheless, he reported, “[T]he [government’s] harassment continued all through the sixties and seventies. ... They were really intimidating me. ... Mr. Hoover was a vengeful man, you know.”<sup>34</sup>

What Arthur Drayton was told by his first local hearing board — “If you got out, you wouldn’t be in this trouble” — conveys the implicit cultural learning and some of the cultural

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 167-174.

impact of the loyalty program regime: any freedom one might theoretically possess in one's associations had to be tempered with awareness of unknown but potentially fearsome future consequences. This was a message reinforced by other events and in such social movements as existed during the postwar period — civil rights activism being the most notable example — where local police, angry mobs, and even anonymous killers might be incited by another citizen's decision to sit at a lunch counter or to attempt registering to vote.

It is hard for anyone not alive at the time to imagine the extent and daily-life detail of conformist forces in the late Forties and Fifties; but these represent the greatest impact of the McCarthy era witch-hunts: a pervasive, stifling conformity in the nation's cultural life. The social-change movements that came to characterize the Sixties and Seventies, and those that have continued since, are rooted in later generations' efforts to override the enormous despair lurking beneath the American way of life.

### ***Criticizing Loyalty***

Loyalty programs did not go uncriticized, though opposition was slow in arising, considering the 1947 vintage of Truman's decree. Journalist Edward R. Murrow televised a critical piece in October 1953 that focused on the case of Lieutenant Milo Radulovich, charged because of his sister's and father's perceived communist vulnerabilities: Radulovich was a weatherman — and not in the Sixties sense: a meteorologist in military service. His eloquence on Murrow's show in discussing his loyalty-program problems, as well as the program's depiction of his family's anger and his own community's support, shamed the Secretary of the Air Force into rescinding Radulovich's security-justified sanction. But



Radulovich was but one exceptional case among many others, unique in winning public attention and redemptive action.

Congressional Democrats began to resist when Eisenhower's Attorney General Herbert Brownell subpoenaed former President Truman in the Fifties to address the charge that he should have been firing suspects of disloyalty from federal service as early as 1946: Truman refused to appear, but opposition to loyalty-review programs and outrage at abuses finally inspired the first congressional investigation in 1955. Since the actual domestic influence and threat of communism was so minuscule, loyalty-review programs had come to rely upon charges made by a sociopathic group of late-blooming former Communists (including infiltrators employed by law-enforcement agencies themselves) whose lack of credibility caused both the perceived threat and the loyalty apparatus itself to quickly wither in the heat and light of open examination.<sup>35</sup>

The Supreme Court finally stepped in to unhinge the working parts of the loyalty apparatus after Eisenhower appointed Earl Warren as Chief Justice. In 1955, the court ruled out congressional investigations that lacked an actual legislative aim — a slippery standard, but a standard nevertheless in a terrain previously completely vulnerable to grandstanding demagogues. In 1956, the court began questioning the extent of that terrain, holding that a fired food-and-drug inspector's job was not "sensitive" in the national-security sense required by the 1950 enabling legislation upon which the current loyalty apparatus had been constructed. Further, the Court undermined state sedition laws rooted in the post-World War I Red Scare that were still on the books, on the basis that national security was properly a

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<sup>35</sup> Fried, 180-183.

federal function, thus precluding enforcement action by individual states. This ruling naturally aroused political reaction from the Right, among “states’ rights” advocates also exercised at the prospect on intervention in matters of race.

By 1957, the court recovered the Fifth Amendment rights of those who refused to testify in earlier witch-hunts, restored evidentiary standards precluding the use of “secret” files or condemnation by ex-communist “witnesses” in legal proceedings, and ruled out Smith Act provisions that framed mere political belief as any basis for establishing “clear and present danger” to the state (the judicial standard set during the nation’s first Red Scare). This ruling effectively ended the era of government prosecution by dismissing pending cases against eighty-one Communist Party leaders.<sup>36</sup>

This historic moment can be seen as the middle ground of an important plank of the “new” American rights platform. Chief Justice Warren was targeted for blame, and agitators pressed for his impeachment. This reaction was not merely a fringe sentiment: President Eisenhower himself later confided that his biggest error while in office had been the appointment of “that dumb son of a bitch Earl Warren” to the Court. Though it had taken years to unfold, the Supreme Court had finally arrived by 1957 at that jurisprudential day that dissenting Justice Hugo Black had predicted in a 1951 dissent: “in calmer times,” he hopefully predicted, the court would “restore the First Amendment liberties to the high preferred place where they belong to a free society.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 184-186.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 187-188.

## DOMESTIC SPYING & DIRTY TRICKS

Just as the loyalty apparatus was coming unhinged, however, and public attention began to relax about the phantom of domestic American communism in favor of happily pursuing “the American Way,” a more sinister apparatus was being put in place. Richard M. Fried describes this as the historical moment at which “federal government agencies undertook a set of clandestine activities worthy of the secret police of the czars”:

[W]hile anti-Communist extremism receded from outward public life, it had not ended. Indeed, the activities of the FBI and other intelligence agencies escalated sharply.<sup>38</sup>

These were the sources of the harassment to which Arthur Drayton referred in telling his personal story, extending well into the Sixties and Seventies, and Drayton was by no means the only American targeted. In fact, he happens to be one of its victims who was nevertheless able to maintain a life of integrity and whose story was published, finally, in 1989. The FBI and its extensive national network of police agencies and surveillance programs — dating back to Hoover’s ascendance in the Palmer Raids — became notorious as the Fifties yielded to the much more activist climate of the Sixties and Seventies under its FBI code-name: COINTELPRO.

COINTELPRO was an acronym for the Counter Intelligence Program formally launched in August 1956, with agent William C. Sullivan in charge, which aimed to “increase factionalism, cause disruptions and win defections” from within the Communist Party U.S.A., already a negligible threat, but its framework steadily expanded to encompass

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 188 and 192.

other forms of anti-establishment threat. In October, Director Hoover reclassified his agency's ongoing surveillance of black activists as falling within COINTELPRO. After the 1963 March on Washington, Sullivan focused even more relentlessly and specifically on Martin Luther King, Jr., writing internally, "In the light of King's powerful demagogic speech ... [w]e must mark him now, if we have not done so before, as the most dangerous Negro of the future in this nation from the standpoint of communism, the Negro, and national security."<sup>39</sup>

Urban rioting in the summer of 1967 upped the FBI ante further, though, widening into BLACK HATE, which aimed to "disrupt, misdirect, or otherwise neutralize the activities of black nationalist hate-type organizations." The next year NEW LEFT was added, when Columbia University protested Dr. King's assassination, widening as New Left activism mounted against the undeclared war in Vietnam.<sup>40</sup>

The program was finally exposed fifteen years after it was begun, after a break-in at a Media, Pennsylvania, FBI field office in 1971. COINTELPRO was formally brought to an end after legal cases brought further information to light. A major investigation by the Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities — called the "Church Committee," after its chair, Senator Frank Church of Idaho — condemned the enterprise in its 1976 report, stating that

intelligence activity in the past decades has, all too often,  
exceeded the restraints on the exercise of governmental power

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<sup>39</sup> Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-63* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 903.

<sup>40</sup> Tim Weiner, *Enemies: A History of the FBI* (New York: Random House, 2012), 271.

which are imposed by our country's Constitution, laws, and traditions. ... We have seen segments of our Government, in their attitudes and action, adopt tactics unworthy of a democracy, and occasionally reminiscent of the tactics of totalitarian regimes.<sup>41</sup>

The Report's opening "Summary of Main Problems" offers a fit summary of what went on in COINTELPRO — each area of action, in the Committee's view, carried to excess:

Too many people have been spied upon by too many Government agencies and too much information has been collected. The Government has often undertaken the secret surveillance of citizens on the basis of their political beliefs, even when those beliefs posed no threat of violence or illegal acts on behalf of a hostile foreign power. The Government, operating primarily through secret informants, but also using other intrusive techniques such as wiretaps, microphone "bugs," surreptitious mail opening, and break-ins, has swept in vast amounts of information about the personal lives, views, and associations of American citizens. Investigations of groups deemed potentially dangerous — and even of groups suspected of associating with potentially dangerous organizations — have continued for decades, despite the fact that those groups did not engage in unlawful activity. Groups and individuals have been harassed and disrupted because of their political views and their lifestyles. Investigations have been based upon vague standards whose breadth made excessive collection inevitable. Unsavory and vicious tactics have been employed — including anonymous attempts to break up marriages, disrupt meetings, ostracize persons from their professions, and provoke target groups into rivalries that might result in deaths. Intelligence agencies have served the political and personal objectives of presidents and other high officials. While the agencies often committed excesses in response to pressure from high officials in the Executive branch and Congress, they also occasionally

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<sup>41</sup> All Church Committee quotations are drawn from U.S. Senate, "Intelligence Activities and the Rights Of Americans, Book II: Final Report of the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities," April 26, 1976, accessed 10 November 2013 at <http://www.raven1.net/cointeldocs/churchfinalreportIIa.htm>.

initiated improper activities and then concealed them from officials whom they had a duty to inform.

For a time in the mid-Seventies, post-Watergate, a critical spirit reigned in regards to domestic intelligence: “in the conduct of intelligence activity, ... the ‘eternal vigilance’ which is the ‘price of liberty’ has been forgotten,” the Senate lamented. This spirit was not long to last: the Reagan administration quickly returned to a disinhibited use of intelligence agencies and covert activities, and the declaration of an open-ended War on Terror has thrust us into a whole new realm.

Even at the time, the practical significance of COINTELPRO’s dissolution could not actually be known. The program had merely sought to centralize and coordinate domestic spying and covert operations that had been going on for decades. But the significance of all that was condemned by the Church Committee, once openly examined, could not be more important to our national cultural policy. The aggressive use of federal resources to pervert the course of history in cultural development constitutes a kind of criminal intervention by the state in the affairs of its citizens that lies beyond reproach.

### **THE “AMERICAN WAY” IN THE FORTIES & FIFTIES**

Despite the growth of anti-communism in the late Thirties, much more widespread attention was then being directed toward cultural diversity as a unique source of U.S. strength. Historian Wendy Wall cites the eight-month run of George Kaufman and Moss Hart’s play, *The American Way*, at New York’s Rockefeller Center as exemplary of predominant celebratory feeling about the nation’s diversity at the end of the decade.

Wall's account of this phenomenon is balanced by her detailed treatment of a countervailing concern: that emphasizing respect for cultural diversity not interfere with the assimilation of immigrants to American life, nor undermine a sense of national unity — especially as World War II broke out. Such popular writers as Louis Adamic and social scientists as Margaret Mead voiced such concerns in the late Thirties and early Forties. Despite his general emphasis on the U.S. as a “nation of nations,” Adamic frequently warned in his 1939-40 lecture tours that “Groups are pulling apart into various corners, away from one another.” The specter of European fascism and its active domestic correlates in the United States, combining older strains of racism and xenophobia against which these progressives were working, defined the contrary fear of forced homogeneity. Promoting intergroup harmony emerged as the balancing concept that inspired the efforts of such organizations as the Common Council for American Unity (CCAU), the National Conference of Christians and Jews (NCCJ), the Council Against Intolerance, the Committee for National Morale, the Committee for Democracy, the Institute for American Democracy, and many others as America approached World War II. The war itself brought special urgency to the idea of national unity, addressed in Margaret Mead's 1942 book, *And Keep Your Powder Dry*.<sup>42</sup> Revelation of the atrocities of fascism kept these impulses in place after the war as well, though the fiery furnace of domestic anti-communism enforced a level of conformism

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<sup>42</sup> Wall, 65, 90-95, and 138.

that Mead described, introducing the 1965 update of her 1942 book, as “the apprehension and apathy of the dismal 1950’s.”<sup>43</sup>

The “American Way” campaign ripened in the postwar era. Historian Wendy Wall summarizes the process through which a strong sense of national consensus was forged:

Ultimately, three broad groups played central roles in the effort to shape the public consensus on national values between the mid-1930s and the mid-1950s. Many governmental officials and cultural affiliates ... sought to unify Americans and steel them to withstand first the Fascist and then the Communist threat. Meanwhile, industry, public relations, and advertising executives worked to reassert the authority of business, to halt or roll back the New Deal, and to restore a political culture conducive to the exercise of corporate power with minimal government control. Finally, a loose coalition of individuals and organizations sought to defuse “intergroup” tensions and promote a more religiously, ethnically, and racially tolerant society.<sup>44</sup>

Wall summarizes their consensus on national values as follows:

Diverse as they were, all these individuals and groups invoked national unity and shared values, largely rejecting the language of progressive struggle that had propelled social movements for decades. For divergent reasons, they also emphasized individual freedoms rather than majoritarian democracy. Business groups stressed individual rights in order to shore up free enterprise, while many intergroup liberals did so to protect religious and ethnic minorities...<sup>45</sup>

But she also observes “a chasmal divide” among “those who preached and appealed to a unifying set of American values”:

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<sup>43</sup> Margaret Mead, *And Keep Your Powder Dry: An Anthropologist Looks at America* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1965), xii.

<sup>44</sup> Wall, 279-280.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 280-281.



Some Americans — economic conservatives, many cold warriors, and those intergroup liberals who hoped only to create or preserve social harmony — presented the U.S. as comparatively perfected. In their eyes, America was an intact model of political, religious, and economic freedom, blessed by nearly universal affluence. All that Americans needed to do... was to learn to pull together, to get along. In preaching consensus, these groups denied or minimized power imbalances and emphasized *civility* across class, religious, and other lines. By marginalizing dissenters — by casting those who disrupted national unity as somehow un-American — they shored up the social, economic and political status quo.<sup>46</sup>

The strength of this dominant position rendered those on the other side of the divide — no matter how idealistically committed to “American values” — dissenters deserving of marginalization.

### ***All Aboard the Freedom Train***

Mead’s dismal Fifties took root soon after the War, as advocates of Americanism created a Freedom Train they expected all real Americans to board.

The [Freedom T]rain was the brainchild of Attorney General Tom C. Clark, who hoped it would “be the springboard of a great crusade for reawakening faith in America.” ... In 1947, the attorney general embarked on a nationwide anti-Communist speaking tour reminiscent of the itinerant preachers and circuit riders who fomented the Second Great Awakening.<sup>47</sup>

Clark’s assistant director of public information, William Coblenz, could actually take credit here, inspired by a lunchtime stroll from Justice to the National Archives, where the United States’ foundational documents were reverently displayed: why not a traveling

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<sup>46</sup> Wall, 281-282.

<sup>47</sup> Herzog, 82-83.

exhibit, has asked himself, so all Americans could be illuminated by their glow? His boss loved the idea, and Coblenz and Archives staff began assembling an exhibit of facsimile documents that would fit neatly into a refurbished train car, featuring “the story of the establishment, growth, and defense of rights and freedoms that belong to each one of us as American citizens.”<sup>48</sup>

From Clark’s first phone call on the matter, however, the planning process ballooned and veered off in new directions. An attorney friend happened to be travelling on the West Coast with Paramount Pictures honcho Barney Balaban, to whom he handed over the phone when Clark reached him. Balaban loved the idea, too, but thought it belonged in the private sector, offered to bankroll it, established an entity to house it — the American Heritage Foundation — and hired a staffer, Louis Novins, to organize toward a December lunch at the Justice Department for various business and media types.

These interests were already circling the White House, making Clark’s invitation a timely one. The National Association of Manufacturers “American Way” project had led to creation of the War Advertising Council, which was renamed simply the Advertising Council after V-J Day. Their agenda, however, remained unchanged:

The very existence of the Advertising Council testified to both the continuing strength of anti-New Deal sentiment in America’s business community and the conviction on the part of Madison Avenue executives, federal officials, and others that such an institution could help shape public attitudes about issues of national importance.

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<sup>48</sup> Wall, 202-203.

The Council lost no time in working to maintain the collaborative relationship its members had developed in wartime propaganda:

Beginning in 1946, [the Advertising Council] organized regular White House conferences on pressing national issues that brought together administration officials, Advertising Council directors, and influential individuals who served on the Council's various advisory committees. ... Such conferences bolstered the reputation and influence of the Advertising Council, while giving the administration an opportunity to garner elite support for its programs. ...

Under Balaban's influence, the Freedom Train looked like a perfect framework for a multi-dimensional national campaign. As it happened, ad executive Thomas D'Arcy Brophy was retailing a similar idea in New York, but for radio: a "super-radio program" modeled on "I Am an American" Day. He jumped aboard the Freedom Train, too, and he and Novins became key players in making it real, as an official project of the Advertising Council.<sup>49</sup>

Historian Wendy Wall tells the fascinating Freedom Train story in detail. Advancing the scientific method of the advertising industry, wealthy donors to the American Heritage Foundation effort became a kind of "focus group" for Freedom Train content. A hand-picked Who's Who group of 175 stars of media, socioeconomic, and civic worlds were assembled to partake of a kind of "first draft" of the campaign, heralded by Attorney General Clark as being all about the motto: "Work at democracy to make democracy work." This theme proved simply too alarming for those in attendance: promising henceforward to downplay "democracy," Brophy proposed falling back on NAM's slogan from the Thirties — "Freedom Is Everybody's Job." "Freedom" quickly replaced "democracy" as the meme of

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<sup>49</sup> Wall, 173-175, and 207.

the historical moment, contrasting to the evil of totalitarianism — which such political economists as Friedrich A. von Hayek had recently argued could arise as easily from democratic majoritarianism, by insisting on national economic planning that could in turn lead to “totalitarian serfdom.” The Freedom Train came to focus on the “heritage of individual freedom.”<sup>50</sup>

The curatorial process soon escaped the control of Archives historians as the traveling exhibit was winnowed to death by a thousand cuts — a numerical exaggeration, perhaps, but those cuts were significant: the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> amendments and the Emancipation Proclamation disappeared, as did William Lloyd Garrison’s *The Liberator* from the display on freedom of the press, and Woodrow Wilson’s first inaugural address — deemed too emphatic about “Democratic victory” — and FDR’s fireside chat describing the U.S. as the “arsenal of democracy.” Nothing was included to credit the labor movement as part of the American Heritage version of America. The entire section on “Economic Rights” was axed wholesale. Of equal interest to what was cut were the donor-dominated selection committee’s additions to the display: Robert E. Lee’s 1865 address encouraging the healing of the nation after Civil War, hanging alongside the Gettysburg Address; and key documents from Alexander Hamilton.<sup>51</sup>

By the time the Freedom Train left the station in September 1947, historian Wall concludes, “it bore almost no resemblance to the exhibit the National Archives staffers had

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<sup>50</sup> Wall, 201-240; and Friedrich A. von Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1945).

<sup>51</sup> Wall, 211-216.

labored on the previous year.” Its first stop was in Philadelphia commemorated the 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adjournment of the Constitutional Convention. A celebrity-studded crowd of 1,000 partook in what became a set-piece of Freedom Train appearances: group recitation of the “Freedom Pledge.” Each host city drew on a fat publicity packet to stage this and other events designed to trigger a “patriotic chain reaction” everywhere the train stopped.

Much to its organizers’ chagrin, the 37,000-mile whistle-stop tour called for the Freedom Train to pull into some of America’s racially-segregated train stations, creating an embarrassing question of whether and how black Americans could board the Freedom Train in cities where they were in fact not free. Memphis had to be dropped from the schedule altogether. A gag order respected by the national press prevented the nation from learning that other southern stops fed viewers into the Train through racially segregated lines — sometimes, as in Birmingham, Alabama, in blocks of twenty, to minimize mingling between racial groups.<sup>52</sup>

The final stop of the Freedom Train was Washington, DC, was timed to coincide with the weeklong celebration of Truman’s only formal inauguration. Some thought that more fundraising might keep the Freedom Train on track longer, but a fire broke out in one of the cars while it was sidetracked in San Bernardino. Though no priceless documents were lost, the will to continue was apparently extinguished along with the flames. The message had been crafted, transmitted, and received, however: “Freedom [not democracy] Is Everybody’s Job.”

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<sup>52</sup> Wall, 216, and 233-240.

### *The Covenant Nation: Sacralizing the American State*

Attorney General Thomas Clark was notable not only for his embrace of the Freedom Train. Historian Jonathan P. Herzog describes Clark as exemplary of those leading Americans who “could see that religious conflict was inseparable from the Cold War...” and, in 1946-47, as the Truman administration’s “chief proponent for American sacralization.”

Clark used his position to advocate a strand of Americanism premised upon religion. He understood America faced not just hostile nations but “violent foreign ideologies.” Clark ... viewed Communism as a hostile religious faith that drew strength from a “black Bible.” ... [Clark told a Catholic audience in Cleveland,] “It is imperative that our people and our children return to God and walk in His ways” ...<sup>53</sup>

Faced with challenge of distinguishing itself from the Soviet Union, the United States failed to define itself as a secular democracy and to articulate its unique values in cultural policy terms. Instead, it settled for the values represented by organized religion. The interpretations being made by U.S. opinion leaders and policymakers who were getting worked up about the Soviet threat led naturally back to religion:

American leaders recognized that Communism was an “armed doctrine,” a disease of the psyche and spirit that arms alone could not defeat. Intellectuals, journalists, and theologians who studied Communism in the decades after the Russian Revolution began to conclude that it stood for more than atheism and the destruction of organized religion. They saw it also as a powerful religion of materialism, complete with its own scripture, prophets, and eschatology.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Herzog, 82-83.

<sup>54</sup> Herzog, 5-6.

But the invocation of religion was also strategic. Psychological warfare — hugely important in the global Cold War arena, as we will soon discuss — begins at home. Securing consent to the cultural policy values implicit in early Cold War maneuvering required proselytization.

... American leaders understood ... that the Cold War would be won or lost not only at the barrel of a gun but also within the conflicted souls at home and around the world. ... They did not hesitate to call the Cold War a holy crusade. They fought faith with faith. Religion in America, having had its political, social, and cultural meaning circumscribed for the preceding several decades, could fulfill a function no other institution could. ... In speeches and advertisements, in pledge drives and military training facilities, in schools and movie theaters, the engineers of spiritual mobilization set out to create a citizenry.<sup>55</sup>

Public cultural policy in modern democracies is almost uniformly expressed in secular terms and formally distanced from religious affairs, except to the extent that attitudes toward particular religious traditions are interfering with their cultural rights or those of their adherents. Rather than crafting such a secular statement, though, policymakers in the United States in the late Forties and early Fifties framed its values forthrightly in religious terms.

Ignoring the First Amendment, U.S. policymakers resorted to contrasting an atheistic Communism with a God-infused “free world” along conventional lines of religious belief. Prominent anti-communists were trying on religious raiments some time before they were imposed upon the Army. Father Walsh of Georgetown’s School of Foreign Service had done so since the Twenties. Eisenhower’s future Secretary of State John Foster Dulles identified communism as the greatest threat to world peace in a speech before the World Council of

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<sup>55</sup> Herzog, 5-6.

Churches in August 1948, lamenting the fact that “secularization” had divorced political action from its presumed religious foundations:

Once the connection is broken between faith and practices, practices ... lose their moral significance and seem to be matters of expediency. As such they are vulnerable to attack by those who inject strong belief into different practices.

Quoting Dulles to this effect, Jonathan Herzog points out the unspoken fear that “If the religious foundations of Western society disintegrated, the spiritually formidable and perilous Communist philosophy might fill the moral vacuum.”<sup>56</sup>

Herzog’s argument dovetails with Wendy Wall’s account of the augmentation of “American Way” definition to include “Judeo-Christianity” in the postwar period. Herzog posits that a “spiritual-industrial complex” constructed in the late Forties and early Fifties has dominated American politics ever since. He argues that “American leaders thought that secular institutions and beliefs alone were insufficient to meet society’s Cold War needs.” He explains the meaning of the rubric he coined for their creation as follows:

The term is vague, but each word encapsulates an important truth. “Spiritual” emphasizes the fact that just as America mobilized for the Cold War in body, its leaders sought to energize the soul. ... The word “industrial” underscores the factory-made approach and contrived feel that emblemized some of the spiritual rhetoric and policies of the early Cold War. [It] was the beneficiary of state sanction and commercial talent. It worked to foment a religious revival that was conceived in boardrooms rather than camp meetings, steered by Madison Avenue and Hollywood suits rather than traveling preachers, and measured with a statistical precision that old-time revivalists ... would have envied. ... Finally, the word “complex” highlights the efforts interwoven motives, actors, and actions. Leaders formed a series of committees,

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 68-69.



organizations, and advisory boards that put the resources of American Bureaucracy behind religious revival and spiritual rededication.<sup>57</sup>

A great historic irony resides in the timing of this development, for at the very time that political leaders were brokering this marriage between state and religious belief, idealistic Americans were playing a lead role in defining the set of secular values that became the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This might have been the moment for the United States to embrace this new, expanded bill of cultural rights as its core of national identity. Instead, it drew back to more conventional notions of God and godlessness.

Rather than cite the UDHR, Truman drew from more traditional Sunday-morning sermonizing for his 1948 State of the Union address:

The elements of our strength are many. They include our democratic government, our economic system, our great natural resources. But these are only partial explanations. The basic source of our strength is spiritual. For we are a people with a faith. We believe in the dignity of man. We believe that he was created in the image of the Father of us all. We do not believe that men exist merely to strengthen the state or to be cogs in the economic machine. ... We have a profound devotion to the welfare and rights of the individual as a human being. The faith of our people has particular meaning at this time in history because of the unsettled and changing state of the world.<sup>58</sup>

The central point of this quotation — that “We believe in the dignity of man” — did not require religious framing, and in fact is the central theme of the UDHR. But this was the

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=13005>, delivered January 7, 1948, accessed August 22, 2012.

frame Truman chose for the picture he wanted to paint. What happened in the decade that followed made the religious connection explicit and binding.

In that same year, the House Un-American Activities Committee published an organizing tract that installed religion at the center of the U.S.'s ideological arsenal. Having defined Communism itself as a religion, anonymous HUAC writers assert that, "Communism cannot dominate family life, until it has first fought its way past the influence of religion upon the family."<sup>59</sup> Herzog's study describes a raft of subsequent actions that confirmed this consensus, and he concludes that a sinister connection thus was forged in America's national identity:

... [T]he process by which religious faith has been fused with popular conceptions of Americanism was not brought about by some movement of destiny's hand. ... [F]or millions constantly bombarded with the message that the religious could not be Communists, it was a short logical step to the authoritative axiom that the irreligious could not be true Americans.<sup>60</sup>

Jonathan Herzog opens his description of what he calls the "spiritual-industrial complex" that emerged mid-century by describing what U.S. Army instructors told new recruits about the world being faced by the country they were defending, or even fighting for, in Korea. The U.S. was a "covenant nation":

There were "demonic" nations that attacked both organized religion and belief in higher powers. There were "secular" nations that enforced a strict separation of church and state. And then there were "covenant" nations that recognized their dependence upon God. ... [I]t would be reasonable to assume that the U.S. Army considered America secular. After all, the

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<sup>59</sup> Herzog, 87.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 12.

Constitution regulated state interference in religious affairs, and tax dollars were not a church prop. But ... [a]ccording to the Army, secular nations were places like France — lands of spiritual indifference, ennui, and rising rates of skepticism. ... not opposed to their demonic counterparts [like the Soviet Union, which offered a substitute system of belief in the “Promethean man” and “scientific atheism”]. Frankly, they did not care enough. No, the United States was a covenant nation.<sup>61</sup>

Repositioning the United States among the nations as a forthright advocate of religion was made a priority among leading anti-communists. John Foster Dulles, who became Eisenhower’s Secretary of State five years later, described communism as the greatest threat to world peace at a meeting of World Council of Churches in 1948, arguing that only in the twentieth century had political action been separated from presumably religious foundations:

Once the connection is broken between faith and practices, practices ... lose their moral significance and seem to be matters of expediency. As such they are vulnerable to attack by those who inject strong belief into different practices.

It was of course the strong belief of communist philosophy that Dulles and his fellow travelers feared might seem expedient.<sup>62</sup>

### ***Putting the Nation Under God***

This was not allowed to remain merely a philosophical exercise. Congressional figures saw to it that hallmark legislation was adopted and public rituals were established to confirm this revision of the national cultural consensus. As Herzog describes in detail,

Beginning in 1946, a handful of representatives began the Congressional process of sacralization that would culminate

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<sup>61</sup> Herzog, 3-4.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 68-69.

eight years later with a series of resolutions that inserted God into currency, the national motto, and the Pledge of Allegiance.<sup>63</sup>

“In God We Trust” was adopted as the official national motto, replacing the more prevalent, though informal, *E Pluribus Unum*. The new motto began to be printed on postage stamps — tellingly, first only on foreign airmail denominations, before domestic stamps were affected. Then it found prominent placement in America’s “Holy of Holies”: our currency. And finally, “under God” was made part of the Pledge of Allegiance that most U.S. students recited together at the start of each school day. (Eventually, litigation established a right not to make this recitation; but such refusal, before or after this court ruling, risked vilification in the classroom and on the playground.)

So central to American cultural identity was this sacralization of the state that it was considered problematic that General Eisenhower had been elected President without benefit of formal baptism. On the first Sunday after his Inauguration, Eisenhower thus became the first (and so far, last) President to be baptized while in office.<sup>64</sup>

For a time in the early Fifties, the same social dynamics that brought religion to the fore politically also carried more Americans to church each Sunday than had been the case before or since. By the later Fifties, this ardor had cooled; but the words remained on our currency, in our Pledge, and in our political lexicon. Sixties sophistication and activism brought religious observance to a new low point in American life, but this sacralization of American national values left a lasting mark on U.S. national identity:

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 99-100.

The most visible signs of national piety so evident in the 1950s may have disappeared in the social turmoil of the 1960s, but the social and cultural residue of the spiritual-industrial complex proved far more indelible. Cold War leaders did not invent this connection between religion and nationalism, but they reified it. The statutes, monuments, and sentiments live on as bulwarks against secularism and reminders that the nation rests upon the groundwork of religious faith. They help explain the growth of religious and political conservatism and continue to serve as valuable tools for those defending the place of religion in American life.<sup>65</sup>

### ***Rewritten History***

The crucial difference for contemporary times is that what was an innovation in the early Fifties now stands as a seemingly lasting part of America's national legacy. Tea Party activists today invoke a timeless heritage that denies the historic facts of life in America: religiosity as an aspect of American cultural identity was not born in our Revolution, but in the witch-hunting Fifties. As Herzog accurately notes,

When Americans now bristle at the thought of courts rewriting their cherished national history, they have in mind a more distant past, not occurring within the lifespan of most baby boomers.<sup>66</sup>

The "timeless tradition" of America was, like me, born in the Fifties. It's not too late to reconsider its significance and change course. Characterizing the nation according to its civic and political values could be accomplished through a more straightforward cultural policy, leaving religious belief to the realm of personal choice, safeguarded constitutionally as it always has been, at least in theory. Conscious as we now are that Judaism and

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<sup>65</sup> Herzog, 8.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 216.

Christianity are but two of the world's great religions presently ascribed to by our citizens, such an adjustment would fit the culturally diverse composition of our population in the twenty-first century.

Wall notes that questions of national identity were not put to rest by the "American Way" campaign she describes in her monograph:

Since the mid-1990s, and particularly since 2001, there has been a resurgent interest in the kinds of questions that preoccupied Americans between the mid-1930s and the early 1960s. During the Clinton years, debates over multiculturalism and the eruption of racial tensions on the streets of Los Angeles and Cincinnati spurred widespread discussion of America's common ground and public values. Questions of national unity and identity took on additional urgency after the controversial 2000 presidential election and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. In the wake of those attacks, the nonprofit Advertising Council launched an "I am an American" campaign, which depicted individuals of many ages, races, and religions. Still, a December 2001 cover story in the *Atlantic Monthly* of "red" and "blue" America asked, "Are We Really One Country?"

Wall implies that "nostalgia for an earlier age" lay behind this renewed questioning, suggesting that the period from the New Deal through the civil rights movement would be the age for which this nostalgia was felt, though her study caused her to conclude "that the story is a bit more complex."<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Wall, 290.

### *The Religion of Capitalism*

The “free enterprise” definition falls short of describing cultural consensus today, at least when one digs beneath its surface to examine the widening economic gap between rich and poor. The current economic collapse has brought considerable attention to favoritism in public policy vis-à-vis corporations whose practices do not respect the economic and cultural values of their own workers, much less those of the general public.

In fact, “free enterprise” was a contested notion even at the time of its coinage.

Educator Horace Kallen wrote in 1949,

Business and industry profess a true religion they call free enterprise, and the public relations experts and the propagandists who are its home missionaries ... preach it diversely up and down in the land. Their preachment, however, neither describes the national economy nor offers a program for its reform. It impresses the innocent bystander rather as a demand that the government shall refrain from any and all interference with the trend of business enterprise for centralization and monopoly. This terminus is the polar opposite of free enterprise. Enterprise is free when all individuals are equally protected by law in their efforts, and equally assured by society of the opportunity to use their powers to do what they want to do, so far as doing so does not diminish the equal right of any. The criteria of free enterprise inhere in the range and diversities of self-possession, self-support and self-rule, of initiatives of faith and works among the multitudes of man, employing their knowledge and skills to act on their personal beliefs at their own risk. The economy of free enterprise is measured by the number and variety of businesses that constitute it. ... They are institutions of free enterprise when their form and function excludes monopoly and assures equal liberty to all their members. ... On the record, enterprise is in fact anything but free. For the multitudes of farmers, workers and small businessman, free enterprise is an illusion. The mechanisms of the market and the price system no longer so work as to preserve to each his marginal profit. They have been replaced by the administrative decisions of the planned economies of trust and cartel. These

latter dominate the nation's business... Their form is hierarchical. Their structure repeats that of an army or an authoritarian church.<sup>68</sup>

The tendencies Kallen described have not only proven perennial, but have increased in more than six decades of corporate consolidation and the polarization of wealth in the Reagan era.

Placing economic freedom in a context defined by democratic political aspirations would clarify the confusion created by the decades-long transaction of the corporate driven campaign to define our culture in terms of “free enterprise.” Surely the United States’ “true religion” has more to do with the values outlined in the Declaration of Independence and Constitution than with a “capitalism” that did not exist at the time that our nation-state was created.

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Clearly, much was done within the United States to domesticate anti-communism. But to understand how new official understandings of American cultural identity were forged as the Cold War began, we must drop back into that crucial postwar effort to take the nation's anti-communism to global scale. It was out of this effort that the view of culture embraced by the domestic cultural apparatus of the Sixties emerged.

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<sup>68</sup> Horace M. Kallen, *The Education of Free Men: An Essay Toward a Philosophy of Education for Americans* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Co., 1949), 91-93.



## **CHAPTER 9**

### **GLOBALIZING ANTI-COMMUNISM**

On a parallel path to domestic anti-communism, the U.S. government pursued international policy arrangements from the late Forties that not only defined national cultural policy in international affairs, but also contained the aesthetic seeds from which the leading federal domestic cultural agencies of the present sprang up in the mid-Sixties. Positioning the United States as “the leader of the free world” ultimately relied on presenting an elitist construction of the high-art European culture as integral to American national cultural identity.

#### **GETTING STARTED: THE ROOTS OF U.S. CULTURAL DIPLOMACY**

The United States’ first interest in cultural diplomacy was piqued not by the perceived threat of communism, but by Latin American incursions of European fascism. Historians Thomson and Laves describe a “Nazi drive during the 1930s to win the favor of the countries of South and Central America, allied with similar efforts by the Italians and Japanese ... [as] making a cultural program on the part of the United States an urgent priority.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Charles A. Thomson and Walter H. C. Laves, *Cultural Relations and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963), 35.

This led to the creation of two entities in 1938, which continued working through World War II. The first was the Interdepartmental Committee on Cooperation with the American Republics (ICCAR), originally established in response to FDR's oral instructions in February 1938, and then formally authorized in August 1939 (P.L. 355). ICCAR comprised representatives from twenty-five federal agencies involved in piecemeal technical exchange and bilateral projects. The second was the State Department's Division of Cultural Relations, which oversaw cultural and educational exchange programs. The Division's first advisory group was constituted in October 1938, then convened four larger advisory conferences in the fall of 1939, the largest attracting over six-hundred educational leaders from forty-six U.S. states. Government funding for the new Division was meager (just \$28,000 for five staff in the first year) and was primarily passed on to private entities that became involved in later years. In 1940, though, with the international situation rapidly deteriorating, Nelson Rockefeller was appointed to fill a newly created post as Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (CIAA), and his division grew rapidly through the war, commanding budgets of \$60 million and \$38 million in 1943 and 1944, respectively. The first American cultural attachés or cultural officers were appointed in 1941, all to Latin American posts at first, but a few were later dispatched outside the Western Hemisphere. Scientific attachés, always fewer in number, began to be posted in 1951.<sup>2</sup>

In his introduction to the catalog for one of the nineteen shows produced by the Museum of Modern Art for the CIAA, artist-critic Barnett Newman articulated Rockefeller's ambition in presenting the ground-breaking 1943 "First Exhibition of Modern American

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 36-43, 45-46 and 49.

Artists” by saying, “We have come together as American modern artists ... to present to the public a body of work that will adequately reflect the new America that is taking place today and the kind of America that will, it is hoped, become the cultural center of the world.”<sup>3</sup> This spirit anticipated the postwar motivation on foreign-policy leaders in projecting a better image of the United States image abroad.

### ***Propaganda, Cultural Exchange and the Multilateral Moment***

Even so, early State Department planners were obsessed with keeping cultural exchange free of “ulterior” foreign-policy objectives. Participants in a 1943 advisory committee meeting held that “Any implication of a tie-in between cultural interchange and foreign policy invalidates the effect of cultural activities.”<sup>4</sup> This was a difficult and contentious distinction for Foreign Service personnel to maintain, both at the time and in decades to come, as both federal and national political priorities shifted, and as actors outside the State Department began to act on interests of their own.

Regardless of this stance, World War II quickly brought propaganda to the fore. The Office of War Information, established in 1942 with journalist Elmer Davis at its helm, operated in other parts of the worlds than Latin America, mainly carrying on information and propaganda activities classed as “psychological warfare” through mass media (press, radio and motion pictures). The OWI “backed into” cultural activities through journalists’ exchanges (which actually were one-way, bringing foreign journalists to the U.S.), providing

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<sup>3</sup> Saunders, 275-276.

<sup>4</sup> Thomson and Laves, 43.

books and magazines to supplement its presswork, and establishing twenty-eight information libraries abroad. Cultural activities were eventually extended to the Near East and China during the war, in the latter case, largely by extending study grants to 1,700 Chinese students stranded in the U.S. at the outbreak of fighting in Asia.<sup>5</sup>

Whether and how international cultural diplomacy might continue remained uncertain in the years immediately following World War II, with the Cold War only beginning to take shape. The early consensus was that propaganda (associated with providing information internationally) should be left behind, and that cultural activities should not be allowed to mix with this ulterior purpose. As Thomson and Laves sum up the thinking of the time:

[I]nternational information activities were viewed as tied up with “power politics.” They were employed as an instrument “to implement the diplomatic policies of the Department of State.” As channeled through radio, press, and motion pictures, they were largely unilateral in character, and might smack of imposition. ... Cultural activities should be kept clear of propaganda, otherwise they might be viewed as cultural imperialism designed to impose the culture of the United States on other peoples. ... [T]he basic distinction in the minds of this group seems to have been whether an activity sought to serve a unilateral nationalism or a multilateral partnership.<sup>6</sup>

President Roosevelt, in his final inaugural address in 1944, articulated his vision of the multilateral role he wanted the United States to play in the postwar world:

We have learned that we cannot live alone, at peace; that our own well-being is dependent on the well-being of other nations, far away. ... [The American people] have learned to be citizens of the world, members of the human community. We

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 51-56. See also Emily S. Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890-1945* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 208.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 70-71.

have learned the simple truth. As Emerson said, that, “The only way to have a friend is to be one.”<sup>7</sup>

Historian Elizabeth Borgwardt described Roosevelt’s vision as “a New Deal for the world,” rooted in the wartime Atlantic Charter, embodied in the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank, and dramatized in the Nuremberg trials. She describes all of these as “mechanisms for promoting collective security, for stabilizing and coordinating international currency transactions and economic development, and for advancing ideas about international justice” and as expressions of commitment to the “four freedoms” Roosevelt had described in his State of the Union message in January 1941:

The first is freedom of speech and expression — everywhere in the world ...

The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way — everywhere in the world ...

The third is freedom from want ... — everywhere in the world ...

The fourth is freedom from fear ... — everywhere in the world ...

Freedom means the supremacy of human rights everywhere. Our support goes to those who struggle to gain these rights or keep them.

Carrying this thinking into the Atlantic Charter, FDR made it clear that the aspirational statement he and Winston Churchill had framed was truly global in its intentions:

We of the United Nations are agreed on certain broad principles in the kind of peace we seek. The Atlantic Charter

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<sup>7</sup> Borgwardt, 11.

applies not only to parts of the world that border the Atlantic but to the whole world.<sup>8</sup>

And these principles were widely applied, in ways that would inspire action among and within nation-states for years to come, regardless of changing strategies in U.S. foreign relations. Borgwardt cites Nelson Mandela's later assessment:

The Atlantic Charter of 1941 ... reaffirmed faith in the dignity of each human being and propagated a host of democratic principles. ... Inspired by the Atlantic Charter and the fight of the allies against tyranny and oppression, the ANC created its own charter ... We hoped that the government and ordinary South Africans would see the principles they were fighting for in Europe were the same ones we were advocating at home.<sup>9</sup>

Borgwardt argues that this vision belonged not only to President Roosevelt, but became the prevailing spirit of “many ordinary Americans [for whom] the New Deal at home and the prospect of victory abroad had kindled optimism and hope, even as their world had been turned upside down ...” The politically transformative experiences of economic suffering and total war “served to prepare the minds of Americans for expanding the New Deal — with all its contradictions and limitations — to the rest of the world.”<sup>10</sup> The keystone institutions of this “New Deal for the world” were put in place, but official American resistance to giving up hegemonic power began to kick in at their very creation.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 29, citing Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1994), 83-84.

<sup>10</sup> Borgwardt, 86.

### ***Backing Away from UNESCO and Multilateralism***

The shift from New Deal multilateralist thinking to the unilateral approach that characterized the Cold War is revealed most clearly in changing U.S. attitudes toward UNESCO. The United States had championed a democratic paradigm in the early days of birthing this new international cultural agency, defeating the more elitist French model with which it contended at the design stage:

The word “peoples” was interpreted in two senses. The French and other Europeans held that the important element was not the ordinary citizen but the elite of intellectuals. ... The Americans and others maintained that the word meant the whole people, in the broadest democratic sense; Unesco’s major object was the “common understanding of the masses of the people in this world.”<sup>11</sup>

This was the paradigm that prevailed in UNESCO’s design, and such leading American figures as former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and Assistant Secretary of State Archibald MacLeish maintained this idealistic intention in shaping it and the U.N. generally. Writing for the State Department in January 1945, H. S. Vilard explained their guiding philosophy:

Without the intellectual tools to which our civilization has become accustomed, economic and social disorganization is intensified and moral despair easily sets in ... [T]his Government should participate in an international program to help the war-torn countries ... in repairing the moral, spiritual and physical damage.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Walter H.C. Laves and Charles A. Thomson, *UNESCO: Purpose, Progress, Prospects* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957; New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1968), 39.

<sup>12</sup> “The Positive Approach to an Enduring Peace,” *Department of State Bulletin* 2256 (28 January 1945), 140, quoted in S.E. Graham, “The (Real)politics of Culture: U.S. Cultural Diplomacy in Unesco, 1946–1954,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (April 2006), 236.

But the New Deal spirit of democratic multilateralism that motivated U.S. leadership in organizing the United Nations quickly withered in the heat of post-war domestic politics, bringing forward fears and reservations held by the American Right at the United Nations' very creation. Members of the U.S. Congress early in debate raised states' rights concerns over the formation of the United Nations, leading to some significant revisions in the U.N. Charter itself, between its idealistic conception at Dumbarton Oaks and its delivery in San Francisco. Article 2 of the Charter reassured the powers-that-were that the new entity would lack any authority to pierce the armor of national sovereignty. The threat that some universal human rights principle or another might legitimate critique, if not transformation, of the nation's cultural status quo — styled by conservatives as “clawback” provisions — or that bringing national attention to aspects of human rights previously left to sub-national states by the federal government alarmed the emerging coalition of Southern Democrats and anti-New Deal Republicans trying to abort or defang the U.N. at its conception. Here, ironically but tellingly, anti-democratic elements of U.S. political leadership had common cause with Stalin. Borgwardt concludes that Article 2's provisions to assure national sovereignty were “transparently aimed to help with the politics of US Senate ratification as well as Soviet sensitivities to foreign scrutiny or intervention.” Conservatives were placated by these changes:

John Foster Dulles, advising the Republican members of the US delegation [to the 1945 founding UN Conference on International Organization in San Francisco], indicated that domestic jurisdiction was “a basic principle of the organization” and drew an analogy with “federalism in the United States.” The analogy was quite apt. American federalism promoted local control and governance that was responsive to popular sovereignty. But in the southern states in



particular, it also sheltered racist regimes from the reach of the US Constitution.<sup>13</sup>

It was only with this reassurance and reservation that the UN Charter was signed in San Francisco.

The appointment of British national Julian Huxley as UNESCO's Director-General over the ill-qualified American candidate Truman put forward, to pay off a political debt, excited concern that Washington was losing control of the agency. The "acerbic" Huxley was "left-wing in his political sympathies" and also an atheist, exacerbating disappointment among the Americans, whose fears were amplified by his early staff appointments. Then, at the agency's first General Conference in Paris in November 1946, the Yugoslavian delegate attacked the assertion in the preamble to UNESCO's Constitution that "wars are made in the minds of men" as contradicting the deep truth of historical materialism, and warned that international co-operation stood little chance if the Soviet Union did not join. This mingling of politics with cultural affairs shocked American delegates and gave birth to suspicions and an urgent desire for greater control in the State Department.

A February 1947 memo to President Truman from General Hoyt Vandenberg, director of his Central Intelligence Group, warned of communist sympathizers in UNESCO, which occasioned a State Department reassessment. Mistrustful of the U.S. National Commission on UNESCO as a body that could be inattentive to official U.S. positions and directives, one Foreign Service penned an angry memo after observing the Commission's September 1947 annual conference, arguing that

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<sup>13</sup> Borgwardt, 192.

[f]or a group of citizen to bypass the Department to represent the people of United States to the people of other nations is actually usurping the function of the Government and is setting up an institution with no responsibilities to Government, although supported by Government, which might follow policies frustrative of foreign policies of Government. If they wish to indicate their voice as free citizens of a democracy, they may do so, but such a voice... should not be heard in a United Nations organization in which other participants are governmental organizations.

Historian Frank Ninkovich, summarizing this sequence of events, states that “The State Department now took the position that universality would have to reflect American national values, and not the reverse.” He describes a State Department briefing session for delegates to UNESCO’s second General Conference in Mexico City in December 1947 as requiring its members “to swallow their castor oil in the form of a full briefing on the dangers of Communist influences in UNESCO.” The Conference brought accusations of U.S. cultural imperialism from the Polish delegation, cementing official fears that the democratic “town meeting” U.N. architects had envisioned would bring too many nasty surprises: “[T]he unexpected emergence of cultural politics vitiated the idealist premises upon which UNESCO had been founded.”<sup>14</sup>

By the Fifties, after the Soviet Union had joined UNESCO, and former colonial nations were winning independence and joining the U.N., U.S. disaffection with UNESCO ran even deeper. What came out in the “town meeting” that its General Conference resembled, organized on a one-nation, one-vote the U.S. had actually fought for, proved to be

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<sup>14</sup> Frank A. Ninkovich, *The Diplomacy of Ideas: U.S. Foreign Policy and Cultural Relations, 1938-1950* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 97-106 and 112.

not to our official liking at a time of virulent ideological conflict within the United States itself, due to the growing plurality of developing countries in its membership.

As a consultant to the U.S. National Commission wrote decades later, briefing delegates for yet another UNESCO conclave in Mexico City in the early Eighties:

U.S. influence waned in part because its interest faltered, beginning relatively early in UNESCO's history and no later than the mid-1950's. This was the result of disenchantment with the resistance to U.S. views of UNESCO's role ...; the domestic climate of uncertainty engendered by the witchhunting of the 1950's, symbolized as "McCarthyism"; unhappiness over, and reluctance to be associated with, the broad lines of policy which emerged in UNESCO as its composition changed; and constant frustration over what were seen as UNESCO'S inefficiencies ... Consequently, the United States generally abandoned the effort to lead in UNESCO beginning in the 1950's.<sup>15</sup>

Resistance, criticism, and defensive withholding of resources — all against a backdrop of unilateral action as the world's primary superpower — have dominated U.S. relations with the United Nations for most of its subsequent history. Unilateralism became the primary force in U.S. international cultural policy, as has continued into the present.

### ***Polarizing the Globe***

From the moment the Truman Doctrine was born, proclaiming the geopolitical bipolarity of the Cold War world, the U.S. foreign policy establishment took measures to create a strongly ideological anti-communism in the socio-cultural realm. In a very real

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<sup>15</sup> Dr. Lawrence S. Finkelstein, "Is the Past Prologue?" U.S. National Commission for UNESCO, *A Critical Assessment of U.S. Participation in UNESCO*, U.S. Department of State Publication 9297, International Organization and Conference Series 158, Bureau of International Organizational Affairs (Washington: Government Printing Office, Oct. 1982), 34.

sense, the American Way campaign described earlier was thus taken to scale internationally, casting the USA as the global champion of freedom and of God-fearing, Judeo-Christian religiosity, in relentless opposition to the “totalitarian,” godless world of communism.

Hannah Arendt’s *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, published in 1951, argued that fascism and communism were identical in their devotion to “radical evil,” enforcing ideological norms instead of valuing diversity. That Arendt also feared the totalitarian tendencies she observed in American politics was apparently missed by most readers at the time, caught up in the hothouse atmosphere of domestic anti-communism. Historian Giles Scott-Smith concludes, “The motto of the Western Cold Warriors became ‘free world versus totalitarianism.’”<sup>16</sup>

The sacralization of American identity described earlier transformed the Cold War into a holy one, extending Manifest Destiny to global, if not celestial, scale. Historian Frances Stonor Saunders observes that

during the height of the Cold War ... America discovered how useful the invocation of the highest hosanna could be. God was everywhere: ... in 10,000 balloons containing Bibles ... floated across the Iron Curtain ... “Why should *we* make a five-year plan for ourselves when God seems to have had a thousand-year plan ready-made for us?” asked [historian Daniel Boorstin]. ... By invoking the ultimate moral authority, America acquired an unanswerable sanction for her “manifest destiny.”

Saunders quotes Paul Nitze, speaking in retrospect years later, about what “Destiny’s elect had been taught” in relation to the anti-communism of the period:

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<sup>16</sup> Giles Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture: The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the CIA and Post-war American Hegemony*. Routledge/PSA Political Studies series. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 43-44.

In history, every religion has greatly honored those members who destroyed the enemy. ... Of course, here are some restraints on ends and means. If you ... read Thucydides, there are limits to what you can do to other Greeks ... But there are no limits to what you can do to a Persian. He's a barbarian. The Communists were barbarians.

The historian then concludes that

with the religious imperative insinuating its way into every major Cold War policy plank, the whole edifice of American power in the 1950s seemed to rest on one fundamental, monist proposition: that the future would be decided [in the words of Whittaker Chambers] "between the two great camps of men — those who reject and those who worship God." "We must not be confused about the issue which confronts the world today," President Truman had warned. "It is tyranny or freedom ... And even worse, communism denies the very existence of God."<sup>17</sup>

### ***Mirroring the Soviet Union***

Already by 1949, Archibald MacLeish, the State Department Assistant Secretary for Public and Cultural Affairs in 1944-45 and then US representative to UNESCO, saw bipolarity as a pattern of reaction that effectively ceded power to the Soviet Union, describing official U.S. policy as being "under a kind of upside-down Russian veto."<sup>18</sup> Whatever Moscow advocated must by definition be opposed to liberty-loving American aspirations. As Borgwardt summarizes this phenomenon, it came to be believed that "economic, social and cultural rights [were] anathema to free enterprise and limited

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<sup>17</sup> Saunders, 279-282.

<sup>18</sup> Studs Terkel, *"The Good War": An Oral History of World War II* (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 13.

government, since these ideas had been tainted by their association with the Soviet system.”<sup>19</sup>

The foundational values of human rights that had guided American idealists through the dark days of the war quickly disappeared.

That “free enterprise,” rather than democracy, was taken up as the United States’ standard reflects the inside influence of the same corporate interests who stood behind the American Way campaign, then just more than a decade old, upon U.S. policymakers in the international arena. Mirroring their constructions of what was wrong with the Soviets produced seemingly compulsory opposites — capitalist “free enterprise” (an economic idea) against totalitarianism (a political one), religiosity against godlessness. Historian Frances Stonor Saunders observes that the ideological polarization of this period “reduced the complexity of world relations to a struggle between the powers of light and darkness — [and] meant that the rhetoric of American foreign policy had come to rest on distinctions which resisted the processes of logic or rationality.”<sup>20</sup>

The immense international cultural project of global positioning on the part of the U.S. foreign-policy establishment was shaped and its message projected through a variety of means and methods, overt and covert: through active propaganda, directed toward foreign audiences inside the communist bloc and elsewhere; through cultural exchange showcasing an officially framed version of American culture; and very importantly to U.S. cultural policy at home and abroad, through the construction of an anti-communist elite rooted in the United

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<sup>19</sup> Borgwardt, 51.

<sup>20</sup> Saunders, 282.

States and Western Europe, constructed and lavishly subsidized largely by our government's intelligence apparatus, using covert means.

### ***Anti-communism, Foreign and Domestic***

That these international efforts can be described as parallel to the domestic anti-communism — not often intersecting — is the result of real intention. Considering the goings-on in the U.S.A.'s foreign-policy establishment, one might say that Joe McCarthy was right in his paranoid obsession about left-friendly forces being present within the State Department — and also in theorizing that espionage was involved. He was mightily mistaken, however, about the intentions and even the direction of this espionage, for culture was understood in the State Department and among its covert spawn in the blossoming “national security” apparatus as a core component of the Cold War arsenal and a means of projecting the United States as a respectable, world-class leader of the “Free World.”

That so much of what was to follow in the international arena took covert form was actually attributed to Joe McCarthy's domestic crusade by a number of the participants in the world of U.S. foreign-policy operatives. As Arthur Schlesinger stated in a 1994 interview,

One of the oddities of the CIA's venture in cultural politics was that what it did should have been done openly and publicly through the United States Information Agency, or some other such body. The reason it couldn't be was because of Joe McCarthy, because if Joe McCarthy knew that the U.S. government was funding Non-Communist Left magazines, and socialist and Catholic trade unions [in Europe], that would have caused great trouble. So it was in order to avoid McCarthy that the CIA did these things in a covert way.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: The New Press, 1999), 197.

The sharp turn in the United States' international cultural policy from New Deal multilateralism to Cold War unilateralism occurred very quickly in the years following World War II. The foreign-policy establishment began to position the USA as a world-class leader in culture, fully justifying in their minds its geopolitical dominance. The "class" in "world-class" reflects something of significance here, for the State Department's agenda was very much focused on projecting an image of America as fully capable of producing elitist, "high-art" culture, and therefore finally freeing it of European influence. With the Marshall Plan well in place and NATO emerging to cement a Western zone in Europe, U.S. foreign-policy players sought to represent a nation that was no longer the unsophisticated "outlier" to superior continental cultural traditions and institutions: the United States was therefore worthy of its global leadership role for deeper reasons than its ability to wield brute force as a means of coercion. The U.S. foreign-policy establishment represented elite interpretations of culture, its advocates being highly self-conscious of the condescension of European leaders toward U.S. culture and politics, whose continuing disdain reinforced by the extensive, proliferating influence of commercial mass media and growing hordes of American tourists.<sup>22</sup>

The primary leaders of domestic U.S. anti-communism embodied many of the very detriments that underlay America's bad image abroad contrast, especially in the view of the elites driving the nation's international image-projection. The witch-hunters' ignorant interpretations of art — whether social-realist, as in the Thirties, or abstract, as in the postwar

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<sup>22</sup> See Christopher Endy's *Cold War Holidays* and Richard Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).



period — exemplified the very image of the unsophisticated, materialist, “uncultured” America that most Europeans dismissed as shallow and stupid, compared to continental artists and intellectuals, who stood on the foundation-stones of Europe’s centuries-old cultural traditions. Noting that “many Americans linked experimental, and especially abstract art to degenerate or subversive impulses,” historian Frances Stonor Saunders quoted Missouri’s Republican Representative George Dondero as typifying the “cultural fundamentalism” that “declared modernism to be quite simply part of a worldwide conspiracy to weaken American resolve.” Dondero warned that

All modern art is Communistic. ... Cubism tends to destroy by designed disorder, Futurism aims to destroy by the machine myth ... Dadaism tends to destroy by ridicule. Expressionism aims to destroy by aping the primitive and insane. Abstractionism aims to destroy by the creation of brainstorm. ... Surrealism aims to destroy by the denial of reason.<sup>23</sup>

That domestic anti-communist leaders were also not incidentally racist, and conspicuously led by committed defenders of segregation and “states’ rights,” instead of internationalist sentiments, reinforced the very problems that the U.S. Foreign Service faced in managing the image of the nation abroad. Their emerging global propaganda campaign tried to erase the strength of anti-democratic and racist forces in cultural life back home.

Tom Braden, who was to head up the CIA’s International Organizations Division in the Fifties, later reflected on the challenge faced by those like himself belonging to the elite

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<sup>23</sup> Saunders, 252-253.

who came to manage the national image abroad: “You always have to battle your own ignoramuses, or, to put it more politely, people who just don’t understand.”<sup>24</sup>

### ***The American Image Abroad***

Anti-communist intellectual Sidney Hook summed up the problematic European view of the United States for *Partisan Review* readers after attending a “World Congress of Peace” convened in Paris in April 1949:

[The French public’s] picture of America is a composite of impressions derived from reading the novels of social protest and revolt (Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath* is taken as a faithful and *representative* account), the novels of American degeneracy (Faulkner) and inanity (Sinclair Lewis), from seeing American movies, and from exposure to an incessant Communist barrage which seeps into the non-Communist press. *The informational re-education of the French public seems to me to be the most fundamental as well as the most pressing task of American democratic policy in France, towards which almost nothing along effective lines has been done.*<sup>25</sup>

A less art world-oriented rendition of popular French anti-Americanism was offered by historian Richard Kuisel:

Interwar observers like Georges Duhamel and André Siegfried announced the major themes that succeeding generations of America-watchers elaborated. They contrasted French civilization with the wasteland of American mass culture and Gallic individualism with American conformism. Americans ... might be wealthy and powerful, but they were dominated by businessmen like Henry Ford who trained their fellow

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<sup>24</sup> Saunders, 259.

<sup>25</sup> From Hook’s “Report on the International Day of Resistance to Dictatorship and War,” *Partisan Review*, vol. 16/7, Fall 1949, cited in Saunders, 69-70.

Americans to be mass producers and consumers — creating a society of comfortable conformists and cultural philistines.

Kuisel notes that until World War II, “the New World had been of marginal interest,” but that “postwar ... the French could no longer ignore America because the United States began to exercise a certain hegemony over France,” which had “social, economic, and cultural, as well as politico-strategic, features.”<sup>26</sup>

Such attitudes toward the United States were not unique to Europe. Tracing the history of international cultural relations prior to World War II, Charles Thomson and Walter Laves describe Latin American attitudes prior to the Thirties as follows:

[T]o the people of Latin America the United States seemed distant and alien. At best it appeared indifferent. The current image of the North American was not that of the scholar, the artist, the humanitarian, or even the ordinary, understandable human being. It was in the popular view that of a vigorous people, but rude and crude, avid for money and material goods. Too prevalently it was symbolized by the invading marine with his trampling boots or the exploiting and corrupting capitalist.<sup>27</sup>

Countering such impressions of the United States became an obsession of those Americans having some official concern for validating their nation’s standing in world opinion as the Cold War got underway. International relations scholar John Ikenberry wrote of three options facing the hegemonic victor of global war: it can dominate, or it can abandon, or it “can try to *transform* its postwar power position into a durable order that

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<sup>26</sup> Kuisel, 2.

<sup>27</sup> Thomson and Laves, *Cultural Relations*, 35.

commands the allegiance of other states within the order.”<sup>28</sup> This last aim became the obsession of U.S. policymakers and their supporters, as they locked themselves into a stance of unilateral action in a bipolar Cold War world.

The main challenge in legitimating the United States as the world’s most enlightened cultural leader, not merely its strongest brute, was characterized years after the fight began by George Kennan in a 1955 address at New York’s Museum of Modern Art:

We have ... to show the outside world both that we have a cultural life and that we care something about it. That we care about it enough, in fact, to give it encouragement and support here at home, and to see that it is enriched by acquaintance with similar activity elsewhere. If these impressions could only be conveyed with enough force and success to countries beyond our borders, *I for one would willingly trade the entire remaining inventory of political propaganda for the results that would be achieved by such results alone.*<sup>29</sup>

This legitimation effort was focused mainly through the strong identification felt by American elites with European high-art culture, where postwar geopolitical lines were quickly being redrawn and heavily reinforced.

### ***Dividing Europe, East and West***

The growing perception of anti-communist bipolarity after World War II has already been described. Against this same backdrop came a set of key events that set the USA’s foreign-policy priesthood in motion on their worldwide cultural crusade. That crusade began and for our purposes — examining cultural policy — remained focused mainly in Europe,

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<sup>28</sup> G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint and the Rebuilding of Order After Major Wars* (Princeton University Press, 2000), 4.

<sup>29</sup> Saunders, 272.

despite the importance of the Korean War in the Fifties and Vietnam in the Sixties and Seventies as centers of American military engagement with communist forces.

The crucial backdrop of U.S. involvement in Europe was what British Prime Minister Winston Churchill called the “iron curtain” in a speech in Fulton, Missouri in 1946, dramatizing the threat perceived in Stalin’s address earlier that year, urging his domestic audience in the USSR to rebuild and prepare for the *next* war, which the contradictions of capitalism would surely bring.<sup>30</sup> It was in 1947 that the imaginary line known as the Iron Curtain — capitalized forever after — was drawn across the geopolitical map of Europe and etched deeply in the minds of people throughout the world, quickly becoming the iconic symbol in the “free world” for the totalitarian reign of terror its citizens imagined were being carried out on the other side.

The Economic Recovery Program (ERP) — the Marshall Plan — was announced in Secretary of State George Marshall’s historic Harvard commencement speech at on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1947, climaxing a very short development timeline. George Kennan, newly appointed as the Department of State’s first Policy Planning Staff director, had been charged with creating the plan on April 29<sup>th</sup>. His first policy proposal — identified as PPS/1 — was completed on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, discussed on the 28<sup>th</sup> and adopted in time for Gen. Marshall’s speech. Clearly, many details were yet to be worked out, and authorization and appropriations would have to won from Congress before anything could actually be done. At Kennan’s recommendation, Soviet foreign minister Molotov was among those European leaders summoned to Paris on June 27<sup>th</sup> to be offered participation in what was described as a European-directed program of

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<sup>30</sup> Gaddis, *Cold War*, 94.

American aid to reconstruct Europe: Molotov's expected refusal, after walking out of that meeting, saved the Plan's chances for Congressional support, though this required the better part of a year to achieve.<sup>31</sup>

Cascading events speedily ensued, creating what Cold War historian John Lewis Gaddis describes as "an ever-deepening whirlpool of distrust" in which each nation's leaders' "suspicions become self-reinforcing."<sup>32</sup> The dissolution of the Comintern during World War II had seemed a reassuring indicator to some Americans that Stalin had abandoned visions of promoting international communism; but the ERP spurred Stalin to create the Cominform.

In July 1947 the Soviets withdrew from the three-power conference in Paris considering Marshall Plan assistance. The Cominform was established in October. Belief was spreading that a new war was inevitable. The year 1948 saw the Communist *coup d'état* in Czechoslovakia, and Soviet blockade of West Berlin. Tito broke with Stalin. The Middle East was torn by Arab-Israeli conflict. Cooperation within all United Nations agencies seemed threatened.<sup>33</sup>

As Charles E. Bohlen, Marshall's aide in establishing the Recovery Plan and the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA) that carried it out, put it in 1947, a new global order had been constructed: "There are, in short, two worlds instead of one."<sup>34</sup> Battle lines had been

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<sup>31</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *George F. Kennan: An American Life* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011), 265-269

<sup>32</sup> Gaddis, *The Cold War*, 27.

<sup>33</sup> Laves and Thomson, *UNESCO*, 34-35. Scott-Smith's later account (54) sets the Cominform's formation in September, more likely in light of subsequent events.

<sup>34</sup> Gaddis, *The Cold War*, 98.

drawn for the culture war that explicitly dominated world politics for more than four decades, then implicitly shaped U.S. responses to terrorist threats into the twenty-first century.

In October 1947, the Association for the Cultural Restoration of Germany convened Berlin's first major intellectual gathering after the city's destruction and occupation — a German Writers Conference. This was also “the first event where the tactics of the Cominform came into play.” It was here that multi-national American Melvin J. Lasky — “a volcano in near-permanent eruption” — stepped up to defend the allegedly “war-mongering” United States, deploying tropes that would become familiar in the intellectual Cold War, challenging the Soviets to join the “*Kampf um die kulturelle Freiheit*” (the struggle over cultural freedom).<sup>35</sup>

Apparently alarmed at the Soviets' new propaganda initiative, George Kennan warned early Cold War strategists and operators at Washington's War College two months later that a “necessary lie” was called for, because of what he described as the Communists'

strong position in Europe, so immensely superior to our own  
... [attained] through unabashed and skillful use of lies. They  
have fought us with unreality, with irrationalism. Can we  
combat this unreality successfully with rationalism, with truth,  
with honest, well-meant economic assistance?

He evidently thought not, for he asserted that the United States needed to carry out a covert form of warfare to advance its objectives.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Scott-Smith, 90.

<sup>36</sup> Saunders, 38-39.

## THE CIA IS BORN

The very month of Kennan's War College lecture — December 1947 — the apparatus for this covert war was being created across town by State Department planners, through NSC-4 and its top-secret appendix NSC-4A, calling for "covert psychological activities." NSC-4 was superseded in June 1948 by the more explicit NSC-10/2, which called for

propaganda, economic warfare, preventative direct action, including sabotage, anti-sabotage, demolition and evacuation measures; subversion against hostile states including assistance to underground resistance movements, guerillas and refugee liberation groups ... so planned and executed that any U.S. government responsibility for them is not evident to unauthorized personnel, and that if uncovered the U.S. government can plausibly disclaim any responsibility for them.<sup>37</sup>

This quickening resolve reverberated throughout Washington. Stalin's activation of Cominform (the Communist Information Bureau), quickly followed by a political clampdown behind the proverbial Iron Curtain; large-scale communist-supported labor unrest in France and Italy, suggesting that Communists might do well in upcoming elections; and a Czech coup in March 1948 spurred members of Congress who had dragged their feet in funding the Marshall Plan into suddenly changing their positions, lest the Soviets succeed in playing the political cards it apparently still possessed.<sup>38</sup> Thus the Marshall Plan and the new apparatus for covert operations came into being simultaneously.

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<sup>37</sup> Frances Stonor Saunders, 38-39.

<sup>38</sup> Scott-Smith, 53-54. See also George Kennan, *Memoirs 1925-1950* (New York: Bantam, 1969), 424.



It was also this perceived threat that won passage for the Smith-Mundt Act of 1948, which “provided a legislative basis for the increasingly structured and activist intentions that cultural diplomacy was framed around,” granting the Secretary of State “[t]he authority to set up a world-wide program of international information and educational exchange....”<sup>39</sup> Congressional authorization for creating the U.S. Information and Educational Exchange (USIE) also gave cover to “psych ops” (psychological operations); except for such simple cultural exchange efforts as the Fulbright fellowships, it was “psych ops” and more overt propaganda efforts that effectively took priority in the State Department and its spin-offs until the mid-Fifties, when more formal performing-arts touring began.

The politically tendentious way that even “information and educational exchange” were understood is summed up in the words of Rep. John Davis Lodge (R-CT): “The important thing is to bring the foreigners in here and work them over” — to which the bill’s Senate co-sponsor, H. Alexander Smith (R-NJ), replied, “That is the point in sending our boys over there.” In reporting these remarks at the time of the Act’s creation, historian Frank Ninkovich concludes, “Once the fundamentalist perspective was ideologized, so to speak, its elements of nativism and antiradicalism became prominent aspects of the new programs” that the State Department launched under its authority.<sup>40</sup>

Newly authorized covert operations were directed in their early days by Frank Wisner’s State Department Office of Policy Coordination (OPC), the institutional seed from which the Central Intelligence Agency grew. Following the CIA Act of 1949, the OPC

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<sup>39</sup> Graham, 241; Thomson and Laves, 78.

<sup>40</sup> Ninkovich, 132.

rapidly grew from 302 staff members and a budget of \$4.7 million to 2,812 staff and \$82 million by 1952. About half of these personnel — 1,400 operatives, including many ex-Nazis — were based in OPC's Templehof Air Base station, aiming to create a network of Germans spying on Russians. The Agency became home for many intelligence operatives who had cut their teeth during the war, such as Michael Josselson, an émigré first from Tsarist Russia, then from Nazi Germany, who served in the Army's Psychological Warfare Division, but ultimately become the longtime head of the Congress for Cultural Freedom.<sup>41</sup>

It would take another couple of years to flesh out the legal foundations, structure, and nature of the United States' global cultural strategy, but Wisner and OPC staff went to work immediately. Wisner's special assistant for labor and émigré affairs, Carmel Offie, famous for lavish entertaining as soon as he began working in the European Foreign Service in the Moscow embassy in the Thirties, was an important OPC liaison to participants on both sides of the Atlantic: his 1943 arrest in Washington's Lafayette Park lavatory (later leaked by the CIA to Joe McCarthy as a back-door means of dealing with accusations of sexual harassment in the OPC office) and wartime involvement in illegal currency transfers had jeopardized his career, but friends in high places urged Wisner to take him on. His near-comeuppance did not occasion much change in Offie's personal style: historian Frances Stonor Saunders notes that "he taunted other men with his homosexuality by tweaking their nipples at staff meetings."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Saunders, 40 and 42.

<sup>42</sup> Saunders, 67.

Agency writer Michael Warner settles for characterizing Offie as “flamboyant and ubiquitous.” Offie played a key role in the years that CIA action in Europe took shape.<sup>43</sup>

The CIA was to become a hidden cornerstone of the nation’s international Cold War effort, channeling tens of millions of dollars to collaborators in Europe. Saunders highlights the cultural policy significance of the new agency:

With this kind of commitment, the CIA was in effect acting as America’s Ministry of Culture. ... This was an entrepreneurial coalition of philanthropic foundations, business corporations and other institutions and individuals, who worked hand in hand with the CIA to provide the cover and the funding pipeline for its secret programmes in western Europe.<sup>44</sup>

### ***Defining the Cultural Cold War***

The covert war launched at this time was importantly a cultural one. In December 1947, the same month that Kennan addressed his War College audience and NSC-4 was issued, Army occupation officer Melvin Lasky delivered a paper to General Lucius Clay, governor of the American zone in Germany, proposed the kernel of an idea that was to become Lasky’s job after leaving the Army:

We have not succeeded in combating the variety of factors — political, psychological, cultural — which work against U.S. foreign policy, and in particular against the Marshall Plan in Europe. [What is needed is] an active truth [bold enough to] enter the contest ... [The Cold War is] cultural in range. And it is here that a serious void in the American program has been most exploited by the enemies of American foreign policy. ...

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<sup>43</sup> Michael Warner, “Origins of the Congress for Cultural Freedom,” 91. Accessed August 13, 2013, from <http://cia.gov/csi/studies/95unclass/Warner.html>, a redacted portion unclassified in 1995 part of a larger classified draft study of CIA involvement with anti-Communist groups in the Cold War.

<sup>44</sup> Saunders, 129.

The void ... is real and grave. ... [the failure] to win the educated and cultured classes — which, in the long run, provide moral and political leadership in the community. ... [A new journal would] serve both as a constructive fillip to German-European thought [and also] a demonstration that behind the official representatives of American democracy lies a great and progressive culture, with a richness of achievement in the arts, in literature, in philosophy, in all the aspects of culture that unite the free traditions of Europe and America.<sup>45</sup>

Lasky's paper sketches out a concern that became central to the United States' Cold War cultural efforts to stem the feared communist tide in Europe. As Lasky remarked later, in a 1951 letter, "we know you can't fight Karl Marx with Coca-Cola."<sup>46</sup>

### ***Uncle Sam Courts Europe's Non-Communist Left***

From the halls of the State Department and of course the White House itself grew a formal but covert program of international support, financial and otherwise, for the "non-communist left" (NCL) in other countries. This program contrasted sharply with McCarthy's and other domestic campaigners' efforts to eradicate "left" tendencies altogether in the cultural life of the United States itself. With Southern Democrats and McCarthyesque Republicans ruling the roost at home, this was a challenging script to construct and maintain, especially when McCarthy emerged with his "commies in the State Department" theory. Part of the rationale for keeping so much of this international cultural work covert was to protect it from scrutiny by domestic witch-hunters whose taste and character many of the international policymakers disdained.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 29-30.

<sup>46</sup> Scott-Smith, 55-56, fn. 129, citing Lasky to Bondy, 1 March 1951, IACF/CCF archive, Regenstein Library, University of Chicago, Series II, Box 241, Folder 4.

The sophisticated liberals who largely steered these efforts understood that European socialism and its adherents' concerns for economic justice could not be merely suppressed without seeming fascistic, reinforcing the U.S. image as, at best, a slap-happy, adolescent hick (reinforced by first encounters with U.S. servicemen in two world wars, and with American tourists who seemed more interested in shopping and carousing than deeper cultural experience) or, worse, an arrogant, self-possessed, materialist brute, undeserving of global leadership.

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., author of *The Vital Center*, summed up what became the strategy of supporting the “non-Communist Left [as] the standard to rally the groups fighting to carve out an area for freedom ... [and] the restoration of the radical nerve [leaving] no lamp in the window for the Communists.” In a 1996 interview, Schlesinger added, “We all felt that democratic socialism was the most effective bulwark against totalitarianism. This became an undercurrent — or even undercover — theme in American foreign policy during the period.”<sup>47</sup>

These efforts began earliest in occupied Germany. A former City College Trotskyist long since alienated by Stalin, the volcanic Lasky became editor of *Der Monat*, just the German-language journal his paper for General Clay had described, which was launched in October 1948 with financing from the American High Commission's “Confidential Fund.”<sup>48</sup> The journal later became the first of several produced in various European languages with covert CIA support.

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<sup>47</sup> Both cited in Saunders, 63.

<sup>48</sup> Saunders, 140.

Lasky's journal was launched in conjunction with a formal organizational initiative conceived and backed by the CIA that is described in the Agency's more or less official history of the era as "one of the CIA's more daring and effective Cold War covert operations"<sup>49</sup>: the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF). The CCF grew out of a sequence of events that alarmed anti-communist intellectuals about the American hegemon's vulnerability to charges suddenly being issued, to some effect, by the Soviet Union and its fellow travelers. But it took all of 1949 and much of 1950 for the CCF to be conceived and born.

### ***War of the Words***

The threat perceived in a more actively propagandizing Soviet Union was enlarged, ironically, through a series of international events devoted to peace. A constellation of some 800 artists and intellectuals gathered for a "Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace" at New York's Waldorf-Astoria in March 1949, in which the United States was consistently cast as a "war monger" by some of the nation's leading lights:

Playwright Clifford Odets denounced the "enemies of Man" and claimed the United States had been agitated into "a state of holy terror" by fraudulent reports of Soviet aggression; composer [Aaron] Copland declared "the present policies of the American Government will lead inevitably into a third world war."<sup>50</sup>

The conference host — the National Council of the Arts, Sciences and Professions — was a communist front organization, right-wingers warned, and the conference did in fact later

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<sup>49</sup> Warner, 89.

<sup>50</sup> Warner, 90.

prove to have been a Cominform initiative. A similar “World Congress of Peace” quickly followed in Paris, also with communist backing.

With covert support from the other side, a small cadre of anti-communist intellectuals — including Sidney Hook, Dwight Macdonald, Mary McCarthy, and Nicolas Nabokov — speedily organized themselves as “Americans for Intellectual Freedom” (AIF) and installed themselves and ten phone lines in the Waldorf’s Bridal Suite for the weekend to monitor, cover, and intervene in the March event as best they could. OPC’s Wisner sent Michael Josselson, a Templehof operative who was to figure prominently in later CIA organizing, and Lasky attended as well. AIF members issued various critiques of the event and staged a counter-demonstration in Bryant Park. According to the CIA’s commissioned account, “Hook and his friends stole the show,” though the tone in all other renditions of this history recalls that cadre members and OPC’s operators were panicked at the thought that Stalin might claim the high ground of peace, casting the U.S. as the world’s greatest geopolitical threat. This inchoate group began urgently to discuss how Americans and like-minded Europeans might better position themselves and best respond to Soviet initiatives.<sup>51</sup>

This conversation continued as opponents gathered alongside the Paris meeting in April, which was the occasion for Sidney Hook’s earlier quoted remarks about French views of American culture. French Resistance fighter and Buchenwald survivor David Rousset and *Franc-Tireur*, his non-communist left circle, quickly organized an “International Day of Resistance to Dictatorship and War” later the same month, in an effort to counter the two

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<sup>51</sup> Warner, 90-91.

communist-sponsored conferences,<sup>52</sup> but American officials deemed it “too radical and neutralist.” Not incidentally, while anti-Stalinist, the meeting also featured the anti-Americanism of which Hook complained, along with his resentment of “the use which [Jean-Paul] Sartre makes of [African American writer Richard Wright] as a kind of club against American culture analogous to the use the Communists make of [American singer Paul] Robeson.”<sup>53</sup> Thus was Wright, one of the six contributors to *The God That Failed*, rendered suspect and drummed out of the government’s anti-communist corps.

Much jockeying for position can be and has since been traced by historians throughout this gestation period, with interpersonal issues and relationships apparently jostling alongside intellectual, political, and strategic ones. Frances Stone Saunders sums up the shift occurring at this time as follows:

In effect, what [Hook] was advocating was the purging of those expressions of American life that he judged to be in conflict with the government’s “democratic policy” abroad. This was a monumental distortion of the very principles of freedom of expression, irreconcilable with the claims of liberal democracy under whose auspices it was proposed.<sup>54</sup>

Concrete plans began to emerge from the dialogue begun the previous winter in August 1949, when a small planning group brought together by Melvin Lasky in Frankfurt proposed convening a “Congress for Cultural Freedom” in Berlin — that island of Western authority in the midst of the Russian zone of occupation, blockaded for nearly a year until

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<sup>52</sup> Berghahn, 129.

<sup>53</sup> Saunders, 69.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 70.



earlier that summer. In September, Michael Josselson discussed the idea with the covert operator who had recruited him, Lawrence de Neufville, then serving on the OPC's Paris labor desk, who in turn "pouched" Carmel Offie on it. Offie referred the matter to Wisner's OPC deputy Frank Lindsay, and it finally reached Wisner in January 1950. Agency approval and funding for the conference were finally granted on April 7<sup>th</sup>, with Wisner's proviso that Lasky and James Burnham be kept out of sight; but for Lasky, at least, it was too late: he had already gone ahead and secured the blessing of the Mayor of Berlin and had begun to invite people to the event in their names. Organizers and eventually an American delegation flew into Berlin at OPC expense (the last leg, aboard military aircraft) in time for the Congress to convene on June 26<sup>th</sup>.

### ***The Anti-Communist Manifesto***

News that communist-backed North Korean troops had crossed the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel reached delegates on the morning of the Congress for Cultural Freedom's opening ceremony in Berlin, lending urgency and weight to its deliberations. The Berlin Philharmonic's performance of Beethoven's portentous "Egmont Overture" and Mayor Ernst Reuter's invitation that the ceremony's 4,000-strong audience stand for a moment of silence, in memory of those who died fighting for freedom, opened the way for four days of panel discussions, tours, press conferences, cocktail parties, concerts, and speeches.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Saunders, 76-77.

The stridency of the affair “appalled” British delegate Hugh Trevor-Roper, who complained, “There was very little in the way of serious discussion,” noting also that the proceedings weren’t “really intellectual at all”:

I had expected and hoped to hear the western point of view put forward and defended, ... [b]ut instead we had denunciations. ... I felt we were being invited to summon up Beezlebug in order to defeat Satan.

Ex-Communist Americans Arthur Koestler and James Burnham and Franz Borkenau of Germany delivered especially polarizing addresses against there being any neutral ground in postwar Europe, a sentiment echoed by Lasky (“Neutralism was, as an idea and as a movement, sponsored by the Soviets”) and actor Robert Montgomery (“There is no neutral corner in Freedom’s room!”). Vocal dissent from the floor was strong enough that Congress managers, Lasky notable among them, began to avoid giving the floor to extremists.<sup>56</sup>

Wisner, infuriated at hearing of Lasky’s prominent role in Berlin, cabled from Washington that he should be removed, due to his known connection to the U.S. government. On the eve of the Congress, the East German propaganda chief Gerhart Eisler had issued a press statement blaming “American policy spy Melvin Lasky” with the recent failed attempt to set fire to Berlin’s Communist House of Culture. Wisner’s eagerness to avoid any appearance of connection was beside the point for many of those in attendance: Trevor-Roper reminisced that “the whole thing was orchestrated on so grandiose a scale ... that I realized that ... it must have been funded by some powerful government organization.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 78-81.

<sup>57</sup> Saunders, 81-82.

Arthur Koestler mounted the podium one last time, before a public audience numbering 15,000 in a sports stadium, to read out the fourteen-point “Freedom Manifesto” that became the ideological foundation for the Congress for Cultural Freedom as an organization — mainly the rejection of neutralism in the fight against totalitarianism.<sup>58</sup> Troublesome British attendees had compelled revisions and amendments to Koestler’s original draft, such as the elimination of language intolerant of Marxist thought: article 6 instead asserts that “No political philosophy or economic theory can claim the sole right to represent freedom in the abstract,” introducing “the extent and quality of freedom” as the criteria by which “the historical contribution of any society is to be judged.”<sup>59</sup> But the Manifesto’s main thrust remained: asserting the primacy of both intellectual freedom (article 1) and freedom of expression (articles 2 and 5), while distinguishing between democratic societies (articles 3 and 4) and totalitarian ones (articles 8, 9, and 11).<sup>60</sup> Article 4 squarely addressed the Cominform’s attempt to lay claim to peace as its unique international aim, noting that “wars can be prepared and waged under [a] slogan ... of peace,” which it denounced as “counterfeit currency circulated for dishonest purposes.”<sup>61</sup>

More difficult to perceive across the distance of time are revisions made in Koestler’s draft Manifesto at the insistence of delegates not sharing the urgency he and James Burnham, then among the harshest critics of Kennan’s “containment” stance, felt that liberation of

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<sup>58</sup> The final Manifesto text appears as an appendix to Scott-Smith, 167-168.

<sup>59</sup> Scott-Smith, 167.

<sup>60</sup> Saunders, 82-83; Scott-Smith, 109-110.

<sup>61</sup> Scott-Smith, 167.

Soviet bloc countries should be the free world's goal. For his part, Wisner worried that the Congress not become a more militant organization, which might repel elements of the European non-communist left that the U.S. government meant to involve. Article 10 was the stage for this minor but energetic drama, opening with, "We hold that there can be no stable world so long as mankind, with regard to freedom, remains divided into 'haves' and 'have-nots.'" The draft's either/or struggle between "the defence of freedom" and the "reconquest of lost freedoms" was augmented to include "the creation of new freedoms." This subtle amendment placated the mainly-British delegates who bristled at the suggestion that the actually existing West already represented some kind of apotheosis of freedom. This same spirit inspired the Congress to add an entirely new final article 13: "The defense of intellectual liberty today imposes a positive obligation: to offer new and constructive answers to the problems of our time."<sup>62</sup>

### ***The Congress for Cultural Freedom Is Established***

The OPC Project Review Board had already secretly approved the CCF's continuance as an organization early in 1950, months before the Berlin Congress, under the codename QKOPERA. Wisner's demand that Lasky be put out (at least officially) led to Michael Josselson's becoming the Congress organization's director, and CCF's planned headquarters being moved from Berlin to Paris. Josselson, who would nevertheless rely on Lasky's counsel throughout his tenure, was to report to his original CIA recruiter de Neufville. Composer and *bon vivant* Nicolas Nabokov (cousin of Vladimir) became General Secretary

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<sup>62</sup> Scott-Smith, 110 and 168.

of the CCF, serving under Josselson. A contested choice, mostly because of support for other candidates, Nabokov had the ardent backing of Josselson and a critical mass of New York intellectuals, as well as George Kennan and Charles Bohlen.<sup>63</sup>

Nabokov had spoken stridently in Berlin of his urgent wish that “out of this Congress we must build an organization for war.” He began planning right away to bombard Paris with a display of sophisticated American taste, in the form of a festival.<sup>64</sup> But much more quickly, Europe seemed in need of shoring up against communist advances. It took partnerships to carry out this campaign; but of partners, there were plenty.

### ***Public-Private Propaganda Partners***

Already gestating by this time were private-sector initiatives that prepared the ground and quickly became implicated in the U.S. government’s global Cold War apparatus.

Historian Giles Scott-Smith summarizes the significance of this constellation of forces:

The conception of the American ruling class in the late 1940s, that Western Europe had to be transformed according to the productivist corporate-liberal synthesis to prevent economic stagnation from leading to socio-political disorder, found many supporters among European elites feeling threatened by the possibilities of post-war upheaval. ... [T]his transnational configuration of elites operating in big business, trade unions, in politics and in institutions of civil society would be the basis for American hegemonic leadership in the West until the early 1970s.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Saunders, 86-87.

<sup>64</sup> Scott-Smith, 121.

<sup>65</sup> Scott-Smith, 52-53.

An important and early component of this emerging constellation — “the paradigm for the CIA-led ‘corporatization’ of the foreign policy machinery in the Cold War period” — was the National Committee for a Free Europe. NCFE’s first president, Allen Dulles, was replaced upon his transfer to the CIA by C. D. (General Charles Douglas) Jackson of the wartime OSS and managing director of Time-Life in the late Forties, who would become advisor to Presidents Truman and Eisenhower. The NCFE’s fundraising arm, the “Crusade for Freedom,” provided both a stage and a launching pad for future President Ronald Reagan, the Crusade’s leading spokesman and publicist. The Committee launched Radio Free Europe in 1949, and caused countless thousands of balloons carrying propaganda pamphlets to rain down upon Soviet satellite countries in the early Fifties.<sup>66</sup>

American trade unions were also early, active participants in the East-West alignment of Europe. Having already carefully distanced themselves from communist associations back home, as domestic anti-communism grew, leaders of both the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) built on the patriotic pattern set in World War II in their approach to organizing: “working alongside management in a collective bargaining arrangement ... [in keeping with] the ‘politics of productivity’” then being extended to Western Europe through the Marshall Plan. This spirit was taken up by union leaders who fit the post-war American mold as ex-communist anti-communists:

Within the AFL, an aggressive drive against communist influence in the European unions was being planned well before the end of 1947. ... The foremost influence on this policy direction was Jay Lovestone, up until 1929 the Secretary of the American Communist Party and one of its founder

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<sup>66</sup> Saunders, 130, 132, and 146.

members, but thereafter increasingly a critic of Stalin's dictatorial methods. ... Lovestone, along with fellow socialists [David] Dubinsky and Irving Brown, became the prime movers of post-war AFL foreign policy through the Free Trade Union Committee (FTUC) ... set up in 1944... to aid the rebuilding of democratic institutions and union organizations in post-fascist, postwar Europe.<sup>67</sup>

Irving Brown played a central role from early on in the Cold War.

... [Irving] Brown, as FTUC European representative, became the main AFL anti-Communist trouble-shooter abroad for several decades after the war. ... Under the Marshall Plan Brown was principal union coordinator for the State Department and thus worked closely with Paul Nitze on the Technical Assistance Program. Then, in 1948, the FTUC agreed a formal arrangement with the OPC to act as a financial conduit to European anti-Communist groups, and up to 1958 the committee received \$464,167 from the CIA for a whole range of different activities. This is surely the thin end of the web, and other sources have pointed to a budget of between \$1 million and \$2 million dollars provided for Brown by the agency.<sup>68</sup>

Brown and company were most urgently concerned that the center-left coalition governments likely to be elected in France and Italy not include Communist Party participation. Distancing French and Italian unions from communism was their approach to achieving separation of European communist parties from other parties on the left.

Particular focus was placed on France (with the formation of the non-communist Force Ouvrière by Brown) and Italy to prevent the communist unions from undermining the Marshall Plan, and the solidification of a broad non-communist union front by pursuing the break-up of the Soviet-led World

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<sup>67</sup> Scott-Smith, 73-74.

<sup>68</sup> Scott-Smith, 74-75.

Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), which had included the CIO and the British Trades Union Congress, in 1948-9.<sup>69</sup>

As Cold War patterns crystallized, these early entities were joined by others, including pre-existing and new elements in what was known as the European Movement. That elite movement had roots in the Twenties, when Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi began agitating for a pan-European union, and in World War II, when Joseph Retinger, a Polish exile, built a wide network among exiled European leaders and American business and government interests.

The wish to formalize and direct these elite, pan-European networks from across the Atlantic led to William Donovan's formation of the American Committee on United Europe (ACUE) in April 1948. Former head of the wartime intelligence service, Donovan had at that time rallied "an elite corps which hailed from America's most powerful institutions and families" to occupy wartime espionage posts, and leaving him well-positioned to create this new organization.<sup>70</sup> Though the ACUE never grew very large — there were fewer than 400 members two years later — the organization comprised "a remarkable cross-section of intelligence and big business personnel," including Allen Dulles (then secretary of the Council on Foreign Relations and advisor to the creators of the CIA, which he would head throughout the Eisenhower administration), Thomas Braden, David Dubinsky, Walter Bedell

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<sup>69</sup> Scott-Smith, 75.

<sup>70</sup> Saunders, 16-17 and 34-35.



Smith (CIA Director, 1950-53), Charles Hook (chair, Armco Steel Corporation), and Lucius D. Clay (former commander-in-chief of U.S. Forces Europe).<sup>71</sup>

Retinger convened another influential coalescence of transatlantic elites later on, in May 1954. The Bilderberg Group took its name from the Dutch hotel where it first met, and its secret meetings regularly brought together top-level business and government leaders from the U.S. and Western Europe for discussion and planning in order to define common political and economic objectives. Walter Bedell Smith and C.D. Jackson, both top-level confidants of President Eisenhower, attended in 1954; but American participation lagged until the proposed European Defense Community faltered later that year, exciting fear that the presumed trans-Atlantic military alliance would not take shape and spurring more Americans to take part.

Tracing all these elements and actors, historian Giles Scott-Smith lays out a convincing argument that postwar American hegemony comprised the coalescence of these networks:

This, then, was Atlanticism — the creation of a solid consensus among the elites in Europe and the USA that worked towards first the acceptance of an American role in European affairs, and then its solidification. Institutions such as ACUE, NCFE, and Bilderberg demonstrate the alignment of significant economic and political interests with the maintenance of this hegemonic framework.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Scott-Smith, 76.

<sup>72</sup> Scott-Smith, 78.

## THE COLD WAR HEATS UP

In the years immediately following World War II, some Americans questioned whether there was any need for the United States to “sell itself” to the rest of the world. As Rep. John Bennett argued in 1947,

For more than 200 years — even to the remotest corner of the earth — people have known that the United States meant freedom in the fullest connotation of the term. ... Things that are self-evident require no proof.

Historian Frank Ninkovich, quoting the Congressman, adds that these resistant politicians also feared that “selling America” might attract unwanted buyers, warning that the country might be “swamped by invaders from Europe,” carrying “alien ideologies.” Besides, they observed, displaying their mistrust of the New Deal state, national action of this kind might constitute “a subtle, sinister way to Federal control.”<sup>73</sup>

As the late Forties yielded to the Fifties, however, world events seemed to lend credence to U.S. fears that communism was aggressively on the march throughout the world. The victory of Chinese communists put Chiang Kai-shek in retreat on Formosa, and wider communist ambitions in Asia were feared. News of the first Soviet atomic explosion suggested that America’s geopolitical dominance might be undone. The worsening situation climaxed in aggressive armed action from both sides in Korea in June 1950.

Thomson and Laves describe this historical moment as an important shift in the U.S. cultural relations:

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<sup>73</sup> Ninkovich, 125.

Shortly after the first Soviet atomic explosion the National Security Council decided in January, 1950 ... that the international situation confronting the United States was perilous, and ... called for enlarged and harder-hitting propaganda activity. In April President Truman underlined this proposal in a speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, urging a world-wide "Campaign of Truth." This proved to be not entirely realistic. In the atmosphere of crisis, truth suffered more than formerly from partisan fact and slanted information.<sup>74</sup>

William Benton, elected Senator in 1948 after serving as Assistant Secretary of State from 1945-47, expressed his alarm at the state of communist propaganda in 1950: "There has never been anything like it, anything so skillful and so effective in its mass impact." He listed five themes as central to Soviet attacks:

First. The United States is headed for a cataclysmic economic crash.

Second. The rulers of the United States are Fascists, warmongers, and monopolists.

Third. Although the rich in the United States are getting richer, everybody else is getting poorer and there is starvation, unrest, and growing sympathy for the Soviet Union among the masses.

Fourth. America's vaunted freedom is a fraud, and our doctrine of equality is belied by racial and religious discrimination.

Fifth. Our character is bad — we are culturally barbarous, money-mad, lawless, crime-ridden, and effete.<sup>75</sup>

Plans laid by Assistant Secretary of State Edward W. Barrett to campaign against these Soviet messages won support from Benton and twelve other senators, who called for a

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<sup>74</sup> Thomson and Laves, *Cultural Relations*, 78-80.

<sup>75</sup> Thomson and Laves, 79, citing debate on Sen. Res. 243, *Congressional Record* 96 (March 22, 1950), 3765-66.

“world-wide Marshall Plan in the field of ideas,” involving radio and film, bringing foreign students to the US, and support through the U.N., acceleration of the work of UNESCO, and U.S. diplomacy for world-wide freedom of information. Finally, their aim was that “the international propagation of the democratic creed be made an instrument of supreme national policy.”<sup>76</sup>

Benton’s invocation of UNESCO fit within the evolution away from multilateralism described earlier. At the November 1949 meeting of the U.S. National Commission, he called for expansion of UNESCO’s program and budget to achieve “objectives which are also the objectives of U.S. foreign policy.” After opposition was expressed to nationalist use of the agency, Benton stated at the Commission’s next meeting in January that his purpose was not to make the organization an instrument, but rather “an ally, an adjunct, an assistance to our foreign policy.”<sup>77</sup>

### ***The Campaign of Truth***

The Truman Doctrine was operationalized in the cultural realm of international relations through the President’s Campaign of Truth.

[I]t had gradually become clear that Soviet hostility was the fruit not of ignorance but of deliberate intent. ... In consequence the “Campaign of Truth” was to be a psychological offensive against Soviet propaganda activities and in favor of a more positive attitude on the part of other peoples toward the United States. Its stated objectives were to strengthen cohesion among the countries of the free world, to present the United States as a worthy partner with whom to

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<sup>76</sup> Thomson and Laves, *Cultural Relations*, 80.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 207-208, fnnt, 49.

cooperate, to deter Communist aggression, and to help roll back Soviet influence.<sup>78</sup>

Much of this psychological offensive was obscured from public view, at least as to its relation to the campaign's largely hidden structural and financial infrastructure. The overall task was ultimately handed to the CIA, after being launched by precursor groups following Smith-Mundt's 1948 passage. Yet some notable products of this covert work did reach sizable public audiences. Particularly well known was *The God That Failed*, a collection of six essays by American and European anti-communist ex-communists — Ignazio Silone, André Gide, Richard Wright, Arthur Koestler, Louis Fischer, and Stephen Spender. This project was conceived and the resulting book edited by Richard Crossman, former head of the Psychological Warfare Executive's German section, who wrote Truman advisor C.D. Jackson and Melvin Lasky about the idea. Lasky translated and published all but one of these essays in *Der Monat*, and the collection was published in 1950 by Hamish Hamilton (Koestler's publisher) in the United Kingdom and by Cass Canfield (later Allen Dulles's publisher) in the U.S.<sup>79</sup>

Truman's Campaign lasted into 1952, by which time any aversion within the Foreign Service establishment to mixing cultural or informational activities with the nation's geopolitical interests was apparently long forgotten. Reflecting in retrospect upon his role as director of State's Office of Educational Exchange from 1948-52, William C. Johnstone said:

It is basically a political job, for this program is an effective arm or instrument of American foreign policy. In its simplest

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>79</sup> Saunders, 65.

form, the job of this program is to implant a set of ideas or facts in the mind of a person. When this is done effectively, it results in action favorable to the achievement of American foreign policy. It can help unite the free nations on the road to peace.<sup>80</sup>

That this was also understood at the time is borne up by a September 1951 report to Congress from the Bureau of the Budget on State Department programs:

The objectives of so-called information and cultural activities are the same; no cultural activity is presently being continued which does not, through its own methods, encourage the unity and strengthening of the free world, increase trust in the United States as a leader of the free world, or expose the evils of Communism. ... Culture for culture's sake has no place in the United States Information and Educational Exchange Program. The value of international cultural exchange is to win respect for the cultural achievements of our free society, where that respect is necessary to inspire cooperation with us in world affairs. In such a situation, cultural activities are an indispensable tool in propaganda.<sup>81</sup>

As to practical impact, Thomson and Laves see these early years in the Cold War as bringing cultural diplomacy in line with other impulses in federal policy:

"Mutual understanding" continued to be a watchword, but was given such unilateral content as to obscure any real top-level concern with reciprocity. Immediate political objectives more and more shaped cultural as well as informational programs, and their aims were defined as countering Soviet propaganda attacks... The Point Four program ... gave technical assistance ... to help less developed countries. But as it was drawn into closer association with military and economic aid, it was increasingly viewed as an instrument of mutual security to oppose the spread of Communism.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Thomson and Laves, 84.

<sup>81</sup> Thomson and Laves, 86.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 95.

By this time, Foreign Service personnel and other U.S. participants in international relations were becoming aware of problems with early propaganda, which boasting of the comfort enjoyed by citizens of the young global hegemon — not only uniquely unscathed, but strengthened, by the War mobilization:

Previously ... the story presented had overwhelmed and disconcerted foreign peoples, and by its portrayal of American prosperity and of the superior comfort and well-being of the American standard of living had stirred resentment.<sup>83</sup>

As time wore on, government propagandists also came to understand that the alarmist tone of the Campaign of Truth — too unsubtle and baldly self-interested — was backfiring:

[T]he “Campaign of Truth” ... provoked a reaction. The view had emerged that the character of the whole United States information and cultural programs had become “too direct, too shrill, too polemical and, in a sense, too patronizing.” Any attempt, it was argued, to manipulate for nationalistic ends the minds and loyalties of our actual and potential friends abroad was contrary to American principles, and was naturally resented by those whose confidence and help we were seeking. ... [T]he program should be honest, calm and moderate, and intellectually mature and directed toward the fundamental attitudes and values of foreign peoples.<sup>84</sup>

This early experience helped shape projections of the United States by the considerable propaganda apparatus being deployed first in Europe, and then throughout the world.

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 96.

## ***Propaganda and Mass Media***

Along with intensifying anti-Soviet feeling in the United States came a sea change in popular and Congressional attitudes toward propaganda.

In the 1946 Congressional debates, the Voice of America was subjected to more serious attack than any other activity; in 1947 it proved to be “the most popular, the most wanted, the most understood, and the least vulnerable.”<sup>85</sup>

Walter Hixson observed that “as East-West tensions mounted, radio emerged as virtually the only viable means of disseminating anti-communist propaganda.”<sup>86</sup>

Radio was by no means the only medium employed: tens of thousands of balloons were floated over Eastern Europe, bearing propaganda messages, for example; and popular postcard-writing campaigns were mounted between immigrant populations of United States and citizens of Italy, to encourage anti-communist voting in the crucial election of 1948. But radio was definitely emphasized, not only through the government’s Voice of America broadcast operations, but also by Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberation, non-governmental entities working in consort with government interests.

Radio broadcasts were undeniably effective. From the summer of 1948 through May 1949, foreign listeners posted close to ten thousand letters each month in response to VOA programming, which estimated its audience at eight million, with listeners affecting others through word-of-mouth. In the winter of 1948, Moscow started jamming VOA broadcasts to

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 69, quoting from Benton’s Senate testimony on the *United States Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1947*, 111.

<sup>86</sup> Walter L Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945–1961* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 31.



Europe and the Pacific, an effort that intensified and continued for some time to come, requiring construction of hundreds of new transmitting stations by the war-ravaged and hard-strapped USSR. In 1950, the Soviets charged that the United States was “unceremoniously interfering with the radio services of the Marshall Plan countries, rebuilding them on the American pattern, and grabbing radio frequencies belonging to European broadcasting networks.” The Soviets never officially banned listening to Western broadcasts, apparently thinking this would constitute too profound an admission of their impact, though in 1951 the regime did forbid amateur radio operators from contacting people outside the USSR.<sup>87</sup>

Soviet jamming was used as evidence of VOA’s effectiveness, in order to secure domestic support for radio propaganda. After retiring from forty-seven years of work in Soviet broadcast operations in 1994, Victor Franzusoff reported that “many Soviet officials admitted to us that VOA had considerable influence on listeners.” VOA’s own costs were increased considerably by the Truman administration’s commitment to counter Soviet jamming. The administration never seriously considered abandoning broadcasts to Eastern Europe, and Sen. Benton advised that it redouble its efforts to penetrate jamming. Many techniques were tried: material was broadcast at two frequencies, requiring twice the number of jammers; VOA engineers shifted signals, requiring Soviet jammers to monitor them constantly; directional antennas and filters were deployed; the audio spectrum was “clipped,” cutting out lower tones of the human voice and reinforcing the more penetrating higher ones; VOA broadcasts were positioned immediately next to regular Soviet frequencies, so Soviet jammers could not block VOA broadcasts without blocking their own. All of this required

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<sup>87</sup> Hixson, 33-34.

heavy U.S. investment in both equipment and personnel, but Congress was ready to pay the price: in 1950, it allocated more than twice the regular VOA operating budget in start up funds for a “ring plan” to surround the Soviet Union with new transmitters. Martin Dies’ fears of *A Trojan Horse in America* are ironically echoed by the handle assigned to the group that produced this plan: Project TROY was the State-financed effort to involve academics at MIT and Harvard in devising strategies to infiltrate the Soviet empire with U.S. propaganda.<sup>88</sup>

Lavish support seemed even more urgent after war broke out in Korea. VOA dramatically expanded its operations worldwide, rapidly developing a potential audience of 300 million. By 1951, VOA went from producing daily programming in twenty-four languages to forty-five. By 1953, broadcasting in forty-six languages, VOA employed 2,000 personnel, one quarter of whom were foreign-born.<sup>89</sup>

### ***Captivating VOA’s Audience***

Secretary of State Dean Acheson, celebrating the launch of two new minority-language broadcast services targeting republics in the Soviet Union, stated his hope that listeners would “maintain their religious traditions, their own way of life, despite the efforts of the communist regime to replace religion with godlessness, to replace the glorious histories of the peoples of the Soviet Union with the folklore of Stalinism.”<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Hixson, 34-36

<sup>89</sup> Hixson, 37.

<sup>90</sup> Hixson, 37.

But Voice of America's daily programming was less measured than Acheson's official pronouncement: one Voice employee said, "[A]nything more subtle than a bludgeon was considered 'soft on communism.'" Walter Hixson described VOA propaganda, especially by émigré broadcasters, as "often crude. Much of it undoubtedly proved offensive rather than persuasive, especially among those committed communists who viewed émigrés as little more than traitors."

VOA broadcasts described the United States as "the Promised Land to refugees from communist tyranny," and featured a relentless menu of anti-communist themes:

refuting the misrepresentations of official Soviet history and the state-controlled press; emphasizing the regime's refusal to grant citizens the right to travel abroad; "slave labor" and collectivization; low wages and long working hours of men and women; privileges granted to CP members; limitations on the intelligentsia; denial of freedom of religion; and subjugation of ethnic minority groups. ... A constant theme of VOA propaganda to Eastern Europe and the Baltic states was Soviet collaboration with Adolf Hitler in the 1939 Nazi-Soviet Pact. ... VOA offered regular features such as the programs "Life Behind the Soviet Curtain" and the satirical "Communist Paradise" to expose "the sham and hypocrisy of communism's pretense of a better life." ... VOA often asked authors, including the most prominent exiles and dissidents, to read excerpts from their work attacking communism. ... While condemning the denial of religious and political freedom in Eastern Europe and the USSR, VOA emphasized the existence of democratic government in the United States. It glorified the U.S. electoral process...

A 1954 VOA broadcast claimed that "the Communist Party, on equal terms with other parties, enjoys all the rights and opportunities existing in a free country," neglecting entirely

the widespread purging of suspected communists and “fellow-travelers” from public life then in progress throughout the United States.<sup>91</sup>

Strategically, VOA focused especially on Soviet intellectuals, professionals, technicians, writers, and artists in the major cities, contrasting Western freedoms for artists and intellectuals with the stifling, repressive climate of the USSR and its satellites. Its “Communism and Russian Culture” series detailed the privations of artists and the intelligentsia in the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, the VOA ignored strife between management and labor in the U.S., as well as income and social inequalities between men and women and people of differing races, cultural backgrounds, and politics. Typical was the Czech service’s series “America, A Classless Society,” which argued “that capitalists — and especially American capitalists — are not so ruthless and selfish as communist propaganda describes them.” In foreign affairs, Moscow was portrayed as seeking “world domination,” while the considerable overseas activities of the U.S. at the time were framed as “purely defensive reactions to Soviet aggression.”<sup>92</sup>

### ***VOA’s Cultural Programming***

There was more to the VOA schedule than relentless haranguing, however. Radio programming was picked up from domestic sources — “The Telephone Hour,” “Hit Parade,”

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<sup>91</sup> Hixson., 37-38 and 40-42..

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 38 and 44-45.

“University Theater,” and “Adventures in Science” — and much was made of American music. Especially popular was jazz.<sup>93</sup>

The popularity of American music during World War II had prepared receptive ground for this particular expression of U.S. culture at war’s end. Louis Armstrong’s music, banned in occupied Europe, “came to symbolize the freedoms associated with Allied culture ... clandestinely distributed and imitated in live performances by attaching ‘coded’ titles to the songs,” according to British-born jazz critic Leonard Feather, host of the first Voice of America jazz programs (*Jazz Club USA*, which first aired in 1952). Feather observed that jazz audiences in Paris and Berlin in the early Thirties had “elements in common with membership in a resistance movement.”<sup>94</sup>

Apart from its projection of racial harmony, others heard some expression of the American spirit in jazz, even seeing it as an enactment of U.S. political culture. Buffalo native Willis Conover, whose VOA program *Music USA* began to air in 1955, believed that jazz was “structurally parallel to the American political system”:

Jazz musicians agree in advance on what the harmonic progression is going to be, in what key, how fast, and how long, and within that agreement they are free to play anything they want. ... Jazz is a cross between total discipline and total anarchy.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>94</sup> Penny M. Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 8-10.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 16.

Conover's enormous celebrity behind the Iron Curtain, where his show eventually reached an audience of 30 million in 80 countries, was the fruit of steady work in using mass media to provide a Voice of America heard throughout the world.

### ***Finding "Communism" in Agencies of Anti-Communism***

The stridency of VOA in its early years and the aggressive anti-communist feeling that fueled its rapid expansion make it especially ironic that Senator Joe McCarthy unleashed his team to attack it in February 1953, soon after Eisenhower's inauguration. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles promised cooperation, as long as he — so newly installed in office — would be held harmless for anything that might come out. Meanwhile, Dulles ordered officials of the International Information Administration (IIA), established by Truman, to oversee "information activities" somewhat independently of the State Department.<sup>96</sup>

McCarthy also extended his witch-hunting into book selection for the government's overseas libraries, having an immediate impact on government policy. A State Department directive, based on a special study by the Committee on Books Abroad completed in May 1952, was issued in January 1953. Reflecting the wariness of the anti-communist era, it warned that "materials produced by a person whose ideologies and views are questionable or controversial" should be used only when the balance was "clearly and strongly in favor" of their usefulness — rejecting the notion that anything written by a controversial author should be banned, regardless of content. Barely two weeks later, though, this directive was withdrawn; and one week further on, officials of the newly installed Eisenhower

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<sup>96</sup> Thomson and Laves, 99-105.

administration banned all materials by “Communists, fellow travelers, and so forth” from the libraries and any of their programs. There was no authoritative list of “communists and fellow travelers”; but of course the phrase “and so forth” aroused the greatest consternation. As shelves were cleared of suspect material, some books were burned, enabling Soviet propagandists to compare U.S. censorship with Nazi book-burnings. Protests within the U.S. led to the third new directive in as many months, in mid-March, eliminating the phrase “and so forth,” but upholding the ban on books by Communists and members of “Communist Fronts” and magazines “which often print Communist propaganda.” Further, single issues of “responsible and reputable” magazines that contained “anything detrimental to this country’s objectives” were to be withheld. Yet another supplemental directive came in April, requiring the removal of books by anyone who refused to testify before Congressional committees concerning their alleged Communist affiliations.<sup>97</sup>

Finally, in its fifth month, the Eisenhower administration appeared to take charge of the situation by sending its Reorganization Plan No. 8 to Congress at the beginning of June. Eisenhower’s plan established an independent United States Information Agency (USIA) as of August 1<sup>st</sup>, granting it jurisdiction over libraries abroad.<sup>98</sup> The President tried to distinguish himself from McCarthyist elements, then in their full flood, by urging a commencement audience at Dartmouth,

Don’t join the book burners. Don’t think you are going to  
conceal faults by concealing evidence that they ever existed.  
Don’t be afraid to go in your library and read every book, as

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<sup>97</sup> Thomson and Laves, 100-102.

<sup>98</sup> Thomson and Laves, 106 and 108.

long as that document does not offend our own ideas of decency. That should be the only censorship.<sup>99</sup>

Writing in the *Saturday Review* years later, in 1975, as CIA investigations were beginning to climax, Tom Braden tried to remind a more cynical audience of post-Watergate readers of the “respectability of what people then called ‘the cause’ of anti-Communism”: Eisenhower had said that book-burning “was the bad way to fight Communism. That good way was the CIA.”<sup>100</sup>

### ***The Strategy of Freedom: NSC-68***

At the same time the Campaign of Truth was being launched, the government’s covert apparatus ascended to a higher plateau. Paul Nitze replaced George Kennan as the head of the State Department’s Policy Planning Staff in 1950. In response to perceptions of a growing international communist threat, and specifically to President Truman’s request for a re-examination of the nation’s foreign-policy objectives, Nitze delivered NSC-68 — “The Strategy of Freedom” — in April 1950.<sup>101</sup> This National Security document has been called “the quintessential US Cold War document.” Historian Walter LaFeber stated that “NSC-68 proved to be the American blueprint for waging the Cold War during the next 20 years.”<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Remarks by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Dartmouth College Commencement Exercises, Hanover, NH, June 14, 1953, accessed at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9606> (18 August 2013).

<sup>100</sup> Quoted in Saunders, 212.

<sup>101</sup> The document can be accessed at <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nsc-68.htm> (accessed on 4 July 2013)

<sup>102</sup> Scott-Smith, 40-41 and 180, fnnt. 43, quoting Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War 1945-1980* (New York: John Wiley, 1985), 97.



NSC-68 can be credited with advancing the most forthright statement of national cultural policy at the time. The section headed “Fundamental Purpose of the United States” states:

The fundamental purpose of the United States is laid down in the Preamble to the Constitution: “... to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity.” In essence, the fundamental purpose is to assure the integrity and vitality of our free society, which is founded upon the dignity and worth of the individual.

Three realities emerge as a consequence of this purpose: Our determination to maintain the essential elements of individual freedom, as set forth in the Constitution and Bill of Rights; our determination to create conditions under which our free and democratic system can live and prosper; and our determination to fight if necessary to defend our way of life, for which as in the Declaration of Independence, “with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.”<sup>103</sup>

NSC-68’s framers contrasted these values with those imputed to Stalin’s Soviet Union:

The fundamental design of those who control the Soviet Union and the international communist movement is to retain and solidify their absolute power, first in the Soviet Union and second in the areas now under their control. In the minds of the Soviet leaders, however, achievement of this design requires the dynamic extension of their authority and the ultimate elimination of any effective opposition to their authority.

The design, therefore, calls for the complete subversion or forcible destruction of the machinery of government and structure of society in the countries of the non-Soviet world and their replacement by an apparatus and structure subservient to and controlled from the Kremlin. To that end Soviet efforts are now directed toward the domination of the Eurasian land

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<sup>103</sup> <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nsc-68-2.htm> (accessed 21 August 2013).

mass. The United States, as the principal center of power in the non-Soviet world and the bulwark of opposition to Soviet expansion, is the principal enemy whose integrity and vitality must be subverted or destroyed by one means or another if the Kremlin is to achieve its fundamental design.<sup>104</sup>

NSC-68's framers concluded that "Our free society, confronted by a threat to its basic values," must "take such action, including the use of military force, as may be required to protect those values."<sup>105</sup>

On the question of raw geopolitical power, State Department planners were not sanguine:

[T]he actual and potential [military] capabilities of the United States, given a continuation of current and projected programs, will become less and less effective as a war deterrent. ... A building up of the military capabilities of the United States and the free world is a pre-condition to ... the protection of the United States against disaster.<sup>106</sup>

Weighing alternatives, NSC planners rejected negotiation, since "the terms of agreements ... would reflect present realities and would therefore be unacceptable, if not disastrous, to the United States and the rest of the free world." The longer historic tendency of the United States toward isolationism — which planners warned would not necessarily require a deliberate decision, but would naturally arise "from a failure to take the actions necessary to bring our capabilities into line with our commitments" — would, in the Cold War environment they perceived, lead to "imponderable, but nevertheless drastic, effects on our

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<sup>104</sup> <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nsc-68-3.htm> (accessed 21 August 2013).

<sup>105</sup> <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nsc-68-4.htm> (accessed 21 August 2013).

<sup>106</sup> <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nsc-68-cr.htm> (accessed 21 August 2013).

belief in ourselves and in our way of life...” And despite “the provocativeness of recent Soviet behavior,” planners admitted that “a surprise attack upon the Soviet Union ... would be repugnant to many Americans.” They thought “the American people would probably rally in support,” but concluded that “the shock of responsibility for a surprise attack would be morally corrosive.” In an explanation that bears contemplation decades later, they admitted, “It goes without saying that the idea of ‘preventive’ war — in the sense of a military attack not provoked by a military attack upon us or our allies — is generally unacceptable to Americans.” NSC-68 thus concludes that the only solution was “A more rapid build-up of political, economic, and military strength and thereby of confidence in the free world than is now contemplated...”<sup>107</sup>

No budget was estimated for the massive build-up of military capabilities called for in NSC-68 — including the development and deployment of the hydrogen bomb — and expanded military aid to “free world” allies. Secretary of State Acheson “later stated that this would only have directed interest away from the real issues at stake,” according to historian Giles Scott-Smith, “but the estimate was that the military budget alone would need to increase from \$13.5 billion to somewhere around \$50 billion a year.”<sup>108</sup>

The “Strategy of Freedom” stated that over the long term,

... the only sure victory lies in the frustration of the Kremlin design by the steady development of the moral and material strength of the free world and its projection into the Soviet

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<sup>107</sup> <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nsc-68-9.htm> (accessed 21 August 2013).

<sup>108</sup> Scott-Smith, 41.

world in such a way as to bring about an internal change in the Soviet system.<sup>109</sup>

And it is here that Scott-Smith locates the greatest significance of NSC-68:

[T]he real significance in this document was its explicit linkage of these overt measures with the covert dimension “in the fields of economic and political and psychological warfare.” If the contest was about values rather than simply military capability, all areas of society had to be targeted to promote the message of the free world against tyranny, and all methods were therefore justifiable. Freedom, in other words, needed a strategy for it to triumph, and every effort to influence civil society towards recognising the natural moral and rational supremacy of the principles of freedom, tolerance, the importance of the individual was now given the official seal of approval. Such a projection of values also required that channels other than the government had to be supported or, perhaps, created, in order to emphasise the general concern for these issues across civil society. Thus, through the utilisation of the state–private network of elites across the political, economic and socio-cultural fields, the Gramscian “enlarged state,” crossing the boundaries of the political/civil society divide, was coming into official existence.<sup>110</sup>

With NSC-68 in place, Allen Dulles joined the CIA as Deputy Director of Operations in December 1950, and Tom Braden joined the Agency to set up International Organizations Division under the OPC’s Wisner, but reporting directly to Dulles.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nsc-68-9.htm> (accessed 21 August 2013).

<sup>110</sup> Scott-Smith, 41. Quotations are from S. Lucas, *Freedom’s War: The American Crusade Against the Soviet Union* (New York University Press, 1999), 79-80.

<sup>111</sup> Saunders, 95 and 97

## THE CIA IN BLOOM: AMERICA'S SHADOW CABINET FOR CULTURE

It was in aid of securing the “moral and material strength of the free world” that the CIA undertook sponsorship of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. While Truman’s Campaign of Truth was unfolding, CCF organizers were organizing themselves and starting to produce public programs with covert backing. But further refinements in Cold War policy and strategy, made as Eisenhower replaced Truman, affected how programs in the CIA and State Department evolved.

### *Psychological Strategizing*

In the final year of Truman’s administration, a Psychological Strategy Board (PSB) was formed to create a “policy blueprint” for covert operations. This move was urged upon Truman by C.D. Jackson, president of the NCFE and, by 1951, “an ‘outside’ director of CIA covert operations through The Truth Campaign.” Jackson was disturbed at “the absolute paucity of policy in Washington,” perturbed over organizational disputes and interpersonal rivalries among “professional amateurs,” and eager to tackle “an opportunity and a problem” he perceived as an ad-man for *Time* in the Thirties:

The opportunity is to recapture our world dynamic, which is not dollars but ideas. Our dynamic up to now — self-protection and dollars — must be replaced by the earlier American dynamic of dedication to an ideal. Here we are faced with the possibility of a resurgence of the American proposition throughout the world.

Truman issued a secret directive establishing the PSB in April 1951 as a joint effort of the Department of Defense and the CIA. Kennan’s backing of the idea overrode State Department resistance, as far as the President was concerned. In May 1952, the PSB took

over supervision of the CIA's program of psychological warfare, code-named "Packet."<sup>112</sup>

Two PSB reports were commissioned that fall and issued in May 1953, one focusing on the efficiency of psychological operations and the other providing strategic frameworks: they urged Cold Warriors to "portray U.S. policy as a 'truly Christian approach ... characteristic of the American people'" — framing bipolar global conflict as a holy war, rather than one waged over economics or politics.<sup>113</sup>

This doctrinal paper, appearing in draft form as a document labeled PSB D-33/2, inspired a detailed response from an alarmed PSB officer, Charles Burton Marshall, who asked,

How [can] a government interpose with a wide doctrinal system of its own without taking on the color of totalitarianism? The paper ... accepts uniformity as a substitute for diversity. It postulates a system justifying "a particular type of social belief and structure," providing "a body of principles for human aspirations," and embracing "all fields of human thought" — "all fields of intellectual interests, from anthropology and artistic creations to sociology and scientific methodology." ... "a machinery" to produce ideas portraying "the American way of life" on "a systematic and scientific basis." ... It anticipates "doctrinal production" under a "coordination mechanism." ... It asserts "a premium on swift and positive action to galvanize the creation and distribution of ideas" ... It foretells a "long-term intellectual movement" as growing out of this effort and having the aim not only to counter communism but indeed to "break down worldwide doctrinaire thought patterns" providing an intellectual base for "doctrines hostile to American objectives." ... That is just about as totalitarian as one can get.

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<sup>112</sup> Saunders, 147-148.

<sup>113</sup> Herzog, 126-127.

Marshall expressed particular alarm over the PSB's emphasis upon elite groups — the very basis for the CIA's entire non-communist left strategy — instead of the individual:

Individuals are relegated to tertiary importance. The supposed elite emerges as the only group that counts. The elite is defined as that numerically "limited group capable and interested in manipulating doctrinal matters," the men of ideas who pull the intellectual strings "in forming, or at least predisposing, the attitudes and opinions" of those who in turn lead public opinion.<sup>114</sup>

The ironies doctrinal freedom and anti-communist correctness were real, and would be frequently and passionately criticized when the CIA's intervention in Atlanticist cultural affairs was revealed in the mid-Sixties. But there was no wont of emphasis upon individual freedom among those driving the coordination mechanism that emerged.

### ***The Congress for Cultural Freedom Goes Public***

After the Berlin Congress for Cultural Freedom, the CCF's Steering Committee met in the conference hall of the anti-communist International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)<sup>115</sup> in Brussels in November 1950 to agree on structure and program. The Committee worked from one paper prepared by Lasky in July, and another from Koestler entitled "Immediate Tasks for the Transition Period." Koestler himself had already been removed from the core group, due to his strident pontificating in Berlin — more in keeping with the domestic spirit motivating HUAC and McCarthy, and therefore offensive to

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<sup>114</sup> Saunders, 149-150. Still classified at the time of Saunders' book, PSB D-33/2 was declassified in 2005 and can be accessed at [http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document\\_conversions/5829/CIA-RDP80R01731R003200050006-0.pdf](http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/5829/CIA-RDP80R01731R003200050006-0.pdf) (August 28, 2013).

<sup>115</sup> Scott-Smith, 75.

Europeans being targeted on the non-communist left. Arthur Schlesinger, Averell Harriman's aide at the Marshall Plan's ECA office in Paris, had persuaded honorary co-president Bertrand Russell not to resign as a Congress figurehead after Berlin (Russell remained in post until 1956): Russell and fellow co-presidents Benedetto Croce (d. 1952, replaced by Don Salvador de Madariaga), John Dewey, Karl Jaspers, and Jacques Maritain lent prestige to the effort (Isaiah Berlin declined to serve); and Swiss writer, theorist and European federalist Denis de Rougemont agreed to serve as president of the CCF's Executive Committee. With \$170,000 in start-up funding from Irving Brown's Free Trade Union Committee, the institutional phase of the CCF began.<sup>116</sup>

Speaking of the purpose of his CIA Division in 1994, Tom Braden articulated the underlying aims driving covert support to the CCF as the Agency's hallmark project:

We wanted to unite all the people who were artists, who were writers, who were musicians, and all the people who follow those people, to demonstrate that the West and the United States was devoted to freedom of expression and to intellectual achievement, without any rigid barriers as to *what you must write and what you must say and what you must do and what you must paint*, which was what was going on in the Soviet Union. I think we did it damn well.<sup>117</sup>

A flotilla of CCF projects was soon launched, continuing with covert aid from the CIA and its fellow-traveling U.S. funders until *Ramparts* magazine's embarrassing 1967 disclosure of the Agency's secret support. Michael Josselson, CCF director from 1951-1967, and general secretary Nicolas Nabokov established the Congress's Paris operations and to

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<sup>116</sup> Saunders, 87-89 and 91-94.

<sup>117</sup> Saunders, 98. Saunders attributes the emphasis in this passage to Braden.



“intellectualize” and “culturize” its programs, focusing on areas of perceived Soviet weakness:

The cultural initiatives in international communism were to be countered not at the level of crude propaganda of the kind the [American Congress for Cultural Freedom] had been calling for; instead Nabokov and Josselson developed a “high-cultural” program that proved very successful.<sup>118</sup>

Hoping to be perceived as acting in a genuinely entrepreneurial way, the CCF Secretariat proceeded with an program that would gradually expand throughout Western Europe and beyond for the remainder of the Fifties and into the early Sixties.

[T]he Congress ... through its prominent journals, large-scale conferences and seminars, and sometimes lavish festivals ... was to proclaim consistently ... that freedom of the intellect and of culture ... was a prerequisite for any ... progressive democratic society. In other words, no intellectual or cultural activity worth its name could be carried out, and no claim of cultural excellence could be made, without the assurance of complete independence from political interference.<sup>119</sup>

### ***Publications for Cultural Freedom***

A small but significant intellectual publishing industry grew out of the CIA-backed Congress. *Preuves* became the first CCF journal, launched in 1951, with the German-Swiss François Bondy as its editor. Published monthly in French, *Preuves* provided what Australian politician and journalist Peter Coleman described as a “measured liberal anti-Communist

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<sup>118</sup> Volker R. Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe: Shepard Stone between Philanthropy, Academy, and Diplomacy* (Princeton University Press, 2001), 133. Berghahn traces the ACCF to the Committee for Cultural Freedom founded by Sidney Hook and John Dewey in 1939 (115) and the “Americans for Intellectual Freedom” group formed in response to the Cominform-backed Waldorf conference of 1949 (129).

<sup>119</sup> Scott-Smith, 4.

perspective into French debates, opposing the neutralism of *L'Observateur*, the pacifism of *Esprit* and the ‘co-existentialism’” of Sartre’s *Les Temps Moderne*. The journal was read not only in France, but also in francophone Africa and within intellectual circles in central and eastern Europe.<sup>120</sup>

Three more Congress-backed journals were introduced in 1953, in Spanish, German, and English. *Cuadernos*, published in Paris but read throughout the Spanish-speaking world, was edited by Julian Gorkin (née Gomez), founder of the Communist Party in Valencia in 1921 and a Comintern official, who emerged as a Trotskyist during the Spanish Civil War and went into exile in Mexico during World War II. *Forum* was launched the same year, edited in Vienna by Friedrich Torberg, a Jewish exile to the U.S. after the fall of France, not only to fill gaps perceived between communist and Catholic publications in Austria, but also to reach German-speaking intellectuals in Hungary. The English-language *Encounter* was third, quickly becoming influential within the United Kingdom’s anti-communist, pro-American Liberal-Labor community and distributed by the British Council to Commonwealth countries.<sup>121</sup>

Relying on covert support from the British Foreign Office’s Information Research Division (IRD) as well as from the CIA, co-editors were required for their joint operation of *Encounter*. Arrangements began with a 1951 meeting between Wisner with his counterparts in the UK’s Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), accompanied by the notorious CIA-MI6 liaison

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<sup>120</sup> Berghahn, 140, citing Coleman’s *The Liberal Conspiracy: The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Struggle for the Mind of Postwar Europe*.

<sup>121</sup> Berghahn, 140-141.

Harold Adrian Russell “Kim” Philby (in fact a double agent, who defected to Russia in 1963). Josselson and de Neufville met with Philby at the Royal Auto Club to strategize. Subsequent negotiations were brokered by British spymaster Christopher Monty Woodhouse (who was simultaneously helping engineer the CIA/SIS-backed overthrow of Iranian premier Mohammed Mossadegh in favor of the ultra-right Shah). Stephen Spender was chosen to serve as *Encounter*’s British co-editor, while Irving Kristol, executive director of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom and later hailed as the “godfather of modern conservatism,” became his American counterpart.<sup>122</sup>

The last of the major Western European languages was finally brought into the Congress family of publications in 1956, when the Italian-language *Tempo Presente* was launched under the joint editorship of Ignazio Silone and Nicola Chiaromonte.<sup>123</sup>

In 1955, the Congress backed historian Walter Laqueur, the CCF’s official representative in Israel, in creating *Soviet Survey*, a monthly newsletter focused on intellectual, political and artistic life in Eastern Europe. That same year, the Congress extended its publication program beyond Europe with *Quest*, an Indian journal produced in English, an administrative language there more than a literary one: John Kenneth Galbraith complained that “it broke new ground in ponderous, unfocused illiteracy.” *Quadrant* was established in Australia, and the most heavily subsidized of all CCF publications, *Jiyu*, was later established in Japan. By the mid-Sixties, the Congress had extended its reach to the

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<sup>122</sup> Saunders, 167-173; and Barry Gewen, “Irving Kristol, Godfather of Modern Conservatism, Dies at 89,” *The New York Times*, September 18, 2009.

<sup>123</sup> Berghahn, 140, 128.

Arab world, Africa, and China. *Transition* appeared in Uganda, continuing operations until its offices were raided and editors imprisoned in 1968.<sup>124</sup>

The last of the Congress journals was *Censorship*, launched from London in 1964 and continuing through the CCF's demise in 1967. Stephen Spender used it as his model when he launched *Index on Censorship* in 1972, with a generous grant from the Ford Foundation.<sup>125</sup>

Though central to the entire CCF enterprise, Lasky and his journal *Der Monat* had to be kept at arms-length in the early years, even within the context of "plausible deniability" that accompanied CIA support overall. When *Der Monat*'s original occupation funding was lost, Lasky's journal was picked up by the Ford Foundation's Intercultural Publications program, launched in 1952 by Shepard Stone, who had also worked with Lucius Clay in the German occupation government.<sup>126</sup> At the end of 1953, Josselson finally succeeded in bringing *Der Monat* officially under the Congress umbrella, making it one of the CCF's flagship publications, along with *Encounter* and *Preuves*. Lasky himself could then formally be included as a member of a "Tri-Magazine Editorial Committee," comprising the editors as well as Josselson, Nabokov, and de Rougement; but Josselson and Lasky were in charge. As Diana Josselson explained,

Michael was publisher and editor-in-chief. Lasky was vice president, and, to a certain extent, Michael's mouthpiece. Michael tried to arrange periodic meetings between the various editors, and Lasky was understood to be the main guy if

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<sup>124</sup> Saunders, 214-216 and 334.

<sup>125</sup> Saunders, 216 and 334-335.

<sup>126</sup> Saunders, 140.

Michael wasn't there. They were in close contact, and saw things similarly.<sup>127</sup>

By 1956, Lasky reported that the magazines had become “symbols of the cultural life of two ancient nations of free, humane, and democratic international (and transatlantic) exchange.” Though he was referring to all the journals, Lasky’s reference to “two nations” only works if Europe as a whole were considered one of them; but it may also reflect the Anglo-American preference for the English-language *Encounter*. Historian Saunders notes that “Back at CIA headquarters in Washington, *Encounter* was regarded proudly as a ‘flagship,’ ... even ... a kind of calling card for CIA agents.” She recounts one agent telling another, before their first clandestine meeting, “I’ll be carrying a copy of *Encounter*, so you’ll know who I am.”<sup>128</sup>

Apart from their steadfast anti-communism, these journals also shared an aversion to criticizing the United States. This was so firmly established that Lasky had to caution his fellow editors against taking it too far, by “insisting, in the matter of American material, that the USA be constantly projected ‘positively,’ that all the European anti-American stereotypes being made short shrift of”:

Let’s not always be forcing the matter. (And-what-have-we-done-today-to-stop-people-thinking-of-us-as-Barbarians?) We — not unlike everybody else — have too many problems (including materialism, cynicism, corruption, violence) consistently to come out with a positive word of cheer for the Stars-and-Stripes forever. Let European writers grumble. Let’s

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<sup>127</sup> Saunders, 216-217.

<sup>128</sup> Saunders, 217-219.

grumble about ourselves (paradoxically, one of our most sympathetic sounds).<sup>129</sup>

Anti-American feeling was still swelling in Europe, inflamed by disgust at racist resistance to the U.S. civil rights movement, demagogical domestic anti-communism, and what became known for quite some time as “the Americanization of culture,” both literal and figurative. As Saunders documents, anti-Americanism was expressed in many ways, but was “a psychological necessity to many Europeans.” Historians of this era, like participants at the time, see the most telling sign of Americans in the drivers’ seat in these periodicals’ failure to acknowledge any dark side or drawbacks in The American Way. But one might as easily see this in the bland uniformity of the Euro-American brand of high-art culture being peddled by the Congress and its CIA backers, the exceptions merely proving the rule.

### ***American Festivals in Europe (and Beyond)***

The first major public event hosted by the Congress for Cultural Freedom took place in May 1952, almost two years after the Berlin conclave, this time in Paris. *Oeuvre de Vingtième Siècle* (“Masterpieces of the Twentieth Century”) was devoted to the significance of modernism in the arts — once attacked by the Nazis as “degenerate,” then after the war, by Stalin’s cultural theorists, who favored “socialist realism.” Nicolas Nabokov eagerly embraced this project, mounting a month-long program larded with panel discussions and lectures that drew out significant Cold War content, along with church services “for the victims of totalitarian oppression.” An exhibition of 150 modernist French and American paintings and sculptures was mounted, competing with a communist-backed show of

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<sup>129</sup> Saunders, 217-218.

Mexican art then on view at the Paris Museum of Modern Art. Alban Berg's *Wozzek* received its Paris premiere in a performance by the Vienna Opera, as did Benjamin Britten's *Billy Budd* by Covent Garden, Gertrude Stein and Virgil Thompson's *Four Saints in Three Acts*, and Arnold Schoenberg's *Die Erwartung*. Igor Stravinsky conducted his *Oedipus Rex* before a set designed by librettist Jean Cocteau. The New York City Ballet appeared, as did the Boston Symphony, conducted for the occasion by Charles Munch of France. William Faulkner, Katherine Anne Porter, and Allen Tate appeared in literary debates. And Nabokov pointedly arranged performance of works by Sergei Prokofiev and Dmitri Shostakovich, both then banned in the USSR.<sup>130</sup>

Most prominent intellectuals in Paris steered clear of associating with the event: of those enjoying an international reputation, only André Malraux played an active part. Sartre refused even to attend, explaining that he was "not as anti-Communist as all that." And press response ranged from tepid, among conservative papers, to downright hostile from those farther to the left. *L'Humanité* expressed disgust for the CCF's effort to recruit a "cultural army," and *Combat* labeled the event "NATO's Festival," pointing out that it was staged by a "nation that lynched blacks and hounded anyone accused of 'un-American activities.'" Even back in the States, the *New Yorker* discounted the Festival as "an extremely popular fiasco." Nabokov blamed the French the negativity of this response, ruling the event "a psychological success in the ... depressingly morbid intellectual climate of France," asserting that "in any other country ... we would ... have had ... a finer press reaction." But he also felt that only such an event could have established the CCF as a "positive, and not only a political

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<sup>130</sup> Berghahn, 135; Saunders, 117.

organization,” and concluded that it had succeeded on this score, reporting that “intellectuals who were afraid of us before have come to us now as friends and colleagues.”<sup>131</sup>

The Paris festival also occasioned the debut of the Farfield Foundation, a “dummy” foundation first set up by the CIA to manage the \$130,000 it had pledged for the Paris festival, mainly to underwrite the costs of including the Boston Symphony, then widely regarded as the best in the U.S. (Of course, the CIA was not listed as a patron: its support was listed as deriving from “prominent individuals and associations.”) Because the festival coincided with the BSO’s lucrative Pops season, IOD chief Tom Braden had to intercede personally to secure its participation, working through C.D. Jackson, a member of the Orchestra’s board, by then on leave from his Time-Life post to work on Eisenhower’s presidential campaign. Farfield long outlasted the Paris festival, becoming the “principal conduit for Agency funds to the Congress.”<sup>132</sup>

Farfield’s first president was Julius “Junkie” Fleischmann, heir to a yeast and gin fortune and trustee for a variety of major U.S. cultural institutions. Michael Josselson praised Fleischmann — as his job would repeatedly require him to do — as the “American Maecenas of the cultural world.” Historian Frances Stonor Saunders called Junkie “the CIA’s most significant single front-man.” Fleischmann had personally hung out in the sheds on the National Mall where Wisner’s OPC was being born in the late Forties and relished his role in obscuring the new agency’s covert funding, initially through the Fleischmann Foundation.

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<sup>131</sup> Berghahn, 135-136; Saunders, 120 and 122.

<sup>132</sup> Saunders, 116-117.



But tensions emerged after Braden's IOD came into being. Decades later, Braden complained to historian Saunders,

[Fleischmann] began to think he was the boss of these fronts. They were just using his name, but he started to believe it was for real. ... [H]e started telling me what he wanted. ... And that was the last thing I needed ... In the end, we offered him the Farfield as a kind of substitute. ... The Farfield Foundation was a CIA foundation and there were many such foundations. ... We used the names of foundations for many purposes but the foundation *didn't exist* except on paper.

Diana Josselson, who was actively involved in the CCF (codename "Jena Ensinger") after her 1953 marriage to its director, explained to Saunders years later,

It was good to have a patron to display, and [Fleischmann] loved his role. But the relationship became a chore and a bore, because it diverted Michael from more substantive things while he made a big show of being deferential to the big patron. ... The whole relationship was farcical, in a way, because we just played it straight. They would just pass on a set of pre-prepared actions.

For his part, Nabokov denied any knowledge of CIA support: "Curiously enough, not for a moment did the question of money cross my mind." He apparently thought his funding derived from Brown's labor organizations. "Not in my wildest dreams could I have expected that my 'dream festival' would be supported by America's spying establishment."<sup>133</sup>

The Congress produced two more festivals after the CCF's Paris debut, the next taking place in Rome in May 1954: the International Conference of Twentieth Century Music. This event, too, was planned by Nabokov, not incidentally a composer himself, in order to position the Congress as a vanguard promoter of avant-garde composition — a press

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<sup>133</sup> Saunders, 126-128 and 153-154.

release stated it was “designed to prove that art thrives on freedom” — presenting music that had been expressly forbidden by Stalin. Apparently Nabokov had taken in Herbert Read’s criticism that the Paris event had been “a complacent look at the past,” for he announced to the press “a composers’ contest ... unlike any ... ever held”: a dozen “promising but internationally unknown composers” would be brought to Rome, their scores performed, and a winner selected by a jury “democratically elected by all those attending the conference.” The advisory board Nabokov assembled for his music festival included luminaries of the international music scene: his first invitation went to Igor Stravinsky, lately a convert to dodecaphonic music, who was granted the lordly sum of \$5,000 for his expenses, accompanied by his wife and secretary. Nabokov installed himself for the duration in Rome’s lavish Palazzo Pecci, donated to serve as the festival’s offices by his friend Count Cecil Pecci-Blunt (née Blumenthal, a well-to-do American whose title was a wedding present from Pope Benedict XV), a colorful character long active in European art circles.<sup>134</sup> Nabokov personally programmed a group of atonal and twelve-time composers quite beyond the expected bent of his advisory group. Art critic and theorist Susan Sontag reminisced in a 1987 *New Yorker* piece about the “squawks and bumps” of the resulting musical experience, toward which “we were deferential”: she explained, “[W]e knew we were supposed to appreciate ugly music ... (we had enormous appetites and strong stomachs).” Not so Pierre Boulez, who penned an outraged letter afterwards, accusing Nabokov of encouraging a

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<sup>134</sup> Count Pecci-Blunt was not infrequently referred as one of “les Deux Cecils,” in reference to the young footman with whom he fell instantly in love at a friend’s banquet, then kept in a French Riviera villa for decades. See David Patrick Columbia’s *New York Social Diary* at [http://www.newyorksocialdiary.com/socialdiary/2004/01\\_14\\_04/socialdiary01\\_14\\_04.php](http://www.newyorksocialdiary.com/socialdiary/2004/01_14_04/socialdiary01_14_04.php) and [http://nysocialdiary.com/personages09\\_02\\_05.php](http://nysocialdiary.com/personages09_02_05.php) (accessed August 27, 2013).

“folklore of mediocrity” and suggesting that the Congress next undertake something “in better taste” — perhaps a conference on “the role of the condom in the Twentieth Century.” Nabokov responded by ordering Boulez never to write to him again.<sup>135</sup>

One final Congress-sponsored festival took place in Tokyo in 1961, reflecting growing interest in Japan as a regional counterweight to China, but no further large-scale European festivals were staged. Nevertheless, the CCF continued to convene a variety of other large conferences and specialized meetings, large and small.

### ***Meeting Freely, at Agency Expense***

Frequent conferences and scholarly meetings generated new material for various Congress periodicals, contributing to the further articulation of an Atlanticist perspective on cultural freedom, defining culture quite broadly. Science, for example, became a focus of CCF concern, responding in part both to HUAC’s attacks upon Manhattan Project scientist Robert Oppenheimer and to the Soviet espousal of “Lysenkoism,” according to which the pursuit of science would be subjected to state planning dictates and social priorities. Michael Polanyi, a Hungarian exile from Nazism then serving as professor at Manchester University, was prominent among the Congress’s science advisors, advocating acceptance of a diversity of methods as against “scientific Marxism.” Staking out the field of science as a terrain for cultural freedom provided strategists in the East-West culture wars an escape hatch from the inferiority complex generally besetting Americans in the arts. A 1953 conference on

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<sup>135</sup> Saunders, 221-224.

“Science and Freedom” in Hamburg crystallized this discourse, leading to creation of yet another CCF publication by that name, edited by Polanyi.<sup>136</sup>

Typical of the CCF’s more generalist conferences was one held in Milan in 1955, ambitiously entitled “The Future of Freedom.” By this time, McCarthy had been defeated back home, and the Congress was thus relatively untroubled in its liberal consensus by American hard-liners. Younger European social democrats with solid commitments to reformism, welfare-state economics, and a softer line vis-à-vis the Soviet Union emerged at this meeting of 140 intellectuals. The Milan conference also featured attendance of the first significant group of all-expenses-paid participants from the non-Western world — increasingly important in the year when the Bandung Conference focused the “nonaligned movement,” a movement of “third world” countries that by its very definition challenged the United States’ Manichean East-West global agenda.<sup>137</sup>

In keeping with its more global audience, a full day was devoted to discussions of nationalism and colonialism in Milan, heralding increased CCF interest in the non-European world that was to continue into the Sixties. The conference was generally less plagued by anti-communist dogmatism than earlier Congress gatherings had been, aided both by the growing anticolonial movement and by increased awareness among all participants of growing social ferment within the Eastern bloc, which climaxed in the following year with

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<sup>136</sup> Berghahn, 137-139, Saunders 214

<sup>137</sup> <http://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/lw/97935.htm> (accessed 27 August 2013)

uprisings in Hungary and Poland.<sup>138</sup> In all, however, participant Hannah Arendt declared the whole affair “deadly boring.”<sup>139</sup>

By this time, Irving Kristol was exhausting the last of his *Encounter* colleagues’ patience, and this came to a head in Milan. Saunders’ history of *The Cultural Cold War* summarizes “fiery” exchanges between Josselson and Kristol, as well as the tensions between Kristol and co-editor Spender. There was much “boudoir politicking” in the Milan conference hotel, which “steamed with intrigue” surrounding the move afoot among Congress insiders to replace Kristol with Dwight Macdonald. Sidney Hook hosted dissenters to the idea in his room: the impulse to retain Kristol seemed to be prevailing with *Encounter*’s “central control — the apparat.” Meanwhile, Arthur Schlesinger’s room became a center for Macdonald advocates. Schlesinger dug in his heels on Macdonald’s behalf, along with the CIA, which succeeded in pressuring Josselson to accept Macdonald as “contributing editor” for a year, while allowing Kristol to stay on (which he did until 1958, when Josselson finally replaced him with the ubiquitous Melvin Lasky). Macdonald repaid the favor with a review of the Milan conclave that criticized its luxurious accommodations and delegates’ lack of concentration on substantive debate.<sup>140</sup>

Despite continuing intrigue, endemic to CIA control and operation, and Macdonald’s public accusation of profligacy, extensive meeting did go on for many more years among various Congress-convened groups. Josselson regularized harvesting these elite gatherings

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<sup>138</sup> Berghahn, 139-140.

<sup>139</sup> Saunders, 310.

<sup>140</sup> Saunders, 177-180 and 307-311.

for published product by creating the CCF's Forum Service in October 1957. The *Mayflower*-descended venture capitalist John Hay "Jock" Whitney provided the front for this undercover initiative, incorporating the organization in Delaware under his own name. Later renamed "Forum World Features," the service provided "background information and analysis" to subscribers all over the world, becoming "the most widely circulated of CIA-owned news services."<sup>141</sup>

### ***CIA Projects and Projections***

The trans-Atlantic cultural network created and sustained under CIA auspices began to generate many projects less clearly identified as Congress-related, though many resulted from active encouragement by Josselson and other CCF participants.

By 1958, the CCF had established a clearinghouse and international distribution service for its growing output, but also benefiting a battery of other cultural publications deemed worthy of its support. These included *Partisan Review*, *Kenyon Review*, *Hudson Review*, *Sewanee Review*, *Poetry*, *The Journal of the History of Ideas*, and *Daedalus*, among others. Grants were made through various CIA conduits to the Council of Literary Magazines for the same purpose before the Council and the Congress jointly began awarding fellowships to approved artists. Unbeknownst to each other, both *Partisan Review* and the *New Leader* began receiving Agency support through Farfield grants in 1953, as well as from other funding agencies involved in the CIA's back-channel network.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Saunders, 311-312.

<sup>142</sup> Saunders, 333.

Quite a few Agency personnel got directly involved in cultural projects of their own. Many became authors on the side, consistently presenting themselves as “freelancers”: James Michener and Peter Matthiessen both wrote books while in the CIA’s employ. E. Howard Hunt (of Watergate fame), who ran Agency training in political and psychological warfare, was another, eventually winning a Guggenheim. Books held a special place in the pantheon of cultural products for many in the CIA network. As the Agency’s former director of covert operations testified before a Senate committee in the 1970’s,

Books differ from all other propaganda media, ... primarily because one single book can change the reader’s attitude and action to an extent unmatched by the impact of any other single medium [so as to] make books the most important weapon of strategic (long-range) propaganda.

James Jesus Angleton, the CIA’s Associate Deputy Director of Operations for Counterintelligence from 1954-75, might have published more poetry, his chosen art form as a young man, had his obsession with flushing out communist moles inside the world of covert operations not consumed him: his editorship of Yale’s literary magazine *Furioso* (coincident with his membership in the notorious Skull and Bones clique) had introduced him to William Carlos Williams, E. E. Cummings and Ezra Pound, with whom he continued to palaver throughout his tenure at the CIA, keeping some element of his identity as a poet alive. He was surely furious for having been duped by the revealed double-agentry of his close friend and collaborator Kim Philby.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Saunders, 238-239, 245-249, and 341-342

More significantly, the Agency established its own clandestine books program. The program's 1961 aims were summarized for Senator Church's 1976 Senate investigation as follows:

Get books published or distributed abroad without revealing any U.S. influence, by covertly subsidizing foreign publications or booksellers. Get books published which should not be "contaminated" by any overt tie-in with the U.S. government . . . Get books published for operational reasons, regardless of commercial viability. Initiate and subsidize indigenous national or international organizations for book publishing or distributing purposes. Stimulate the writing of politically significant books by unknown foreign authors — either by directly subsidizing the author, if covert contact is feasible, or indirectly, through literary agents or publishers.

The *New York Times* estimated that the Agency has been involved in publishing at least one thousand books.<sup>144</sup>

### ***Freedom's Forge Hits Hollywood***

New covert initiatives were also undertaken in Hollywood, building on the rubble of HUAC's early witch-hunting there and taking advantage of the industry's slavish self-censorship. Soon enough, the CIA became a producer, bringing Orwell to the big screen.

Carleton Alsop, a Hollywood producer and agent (though not yet in the CIA sense) since the Thirties, played a starring role. Alsop joined Wisner's Psychological Warfare Workshop under the tutelage of E. Howard Hunt. Hunt later dispatched him and Finis Farr, a Hollywood writer, to meet with George Orwell's widow in order to clear rights for the CIA-

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<sup>144</sup> Saunders, 244-248.



financed and -distributed animated version of *Animal Farm*, which the two accomplished by promising her a personal meeting with Clark Gable.

With rights secured, Denis de Rougement oversaw *Animal Farm* production by a British firm that had produced scores of films for the British Central Office of Information. “Spinning” Orwell’s work to suit the CIA’s propaganda purposes required changes in Orwell’s ending, in which communist pigs and capitalist men became indistinguishable. This simply wouldn’t do. In the CIA’s cartoon version, humans were eliminated altogether: only animals remained, and it was the sight of the reveling pigs that incited rebellion among the other barnyard animals. The Agency apparently assumed that the audience by that time would understand just which pigs they had in mind.

Pleased with this product, the CIA went right to work on Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, produced at its behest by Hollywood’s Motion Picture Capital Corporation, newly founded by Peter Rathvon, a friend of director John Ford who had previously financed other films through the CIA’s Motion Picture Service. Once again, Agency personnel had problems with Orwell’s ending, finding his depiction of totalitarianism simply too hopeless. In his search for a more upbeat finale, Rathvon sought advice from writer Sol Stein, then serving as director of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, after having worked as chief editor of the Voice of America’s Ideological Advisory Staff.<sup>145</sup> Separate endings were ultimately produced for U.S. and British audiences — the British one having protagonist

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<sup>145</sup> Sol Stein Papers, 1943-2004, Columbia University, [http://findingaids.cul.columbia.edu/ead/nnc-rb/ldpd\\_5540444/print](http://findingaids.cul.columbia.edu/ead/nnc-rb/ldpd_5540444/print) (accessed September 1, 2013).

Winston Smith cry out “Down with Big Brother!” before he is gunned down. The end. But of course, the Agency’s name did not appear as the credits rolled.<sup>146</sup>

Alsop continued as an undercover agent for the CIA after he was hired by Paramount. There, he generated regular secret reports to the Agency on communists and fellow travelers in Hollywood, as well as on his progress in spearheading a covert pressure group to make sure that specific themes were being addressed, however subtly. For example, the Agency wanted to make sure that Hollywood films included “well-dressed negroes as part of the American scene.” This resulted in certain departures from reality (and anachronisms, when these films are viewed today) — like including well-dressed black people in crowds of golf-tournament spectators in the Jerry Lewis film *Caddy*, at a time when they would not have been allowed into the golf clubs where that picture was shot. The CIA also wanted to suppress projects that presented unflattering portraits of the nation in film, leading Alsop to kill a Paramount script that featured “[u]nflattering portrayal of rich, uncouth, ruthless Americans, ... racial denigration of Mexicans” and the “[i]mplication [that the] wealth of Anglo-Texans [was] built by exploiting Mexican labor.” He killed the project at his own home studio, but could not stop Warner Brothers from producing and releasing *Giant* in 1956.<sup>147</sup>

In the midst of this ongoing CIA activity, the Eisenhower administration focused fresh attention on Hollywood in its early months. Cecil B. DeMille was recruited as a special consultant on cinema, working directly with C.D. Jackson in the White House until Nelson

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<sup>146</sup> Saunders, 293-295.

<sup>147</sup> Saunders, 290-291

Rockefeller replaced Jackson in the summer of 1953. DeMille advised the Agency's Motion Picture Service (MPS), which in turn used 135 U.S. Information Service (later, USIA) posts as a distribution network for public showings of films that addressed "the objectives which the United States is interested in obtaining" and reaching "the pre-determined audience ... we must condition." The MPS also regulated American participation in foreign film festivals, which previously had been left to the industry itself, though the Russians fielded an official delegations to Cannes in 1951, headed up by their deputy minister of cinema. Here, too, the MPS sought to exclude "American motion pictures and producers which do not support foreign policy, [and] which in some cases are harmful."<sup>148</sup>

DeMille and the MPS also began to advise the Operations Coordinating Board (OCB, which had replaced the Psychological Strategy Board<sup>149</sup>) on its use of film, generating a list in the summer of 1954 of thirty-seven films to be shown behind the Iron Curtain. The Joint Chiefs of Staff launched a top-secret campaign in 1955 under the banner of "Militant Liberty," involving the Pentagon, the Navy, the National Security Council, and the OCB in efforts to insert the theme of "freedom" into Hollywood pictures. In the summer of 1956, the Joint Chiefs convened several meetings including such prominent Hollywood anti-communists as Ward Bond, Merian Cooper, John Ford, and John Wayne. Participants at one

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<sup>148</sup> Saunders, 288-289.

<sup>149</sup> Reporting to the National Security Council, the OCB was created by Executive Order 10483 in 1953.

of these meetings targeted Jock's cousin, Cornelius Vanderbilt "Sonny" Whitney, to receive a briefing.<sup>150</sup>

Sonny Whitney had enjoyed success as the producer of such Thirties films as *A Star Is Born* and *Gone With the Wind*, and had also already allowed the Whitney Trust to be used as a CIA conduit. Sonny set up his own production entity, C.V. Whitney Pictures, in 1954 to undertake production of what he called an "American Series" — "to show our people their country and also to make certain that the rest of the world learns more about us." John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956) was the first of the series to be released; followed by *The Wings of Eagles* (1957), in which Ward Bond appears in the role of the Ford character, the fictitious director "John Dodge"; and finally, *The Missouri Traveler* (1958).<sup>151</sup>

### ***Grantmaking for Cultural Freedom***

Besides subsidizing participants in its own programs and underwriting its growing network of collaborating journals and publishers, the Congress for Cultural Freedom also began issuing grants to other groups and conferring fellowships upon artists in the U.S. and Europe, mainly at Michael Josselson's discretion. Josselson also oversaw a "special discretionary fund" at the Farfield Foundation for the same purposes. Some of these grants were for general support, while others enabled special projects — for instance, a second European tour by the Boston Symphony in 1956, centered around a memorial concert for exiled Romanian musician Georges Enesco. Celebrating the success of the BSO tour

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<sup>150</sup> Saunders, 285-285.

<sup>151</sup> Saunders, 284-287, 289.

especially, its Trustee C.D. Jackson trumpeted the “strange” success of the CIA’s cultural campaign:

“Culture” is no longer a sissy word. A nation like ours can be virile. A nation like ours can be fantastically successful economically. But in a strange way the glue that holds things together is the nation’s coefficient of idealism ... The tangible, visible and audible expression of national idealism is culture. Of all the expressions of culture, music is the most universal. Of all the expressions of present-day musical culture, the Boston Symphony Orchestra is the best.

A first European tour of the Metropolitan Opera also took place in 1956. The PSB had directed Junkie Fleischmann to amass the \$750,000 needed to finance this tour in 1953, working in conjunction with Jackson. In the end, most of this sum “appears to have come from the CIA.”<sup>152</sup>

As time wore on, and Congress officials became more concerned about obscuring the source of its primary funding, efforts were made to diversify the operation’s base of financial support. Backroom deals with the CIA brought other foundations into the mix. Together, the Farfield Foundation and other CIA conduits made hundreds of grants to various cultural organizations and many artists, writers, and scholars.<sup>153</sup>

### *Americans for Abstract Expressionism*

New York’s Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) occupies a special place in the CCF/CIA pantheon of Cold War cultural programming. Its personal connections to the official U.S. foreign-policy apparatus go back to the cradle: Nelson Rockefeller, who called

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<sup>152</sup> Saunders, 224-225.

<sup>153</sup> Saunders, 356-358.

MoMA “mommy’s museum” — in honor of the driving force behind its founding, Abigail Aldrich Rockefeller — relied upon its curators to produce no fewer than nineteen touring exhibitions for Latin America under CIAA auspices. But Nelson was hardly alone: multiple MoMA Trustees and staff had significant personal connections with covert agencies.<sup>154</sup>

Most prominent among them was MoMA’s powerhouse director, Austrian-born count René d’Harnoncourt, an early collector of Latin American work who directed art programs for Rockefeller at CIAA before being recruited as MoMA’s director in 1949. There, he quickly became the United States’ most strident campaigner in favor of embracing modern art as the “foremost symbol” of democracy, openly lobbying Congress in 1950 to finance a cultural campaign against communism. He went on to advise the State Department and the bewildering, shifting array of covert operators throughout the Fifties and beyond.

D’Harnancourt ruled the roost at MoMA until 1967.<sup>155</sup>

MoMA-trustee connections to covert agencies were numerous. Rockefeller’s close friend Jock Whitney (manager of the Whitney fortune) directed the CIAA’s motion-picture division before he joined the OSS; his business partner, William H. Jackson, later became Deputy Director of the CIA. (Lawrence de Neufville gave Whitney some strategic credit in creating MoMA’s substantial role in the government’s covert operation: “I do remember hearing that Jock Whitney and Allen Dulles agreed they had to do something about modern art after the State Department caved in.” This debacle — the “Advancing American Art” exhibition — is discussed later.) Vanderbilt-descended William Burden, also a Rockefeller

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<sup>154</sup> Saunders, 262, 266, and 270.

<sup>155</sup> Saunders, 262, 266, and 270.

protégé at the CIAA, became a proud “front man” for CIA-funded projects in the Fifties. And fellow MoMA trustee William Paley, heir to a cigar fortune and owner of CBS, was a close personal friend of Allen Dulles, in whose home and offices CBS correspondents were annually entertained and briefed on CIA affairs. A number of MoMA trustees also served as directors for the CIA’s Farfield Foundation: not only Junkie Fleischmann, discussed earlier, but also Joseph Vernon Reed, Gardner Cowles, and Cass Canfield. Oveta Culp Hobby, a MoMA co-founder, sat on the board of Radio Free Europe, and allowed the CIA to use her family foundation as a conduit for covert funding; later appointed by Eisenhower as the first Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, Hobby’s HEW assistant was Joan Braden (Tom’s wife). Tom Braden himself had worked with Rockefeller at MoMA from 1947-49, serving as executive secretary before assuming his position as head of the CIA’s International Organizations Division.<sup>156</sup>

This elite network shared MoMA’s and the CIA’s common aesthetic commitment to modernism, and to abstract expressionism in particular — and not incidentally to the artists whose work these trustees were collecting. Not only did this reflect their more sophisticated understanding of art than that prevailing among Congressional witch-hunters; it also presumably carried Cold War content.

[F]or [America’s cultural mandarins, Abstract Expressionism] spoke to a specifically anti-Communist ideology, the ideology of freedom, of free enterprise. Non-figurative and politically silent, it was the very antithesis to socialist realism. It was precisely the kind of art the Soviets loved to hate. But it was more than this. It was, claimed its apologists, an explicitly *American* intervention in the modernist canon. ...

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<sup>156</sup> Saunders, 260-263.

“independent, self-reliant, a true expression of the national will, spirit and character. . . . US art is no longer a repository of European influences . . .”<sup>157</sup>

This modernist sentiment was also brewing in the art-critical world. In 1948, critic Clement Greenberg celebrated his sense that U.S. cultural hegemony had finally risen to match postwar geopolitical reality:

When one sees how much the level of American art has risen in the last five years . . . the conclusion forces itself, much to our surprise, that the main premises of Western Art have at last migrated to the United States, along with the center of gravity of industrial production and political power.<sup>158</sup>

No wonder President Eisenhower singled MoMA out in a speech in which he described artists as a kind of indicator species, useful in distinguishing between conditions of tyranny and freedom:

As long as artists are at liberty to feel with high personal intensity, as long as our artists are free to create with sincerity and conviction, there will be healthy controversy and progress in art. . . . How different it is in tyranny. When artists are made slaves and tools of the state; when artists become chief propagandists of a cause, progress is arrested and creation and genius are destroyed.<sup>159</sup>

MoMA’s advocacy of modern American art — specifically the “New York School” of abstract expressionists — provided the definitive aesthetic for Cold War cultural policymakers. Wyoming-born Jackson Pollack provided a photogenic face for the movement,

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<sup>157</sup> Saunders, 254. The internal quotation is drawn from the 1946 *Encyclopedia Britannica* entry for modern art.

<sup>158</sup> Saunders, 255.

<sup>159</sup> Saunders, 262-263.



archetypally American, dribbling and spraying paint on his large and larger canvases.

Frances Stonor Saunders' account of *The Cultural Cold War* enumerates many fascinating details about MoMA's CIA-backed exhibitions<sup>160</sup> — among them, diverse critical response to those huge canvases. Some European critics felt queasy at the tendencies revealed by MoMA's exhibition of "The New American Painting," for example. It was

"The Biggest in the World," announced *La Libre Belgique*, which worried that "this strength, displayed in the frenzy of a total freedom, seems a really dangerous tide. Our own abstract painters, all the 'informal' European artists, seem pygmies before the disturbing power of these unchained giants." References to the size, the violence, the Wild West abounded, "as if the critics had got hold of the wrong catalogue, [a defender complained] and thought the pictures were painted by Wyatt Earp or Billy the Kid."<sup>161</sup>

The Museum's curators produced a steady stream of exhibitions to confirm and explicate modern (American) art's progress in taking in and taking over the world. Eva Cockcroft's famous 1974 *Artforum* article, "Abstract Expressionism: Weapon of the Cold War," traced the roots of MoMA's narrow Seventies aesthetic to its Cold War work:

Links between cultural cold war politics and the success of Abstract Expressionism are by no means coincidental. ... They were consciously forged at the time by some of the most influential figures controlling museum policies and advocating enlightened cold war tactics designed to woo European intellectuals. ... In terms of cultural propaganda, the functions of both the CIA's cultural apparatus and MoMA's international programs were similar and, in fact, mutually supportive.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> See especially Saunders, 263-271.

<sup>161</sup> Saunders, 274.

<sup>162</sup> Saunders, 263.

Saunders concludes her summary of MoMA's staging of modern American art with her assessment of the institution's role and impact, converting freedom to conformity:

The Museum of Modern Art ... held tenaciously to its executive role in manufacturing a history for Abstract Expressionism. Ordered and systematic, this history reduced what had once been provocative and strange to an academic formula, a received mannerism, an *art officiel*. Thus installed within the canon, the freest form of art now lacked freedom. More and more painters produced more and more paintings which got bigger and bigger and emptier and emptier. It was this very stylistic conformity, prescribed by MoMA and the broader social contract of which it was a part, that brought Abstract Expressionism to the verge of kitsch. ... One of the extraordinary features of the role that American painting played in the cultural Cold War is ... that a movement which so deliberately declared itself to be apolitical could become so intensely politicized.

The ever-critical Jason Epstein weighed in on this art-world phenomenon, viewed with an outsider's eye:

It was like the emperor's clothes. You parade it down the street and you say, "This is great art" ... Who's going to stand up to Clem Greenberg and later to the Rockefellers who were buying it for their bank lobbies and say, "This stuff is terrible"?<sup>163</sup>

Saunders cites two critics on the predominance of abstract expressionism within the New York art world. Adam Gopnick, for example, states that "oversized abstract watercolors [had become] the single style of the American museum, forcing two generations of realists to live in the basements and pass still-lives around like samizdat." John Canady observed that by 1959, abstract expressionism was so popular that "an unknown artist trying to exhibit in New

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<sup>163</sup> Saunders, 274-275.

York couldn't find a gallery unless he was painting in a mode derived from one or another member of the New York School.”<sup>164</sup>

On the political front, considering the place of content in modern art, critic Harold Rosenberg explains how he saw post-war art as entailing “the political choice of giving up politics”:

[I]n its politically shrewd reaction against politics, in its ostensible demonstration that competing ideologies had depleted themselves and dissipated adherents ... the new painters and their supporters had of course become fully engaged in the issues of the day.

They did so by emptying their work of content.<sup>165</sup>

This socially disengaged notion of art was to reign among the new federal arts agencies created in the mid-Sixties. Challenging this postwar art-world orthodoxy became the inspiration and irritation of multiple alternative arts and cultural movements ever since.

### ***Feasting for Freedom, Footing the Bill***

Intentionally hidden as it was, it remains difficult to assess the amount or reach of CIA money invested in its myriad cultural initiatives. But even within the Congress for Cultural Freedom itself, there was rankling over lavish spending in its various programs. Nabokov's festivals provided the most obvious targets. Melvin Lasky considered the Paris festival “trivial” and bristled, “The Boston Symphony Orchestra cost a packet.” (Saunders counts the BSO price tag rather precisely at \$166,359.84.) Lasky later complained, “[T]o

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<sup>164</sup> Saunders, 274.

<sup>165</sup> Saunders, 275.

spend such large sums on this kind of spectacular hype — it didn't make sense." Even Diana Josselson, who considered "Nicolas's festival ... thrilling," admitted that in its extravagant Paris staging of large companies imported from all over Europe and the United States, "[I]t gave more weight to the idea that America [meaning the U.S. government] was behind the Congress."<sup>166</sup>

Histories of the Congress feature extensive disavowals that anyone knew at the time that the CIA was paying for everything. Equally extensive are the number of participants who scoff in retrospect that it would have been naïve to think otherwise — especially in a Europe recovering from the war and still extremely stressed financially. As editor and critic Jacob Epstein recalled,

Suddenly there were limousines, parties with lashings of smoked salmon ... and people who couldn't normally afford the bus ticket to Newark were now flying first class to India for the summer.

Malcolm Muggeridge wrote, "In the heyday ... the airlines were crowded with dons and writers carrying branded culture to every corner of the habitable globe."<sup>167</sup> "Who do you think's paying for this?" became a topic of speculative conversation over countless multi-course meals hosted by the CCF in Western Europe's finest salons.

### ***Revolving Doors***

Multiple entities helped obscure the CIA's direct financial support of the Congress for Cultural Freedom's undertakings. Funding relationships were reflected in and primed by

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<sup>166</sup> Saunders, 124-125.

<sup>167</sup> Saunders, 220.

revolving-door patterns in staffing among the academy, the foundation world, the U.S. foreign-policy establishment, and the various think tanks that brought them all together for strategic conversation, aside from the Congress itself. Key figures and the relationships they maintained provided personal bridges among these apparently separate worlds, and were carried seamlessly into the nation's domestic cultural affairs from the Fifties on.

John McCloy is a good example. Former Assistant Secretary of War, then president of the World Bank and High Commissioner of Germany, McCloy became president of the Ford Foundation (still headquartered in southern California) in 1953, the same year he assumed the chair of the Rockefellers' Chase Manhattan Bank and of the nonprofit Council of Foreign Relations. Throughout, McCloy served as the Wall Street attorney of the seven largest U.S. oil companies and sat on numerous other corporate boards. Once ensconced at Ford, McCloy established a secret three-man committee, including himself and the two program officers he had specifically assigned to the matter, to oversee the Foundation's work as a pass-through or cover for CIA funds and a substantial contributor itself to programs and initiatives growing out of it.<sup>168</sup>

The Rockefeller family and its various philanthropies and think tanks offer the longest through-line in our story of Twentieth Century U.S. cultural policy — even longer than J. Edgar Hoover's, he being disadvantaged by absence of fortune or heir. The unparalleled fortune built by John D. Rockefeller through Standard Oil from the late nineteenth century fell first to JDR's son "Junior" Rockefeller, the Rockefeller Foundation's first president. Junior also funded start-up for the Council on Foreign Relations and donated

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<sup>168</sup> Saunders, 141.

real estate for construction of the Museum of Modern Art, whose creation was spearheaded by his wife, Abby.

The five male siblings in the third generation of Rockefeller wealth spawned and supported countless initiatives in business, politics, government, and the nonprofit sector. Nelson was most directly and centrally involved in covert operations, replacing C.D. Jackson as Eisenhower's special advisor on Cold War strategy and coordinating covert operations in 1954-55. He left the White House and Washington in frustration at not getting the Defense post he wanted, and situated himself at the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, a family think tank established in 1940. There he launched the Special Studies Project, an ambitious effort to define central problems and opportunities facing the United States, headed up by a young associate professor from Harvard, Henry Kissinger.<sup>169</sup> Nelson became a key figure in laying the groundwork for domestic American cultural policy, when as governor he established the New York State Council on the Arts.<sup>170</sup>

Nelson's brother David was active as a financier of Cold War initiatives, through his control of the Chase Manhattan Bank Foundation's donations committee and personally connected with many cultural-policy players. When fellow Council on Foreign Relations director Allen Dulles feared that incoming President Eisenhower might not like him staying on at the CIA, Rockefeller assured him over lunch that were this the case, he might expect to

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<sup>169</sup> Saunders, 144 and 261; and Michael Straight, *Nancy Hanks: An Intimate Portrait* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1988), 56.

<sup>170</sup> Paul J. DiMaggio, "Decentralization of Arts Funding from the Federal Government to the States," *Public Money and the Muse: Essays on Government Funding for the Arts*, Stephen Benedict, ed., The American Assembly, Columbia University (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1991), 218.

land gently as President of Ford, the post that eventually went to McCloy instead. Tom Braden took care to brief David frequently on Agency matters, with Allen's blessing, and later reminisced, "He was of the same mind as us ... Sometime David would give me money to do things that weren't in our budget. ... David just have me the cheque ... The CIA never came into the equation."<sup>171</sup>

Junior's eldest son JDR III, also vitally interested in international relations, became best known for his work in nonprofit philanthropic sectors: he chaired the Rockefeller Brothers' panel on the performing arts, staffed by the future chief of the National Endowment for the Arts; and spearheaded efforts in the Fifties that led to construction of New York City's Lincoln Center in the Sixties, which inspired similar centers, often twinned with "urban removal" programs, to such an extent that the obsession quickly came to joked about in cultural development circles as "the Edifice Complex."<sup>172</sup>

Shepard Stone was another frequent flyer through the revolving door of Cold War action, philanthropy, and think-tankery. Following wartime intelligence and occupation-government service, Stone returned to the *New York Times*, where he had worked as a journalist in the Thirties. But John McCloy soon called him back to Germany; and from there, Stone followed McCloy first to California, then to New York City, as the Ford Foundation's Director of International Affairs from 1952-67, where he was deeply involved in CIA collaboration. Leaving Ford, Stone returned to Europe as President of the

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<sup>171</sup> Saunders, 137, 140-141, and 145.

<sup>172</sup> Rockefeller Panel Report on the Future of Theatre, Dance, Music in America, *The Performing Arts: Problems and Prospects* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1965).

International Association for Cultural Freedom, the successor group to the Congress for Cultural Freedom, after disclosure of CIA funding in a 1967 *Ramparts* article brought the CCF down, and Michael Josselson's directorship of the IACF's predecessor group along with it.<sup>173</sup>

The fascination of America's ruling class with the Atlanticist agenda and its frenetic activity in the United States' foreign-policy establishment represented the coming of age of American power and the triumph of the U.S. power elite. The backdoor channels these figures cut under CIA auspices were sometimes justified as an escape from garden-variety anti-communists that ruled the roost back home. The tone of covert-agency initiatives reflected the rarefied culture of Board and clubrooms, and the pervasive postwar penchant for power and global intrigue. Saunders succinctly quotes other observers of the intellectual elite's romance with covert ops:

"... a certain sort of intellectuals have always had a romance about intelligence services," observed [historian] Carol Brightman. "It's a kind of coming of age experience, ... especially on certain campuses such as Yale." For novelist Richard Elman ..., there was also a shared aesthetic concern: "It's worth considering what these people had in common. They were all Christians, in a non-sectarian, T.S. Eliot kind of way. They believed in a higher authority, a higher truth which sanctioned their anti-Communist, anti-atheist crusade. T.S. Eliot, Pound, and other modernists appealed to their elite sensibilities. ... These were men, as much as Shaw and Wells, for whom the socialist 'century of the common man' was unwelcome — they wanted the Uncommon Man and High Culture. So, they weren't just putting money into culture willy-nilly."<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> See Berghahn and Saunders, 381-384.

<sup>174</sup> Saunders, 248.



In the end, this notion of elite culture was to permeate domestic policymaking as well.

### ***The Impact of Covert Support***

Frances Stonor Saunders' insider interviews with Agency network veterans in the 1990's brought forward surprisingly few critics of the covert approach to U.S. cultural policy in international relations: how can it be said that the CIA did anything but support a great deal of interesting work? After all, the U.S. government derived no direct geopolitical objective through its covert culture war. The Psych Ops impresarios were driven to operate covertly by the benightedness and low cultural standing of the Typhoid Mary's of anti-communism in Congress and the mass media.

Regardless of these denials, there was no joy in Mudville when the 1977 *Ramparts* article came out, publicly exposing the CIA's cultural campaign for the first time. Jason Epstein, whose co-founding of the independent *New York Review of Books* in 1964 had scared the Cold War elite of the Fifties a little earlier, offered Saunders a critical perspective as he described how censorship worked in the Congress for Cultural Freedom:

This CIA claimed that it was sponsoring freedom of expression. Of course that wasn't true. When Dwight Macdonald wrote his article for *Encounter* [criticizing American culture upon his return to the States], the editors of the magazine ... refused to publish it. That doesn't say much for promoting freedom of expression. The CIA was promoting a policy and a political line: that was what it was paying for and that's what it expected to get. Freedom of expression had nothing to do with it.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Saunders, 320-321. See 315-324 for her detailed treatment of the whole hubbub surrounding Macdonald's "America! America!" article.

Saunders herself concluded her impressive study by stating that in this instance, the CCF's journal "*Encounter* suspended that most precious of western philosophical concepts — the freedom to think and act independently — and trimmed it sails to suit the prevailing winds." (Macdonald's rejected article was published by *Dissent* in 1958, and eventually managed to get past the editors of CCF's own *Tempo Presente*.)<sup>176</sup>

But historian Peter Steinfels saw the Agency's gatekeeping function as operating at a much deeper level than in the mere censorship of content:

The pertinent question about *Encounter*'s independence was not whether there were instructions cabled to the editors from Washington, but who chose the editors in the first place, and who established the clear bounds of "responsible" opinion within which differences were uninhibitedly explored.

Epstein agreed, seeing CIA impact in the very infrastructure of the intellectual community — by virtue of the Agency's "setting up an arbitrary and factitious system of values by which academic personnel were advanced, magazine editors appointed, and scholars subsidized and published, not necessarily on their merits ... but because of their allegiance."<sup>177</sup> The price of entry into the CIA-financed community was to sign on the Cold War dotted line, as Epstein concludes:

[T]he CIA and the Ford Foundation ... had set up and were financing an apparatus of intellectuals selected for their correct cold-war positions, as an alternative to what might call a free intellectual market where ideology was presumed to count less than individual talent and achievement, and where doubts

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<sup>176</sup> Saunders, 320 and 322.

<sup>177</sup> Saunders, 323.

about established orthodoxies were taken to be the beginning of all inquiry ...<sup>178</sup>

Journalist Andrew Kopkind describes the paradox created by the general climate of anti-communism, once it became established:

The distance between the rhetoric of the open society and the reality of control was greater than anyone thought ... Everyone who went abroad for an American organization was, in one way or another, a witness to the theory that the world was torn between communism and democracy, and anything in between was treason. The illusion of dissent was maintained: the CIA supported socialist cold warriors, fascist cold warriors, black and white cold warriors. The catholicity and flexibility of CIA operations were major advantages. But it was a sham pluralism, and it was utterly corrupting.<sup>179</sup>

This “sham pluralism” can revealingly be considered not only in its political sense, but also even more productively by the aesthetic conventions it established. Allen Ginsberg captured this subjective bias in a 1978 sketch entitled “T.S. Eliot Entered My Dreams,” writing about the paranoid poet and CIA mole-hunter James Jesus Angleton’s notion of “literary conspiracies” and how they manifest through the Agency’s cultural operations and sensibility:

[I]t secretly nourished the careers of too many square intellectuals, provided sustenance to thinkers in the Academy who influenced the intellectual tone of the West ... After all, Intellectual tone should be revolutionary, or at least Radical, seeking roots of dis-ease and Mechanization and dominance by unnatural monopoly ... And the Government through foundations was supporting the whole field of ‘Scholars of War’ ... The subsidization of magazines like *Encounter* which held Eliotic style as a touchstone of sophistication and

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<sup>178</sup> Saunders, 409.

<sup>179</sup> Saunders, 408-409.

competence ... failed to create an alternative free vital decentralized individualistic culture. Instead we had the worst of Capitalist Imperialism.<sup>180</sup>

The conformist requirements in culture ran much deeper, in the taste biases of the gatekeepers and theorizers as they took on the traditionally European mantle of high-art leadership, to the exclusion of the cultures of those whom we might today call “the 99%.” These biases ran deepest in relation to the many non-European cultural traditions then present in U.S. culture, echoing the threat perceived in alien ethnic or politically inspired artwork earlier, in the Red Scare of 1919. All were diminished by the elite Atlanticist aesthetic that prevailed throughout the Cold War era.

The deadening hand of ideological conformism fell not only upon the art world, but throughout the culture. George Kennan noticed it by the time he spoke at MoMA in 1955, decrying anti-communism itself as having become a kind of totalitarianism:

In recent years, there has grown up among us a most reprehensible habit, a totalitarian habit in fact, of judging the suitability of cultural contributions by whatever political coloration we conceive their creators to have acquired, I know of nothing sillier than this. ... After all, cultural events are not political livestock exhibits in which we put forward human figures to be admired for the purity of their ideological features.<sup>181</sup>

We will shortly turn to examining how these forces have manifest in the domestic arena. But the international picture must first be rounded out by considering the overt cultural initiatives undertaken by the White House and the State Department in the later Fifties.

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<sup>180</sup> Saunders, 248-249.

<sup>181</sup> Saunders, 227.

### ***Bringing the Geopolitical In***

Before leaving the murky world of covert action, however, it is important to acknowledge that the CIA did much more to exert influence on the political culture of the world during the Cold War than by acting as a Shadow Cabinet for U.S. culture. Historian John Lewis Gaddis inventories U.S. interventions he saw as contradictory to, even destructive of, stated American values during this era: in Berlin, Cambodia, Chile, Cuba, Guatemala, Hungary, Iran, Italy, the Middle East, Poland, the U.S.S.R., and Vietnam.<sup>182</sup> Penny Von Eschen's account of State Department cultural programs brushes up against many of these, adding the Central African Republic, The Congo, Ghana, and many more.

The United States' cultural policy in the global arena — steadfastly insisting that we had none — has had enormous impact throughout the world, sometimes to deadly effect, through our raw geopolitical might, often covertly deployed. Our interventions reveal greater concern for the economic interests of U.S.-based multinational corporations than for fostering democracy.

Though the glove of covert action has often hidden our hand, we the people are responsible for the defeat of countless democratic initiatives abroad, as our nation has sought to install and stabilize regimes favorable to our most powerful capitalists. The denial of cultural policy is the fabric from which this glove was cut. Spelling out our preference for capitalist-friendly order over democracy in explicit terms would surely violate most Americans' sense of even-handedness and fair play, embarrassing our sense of political

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<sup>182</sup> Gaddis, *Cold War*, 162-174.

democracy by revealing the close relations that have evolved between the government and powerful corporate interests.

### **STATE DEPARTMENT SHOWCASES FOR U.S. CULTURE**

Muscular propaganda dominated the public face of U.S. cultural relations in the early Cold War. Overt programs of cultural exchange were slower to develop and to win support.

Cultural exchange in a Europe devastated by World War II had fallen first to Allied Occupation forces. It was not until 1949 that the Army's cultural program was officially transferred to the State Department, and it took even longer to secure federal financing in these quarters. The Smith-Mundt Act of 1948 authorized the Secretary of State to undertake cultural exchange initiatives, but "psych ops" and direct propaganda efforts took priority in Washington until the mid-Fifties, when more formal performing-arts presentations began. President Eisenhower finally established an Emergency Fund for International Affairs in 1954, empowered to support cultural presentations abroad; and the International Cultural Exchange and Trade Fair Participation Act established a more permanent place for this approach to cultural diplomacy in 1956.<sup>183</sup>

Historian Penny Von Eschen wrote that postwar "State Department cultural policy was often as improvised (though not as skillfully) as the solos of jazz artists."<sup>184</sup> The Department's arrangements and priorities shifted a great deal, depending upon American

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<sup>183</sup> Berghahn, 149.

<sup>184</sup> Von Eschen, 22.

foreign policy priorities and resources. The clearest expressions of State Department policy aims emerged in its relatively high-profile public programs.

The first big initiative undertaken by State came quite soon after the end of World War II, but had to be written off as a “learning experience” for the foreign-policy establishment in dealing with an increasingly bellicose Congress. “Advancing American Art” — a bold depiction of abstract expressionism practically at its birthing moment — opened briefly at New York’s Metropolitan Museum late in 1946, to critical acclaim, before being shipped off to the first venues in extended State Department tours of European and Latin American cultural centers. It was this exhibit that inspired George Dondero’s speech, quoted earlier, defining the aim of “abstractionism” as destruction “by the creation of brainstorm.” The exhibitions were unceremoniously and rather publicly yanked back to Washington and ingloriously auctioned off at rummage-sale rates. Congress commanded that no further exhibitions could be mounted without securing its explicit prior approval. This guaranteed that most visual arts programs would be handled through private agencies, and most often, through the covert channels already described. Clearly, projecting America’s elite cultural leadership abroad would prove a difficult balancing act, at a time of virulent reaction and resistance to cultural democracy at home. Thomson and Laves end their 1963 discussion of this episode with the observation that

The hostile attitude in the Congress led to disregard and neglect of the fine arts in general; and to a specific injunction against government-financed exhibitions of paintings that had not received individual, prior approval from the legislative body.

Thomson and Laves could not yet have known of the extensive, expensive alternative paths found and funded by the C.I.A. precisely in order to avoid public scrutiny, though some investigations of covert action were by that time already underway by the time they wrote.<sup>185</sup>

### ***Jazzing Up America's Image Broad***

More successful than “Advancing American Art” were the State Department’s later forays into performing-arts touring, and most successfully of all, the jazz tours of the Fifties and Sixties. The Department’s first major foray took advantage of the commercial success of producers Bievens Davis and Robert Breen’s 1953 London staging of *Porgy and Bess*, starring Cab Calloway and Leontyne Price. The State Department took the company on what turned into a four-year tour throughout Europe, South America, the Middle East, and the U.S. itself. The tour reached the apogee of propaganda success when it opened in Moscow in December 1955, with Truman Capote in tow, reporting on this artistic adventure for the *New Yorker* and publishing his account as a book in 1956.<sup>186</sup>

Eisenhower singled out *Porgy and Bess* in asking Congress for a special appropriation to carry out similar projects in July 1954. An initial \$5 million was authorized in August, to be spent at the President’s discretion, with Secretary of State John Foster Dulles maintaining “close personal contact.”<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Thomson and Laves, 122.

<sup>186</sup> Truman Capote, *The Muses Are Heard* (New York: Random House, 1956).

<sup>187</sup> Von Eschen, 6.



Part of the appeal of *Porgy and Bess* to the White House and State Department was its elevation of down-and-out African-American culture to the high-art stage. This same appeal lay in jazz — and at much lower production and transportation cost. As soon as Eisenhower’s emergency fund was secure, jazz tours quickly became centerpieces of U.S. efforts to present American culture as racially harmonious and respectful of African-infused cultural traditions. Historian Von Eschen notes that “Eisenhower’s ... well-honed sense of expediency superseded his well-documented condescension toward African-Americans and ‘the race question’” in this enterprise.<sup>188</sup>

These tours were used extensively in Europe and became hallmarks of U.S. diplomacy in Africa in the Fifties and Sixties, as former European colonies were gaining national independence. Not infrequently, and certainly not entirely by coincidence, State Department tours landed artists in cities where the CIA had recently toppled some nearby government. The government underwrote tours by jazz ensembles that were barred from performing in segregated cultural facilities in many parts of the United States. Racialized perceptions of jazz were not uncommon, either — as when the White Citizens Council of Alabama condemned the form in the April 1956 issue of *Newsweek* as “a plot to mongrelize America” by forcing black culture on the South through “be-bop ‘Rock and Roll,’ and all Negro Music.”<sup>189</sup>

State Department programmers could not trumpet their successes in retailing projections of U.S. racial harmony without fanning the flames of disharmony already actually

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<sup>188</sup> Von Eschen, 5.

<sup>189</sup> Von Eschen, 26.

burning back home. VOA programmer Leonard Feather reminisced about his discovery that there was a “white curtain which hung over an Afro-American art form lest someone on home ground become aware of its importance.”<sup>190</sup>

Feather’s colleague Willis Conover idealistically believed in the assertion that jazz “corrects the fiction that America is racist.”<sup>191</sup> The idealism of this belief was belied by images being televised at the time of police brutality and White Citizen mob action against peaceful civil rights demonstrators. News coverage completely undermined official U.S. efforts to project images of racial harmony from the stage. And American “jazz ambassadors” often spoke not only far afield of official policy, but sometimes openly, angrily condemned the dominant racist order in the U.S. before foreign audiences numbering in the tens of thousands.

In this context, Dulles and Eisenhower were soon made to learn the impossibility of employing America’s leading African American artists without opening the Pandora’s box of racism and segregation in the U.S. culture.

### ***Shamed into Action: Dealing with Domestic Reality***

Ultimately — crucially — concerns about the nation’s image in the international arena forced the federal government to intervene in domestic racial confrontations in some ways that would be equally visible to the wider world — first and most dramatically in the fall of 1957, when mobs of white racists tried to block school integration in Little Rock,

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<sup>190</sup> Von Eschen, 9.

<sup>191</sup> Von Eschen, 17.

Arkansas. Federal intervention was forced in part by our having effectively anointed one particular cultural ambassador, who acted on the claim made by the government that he was an artist free of its control and spoke out against that government.

A sensation in his first official African tour the previous year, Louis Armstrong was about to tour the Soviet Union and Latin America on the State Department's behalf when the Little Rock confrontation began. He angrily canceled his tour, proclaiming, "The way they are treating my people in the South, the Government can go to hell!" Armstrong added that black people in the United States *had* no country and denounced Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus as "an uneducated plow-boy." This did Satchmo become quite a different kind of cultural ambassador: for the principle of racial equality and social justice among his own people.

International attention to U.S. hypocrisies quickly became so widespread that this incident could not be ignored, even by the most conservative foreign-policy "realists" of the time. Secretary of State Dulles confided to Attorney General Herbert Brownell that he was "sick at heart" over Little Rock, and that it was "ruining our foreign policy." Intervention became necessary to saving America's reputation abroad. Quickly responding, once federal troops were finally sent to enforce Little Rock school integration in October, Armstrong declared that Washington's response was "just wonderful," and he telegraphed his support to the White House. Armstrong's own independent Latin American tour that November — booked commercially, immediately after he left the State Department high and dry — was

exploited for propaganda value by U.S. Foreign Service officers in Latin America, despite the fact that no State Department money was involved.<sup>192</sup>

### ***Taking World Stages by Storm***

Von Eschen's *Satchmo Blows Up the World* offers a fascinating, detailed account of many of the most important State Department jazz tours, tracking shifts in agency structure, funding, sponsorship, and priorities from the Fifties into the Seventies. Overall, her account demonstrates that it was in fact because cultural policy was so ill-defined that insurgent artists and their ideas were able to have an impact:

The United States has been relatively indifferent to culture and cultural policy. Instead, government policy has often promoted the idea that the market itself is the highest cultural value... [I]t was precisely the absence of a coherent cultural policy that created a space for a unique alliance of artists, supporters of the arts, and liberals within the State Department to project the jazz vision of America throughout the globe.<sup>193</sup>

Summing up that impact, Von Eschen sees plenty of positive accomplishment, harking back to jazz as a quintessentially democratic form:

[A]rtists, State Department personnel, and supporters of the arts crafted programs that related to the world through a wide cross-section of America, including its most creative artists. ... [who] represented hope and possibility, not a smug claim to a perfected democracy. ... [who] articulated their connection to the world as artists and humans, not a sense of uniqueness or superiority. ... [A] jazz combo ... symbolize[d] the qualities of a vibrant democracy. ... expressed individual excellence within a profound dependence on and accountability to a collective. ... celebrated the unexpected, and hence the possibilities of

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<sup>192</sup> Von Eschen, 63-64.

<sup>193</sup> Von Eschen, 22 and 24.

democracy and global citizenship rather than the scripted power of empire.<sup>194</sup>

The jazz tours became especially important because these ensembles, by their very nature and practice, suggested the potential of progressive, anti-racist ideas in an American culture that not only included, but had actively embraced African American influence:

Intended as a color-blind promotion of American democracy, the [State Department jazz] tours underscored the importance of African American culture in the Cold War redefinition of America. ... [B]lackness and race operated culturally to redefine an image of American nationhood more inclusive and integrated than the reality. ... [T]he promotion of American culture abroad led just as often to the fostering of collaboration and solidarity throughout the African diaspora ... served to promote diasporic and transnational relationships ... [and helped] to nurture the development of oppositional transnational and Afro-diasporic sensibilities. The tours ... acted as a catalyst for the internationalization of jazz ... [T]hey helped to transform popular music.<sup>195</sup>

Even dispositionally, these artists embodied an American spirit much freer than that communicated by our official representatives, better-heeled tourists, or corporate promoters — though transference of these positive associations among audience members to the official face of the nation was strictly limited. Writing of this era decades later, in 2004, Von Eschen was able to set her critique not only against the global climate of the Fifties, but also in light of what was yet to come:

The jazz ambassadors projected the opposite of the arrogance and belligerence that many in the world had come to associate with U.S. foreign policy since the Vietnam War. ... [T]heir brilliant creativity, their irreverence, and their wit, and for all

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<sup>194</sup> Von Eschen, 259.

<sup>195</sup> Von Eschen, 256-257.

of the ways in which they voiced their affinities with people struggling for freedom in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, the Soviet Union, and Eastern Europe. ... [A]udiences never confused or conflated their love of jazz and American popular culture with an acceptance of American foreign policy.<sup>196</sup>

On the aesthetic front, musicians and critics strove to elevate the image of jazz in the art world through the prominent role they played in State Department tours; but despite its programmatic value to official promoters of America's image abroad, jazz remained a stepchild to the elite construction of American art that came to the fore in the Fifties and Sixties. Efforts to force its acceptance in the socially disengaged terms of the postwar art world risked alienation from the real cultural roots of jazz.

In the quest by musicians and critics to have jazz recognized as legitimate art, the subsequent canonization of jazz as high modernism proved to be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it countered the ... condescending view that jazz was a simple folk form. On the other hand, it abstracted jazz from its origins in African-American working-class culture... [G]iven the widespread adherence to a color-blind liberalism that assumed "black" and "modern" were incompatible, many critics could only elevate jazz to modernism by a dissociating it from black culture.

Von Eschen draws out a parallel bias embedded in elite cultural-policy thinking from the Fifties on: jazz was consistently disparaged as "mere entertainment," and "insisting on the separation of art from entertainment led to myriad contradictions." She observes, "There was constant tension between the view of jazz as high modernist art and the view of jazz as popular culture meant to appeal to the masses."<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Von Eschen, 257.

<sup>197</sup> Von Eschen, 19.

The jazz tours eventually petered out after the late Seventies, especially after this responsibility was shifted out of the State Department:

Jazz and performing-arts tours continued under a reorganized USIA after the cultural presentations moved out of the State Department in 1978, but they were not as high-profile, and ... they lacked the ambition and urgency of the earlier tours.<sup>198</sup>

This reorganization created the International Communication Agency,<sup>199</sup> which drew all U.S. cultural initiatives together from 1978-1999, when these were either transferred back to the State Department or relegated to a new independent agency, as part of a rangy mess of legislation providing “omnibus consolidated and emergency appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1999, and for other purposes.”<sup>200</sup>

It was the very elitist view of culture held by these actors, like their undercover CIA colleagues, that would guide creation of the United States’ domestic public cultural agencies. The emerging aesthetics of State Department officials and other international operators, overt and covert, were mirrored in the values articulated and enacted by the National Foundation of the Arts and Humanities from its creation in 1965. And many key personnel — Nelson Rockefeller being the most prominent example — were actively and centrally involved throughout the process.

For this reason, the schizophrenic quality of cultural leadership and its impact in the Cold War era is especially crucial and interesting, in all its contradictions. The politics of the

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<sup>198</sup> Von Eschen, 251.

<sup>199</sup> President Jimmy Carter, Executive Order 12048 (March 27, 1978). Accessed November 4, 2013 at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=30576#axzz2jhptPWpt>.

<sup>200</sup> Public Law 105-277, Approved October 21, 1998 by the 105th Congress (Washington, DC, GPO). Accessed November 4, 2013 at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-105publ277/html/PLAW-105publ277.htm>.

artists and intellectuals involved had to conform to those of economic, political and military elites, whose dogma was decidedly and determinedly anti-communist.

### *American Materialism on Display*

With the jazz tours still building steaming, the United States hatched a separate cultural initiative more directly revealing of its identity and values in the Cold War contest with the Soviet Union. In January 1958, a new bilateral agreement was signed between the contending powers that opened the way for a variety of new cultural exchanges. Hollywood got the right to distribute its first limited number of films since the mid-Forties, for instance. Many student exchanges were haggled over. And a young Texan, Van Cliburn, won the Tchaikovsky International Piano Competition in 1958. Later that year, though under surveillance back home, Paul Robeson toured the Soviet Union under official U.S. auspices — though drawing smaller crowds than the Harlem Globetrotters, Bob Hope, and “Holiday on Ice,” all of whom followed Robeson in 1959.<sup>201</sup>

Most storied of the Eisenhower administration’s ventures into international display in this period, however, was the massive exposition of American consumer culture thrown up in Sokolniki Park, a wooded, 1,500-acre tract once used by Russia’s aristocrats for falconry, just a fifteen-minute subway ride from the center of Moscow. The American National Exhibition was coordinated by George Allen of the USIA and directed by Harold Chadwick “Chad” McClellan, former president of the National Association of Manufacturers. The U.S.

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<sup>201</sup> Hixson, 154-157



government saw this as a prime opportunity for “propaganda and cultural infiltration” of the USSR.

A classified planning document laid out the Exhibition’s aims: to “increase the knowledge of the Soviet people about the United States,” and thus to counter “communist fiction.” “Freedom of choice and expression” — defined as the “unimpeded flow of diverse good and ideas” — was to be the exposition’s main theme.” To demonstrate freedom of thought, planners initially thought that they would present examples of shortcomings — to reveal and deal with the nation’s social problems — as well as boasting of its predominant blessings. This seemed important, since the Exhibition was seen as targeting an audience of “the politically alert and potentially most influential citizens of the Soviet Union.” But the blowback from a similar effort at the Brussels World’s Fair in 1958 soon put an end to that idea.<sup>202</sup>

The U.S. pavilion in Brussels featured a section called “Unfinished Work,” recalling that phrase in Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, comprising exhibits dealing with race relations, urban renewal, and conservation — in each case, identifying the problem, explaining what was being done, and making optimistic projections for the future. A separate exhibit, “The American Negro,” drew the greatest heat, however, in stating that vis-à-vis the “one American in ten descended from African slaves,” America was united behind the goal spelled out on exhibition signage — of working toward “not utopia, but larger freedom, with more justice. Democracy is our method. Slowly, but surely, it works.”

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<sup>202</sup> Hixson, 161-163, and 165.

Once the content of these exhibits became known to domestic politicians, protests immediately erupted from the American right. “[T]his exhibit could not have been more designed to reflect against the American nation,” cried South Carolina Senator Olin Johnston, “if it had been made in Moscow by the Kremlin.” Officials quickly began to pick at the exhibition itself — removing photos of mixed-race groups and situations, police actions, and mob violence, always taking care to post a guard first, so the press could not witness their removal. But curatorial spot-editing couldn’t stop the powerful momentum coming from above. President Eisenhower, relenting to calls for censorship, compared the situation to high school students wanting to choose their “best clothes” for graduation. These controversial World’s Fair displays were replaced *in toto* with a bland exhibit on public health.<sup>203</sup>

Once officials at the U.S. embassy in Moscow reviewed Washington planners’ early aims, and with “Unofficial Business” being removed from public view in Brussels, the Sokolniki Park exhibition took a more practical turn. Ambassador Llewellyn “Tommy” Thompson thought the main thrust should be “to make the Soviet people dissatisfied with the share of the Russian pie which they now receive and make them realize that the slight improvements projected in their standard of living are only a drop in the bucket to what they could and should have.” This is the direction that prevailed. With government underwriting of only \$3.6 million, Chad McClellan fell in line and, drawing on his NAM connections, rallied corporate support at a White House luncheon for a special 51-member advisory committee. His efforts lassoed extensive contributions from business and industry to show off state-of-the-art American consumerism. Four-hundred fifty companies contributed freely

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<sup>203</sup> Hixson, 145-146

to this massive display of their wares, building and equipping a model home, installing IBM's huge RAMAC "electronic brain" computer, and much, much more. Enclosed in a 30,000-square-foot, gold-anodized geodesic dome designed by Buckminster Fuller, a 50,000-square-foot glass pavilion, and the 360-degree Circarama film theater shipped in from the prior year's World Fair, the resulting exhibition was decidedly longer on goods than ideas, especially since reaction against its truth-telling intentions quickly nipped those ideas in the bud.<sup>204</sup>

Even so, censorious reaction flared up in Washington. Rep. Francis E. Walter, chair of HUAC at the time, caught wind of the art show being installed in the Sokolniki Park exhibition and trumpeted his warning that fully half of the artists "have records of affiliation with communist fronts and causes." Once the White House caught wind of the show's content, chosen by a panel of curators assembled by MoMA, Eisenhower became alarmed that it "represented an extreme form of modernism." Vice President Nixon recommended yanking the art exhibit completely. But the President and Secretary of State Christian Herder on second thought agreed that this might look like censorship, which "would invite consequences considered more likely to impair the effectiveness of the exhibition." Instead, the USIA's George Allen saw to it that "some good examples of nineteenth century art" were thrown in before the show opened, to moderate its modernist bent. So the show did go on, still drawing pointed criticism of its modernist works from Nikita Khrushchev on his final

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<sup>204</sup> Hixson, 167-169.

visit to the exhibition: “People who paint like that are obviously crazy, but people who think it’s art are crazier still.”<sup>205</sup>

Other objections to the American National Exhibition reflected the changed state of the anti-communist consensus at the end of the Fifties. Senator Barry Goldwater criticized the absence of religiosity in the exhibition; but McClellan, Allen, and Thompson all argued back that consumerism was a better focus, since a display of religious feeling in the heart of the godless USSR would be read as overtly propagandistic. In the end, advocates of religion took pride in the scores of Bibles being pilfered by visitors from the 20,000-volume library that McGraw-Hill had supplied, which were faithfully restocked throughout the run.<sup>206</sup>

That organizers shied away from any frontal display of race issues did not prevent these from intruding on the Sokolniki exhibition. An extravagant fashion show, featuring forty-seven models in a variety of scenes, included the staged wedding of an African American bride and groom, actually engaged to each other in real life. The fact that the attendees of this mock wedding included a majority of white models drew venom from Senator Strom Thurmond, and a protest petition signed by forty-one U.S. fashion editors. The scene was quickly scratched, allegedly because of “time constraints,” not segregationist pressure.<sup>207</sup>

More than 2.7 million visitors flocked to the Sokolniki exhibition, a record 130,000 on the final day alone. The USIA concluded it had been “the largest and probably the most

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<sup>205</sup> Hixson, 163, 172-173, 175 and 208-209.

<sup>206</sup> Hixson, 169 and 173-174.

<sup>207</sup> Hixson, 171-172.

productive single psychological effort ever launched by the U.S. in any communist country,” though the agency bemoaned the fact that the “preoccupation with consumer goods was somewhat too great, with too little on either actually living in America ... or on the essentials of democracy” and “too little about the life and spirit of America.”<sup>208</sup>

It was in the “all-electric kitchen” of the six-room model ranch house on the exhibition grounds that Vice President Nixon and Premier Khrushchev conducted their famous “kitchen debate” while Nixon was in town for the exhibition’s opening. Eager to establish his presidential timbre in advance of the 1960 election, Nixon had briefed himself thoroughly for this nervous-making event. Later describing it as one of his life’s “six crises,” Nixon boasted, “I had never been better prepared for a meeting in which I was to participate.” Sipping Pepsi-Cola, the exhibition’s official drink, Nixon managed to rile the Soviet premier in a barbed exchange over their nations’ continuing confrontations in Berlin, but then finally apologized, “I’m afraid I haven’t been a good host.”<sup>209</sup>

Pepsi won Soviet distribution rights soon after the “kitchen debate.” Scrambling to document results from the Sokolniki Park affair, the USIA found evidence in “an unusual number of announcements, decrees, and official actions designed to assure the citizen that his material existence is improving.” More processed foods, increased attention to customer service, brighter colors and new styles in fashion and consumer goods, the introduction of installment credit — these were the impacts on Soviet culture in which the USIA’s took

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<sup>208</sup> Hixson, 201 and 209-211.

<sup>209</sup> Hixson, 176-180.

greatest pride: an “increase in official acknowledgement that drastic improvements must be made in the quality and variety of goods and consumer services.”<sup>210</sup>

The materialism evident in this assessment contrasts ironically with the charges that had been leveled at the Soviet Union ten years earlier, as Cold War battle lines were first being drawn: that over there, religion had been replaced by materialism. We thus see one anti-communist stance having come full circle in that decade when “democracy” was subtly being replaced by “free enterprise.” By the end of the Fifties, the State Department seemed not to be as interested in making the world safe for democracy as it was in creating global demand for consumer capitalism, American-style.

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<sup>210</sup> Hixson, 179, 211-212.

## **CHAPTER 10**

### **DOMESTICATING CULTURAL POLICY**

The United States' crusade against communism, conducted both in our midst and around the world, deeply altered our national culture by the late Fifties. A postwar elite emerged whose leaders, while distancing themselves from Joe McCarthy and his ilk, had internalized a set of values shaped by their excesses. Their subsequent actions brought the Cold War home, institutionalizing anti-communism's greatest collateral damage.

Anti-communist campaigning narrowed the nation's collective definition of what was acceptable in American thought and culture. Exaggerated perceptions of a geopolitical communist threat helped reorient American political thought in conformance with a pervasive anti-communist ideology. Muscular, insistent, and intrusive in its suspicious impulses, the forces of anti-communism were felt in all aspects of American life, as well as in the domestic affairs of other nations, challenging fundamental ideas of national sovereignty in favor of securing some order favorable to the most powerful U.S. interests. The business of America was business, and other nations or points of view that challenged this assumption did so only at their own considerable risk.

The resulting consensus was quite different from what motivated public cultural enterprise in the Thirties. The same cultural assumptions that had driven foreign policy in the late Forties and Fifties were to be extended into the architecture of a developing federal cultural support apparatus in the Sixties.

## **CULTURAL POLICY: A STATE OF DENIAL**

Early Fifties policymakers had relegated all matters of deepest significance to the church (or the synagogue, with a tip of the hat to assimilating Jews) rather than taking the trouble to create a secular definition of national cultural identity and purpose — that is, a cultural policy. To have done so might have honored the longer Constitutional tradition of separation of church and state. Instead, anti-communists successfully asserted that anyone who thought the state had any definitional obligations in the realm of cultural life was a communist — or had fallen some other “alien influence” — and was therefore thinking in a manner that was “un-American.” The nation was thereby deprived of the forum and foundation needed to work out the complex, subtle challenges of defining cultural freedom in the secular framework appropriate to a diverse, democratic society. The world’s leading multicultural democratic society was thus poorly equipped to lead the way toward any kind of cultural democracy.

This challenge remains with us in the twenty-first century, manifest in the radical polarization so evident in U.S. political culture. The landscape of politics can now be mapped geographically in Red and Blue states, ideologically by a Tea Party opposing everybody else, and economically by the one versus the ninety-nine percent. In the unifying, inclusive language of a whole nation, we remain mute.

But failure to declare its cultural policy does not mean that a nation does not have one. Even when policy is formally declared, examination of actual practice is necessary to discover the dissonances that emerge through power politics. When none is stated, policy must be deduced almost entirely from action.



## DOMESTIC CULTURAL POLICY AT THE DAWN OF THE SIXTIES

Having focused so closely on anti-communism, we have yet to summarize the major federal initiatives that effectively defined cultural policy in the postwar United States. Insisting on the primacy of individual freedom and the private sector, the nation moved forward in various areas of social action and concern, according to goals and standards set in a variety of specialized arenas, according to the wishes of the most powerful interests involved. A half dozen of these seem key: the G.I. Bill, highways and housing, suburbanization and urban renewal, militarization, and education, all carried out against the backdrop of a mass-mediated view of the American Way of Life, Cold War edition.

### *The G.I. Bill*

Arguably the keystone of postwar cultural policy, “the G.I. Bill” had huge cultural impact. The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 entitled World War II veterans to educational opportunities, transforming family economics nationwide and installing a financially stable, suburbanizing middle class. The Veterans Administration Web site boasts, “The World War II GI Bill, signed into law on June 22, 1944, is said to have had more impact on the American way of life than any law since the Homestead Act of 1862.”<sup>1</sup> It was the most impressive extension of New Deal thinking in the period following World War II, though it fell significantly short of FDR’s more inclusive vision of securing the Four Freedoms for everyone, not only for returning veterans and their families.

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<sup>1</sup> See [http://www.va.gov/about\\_va/vahistory.asp](http://www.va.gov/about_va/vahistory.asp) (accessed September 3, 2013).

The resulting flood of veterans seriously strained the capacity of U.S. educational institutions. Nearly nine million Americans sought higher education and other training opportunities through the Act, which also subsidized home mortgages, extended business loans, and guaranteed unemployment benefits for veterans.<sup>2</sup> Housing provisions complemented those introduced by the New Deal's Federal Housing Authority:

By the end of its first twenty-five years of operation in 1958, FHA had helped nearly five million families to own houses, had helped provide housing for nearly 800,000 families in multi-unit projects, and had helped more than twenty-two million families improve their properties. In those years, the percentage of American families living in owner-occupied dwellings rose from 45 per cent to 62 per cent. The main beneficiary was suburbia, where approximately one-half of all housing could claim FHA or VA financing in 1962. In the process, the American suburb was transformed from a rich man's paradise into the normal expectation of the middle class.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Highways and Housing***

Suburbanization was further enabled by massive federal intervention in the nation's highway system authorized by the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, celebrated by Secretary of Commerce Bertram D. Tallamy as "the greatest public works program in the history of the world." The Eisenhower administration's "Yellow Book" mapped out the

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<sup>2</sup> P.L. 78-346, 58 Stat. 284m. For more detailed discussion, see John Bound and Sarah Turner, "Going to War and Going to College: Did World War II and the G.I. Bill Increase Educational Attainment for Returning Veterans?" *Journal of Labor Economics*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (October 2002), pp. 784–815.

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth T. Jackson, "Federal Subsidy and the Suburban Dream: The First Quarter-Century of Government Intervention in the Housing Market, *Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington, D.C.*, Vol. 50 (1980), 428.

general plan for the Interstate highways: an expensive, 42,500-mile federal system, sold in part as being essential for the nation's Cold War defense.<sup>4</sup>

The vision of building some massive national highway system arose in a 1938 brainstorming session between President Roosevelt and Thomas H. MacDonald, director of the federal Bureau of Public Roads. They sketched out a scheme of arterial highways that would not only connect the nation's cities, but would also cut through and clear out blighted housing areas in the cities they linked. Excited by the concept, Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace literally went to town, writing, "There exists at present around the cores of the cities, particularly of the older ones, a wide border of decadent and dying property which has become, or is in fact becoming, a slum area." Planners exulted that taking over these areas for highway construction and urban redevelopment would lead to "the elimination of unsightly and unsanitary districts where land values are constantly depreciating." This ambition was reaffirmed in a major highway report prepared in 1944 by Roosevelt's National Interregional Highway Committee, again emphasizing modern slum clearance and urban reconstruction as an important fringe benefit.<sup>5</sup>

Not everyone thought that highway construction would automatically benefit urban culture, however — notably MacDonald. Though he joked that his first job as an Iowa

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<sup>4</sup> Richard F. Weingroff, "Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956: Creating the Interstate System," *Public Roads*, Vol. 60, No. 1 (Summer 1996), accessed September 3, 2013 at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/publicroads/96summer/p96su10.cfm>; and Raymond A. Mohl, "The Interstate and the Cities: Highways, Housing, and the Freeway Revolt," Research Report for the (Washington, DC: Poverty and Race Research Action Council, 2002), 3. Accessed September 3, 2013 at <http://www.prrac.org/pdf/mohl.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Mohl, 5-6.

highway engineer was to “get the farmer out of the mud,” MacDonald had developed a sophisticated understanding of the interrelationship between urban highways and housing in the decades since becoming the first federal director of highways in 1919. He steadfastly emphasized the importance of modernizing and reconstructing housing along with roads in the American city. But after thirty-four years of federal service, MacDonald was not reappointed by the Eisenhower administration in 1953, and he was retired before the Yellow Book was assembled. At that point, historian Mark I. Gelfand writes, the BPR seemingly “lost its interest in the broad implications of the highway in the city and concentrated its attention exclusively on making travel by automobile and truck quicker and less expensive.” MacDonald’s broader conception, linking urban expressways with housing and redevelopment, disappeared from public discussion.<sup>6</sup>

Architectural historian David Monteyn argues that suburbanization itself also represented a conscious response to Cold War threat:

Architects endeavored to support civil defense in a number of ways especially suited to their expertise. They would promote the planning and dispersal of cities that might become enemy targets.<sup>7</sup>

The village did not have to be bombed before it was saved. Abandonment preceded and proceeded alongside the destruction of inner cities.

Passage of the Highway Act of 1956 also cemented the automobile’s status as the national transport of choice, effectively completing the campaign begun by General Motors

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<sup>6</sup> Mohl, 3-9.

<sup>7</sup> David Monteyn, *Fallout Shelter: Designing for Civil Defense in the Cold War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xii.

in 1926 to replace urban rail systems with buses and to assure sufficient public infrastructure for cars and trucks.<sup>8</sup> Officially renamed in 1990, the “Dwight D. Eisenhower System of Interstate and Defense Highways” became the warp and woof of the national fabric.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Urban Renewal and Urban Removal***

As described above, the destructive consequences of highway construction to urban culture were consciously conceived as benefits by system designers. The impact of massive federal highway construction was profound, and the devil dwelt in its details. Most funding was federal, but “state highway departments working with local officials selected the actual interstate routes.” This meant that urban expressway construction

could be used to carry out local race, housing, and residential segregation agendas. In most cities, ... the forced relocation of people from central-city housing triggered a spatial reorganization of residential neighborhoods. Rising black population pressure on limited inner-city housing resources meant that dislocated blacks pressed into neighborhoods of transition, generally working-class white neighborhoods on the fringes of the black ghetto where low-cost housing predominated. These newer second ghettos were already forming after World War II, as whites began moving to the suburbs and increasing numbers of blacks migrated out of the South to the urban North. However, interstate expressway construction speeded up the process ... helping to mold the sprawling, densely populated ghettos of the modern American city.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 170.

<sup>9</sup> Weingroff; and Mohl, 65.

<sup>10</sup> Mohl, 4.

State and municipal officials' routing decisions uprooted many poor, but culturally dynamic neighborhoods, while the settled landscapes of the rich and powerful lay safely distant from what was declared eminent domain. Commercial development was boosted in some locations, urban and rural, and effectively shut down in others.

No prior environmental review was required, much less any cultural one. In fact, environmental organizing in the late Sixties and Seventies was in part spurred by the errors later perceived in this era of quick-and-dirty public planning: the National Environmental Policy Act, passed by an overwhelming bipartisan majority and signed by President Nixon, "was prompted in part by concerns from communities whose members felt their views had been ignored in setting routes for the Interstate Highway System..."<sup>11</sup> Nor were any provisions made for the many communities dispersed or irrevocably injured by pre-construction clearance. By the time the damage was done and public concern was aroused, there was already no longer any there there: public action had already dispersed community members willy-nilly, with little provision for relocation.

Many detailed and interesting stories can be and are now being told about redevelopment efforts in American cities. Massive urban renewal projects catalyzed significant citizen participation and substantial grassroots cultural organizing all over the United States. In the meantime, cleared tracts of urban land lay fenced off for years as controversy swirled over what might eventually be built. San Francisco's Yerba Buena project offers a prime example.

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<sup>11</sup> Mohl, 9.

Three thousand single residents and two-hundred-eighty families lived in a multi-block area of just south of downtown San Francisco studded with SRO (Single Room Occupancy) hotels, including a significant community of ageing Filipinos, stranded in an America that had long since throttled off further immigration from their home country. Once Yerba Buena clearance was complete, with no provision for resident-relocation, citizen activism shifted to the lost cause of saving San Francisco's last outpost for this ageing Filipino population, Chinatown's International Hotel, finally condemned and de-populated in the late Seventies and torn down in 1981. It was not until the Eighties that Yerba Buena development finally began, first by implanting an underground convention center, then followed later by Yerba Buena Gardens, with its space-age mall and Center for the Arts, and then by the new San Francisco Museum of Art. A burgeoning community of high-tech start-ups exploded in the Nineties, spurring proliferation of restaurants, coffee shops, and watering holes.

Nearby, another protracted slum clearance project in San Francisco's Western Addition displaced four thousand from the multicultural, working-class neighborhood. "Rather stunningly, most of the area then laid vacant for a quarter century, leading to further alienation and decline in the African American community."<sup>12</sup> By this time, of course, urban development — when and where it happened — occurred more in the spirit of the Reagan-era Enterprise Zone than that of the late-New Deal Great Society that had leveled the neighborhood in the first place.

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<sup>12</sup>G. William Domhoff, "Why San Francisco Is (or Used to Be) Different: Progressive Activists and Neighborhoods Had a Big Impact" (posted November 2011). Accessed 5 November 2013 at [http://www2.ucsc.edu/whorulesamerica/local/san\\_francisco.html](http://www2.ucsc.edu/whorulesamerica/local/san_francisco.html). See also <http://www.spur.org/publications/library/article/50yearsredevelopment03011999>.

Taken together, highway, housing and urban-redevelopment policies helped produce the much more racially segregated urban landscapes we see in the United States today, surrounded by suburban rings dependent upon private automobiles as our primary means of transportation. Understanding the cultural impact of these federally sanctioned initiatives ultimately requires studying these matters from the ground up — taking in countless local stories, incorporating detailed interactions of state- and local-level interests alongside those operating federally and nationally, and charting factors overlooked at the time. Such a massive, decentralized project of cultural analysis could occupy scholars, students, policymakers, and activists for decades to come; but the effort might help us figure out how to structure and manage inclusive democratic approaches to urban planning for the future that avoid the blind spots and short-sightedness of the Bad Old Days.

### ***Peacetime Militarization of America***

The military-industrial costs of the Cold War are literally incalculable, even though they are almost exclusively dependent on the federal purse. There was no standing down after World War II, compared to what followed previous national war emergencies. Vast new military projects were undertaken under the postwar banner of Defense, not War, a rhetorical shift made officially by the 1949 rechristening of the department in charge.

Despite President Eisenhower's famous farewell warning in 1961, the resulting corporate-military complex has continued in decades since to monopolize the attention of a nation mesmerized by threats to our "national security." The enormous costs of national "defense" have skewed public perceptions about the affordability of domestic initiatives of any other kind. Military bases, manufacturers, and suppliers became mainstays of local



economies throughout the nation, creating psychological as well as literal investment and even dependence upon the perpetuation of government-subsidized war-preparation as a primary emphasis in national cultural life. Military assumptions became central to both U.S. culture and economics.<sup>13</sup>

Cold War militarization was enlivened through various forms of popular cultural participation. “Duck and cover” drills in the Fifties, readily reminiscent of recently ended wartime, gave way to more extensive preparations for nuclear attack in the early Sixties. Cool official U.S. response to the Castro regime, after Bautista’s long U.S.-backed dictatorship was finally overthrown in 1959, pushed Fidel into the camp of global communism, providing a perfect ploy for propagandists to fuel alarm over a Soviet outpost being built ninety miles off our shores.<sup>14</sup> The botched Bay of Pigs “invasion” in 1961 was quickly followed by the actually hair-raising Cuban missile crisis of 1962.<sup>15</sup> Combined with disclosure that upper-atmosphere nuclear testing by the two nuclear powers had caused radioactive pollution, being brought measurably to earth in rain and snow, propagandists’ alarums impelled nationwide action, as communities across the land rushed to establish and supply networks of public fallout shelters. This effort quickly decentralized to the home, as

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<sup>13</sup> A vast literature exists on this topic. A recent introductory sampling of cultural perspectives on the subject can be found in David Swanson, ed., *The Military Industrial Complex at 50* (Charlottesville: Kindle file, 2011), which brings together thirty presentations made at a September 2011 regional conference on the subject at Charlottesville’s Piedmont Virginia Community College. <http://davidswanson.org/mic50>.

<sup>14</sup> Louis A. Pérez Jr., *Cuba in the North American Imagination: Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos* (North Carolina, 2008), 238-256.

<sup>15</sup> Gaddis, *The Cold War*, 77-78.

American families were frightened into finding and supplying their own shelters. As one historian convincingly argues, “the American home had been put on the front lines of the Cold War.” More than a few householders installed fully equipped underground chambers in their single-family backyards. Extensive national surveys helped other homeowners identify the safest places to huddle in their basements.<sup>16</sup>

In a timed, citywide civil-defense drill in Sioux Falls, my sisters and I managed to make the mile-and-a-half walk home from our elementary school in something like twelve minutes, thereby earning the privilege of joining our family for what would surely have been a hellish week or two in our windowless, oversized basement shower stall, in the event of nuclear holocaust, rather than being confined in our school’s boiler room. Nuclear nightmares were no mere metaphor. Fear was planted deep in our national psyche, where it reigns through the present.

### ***Education for Modern America***

Education was the most consciously “cultural” of core federal policy concerns, before federal agencies focusing on the arts and humanities were brought into being. Though control of school systems, facilities, curriculum, and requirements is still mainly understood as being decentralized to state and local authorities, the Cold War brought the federal government more squarely into the front lines of the nation’s educational battle:

[I]n 1958 Congress passed the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) in response to the Soviet launch of Sputnik. To help ensure that highly trained individuals would be available to

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<sup>16</sup> Kenneth David Rose, *One Nation Underground: The Fallout Shelter in American Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 4.

help America compete with the Soviet Union in scientific and technical fields, the NDEA included support for loans to college students, the improvement of science, mathematics, and foreign language instruction in elementary and secondary schools, graduate fellowships, foreign language and area studies, and vocational-technical training.<sup>17</sup>

The primacy of science and technology in Cold War competition provided the backdrop against which advocates of the arts and humanities have fought for attention and respect since the Fifties.<sup>18</sup>

President Lyndon Johnson's call to create and sustain a Great Society spurred Congress to pass the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in the mid-Sixties. From 1965-70, ESEA's Titles I and III provided \$347 million to arts-related programs in schools, and Title IV contributed another \$75 million. This support largely disappeared, however, when ESEA authority was later devolved to the states, retained or restored only where state and local arts advocates were well organized and connected.<sup>19</sup>

The gathering national movement for civil rights across racial lines also brought deeply cultural concerns into the nation's schoolhouses throughout the Cold War. The Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling shook the very foundations of the

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<sup>17</sup> "Overview: The Federal Role in Education," U.S. Department of Education, <http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/fed/role.html> (accessed September 6, 2013).

<sup>18</sup> The length and ongoing nature of this struggle is important to remember. Horace Kallen's arguments are very much like those still being brought in the twenty-first century. See Kallen's *The Education of Free Men: An Essay toward a Philosophy of Education for Americans* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Co., 1949).

<sup>19</sup> Straight, *Hanks*, 94.

nation's educational institutions in multiple ways that remain contested today.<sup>20</sup>

Embarrassing inequalities in educational quality and opportunity nationwide compelled

federal investment in education from the Fifties through the Seventies:

The anti-poverty and civil rights laws of the 1960s and 1970s brought about a dramatic emergence of the [Education] Department's equal access mission. The passage of laws such as Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 which prohibited discrimination based on race, sex, and disability, respectively made civil rights enforcement a fundamental and long-lasting focus of the Department of Education. In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act launched a comprehensive set of programs, including the Title I program of Federal aid to disadvantaged children to address the problems of poor urban and rural areas. And in that same year, the Higher Education Act authorized assistance for postsecondary education, including financial aid programs for needy college students.<sup>21</sup>

Similarly, the Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA) of 1972 was used to support local cultural initiatives in schools throughout the nation "to meet special problems incident to desegregation, and to the elimination, reduction, or prevention of racial isolation in elementary and secondary schools."<sup>22</sup> These programs lasted until the Reagan administration

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<sup>20</sup> Again, there is a vast literature focusing on this topic. The most comprehensive historical treatment I have found of the ruling — and the decades of work that brought it about — is Richard Kluger's *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976).

<sup>21</sup> "Overview: The Federal Role in Education," U.S. Department of Education, <http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/fed/role.html> (accessed September 6, 2013).

<sup>22</sup> Hearings Before the House General Subcommittee on Education and Labor, "Emergency School Aid Act," 92<sup>nd</sup> Cong. 1<sup>st</sup> Sess. (March 15-16, 1971), cover text. Accessed 5 November 2013) at <https://bulk.resource.org/gao.gov/92-318/00007270.pdf>.

slashed non-military spending in favor of an expensive, apparently last-gasp battle against the Evil Empire.

### **THE AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE, REVISED STANDARD VERSION**

Meanwhile, the long, steady agenda of corporate image-reclamation begun in the late Thirties by the National Association of Manufacturers had become the national wallpaper by the early Sixties, aided not only by Hollywood, but also by the rapid proliferation of commercial television in the Fifties. The American Way of Life lay at the very heart of such TV perennials as *Father Knows Best* and *Leave It to Beaver*. Wrapped and packaged with consumer advertising, we were well on the national road to what I have long described as “the commercialization of absolutely everything.” What had once been a propaganda campaign was now institutionalized in popular culture, offering idealized and entertaining images of what might be called the sub-urbanity taking root throughout the United States. The strength of U.S. commercial cultural industries assured that these images were distributed throughout the world, carried everywhere on the wings of fast-proliferating electronic mass media.

The Advertising Council — still active today — was thus freed up to undertake more specialized “public service” initiatives that became part of our mass-mediated legend as Americans: Smokey the Bear was cuddled by millions of children, while preaching individual responsibility as a means of preventing forest fires, just when clear-cutting was transforming the timber industry. An aged Indian wept at seeing litter muck up the place, years before the American Indian Movement took root. Most significant of the Council’s

campaigns in national cultural policy was “Just Say No,” in support of the Reagan administration’s declaration of the “War on Drugs.” Political and social philosopher Cornel West describes it as having authorized “the massive use of state power to incarcerate hundreds of thousands of poor, black, male (and, increasingly, female) young people.”<sup>23</sup>

Still, reflecting years of adjustment to the actual diversity of people in the United States, the Advertising Council’s post-9/11 “I Am an American” campaign displayed a much more varied portrait of those we include as “American” than the one it began with in the late Forties and early Fifties, forged by the National Association of Manufacturers in the Thirties.<sup>24</sup> Even in the heat of the Cold War, the cresting civil rights movement had brought a very important critique to the stereotypical picture being projected by NAM and the Advertising Council. It would take another twenty years before the results showed up on TV, even in token ways; but this movement brought activist challenge to issues of inclusion and social justice nationwide and locally. Principled reliance upon the fundamental ideas of the United States as a nation — as stated in the Declaration, the Constitution, and the Gettysburg Address — challenged the nation’s citizens to work toward overturning repellent aspects of the status quo that most obviously contradicted American national ideals. The Justice Department’s intervention in Little Rock set a new precedent, and expectations about the federal government’s role changed. A climate of responsibility seemed to emerge, authorizing genuine, heartfelt efforts to more consciously create a better world. Rebellion

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<sup>23</sup> Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, Foreword by Cornel West (New York: New Press, 2010).

<sup>24</sup> The Advertising Council presents its own sense of its “classic” campaigns at <http://www.adcouncil.org/Our-Work/The-Classics> (accessed 13 November 2013).

against the conformist consensus depicted in early American television, legitimated by the civil rights movement, helps explain the impetus and force of the later Sixties' "counter-cultural" movements and their widespread impact on the nation since the Seventies, even after reactionary trends in federal cultural policy came to the fore, from the Reagan administration on.

For the time being, however, the *Father Knows Best* cultural consensus stood at its highest tide in the early Sixties, and so it remained for most of the decade. Its homogeneously assimilated "modern" American cultural values prevailed at the time when the current generation of public cultural agencies came into being in the mid-Sixties. The cultural elite that created and managed these new agencies — insisting upon the value of high-art refinement, as against an oceanic tide of commercial mass media — mirrors that which reigned in the halls of State and CIA a decade and more before. In fact, as we shall see, a good number of the same people played leading roles in both settings.

### **FOCUSING ON THE ARTS & HUMANITIES**

The arts and humanities are core concerns in cultural policy discussions throughout the world. Their value, their values, and the manner and extent of their support are understood as perhaps the most purely revealing aspects of national cultural policy. Among the nations of the world, the United States found itself unique in lacking any kind of "cultural ministry" — in our system's language, a Cabinet-level department involved in articulating cultural values, establishing policy, and leading the way in national cultural affairs.

The cultural elite that took charge of U.S. foreign policy as the Cold War were clearly embarrassed by this absence. George Kennan's 1955 address at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), quoted earlier, captured the elite sensibility that infused efforts in the Fifties and early Sixties to establish a domestic public infrastructure to support the nation's cultural life:

We have ... to show the outside world both that we have a cultural life and that we care something about it. That we care about it enough, in fact, to give it encouragement and support here at home...<sup>25</sup>

U.S. propagandists in the State Department, the CIA, and the White House could not wait for this domestic picture to change before launching their international campaigns. Absent any domestic cultural apparatus, as Francis Stonor Saunders argued, the Central Intelligence Agency stood in for our absent ministry of culture, defining and projecting a fine art-centered national culture for the United States, lest we be written off abroad as the brute with the Bomb. Naturally following their own tastes, the cultural elites who created and worked around the CIA focused on the work of only those most professional artists and scholars who also passed the anti-communist litmus test.<sup>26</sup> The CIA's definitions of culture were never seriously questioned as postwar efforts finally succeeded in establishing new federal domestic cultural agencies in the Sixties.

A number of efforts were made in the Fifties to authorize or study the establishment of a federal cultural agency, but each one died on the vine. President Truman asked the Fine

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<sup>25</sup> Saunders, 272.

<sup>26</sup> Saunders, 129.



Arts Commission (established during the Taft administration<sup>27</sup>) to study potential federal support for the arts, and its report was delivered soon after President Eisenhower's election. The ubiquitous Nelson Rockefeller tried to follow up, as chair of Eisenhower's Advisory Committee on Government Organization, but his proposal was sidelined. It did provide his template for the New York State Council on the Arts in 1960, however, after his election as Governor.<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile, various Congressmen introduced bills to create a federal cultural agency in the Fifties — Hubert Humphrey and a group of liberal senators introduced Senate Bill 1109, for example, also in 1953 — but each bill failed. In 1960, stepping in to arbitrate a strike against the Metropolitan Opera, Secretary of Labor Arthur Goldberg realized the settlement's impact on that deficit-ridden institution's budget and argued, "We must come to accept the arts as a new community responsibility." He called on government to step in, focusing its resources on physical plants and meeting deficits.<sup>29</sup> Still, the decade ended without any clear indication that we cared enough about the arts and humanities to include their direct support in the nation's domestic budget.

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<sup>27</sup> August Heckscher, "The Arts and the National Government," Report to the President, May 28, 1963. Presented by Sen. Claiborne Pell to Sen. Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, 88<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> Sess., for publication as S. Doc. 28 (Washington: GPO, 1963), 2.

<sup>28</sup> Straight, *Hanks*, 41 and 63-64.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

### *The Cultural Agencies of the Sixties*

Finally, after the nation passed its torch to a new generation, personified by the upper-crust Kennedys, the New Frontier opened a window for the cultural elite's sophisticated understanding of the arts to find a home in government. President Kennedy recruited August Heckscher III, a veteran of MoMA's CIA-backed International programs division, as his Special Consultant on the Arts late in 1961 "to survey and evaluate the impact of existing government programs and policies affecting the arts and to make recommendations for future action." Heckscher's enthusiasm over his appointment echoed the same concern about the nation's international status that George Kennan had expressed in 1955:

There has been a growing awareness that the United States will be judged ... not alone by its military or economic power, but by the quality of its civilization. The evident desirability of sending the best examples of America's artistic achievements abroad has led to our looking within, to asking whether we have in fact cultivated deeply enough the fields of creativity. We have come to feel as a people not only that we should be stronger but that we should have a higher degree of national well-being in proportion as the arts come into their own.

Heckscher expressed his hopeful belief, stated as fact, that there was "a rapidly developing interest in the arts" in the country. He cited increased attendance at museums and concerts and growing numbers of orchestras, theaters, and other cultural institutions, in numbers that "would have been thought impossible a generation ago." But therein lay the problem that Heckscher saw for traditional, rich patrons of the arts, which summed up for the White House:

The very demands which changing public tastes have made upon established artistic institutions have strained the financial resources available to them. Older forms of patronage have not in all cases been adequately replaced. A long-standing

weakness ... in cultural infrastructure has led to institutions inadequately supported and managed... [O]ften, inadvertently, government has imposed obstacles to the growth of the arts and to the well-being of the individual artist.

After an extended period of fact-finding and hobnobbing with arts leaders and patrons, Heckscher called for creating an Advisory Council on the Arts within the President's Executive Office. Kennedy did so in June 1963 with his Executive Order 11112.

Heckscher also recommended establishing an "Arts Foundation, on the model of the existing foundations in science and health," to provide "grants-in-aid, generally on a matching basis, to states and institutions of the arts." Heckscher warned, however, that "government's role in the arts must always remain peripheral, with individual creativity and private support being central."<sup>30</sup> After Kennedy's assassination, this notion was taken up as part of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society program. Johnson created a National Council on the Arts in his Executive Office in September 1964 "to advise local, state, and federal agencies on methods of fostering artistic and cultural activities."<sup>31</sup> One year later, in September 1965, this White House Council was replaced by a new, independent agency — the National Foundation of the Arts and Humanities (NFAH).<sup>32</sup> Congressional approval of the National Cultural Center came at the same time — rechristened as the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. With new museums beginning to proliferate along the National Mall, heightened commitment to "the arts and humanities" (if not "culture" in its wider sense)

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<sup>30</sup> Heckscher, 1, 27-28, and 35-36.

<sup>31</sup> National Arts and Cultural Developments Act of 1964 (78 Stat. 905), September 3, 1964.

<sup>32</sup> National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965 (79 Stat. 846), September 29, 1965.

seemed to be crystallizing at the federal level, as well as in a number of state and municipal governments.

### ***The National Foundation for the Arts & Humanities***

The NFAH was essentially a bureaucratic shell containing twin federal agencies — the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) — each advised by a Presidentially appointed National Council. Though described as a “Foundation” comprising two “Endowments,” these agencies operated almost exclusively on Congressional appropriation, dispensing grants to arts and humanities institutions and to individual artists and scholars.<sup>33</sup>

Twenty percent of each of Endowment’s appropriations (increased to forty during the Reagan administration) were earmarked for officially designated state arts agencies (SAAs) and humanities committees from 1973 on. Prior to that time, a similar proportion of the Agencies’ budgets was allocated for that purpose, but without a percentage being specified in the legislation. Though initial allocations to the states were small (just \$25,000 from the Arts Endowment, as “a special nonmatching Federal study grant to examine the cultural needs of the State and establish an official state arts agency”). Forty-one states took the bait, and by the end of 1967, “all of the States, except one” had established state arts agencies (SAAs). Twenty-eight of these agencies applied right away for another \$25,000 each to start making grants of their own, collectively underwriting 295 projects. Through these grants were small (really, token), this federal-state network of public agencies began spinning budget straw into

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<sup>33</sup> NFAH Act; Heckscher, 21

project gold, boosting the arts (or, less flamboyantly, the humanities) with matching grants, yielding impressive private-sector donations and inspiring results for annual reports.<sup>34</sup>

Notable among the states that already had state arts agencies before 1965 was New York, where Governor Nelson Rockefeller established one in 1960, having completed his migration from international to national and then to state affairs. For quite some time, with Rockefeller as its champion, the New York State Council for the Arts (NYSCA) stood out among the SAAs for deriving the lion's share of its funding from state legislative appropriations, not limiting itself to what was on offer from the NEA. Even a decade later, NYSCA's legislative budget surpassed the aggregate of all the other fifty-five state arts agencies' taken together.

### ***Public Broadcasting***

Public broadcasting had been of interest since radio's proliferation in the Twenties, discussed earlier, though the concept was rather soundly defeated by Paley & Co. in the Thirties. The proliferation of television brought this interest back to life in the Fifties, though — first in the rather drab dressage of educational TV, but then in the Sixties, in the somewhat hipper garb of *public* television: something that might be watched by general viewers, not only by students and teachers in classroom or distance-learning settings.

Private-sector intervention played a directly catalytic role in public broadcasting, through the Carnegie Foundation–funded Commission on Educational Television, established in 1965. The Carnegie Commission's landmark report, *Public Television: A*

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<sup>34</sup> National Endowment for the Arts and National Council on the Arts, *Annual Report for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1967* (Washington: GPO, 1968), 21.

*Program for Action*, was published early in 1967, in conjunction with President Johnson's State of the Union call for the legislation passed later that year — the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, which created the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB).<sup>35</sup>

CPB became entangled in Washington politics from Day One, though its status as a presumably independent agency was meant to ward off White House and Congressional interference. The Corporation was designed to serve as a funding entity only. Distribution remained contested until another new entity was devised: the Public Broadcast Service (PBS) began operating in 1970, designed and operated in collaboration with local stations and production centers.<sup>36</sup>

National Public Radio (NPR) was formed at the same time as PBS, also at CPB's instigation. But NPR, dealing with a less expensive and longer established medium, was much more strongly identified with and driven by its networks of experienced local stations than was PBS. NPR's institutional and on-air tone expressed public radio's more democratic roots: one commentator in the Nineties argued, "In fact, NPR's roots are populist, growing out of the same total, self-reliant, self-improving soil as the Chautauqua Movement or the Grange."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Engelman, 155-164.

<sup>36</sup> Engelman, 163-166.

<sup>37</sup> Engelman, 89-95.

### *The Cold War Intelligentsia Comes of Age*

A significant number of those who, like Rockefeller, cut their teeth in State Department and CIA cultural initiatives of the Fifties went on to shape and administer the new federal cultural agencies formed in the Sixties.

#### **Miss Nancy Hanks**

Rockefeller's assistant at the time of NYSCA's creation was Nancy Hanks. Even after becoming the powerhouse "Chairman" of the National Endowment for the Arts from 1969-78, "Miss" Hanks continued to enforce these pre-feminist designations, though the women's movement had simultaneously begun to challenge and transform these titles' sexist construction. Even farther back, in the Fifties — long before feminism reawakened from its Great Depression — Hanks had been not only Rockefeller's personal staff assistant, but also his lover. Little known, though rumored, during her lifetime, their affair was disclosed by Hanks' Deputy Chairman at the NEA, Michael Straight, in his 1988 biography of his former boss. Straight wrote of the couple's time together in the early Fifties:

At work, Nelson and Nancy were wholly discreet. The salary she draws as his assistant is what any assistant would expect. The rules that are set for others she obeys. Beyond the office walls Nelson lavishes presents upon her: drawings and etching by Degas and Picasso, a portfolio of securities worth \$200,000.

Rockefeller also paid to create a lake on Hanks' parents' summer-home property in the Blue Ridge Mountains, equipping them with a couple of boats to cruise around in when he and Nancy vacationed there.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 50-52.

Their relationship began in 1953, when Hanks was a recent Duke graduate, still in her 20's. Rockefeller was then in the thick of his most direct involvement in Eisenhower's new administration, first taking stock of overall Governmental Operations, then acting as the President's advisor in covert Cold War strategies. This early experience was formative to Hanks' approach to public administration. She found herself in unusual positions as the only woman on Rockefeller's small staff at this moment in Cold War history: working behind the scenes at the Geneva summit of 1955, for instance, where Rockefeller's Open Skies plan was floated — proposing that the United States and USSR openly share information about their military capabilities, really not plausible in the mutually mistrustful Cold War climate of the time.<sup>39</sup>

From there, failing to win the Defense Department post he wanted, Rockefeller bristled at the humiliations of non-elective office, and left federal service to seek some elective office, where he imagined he might find greater independence. For the short term, though, Nelson returned to New York City to launch and direct six Rockefeller Brothers Fund studies — convening panels of experts in foreign policy, international economic policy, military policy, economic and social issues, the “pursuit of excellence,” and the democratic idea — each tasked with producing some agenda for the future. Hanks administered these projects as Rockefeller's Executive Secretary, but proximity to his first wife (whom he would soon divorce) ended the intimate phase of their relationship. When Nelson declared candidacy for New York's governorship, his brother Laurence replaced as chair of Rockefeller Brothers, and Nancy stepped up as vice chairman, where she remained until

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 41-46.



1969 — except for the few months she served as Nelson’s aide in Albany, during the time that NYSCA was born.<sup>40</sup> Nixon appointed her chair of the NEA in 1969.

### **The Straight Story**

Hanks was not alone in having direct experience with the rarified world of anti-communist cultural elites before getting involved with the new federal arts and humanities agencies. Even before revealing his boss’s secrets, Michael Straight — who served as the NEA’s Deputy Chairman during the Hanks regime — felt compelled to tell some secrets of his own.

Straight was scion of the Whitney fortune, raised and schooled in England from the age of ten. Eventually graduating to Cambridge, he fell into orbit around the “Cambridge Five,” a tight circle of British agents for the Soviet Union centering around the flamboyantly homosexual Guy Burgess (a double agent in the Britain’s MI6 intelligence service, recruited by Kim Philby). In 1937, having joined the circle, Straight was ordered back to America, a country he hardly remembered, to await further instructions. Arriving in Washington, he socialized with Eleanor Roosevelt and used his family’s White House connections to position himself inside the State Department. But no orders ever came: clandestine meetings took place, but nothing was ever assigned. Straight soon joined the Air Corps instead of becoming the Cambridge Sixth, but his flirtation with Soviet communism haunted him after the war: toying with a run for Congress from an adopted district in Connecticut, Straight was warned

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 56-59. It’s not clear whether the Rockefeller Brothers Fund or the State of New York paid Hanks during this brief period.

of rumors about his past. He quickly abandoned electoral fantasies in favor of editing the family magazine — *The New Republic*.<sup>41</sup>

Years later, in 1963, anticipating trouble getting clearance to direct the cultural agency then being discussed, Straight consulted Arthur Schlesinger at the White House before turning himself over to the F.B.I. to fully confess his stymied spy career, then continuing to consult with the agency on “loose ends” for another four years. Straight benefited from the cooler brand of domestic anti-communism prevailing in the early Sixties, compared to the Fifties Red Scare. A friend he consulted before going to the FBI (not knowing the full details) pooh-poohed the notion that Straight’s political past would interfere: “Oh hell! We’ve all been radicals; the president knows that!”<sup>42</sup> Though fully cleared, both Kennedy and Johnson administrations would pass away before Straight finally received his consolation-prize appointment as the NEA’s Deputy Chair, second to Nancy Hanks. His nomination issued ultimately from the White House of Richard Nixon — the veteran Cold Warrior who would soon open the doors to Red China.

Straight’s confession was not without casualty, though it took another decade to materialize. Heating to debate in Parliament in 1978, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher revealed that the previously unidentified “fourth man” of the Cambridge Five was none other than Sir Anthony Blunt, art historian, who since 1945 had served as Surveyor of the King’s (then the Queen’s) Pictures, a curatorial role for which he was knighted in 1957. Blunt was

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<sup>41</sup> Michael Straight, *After Long Silence* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1983), 94-95, 100-110, 126-130, and 134-135.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 200-201, and 317-322.

summarily stripped of his knighthood and driven from public life. Journalists soon ferreted out Straight as the source of this intelligence, thus also revealing his connection to the Cambridge Five: it was the controversy that followed, in those early days of Reagan's raging against the Evil Empire, that inspired Straight to publish his memoir *After Long Silence* in 1983, though he had already retired from public office five years earlier.

### **Filling Out a Generation**

The NEA was not the only Sixties cultural agency headed up by veteran Cold War adventurers. Barnaby Kenney, first Chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities (1966-70) and of its precursor group, the National Commission on the Humanities, worked in Army intelligence during World War II, continuing on covertly for the CIA while he served as president of Brown University (1955-66).<sup>43</sup>

In the public-broadcasting arena, James R. Killian, Jr., who chaired the Carnegie Commission before becoming chair of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), had been the first chair of the President's Council on Foreign Intelligence Activities in 1956, a post he held under President Kennedy as well, through the spring of 1963. Killian's CPB associate Henry Loomis worked for the Department of Defense's Research and Development Board from 1950-51, then served as a consultant to the Psychological Strategy Board before moving on, under Eisenhower, to head up the USIA's Office of Research and Intelligence. Loomis then became director of the Voice of America from 1958-65.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barnaby\\_Keeney](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barnaby_Keeney) (accessed 21 October 2013).

<sup>44</sup> Michael M. Mooney, *The Ministry of Culture: Connections Among Art, Money and Politics* (New York: Wyndham Books, 1980), 121-123.

Many other senior staff in all the federal cultural agencies were drawn from the professional, academic, and government circles out of which this sampling of leadership arose in the Fifties. Their attitudes and values were naturally shaped by the anti-communism to which they pledged allegiance and had become accustomed.

***“Quality,” “Excellence,” and Democracy in Public Cultural Affairs***

The idea of democracy was terrifying to the elite leadership of postwar U.S. cultural institutions. Democracy was usually perceived and framed as an attack upon the idea of quality, which took center stage in these circles. The Rockefeller Panel Report on the Performing Arts opened by articulating this fear, as a subtext to its ambivalent optimism:

Observers of American society, since the establishment of the Republic, have proclaimed the incompatibility of democracy with the attainment of high standards of excellence in the arts. A significant minority, however, has never accepted this judgment. This minority has sought to prove two things: that democracy is as capable of fostering works of artistic excellence as any aristocracy and, more important, that it is capable of creating a far broader audience for them than any other form of society.<sup>45</sup>

Democracy was carefully contained by this elite group of policymakers, “the people” being more likely the source of “broader audience” than of a widening pool of legitimate producers of cultural work. Democracy had to be given lip-service; but the Rockefeller Panel’s rubber immediately met the road in a hairpin turn back in the direction of artistic quality:

The panel is motivated by the conviction that the arts are not for a privileged few but for the many, that their place is not on the periphery of society but at its center, that they are not just a form of recreation but are of central importance to our well-

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<sup>45</sup> Rockefeller Brothers Fund, 1.

being and happiness. In the panel's view, this status will not be widely achieved unless artistic excellence is the constant goal of every artist and every arts organization, and mediocrity is recognized as the ever-present enemy of true progress in the development of the arts.<sup>46</sup>

In the decades since, democracy itself has usually been parodied in arguments against it by defenders of the cultural status quo. Some defenders supposed — however rhetorically — that democracy would require baroque new systems of voting, by some ill-informed mass plebiscite, in place of reasoned, reasonable review by art experts. Arguments often feature preposterous extremes — “throwing the money out of a plane” — as if this is what democratic distribution of cultural resources might require. Implicit in the defenders' aesthetic was the assumption that cultural traditions other than those enshrined in the institutions foregrounded by the Rockefeller Panel simply are not sufficiently interested in, much less characterized by “quality,” settling instead for mediocrity.

The idea that “quality” might be understood differently in other cultural contexts than that of the European-derived fine arts was an argument that had to be brought from outside the new cultural agencies' inner circles, years later. Viewing diversity as a cultural strength suggests that we might speak about “qualities” in the plural — as the contending argument emerged in the Seventies — varying from one cultural context to another, rather than reserving legitimacy to the elusive discernments of taste around which established high-art worlds revolve and patrons mobilized or repelled.

Though federal cultural agencies might be conceived as serving the needs of the entire citizenry, as the leaders of New Deal agencies did, the Sixties cohort of cultural

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 11-12.

policymakers relegated the public at large — and certainly “non-professional” artists and scholars — to supporting roles as consumers and appreciators (though the benighted majority was actually expected to be neither). Agency boosters heavily documented the educational and economic byproducts and impact of professional cultural production in order to make a case for public benefit. New audience members and donors would always be welcome, but a seat in the audience is all most people are good for, in their orthodox view; and as things stand, too many seats remained empty and unpaid for, due to insufficient prior exposure and aesthetic education.

The extent of the alarm generated by even bland proposals to decentralize aesthetic decision-making is reflected by the response of two members of the National Council on the Arts to one made by a liberal Republican consultant to the NCA’s Policy & Planning Committee in October 1980, just prior to Reagan’s election. Due diligence in his research had introduced David B.H. Martin to cultural democracy, which he considered “a beautiful idea” and included in his preface to a proposal calling for pilot funding for sub-granting by municipal arts agencies, whose lobbyists had taken pains to show that they supported exactly the same kinds of high-quality art underwritten by the Endowment. Theo Bikel, thought to be one of the more liberal of Council members, as president of Actors Equity, intoned:

When I took, as we all did, the oath of office ... swearing that I would defend the United States of American against all enemies, foreign of domestic ... I didn’t think I’d have to ward off domestic enemies until today.

Fellow Council member Martin Friedman, director of Minneapolis’s reputedly progressive Walker Art Center, took Bikel’s assertion that it was “a pernicious document” somewhat further, suggesting that one might “surreptitiously sell it to the KGB, because I think it would

do far more than any kind of powerful strategic missile system... to erode a culture.” Bikel explained,

I resent “cultural democracy” as a term because it seems to use the word “democracy,” which we all swear by to our flag and to our faith; it subverts democracy into an autocracy of the uninformed — cultural democracy meaning that we have to be dictated to by those for whom we toil ...

The monies and the efforts of this agency are not meant for the people of the United States of America — they are meant for the artists of excellence, the fruit of whose labor is meant for the people.

Goaded to greater rhetorical heights, Friedman again chimed in, speaking on behalf of the people:

People don’t want double standards. They don’t want to be fooled. They’re smarter than we’re giving them credit for: they understand education; they understand amateurism; they understand community events; but they don’t for a minute confuse what *they’re* participating in with art itself. ... Are we really in the business of supporting amateurism? ... Where does it all end? The neighborhoods? With the streets? ... The result can only be dilution, confusion, and chaos.<sup>47</sup>

Needless to say, this proposal was killed in committee, though a similar one was to pass some years later.

Federal arts and humanities policymakers not only ignored amateurs, but also turned away from artists working in commercial contexts. Among many cultural minorities, gathering in commercial venues or public spaces, rather than in high-arts institutions, provided the only available path to cultural survival. Jazz, for example, thrived largely by

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<sup>47</sup> Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard, “Round Two with the High Chiefs of Arts,” *NAPNOC notes* (Washington, DC), Issue 6, November 1980, pp. 1 and 3.

virtue of its popularity in drinking establishments. That there might have been value in serving these artists' needs was overlooked by the new agencies, so singular was their focus on the "fine arts." Normalizing major cultural institutions' forms and practices in public cultural policy diverted attention from the cultural-development concerns of those working commercially, however marginally, effectively punishing artists who had found such niches for themselves, in the absence of any substantial philanthropic interest or support.

Experience abroad has shown many ways that public support might ameliorate the pressure of finding commercial work and in fact facilitate it, developing new audiences in non-commercial as well as commercial settings. Artists representing various cultural traditions and working in all kinds of milieux benefit from the same kinds of artist-exchange and mentoring, opportunities to focus on creating new work, and such other measures more often taken to support the more limited constituency of artists involved in major "fine arts" institutions.<sup>48</sup>

### ***The President as Minister of Culture***

There is no Minister of Culture to whom we in the United States of America can appeal if our cultural rights are being restricted or if our cultural-development needs are being ignored. We have the judiciary, but they are only reactive, not agencies of cultural development, and communal cultural rights are virtually unestablished in U.S. law. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to which the United States was a signator, remains

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<sup>48</sup> One example from a vast documentary literature: Unesco CC.77/WS/34, *Support for the creative arts: The examples of Poland and Hungary*, Unesco Cultural Development Documentary Dossier 11-12 (Paris: Beugnet, S.A., 1977).



little known nearly seven decades later and worthless as a standard of practical appeal — especially since the entire U.N. apparatus is scoffed at by so many U.S. pundits today. This effectively leaves the President’s role as policymaker-in-chief as the sole site of potential integrative cultural leadership in the American political cosmology. If and when this comes to questioned — as it has been in the virulent Tea Party response to the election of President Obama, on the basis of “dog whistle” racism — even this integrative potential is endangered, without form commitment to the principles of cultural democracy.

Presidential leadership has played a central role throughout our story, and this continued in the Sixties and since. Soon after stepping down as the NEA’s Deputy Chair, Michael Straight wrote, “The development of a coherent federal policy for the arts requires principally a commitment on the part of the White House.”<sup>49</sup> On that score, our presidents have been generally less than attentive to cultural policy as such, more interested in the patina of refinement conferred by supporting the arts and the political advantages of association with the cultural elite.

The Kennedy administration brought an air of sophistication to the White House, and some early action. But it fell to that unpolished Texan, Lyndon Baines Johnson, to take practical action, to the extent that he could before the misadventure in Vietnam brought his presidency to an inglorious end. Richard Nixon, working primarily through his Special Assistant Leonard Garment — once a clarinetist in Woody Herman’s band, then director of communications for Nixon’s 1968 campaign — saw the arts as a means of playing “offset

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<sup>49</sup> Michael Straight, *Twigs for an Eagle’s Nest: Government and the Arts: 1965-1978*, Vol. 4 of *In Great Decades* series (New York/Berkeley: Devon Press, 1979), 96-97.

politics” within his general “mid-America route” in domestic affairs: cutting back Great Society programs in favor of tax and deficit reductions.

Such tiny federal expenditures as were involved in the NFAH could generate useful political support from the small, but influential arts constituency at little cost.<sup>50</sup> Even years later, the numbers involved were small by international standards and disappearingly so as a percentage of federal expenditure.

The combined 1998 appropriations for the two national endowments is \$.78 per person in the United States, while the total government (including state and local) spending on culture in this country is \$6.25. In other Western countries the government share of spending on culture is much higher: \$27.40 per person in the United Kingdom and \$97.70 in Finland, the biggest spender in Europe. The combined budgets of the NEA and the NEH will amount to approximately 1/100 of 1% of the 1999 federal budget of \$1,751 billion.<sup>51</sup>

Nixon’s direct support contributed to several years in which the NFAH multiplied, within this limited scale.

The Carter administration’s populist bent affected NEH grant-making, which supported a number of “people’s history” projects, feeding on appetites rediscovered in the national bicentennial of 1976; but perhaps the most visible advocate at that time was the vice president’s wife, Joan Mondale, who used her position as honorary chair of a redeployed but

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<sup>50</sup> Straight, *Twigs*, 24-25; Straight, *Hanks*, 102-104. This strategy derived from a post-election memo from New York attorney Charles McWhorter, Nixon’s legislative aide as Vice President and his presidential campaign advisor, later appointed by him as a member of the National Council on the Arts.

<sup>51</sup> Cynthia Koch, “The Contest for American Culture: A Leadership Case Study on The NEA and NEH Funding Crisis,” *Public Talk* (1998); accessed at <http://www.upenn.edu/pnc/ptkoch.html>, 27 December 2013.

essentially powerless Federal Council on the Arts & Humanities as a bully pulpit for national arts boosterism. “Joan of Art,” she was called for awhile.<sup>52</sup>

It was not until Reagan’s election that U.S. voters installed an administration reading from a tightly focused cultural-policy script — one that was aggressively opposed to cultural democracy. Spelled out in tendentious simplicity, the Heritage Foundation’s *Mandate for Leadership* — widely considered the “blueprint” for the Reagan administration’s policies — asserted that federal cultural agencies had fallen under the influence of questionable Sixties people whose political agendas had blinded them to the primacy of “enduring artistic accomplishments.”<sup>53</sup> That the “Arts & Humanities” were included as one of fourteen major domains of federal policy addressed in the Heritage Foundation’s rendition of Reagan’s *Mandate for Leadership* was considered strange and remarkable in a capital city struggling to comprehend the substantial changes being made by Reagan’s transition team (which featured a 100-strong “kitchen cabinet” of executives on loan from U.S. corporations through the passage of Reagan’s “Black Book” budget by Memorial Day. Having had to struggle for access to ardently conservative federal agencies, the claim that those in charge had yielded much to Sixties pressures and had fallen away from emphasizing “serious art for art’s sake” seemed laughable; but the shifts Reagan’s appointees made were real.

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<sup>52</sup> Mooney, 18-26.

<sup>53</sup> Charles L. Heatherly, ed., *Mandate for Leadership: Policy Management in a Conservative Administration* (Washington: Heritage Foundation, 1981). See also Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard, “The Heritage Foundation” Stalking Horse for Reagan’s Policies,” *Theaterwork*, St. Peter, MN: March/April, 1981.

Reagan initially proposed deep cuts in federal arts and humanities budgets, and triage planning ensued in the threatened agencies; but proposed budget reductions never materialized. The simple fact that the boards of grantee institutions overrepresented wealthy donors supportive of Reagan's overall program — especially those on the shortened lists created when cuts were threatened —made these proposed cuts (minuscule by federal-budget standards) unlikely. In the end, overall budgets remained relatively unchanged, but the Endowments' grantee lists were reduced, strategically and selectively so, and programs were reoriented in more conservative directions. The influence of Reagan's appointments cemented these shifts. The percentage going out to state and local agencies was soon doubled, though in a climate of reassurance that these agencies' values and patterns of grantmaking were very like those of the federal agencies.

#### **FROM THE THIRTIES TO THE SIXTIES: ANTI-COMMUNISM'S CULTURAL IMPACT**

The federal cultural agencies established in the Sixties contrast sharply with the federal cultural programs of the New Deal. The assumptions made and values held by the White House, Congress, organizers and executives of these new agencies expose several key shifts in cultural-policy thinking, significantly attributable to the Cold War anti-communism of the intervening thirty years:

- the primacy of the private sector in the nation's cultural affairs;
- a Euro-centric definition of culture, focused primarily on established cultural institutions' aesthetics;
- a substantially changed attitude toward the nation's cultural diversity;

- an aversion to cultural work that deals with fundamental social issues;
- a disavowal of democracy in cultural policy; and
- U.S. non-participation (or interference) in international cultural-policy discourse.<sup>54</sup>

I will discuss shifts from the Thirties to the Sixties in each of these six key areas, using the rubric “The McCarthy Effect” as shorthand for the impact of anti-communism on U.S. cultural policy. It is important here to remember, however, the distinction between McCarthy the Man vs. McCarthyism the Movement. This is especially important in tracking anti-communism’s extension into in the less charged domestic atmosphere of the Sixties, and even further: into its resurgence in new clothes in the Eighties and the ongoing Reagan era.

By the Sixties, it was convenient for self-styled “moderates” to blame eccentric ideologues like Joe McCarthy for the excesses of the feverish anti-communist impulses of the Fifties: McCarthy’s own weakened liver and early death made him a handy puppet for the most excessive manifestations of anti-communism. McCarthyism has entered the language to signify the kind of exterminating ideological zeal from which cultural elites wished to distance themselves. This offered a way for the nation’s cultural elite to contain, displace, and deny any such impulse in themselves, laughing off McCarthy’s zealous obsessions while also providing a means to divert general awareness from the lingering impact of anti-communism. The deep internalization of anti-communist values in the policymaking class in

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<sup>54</sup> Only after submitting my thesis for review did I realize my omission of a seventh “McCarthy Effect”: “the sacralization of the state,” which opened the door for what has become the disproportionate influence of fundamentalist fringe groups in U.S. politics, post-Reagan. This is discussed on pp. 174-184, but I should have included it in this summary list.

Sixties Washington forestalled self-examination of what I am calling these half-dozen “McCarthy effects” in U.S. cultural policy.

***The McCarthy Effect, Part One: The Primacy of the Private Sector***

As we have already seen, fear of undue government influence in the nation’s domestic cultural life drove discussions of federal involvement from the Fifties on. Public-sector action must respect the primacy of private initiative in culture, according to the architects of emerging postwar policies. The public sector should follow, supplement, and support private philanthropy in cultural affairs.

This orthodoxy — along with general fear of engagement with social issues, discussed later — explains the paradoxical assertion consistently made by erstwhile U.S. cultural policymakers from the Sixties on: that the nation not only has no cultural policy, but that having one would be inappropriate in the United States. Our official contribution to UNESCO’s series on national cultural policies opened with this assertion, locating our disability (tellingly undercut by the writer’s adverbial “almost”) in the Constitution’s construction of the federal system:

“The United States has no official cultural position, either public or private” ... This is simply a statement of fact affecting a federation form of government. It is not possible for the United States to adopt officially a policy to govern any social enterprise without enormous effort involving almost the modification of the Constitution.<sup>55</sup>

To cultural policymakers in other countries, the suggestion that cultural policy could not be articulated without constitutional amendment would become just one laughable (or

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<sup>55</sup> Mark, 9.

deplorable) aspect of the ill-informed U.S. non-participation in international cultural-policy dialogue — or in entering into open dialogue about domestic cultural policy, for that matter. The fact of American cultural hegemony meant that this international dialogue would inevitably and necessarily address the huge impact of our globalizing commercial cultural industries have had on cultural life throughout the world. All of this has transpired with little interest or participation by any Americans except for Hollywood and record-industry trade associations, naturally opposed to any measures to taken curtail their global reach.

Surface explanations for our official denial of cultural policy took on their fuller, underlying anti-communist coloration in a spontaneous utterance by Librarian of Congress Daniel Boorstin, attempting to dismiss the topic out of hand at the start of a 1982 Washington roundtable on cultural policy convened by *New York Times* editors: “The countries that *have* cultural policies on the whole are, of course, totalitarian countries.” In the moment, Boorstin was called on his specious assertion, and a contentious dialogue ensued; but his characterization of the specter of state control remained typical of most U.S. policymakers’ resistance to talk about the issues. Expert authority was presumed necessary to comment on basic cultural-policy questions: Boorstin refused comment of core questions raised in the roundtable by reminding his interrogators, “I’m not a economist.”<sup>56</sup>

Adamant refusal to admit to the nation’s having any cultural policy — keeping it inexplicit, observable only by analyzing its actions and effects — has effectively short-circuited public discussion and influence in cultural policymaking. The cultural terrain has been left to dominant commercial interests, with a small territory reserved for privately

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<sup>56</sup> Boorstin, 7.

patronized high-arts and public-media institutions. When cultural interests are directly affected — as when foreign governments have tried to guarantee that some percentage of domestic film is produced and screened, for example — the U.S. has interpreted these as trade issues, affecting “product” and “market” alone. In their ascendancy with Reagan in the Eighties, spokesmen for U.S. cultural industries crafted the most cultural of our arguments against foreign-national efforts to control the flood of American product filling their screens: they held that such controls impinged upon the “free speech” of U.S. corporations that manufacture and distribute cultural goods.

When the United States “plays dumb” about the impact of the onslaught of U.S.–produced commercial cultural product upon other nation’s cultures, it is because we made ourselves dumb when it comes to matters of cultural policy. Those in charge have steadfastly striven to keep us ignorant of this crucial sector of public policymaking concern. As a nation, we have absented ourselves from international forums where these concerns are discussed more intelligently and where constructive engagement around the issues involved becomes possible.

From a domestic point of view, opening to global issues would strengthen the basis for understanding and addressing our nation’s unsatisfied domestic cultural development needs, our unaddressed media vacuums and capacities, aside from those of our burgeoning commercial cultural industries and pre-existing nonprofit cultural institutions. Independent-media fields have sprouted up at the margins of public broadcasting, for example, thanks to decades of organizing by indie producers themselves since the Seventies; but community-based media centers have been on their own, and many have gone under, in post-Reagan



America. The democratic cultural-policy aim of enabling and encouraging real freedom of speech for those whose voices not represented in mainstream media is rarely considered by the elites who have held cultural-policy-making authority for the nation.

The most pervasive cultural impact of the lionization of the private sector versus the public is what I earlier referred to as “the commercialization of absolutely everything.” Ideological capitalism has neutralized our critique of the downsides of unregulated profit-taking as a means of “taking care of business” in the nation’s cultural life. (Even that pervasive market metaphor is telling — since, for example, taking care of the sick, or holding prisoners, is not necessarily a business, though each has increasingly become one.) This has narrowed and confined our thinking about alternative approaches to such vital areas of social concern as healthcare and our criminal justice system, transforming these into rich veins of profit at public expense.

In healthcare, only two historical moment moments have arisen in recent decades — the first, in the campaign leading up to President Clinton’s first election, and the second, with President Obama’s — when our nation’s privatized paradigm of healthcare not only came to be questioned, but when public consensus had somehow shifted toward the goal of providing healthcare for all. On both occasions, experts acknowledged that a “single-payer” approach would be most cost-effective and sensible, as had been proven in enlightened countries with worthy public systems. But on both occasions, this option was peremptorily dismissed as unrealistic and therefore unworthy of serious consideration in a post-Reagan political climate that favors inclusion of all commercial interests involved as central to any solution.

That climate has been defined by a general delegitimation of government as a respectable, effective means of responding to social issues. While this may appear not to be a direct result of anti-communism, it surely reflects the long-term success of the fellow-traveling campaign begun by National Association of Manufacturers and continued under the aegis of the Advertising Council. Decades later, with the Cold War definitively won by capitalism, and communism no longer officially a credible global threat, one of the NAM's core ideological products — “free enterprise” and “the American Way of Life” — have continued to direct politicians' attention to corporate interests' wish to reduce governmental regulation or constraint. Calvin Coolidge's definitive pre-New Deal assertion that “the business of America is business” could not have been more fully realized.

Only since the 2008 economic collapse has popular attention returned to issues of economic injustice in a nation now more economically polarized than it has been in generations.<sup>57</sup> Occupy Wall Street and the 99 percent movements have reawakened this critique, but few positive, comprehensive, democratic visions of economic justice — much less of practical political action to move us closer to realizing such visions — are currently available to focus general discussion, much less to mobilize public action. Facing chronic employment, underemployment, and sub-poverty pay for many who do have work (simultaneously collecting welfare, or holding down multiple jobs in their struggle to make ends meet), official attention from the Obama White House has remained tightly focused on

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<sup>57</sup> See “Table 4: Share of wealth held by the Bottom 99% and Top 1% in the United States, 1922-2010,” G. William Domhoff, “Wealth, Income, and Power” (updated February 2013). Accessed 21 November 2013 at <http://www2.ucsc.edu/whorulesamerica/power/wealth.html>.

the business sector, excluding any serious discussion of public programs such as those that defined the New Deal and existed as recently as the Seventies.

The collateral damage of this long-term economic campaign can be seen in “homelessness,” hopelessness, cynicism, drugs, and crime. The plurality of American voters today, like the President himself, came of age during the Reagan era, lacking any personal experience of what came before, however frustrating it was to deal with those in charge of the flawed programs that the Reagan administration eliminated.

The active intervention of corporate interests in shaping today’s political culture is most egregiously evident in the decline of the Grand Old Party of Lincoln as it placated and encouraged Tea Party ideologues, but also in the Democratic Party’s dependence upon corporate support and accommodation. This has produced a generation of young cynics with few apparent political options besides disengagement or, more formally, “libertarianism” as a response. It will take extraordinary measures for political action to attract a critical mass of people, all heading in the same direction, tolerant of each other’s diversity, and ready to restore working government. Meanwhile, the possibility of focusing democratic initiative toward community cultural development comes up not at all.

Repairing this aspect of collateral damage must begin with the culture of politics itself, digging down to its very foundations. Is our national cultural identity rooted in the kind of ideological capitalism that has dominated federal policy since Reagan? Are our national cultural values only manifest and expressed by self-styled religious leaders, as was officially established during the Truman and Eisenhower administrations? Are there no other aspects of national identity or values left unexpressed by business and religious interests?

National cultural policy would provide the framework within which more definitive statements could be proposed and discussed in response to these fundamental cultural-policy questions. Despite official retrenchment to a pre–New Deal consensus on the assumed relations between private and public sectors, we have continued to see enormous changes in popular sentiment on questions of cultural identity, requiring even the Advertising Council to reorient its campaigns. These substantial shifts have not, however, been expressed in formal statements of cultural policy. At this moment in our highly polarized situation, finally finding inclusive, secular language that defines unifying national values — regardless of cultural background, religion, profession, or class — seems essential to finding ways forward.

***The McCarthy Effect, Part Two: Euro-centric Bias***

As we have also discussed, the same Atlanticist aesthetic mantle the CIA used to clothe our naked empire — woven warp and woof out of the European fine arts— was adopted by arts and humanities boosters back home. It might be said that this was “natural,” given who they were and what they’d been through. The leadership group establishing our current generation of public cultural agencies featured a significant cadre of veterans of the United States’ international campaigns. But their choices in cultural policy, however unexamined, constitute choices nonetheless, and need to interrogation in light of the values of cultural democracy.

The same groups of artists and institutions that were spotlighted to legitimate U.S. standing abroad — exemplars of our national accomplishments in the traditionally European-dominated fine arts — became the core constituency for domestic cultural policymakers, ten-to-twenty years on. The aims of cultural support were “re-purposed” for the domestic

context, but fully reflected the Cold War consensus: internationally, our anti-communist artists and intellectuals served as bait for European artists and intellectuals of the “non-communist left” to join the United States’ anti-communist culture camp; on the home front, the output of their work was prescribed as beneficial to an incipient domestic audience that might be awakened, through “exposure,” to the supreme quality of great works of art. Though an actual accounting is impossible, certainly more attention was paid, and probably more money was spent, to satisfy the tastes and preferences of European intellectuals than has ever since been paid to promote participation along the American people, in all our diversity and *declassées* cultural preferences. But the same unquestioned hierarchies of cultural definition and taste held by apparatchiks of the CIA and its precursor agencies, years before, would prevail among the Cold War generation of cultural leaders who established in federal domestic policies.

The values and needs of existing major cultural institutions and anti-communist artists and intellectuals came strongly to the fore as the domestic cultural policy agenda was formed. This viewpoint was quite unlike that held by federal policymakers in the Thirties, who examined a similar cultural status quo, but concluded that existing major cultural institutions were more or less taken care of by their wealthy audiences and patrons — thanks largely to tax-deductibility of charitable contributions (which as we have discussed, effectively authorize private donors to allocate federal cultural funds directly, according to their tastes, and generally to their own social credit). Instead, those in charge of New Deal programs focused their attention on democratic aims and outcomes in cultural life to those Americans whose cultural needs were not addressed by the cultural status quo.

The new generation of cultural leaders in the Fifties and Sixties took the opposite tack, viewing existing cultural institutions as primary. Focusing on established institutional clients also served their strategic, short-term political ends — mobilizing these institutions' definitively well-connected publics on behalf of the new agencies' budgets. Nancy Hanks' success as a control-oriented administrator and lobbyist in the Nixon years multiplied the NEA's budget from a paltry \$8 million in Fiscal 1969 to a slightly less paltry \$115 million by 1978.<sup>58</sup> Hanks was a cagey political operator, who secured large increases in her agency's budget by forging agreements with various classes of institutions, starting with the symphony orchestras, which had actively opposed the NEA until their wooing was complete. The orchestras' operators, encouraged and coordinated through their national organization, then launched lobbying campaigns to mobilize their substantial, well-connected patron bases on the federal agency's behalf. Their rewards were direct: a 1969 budget of \$869,000 for Music, producing only five grants to orchestras, grew to \$4 million in 1971, with \$3 million specifically reserved for orchestras.<sup>59</sup>

This pattern was repeated within of the Arts Endowment's funding-program constituencies, supported by the NEA's simultaneous funding of communication and networking carried out by national service organizations in each artistic field or discipline — museums, theaters, dance companies, arts councils, and organizations in literature and the visual arts. Hanks' ability to switch from tough-as-nails political operator to Southern belle,

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<sup>58</sup> National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities, "History of Authorizations and Appropriations through FY 1978," Program Information, July 1977.

<sup>59</sup> Straight, *Hanks*, 137, 140-141 and 145.

as the situation demanded, was legendary, as was her command of the facts, being well briefed on grants made in every congressional district. Her growing staff came to represent as many as forty percent of the entire agency's by the mid-Seventies, all as obsessed with detail in monitoring all agency communication for conformance to her official positions as she demanded.

Operating within the narrow world of Euro-centric cultural institutions, the NEA relied on numbers to depict impact. A "Fact Sheet" delivered to the White House in October 1976 for release with President Ford's pre-election "Statement on the Arts" compared Rockefeller Panel numbers with 1975 figures ginned up by Hanks' staff: the field of 58 professional orchestras had grown to 110; opera companies by that time totaled 45, up from 27; dance companies, 157 compared to only 37 a decade earlier; professional theaters, dramatically multiplied from a measly 23 to 145; and so on. Michael Straight weighed in against this emphasis after his retirement, observing, "Nelson, in his exuberant way, had led Nancy to believe in expansion *as such*." Straight suggested that "Nancy was in danger ... of losing sight of our underlying purpose. Expansion was becoming not a means to aesthetic enrichment but an end in itself."<sup>60</sup>

Either way, this is a distinction without a difference in considering the federal agencies' overall aesthetic and institutional bias: Straight's sole concern was how well this "underlying purpose" was being served. Pressures to diversify away from the Atlanticist high-culture paradigm, with its limited constituency of major cultural institutions and the artists whose work they preferred, were felt more gradually, emanating almost entirely from

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 388-390.

outside the halls of these agencies. Social activism in the late Sixties and Seventies led to shifts that were ultimately impossible to resist; but this did not stop the older generation in charge from giving it their college try.

Euro-centric definitions of culture drove cultural programming in public broadcasting, too. When PBS began distributing material to CPB-supported stations in the early Seventies, its foundation and corporate underwriting model quickly emerged. American corporate sponsors like Xerox bought rights to BBC productions like Kenneth Clark's *Civilisation* series for primetime broadcast in the United States. Mobil's acquisition of various dramatic series for the *Masterpiece Theatre* strand reinforced an Anglo-American connection that fit right into the Atlanticist paradigm, though now the flow of import-export was reversed, from Europe to the elite American audience to which PBS aspired. Over time, the *Masterpiece* model broadened to include *Theater in America* and *Dance in America*, both underwritten by Exxon, and Arco's *In Performance at Wolf Trap* — and both produced in America, but very much in the high-art Atlanticist tradition already established in public broadcasting.<sup>61</sup>

That these keystone strands of PBS programming were underwritten by oil companies was no accident: the rise of national programming in public television coincided with the 1973-74 "oil crisis," when gas prices quadrupled, presenting a serious public relations problem for the American petrochemical industry, addressed in part by showy association with not-for-profit cultural enterprise. So prominent did oil-company underwriting become

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<sup>61</sup> Mooney, 118-119.



— accounting for over seventy percent of prime-time PBS programs by 1981 — that some critics of the system sarcastically called it the Petroleum Broadcast Service.<sup>62</sup>

Conflict around cultural bias flared up in the “culture wars” of the Nineties, most heatedly in the academy, where independent thought comes more cheaply than in lavish arts productions. There, as the Heritage Foundation had prematurely warned in 1980, post-Sixties scholars had really begun to challenge older generations’ approaches to key disciplines. Attacks upon “the canon” — official versions of history (parodied as the story of “dead white men”) and hierarchies of taste (like the elevation of English literature above all others) built into college curricula — spurred angry reaction from older defenders like Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., joined by a small but flamboyantly outspoken group of “young Turks” like Dinesh d’Souza and various students of Milton Freidman.

Relatively bland, once non-controversial augmentations of United States history thus came under attack from the academic Old School. Historians and social scientists documenting Native American influences upon the Founding Fathers, for example, which I first read about as a grade-schooler, in an American Heritage coffee-table book published in 1961<sup>63</sup> — and already integrated into New York State curriculum due to grassroots cultural organizing in the Seventies — drew heavy fire from defenders of conventional canonical thought in the “Culture Wars” of the Nineties. Schlesinger’s *The Disuniting of America* offers one the most coherent expressions of this spate of reaction, reasserting the “smelting

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<sup>62</sup> Engelman, 192-193.

<sup>63</sup> William Brandon, “The Anvil of America,” *The American Heritage Book of Indians*, Alvin M. Josephy, Ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1961), 187-202.

pot” theory of assimilation in American culture he claimed was being threatened by “sullen and resentful minorities” involved in a “filopietistic commemoration” that “puts the old idea of the coherent society at stake.” That coherent society — which he proclaimed was practically “a new race” — was, “For better or worse, the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant tradition [that] was for two centuries — and in crucial aspects still is — the dominant influence on American society.” Schlesinger chose a statement attributed to Stanley Hauerwas of the Duke Divinity School faculty to characterize the position of his opponents: “The canon of great literature was created by high Anglican assholes to underwrite their social class.”<sup>64</sup>

This was essentially the position already presented at the dawn of the Reagan era. Like a broken clock, the Heritage Foundation was twice-daily right about one thing in what they decried prior to Reagan’s 1980 election. The “threatening,” “new” ideas they feared — questioning Anglo-centric assimilation as the normative ideal in U.S. culture — had indeed gained ground through publicly-subsidized cultural projects in the Seventies. Culturally diverse initiatives found support mainly through non-arts agencies like the departments of Labor, the Interior, Justice, HUD, HHS and the like. But also, and uniquely among federal cultural agencies, NEH Chair Joseph Duffey’s enthusiasm for “Public Programs” in history had begun to confer Washingtonian legitimacy to community-based history projects during the Carter administration. Many academics of the Nineties cut their teeth and launched their careers pursuing the “hidden histories” that such community-based programs brought to

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<sup>64</sup> Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. *The Disuniting of America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), 6, 8, 19, 73, 99, and 117. “Smelting pot” was Emerson’s phrase in his journals; Schlesinger also uses the more common “melting pot” metaphor.

public attention for the first time. This NEH interest drew *Mandate for Leadership*'s most relentless fire to the Humanities Endowment, which Reagan tried at first to hand over to his pal Melvin E. "Mel" Bradford, whose "paleoconservative" defense of the Confederacy proved too offensive for Congressional approval. William J. Bennett filled the void left by Bradford's retreat, the NEH being his stepping stone to service as Reagan's second-term Secretary of Education and Bush *père*'s drug czar, before his canonization as Neocon pundit and recovering high-stakes gambler. The NEH post went to Lynne (Mrs. Dick) Cheney as soon as Bennett moved on to Education.<sup>65</sup>

The threat to status quo thinking of turning multicultural cannons on historic institutional insensitivities to cultural diversity, targeting the canon itself, is real — *if* one considers diversity itself to be a threat. To me, moving ever closer to democracy values, in an ever more inclusive and culturally diverse society, has always seemed the very essence of our nation-state's original dream; and shoring up the cultural values and preferences of the powers-that-be, its very opposite. Defining and expressing a national cultural policy would require us to talk about these values and aspirations openly and publicly, and to agree in unifying, inclusive new ways.

### ***The McCarthy Effect, Part Three: Diversifying from the Ghetto***

The obvious Euro-centrism that reigned in professional cultural institutions could not be condoned without any effort to include — well, others. Once federal civil rights acts were

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<sup>65</sup> Bradford's "paleoconservative" essence can be sampled in "A Fire Bell in the Night: The Southern Conservative View," *Modern Age* (Winter 1973), 10-15. Accessed 21 December 2013 at [http://www.mmisi.org/ma/17\\_01/bradford.pdf](http://www.mmisi.org/ma/17_01/bradford.pdf).

signed, we had to show that there is room for the previously marginalized, lest our way of life be threatened by frustration and anger, which at that point was not only abstract and theoretical: President Johnson's administration ended with U.S. cities literally aflame, the incoming Nixon administration's dour focus on law and order representing the federal government's first line of defense. So efforts to do so were drummed up as soon as possible. At the NEA, for example, "Expansion Arts" was born.

Expansion Arts was introduced at the height of the Black Power movement and was mainly a supporter of cultural projects in minority communities. This was not made explicit in the program's official description, which blandly referred to "various professionally directed community arts programs," which would involve "people on the track of a new sense of personal and community expression." And they would somehow mean something "very different from the traditional approach of 'cultural enrichment.'" That Expansion Arts was nevertheless launched quite frankly and was commonly considered a parallel program for artists of color (to use a descriptor not in use when it was created) was evidenced by the first project example given in the NEA's earliest annual report after the program was begun, where it was reported that NYSCA had spent some of its own money (not the NEA's) to direct a similar funding program, operating under the more forthright title of "Ghetto Arts." Vantile Whitfield was already at work as Expansion Arts' program director.<sup>66</sup> Reminiscing about these days in 1982, Whitfield told me he'd proposed "Ghetto Arts" as the name for the NEA's new department, too, but that higher-ups thought this had to be softened.

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<sup>66</sup> National Endowment for the Arts, *New Dimensions for the Arts, 1971-1972* (Washington, DC: GPO, January 1973), 29.

The ghetto that Expansion Arts served grew out of generations of exclusion, ratified by institutional funding categories (e.g., there were and are today no African American symphony orchestras, at least as these are defined and qualified by the NEA). But this was true also where institutional standardization was absent or weak: Black or Latino companies that might have been funded through Dance, for example, were instead shunted by guidelines and connections into Expansion Arts when they applied to the NEA. And there they remained, rather than “graduating” into the usual arts-discipline funding categories. To top policymakers, “Expansion Arts” surely evoked the sense that outreach work was being done for the same high-quality arts — hoping that audience members would be elevated to arts appreciation, having entered through side doors opened by Expansion Arts grantees. But the general attitude among policymakers inside the Endowment are reflected in Chairman Nancy Hanks’ offhand observation in a that NEA support was directed to ‘support only the highest quality professional activity ... [t]hroughout the Endowment’ — “except Education [which placed resident-artists in schools in all the states in a program that eluded NEA control] and Expansion Arts...”<sup>67</sup>

These were also early days in the post-Sixties reexamination and reconfiguration of racial politics. Elder leaders of the federal agencies, preoccupied by the pressures brought upon them by their power, had not yet fully grasped pervasive aspects of internalized belief that underpin the culture of racism.<sup>68</sup> A revealing “tell” emerges in Michael Straight’s

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<sup>67</sup> Straight, *Hanks*, 224.

<sup>68</sup> Here again, I recommend Joel Williamson’s *Crucible of Race*, though a considerable volume of new work of the culture of racism has since been and will continue to be done.

reminiscence of an unofficial celebration of Van Whitfield's work, right after his NEA resignation was announced. The party was held in Washington's "splendid" old mansion, Decatur House on Lafayette Square, where Straight had literally played parlor games as a Russian spy awaiting orders in the late Thirties, when Washington socialite Mrs. Truxton Beale lived there. Remarking on the unusually "crowded room ... the shouting and the laughter" and music by various jazz artists, Straight remember how much "more exuberant" everyone grew "as the trays of drinks continued on their rounds."

As we left, we passed Mrs. Beale's aged butler. He remembered me from forty years back — he looked at me with imploring eyes. He spoke in whispers, glancing at the polished floor, the delicate card tables, the ancient Chinese vases, all the irreplaceable bric-a-brac that had been left by Mrs. Beale in his care.

Not to worry, I told him, not to worry.<sup>69</sup>

Straight places himself in the best liberal light here — bridging the butler's racist fear and the consensus then abroad in late-Seventies Washington, observed from the patrician distance evident in his own multiple memoirs. Whitfield withdrew after rumors he was on incoming NEA Chair Livingston Biddle's "hit list" for audaciously critical statements made to the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies. And in Biddle's first appearance on the agency side of NEA reauthorization hearings in 1980, the only problem in the national arts landscape, he reported to Congress, came from "those who rock the boat" which happened to be my new job at the time.

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<sup>69</sup> Straight, *Hanks*, 214-215.

Parallel contradictions — reflecting unexamined biases held by the elites in charge — were evident throughout the creation of the NFAH. Jazz was a latter-day addition, and a relatively small one, to a Music Program diet dictated by symphony orchestra programmers. Even after a measure of funding had begun to flow, National Endowment for the Arts writers diminished its significance within the world of “serious” music (and specifically in the NEA’s funding hierarchy) with faint and oddly measured praise: “We have ... in jazz a major folk art. ... We have a population ... terrifyingly addicted to it.”<sup>70</sup> Folk Arts itself came even later, in 1975, and largely because longtime advocates in the Library of Congress and Smithsonian were moving toward creation of some federal crafts agency beyond the NEA’s control.<sup>71</sup>

Issues of cultural diversity have arisen throughout our story of Twentieth Century anti-communism, along the anti-immigrant and racist feeling that has accompanied it. All are relevant in considering where we stand and where we might head in national cultural policy. One point that bears emphasis arises from the generational problem we face in the post-Reagan era: those culturally specific communities that have taken root or grown significantly since 1980 have arrived at time when very little public funding has available to support new cultural initiatives based in lower-income communities. Newer immigrant communities have been left to deal with issues of cultural continuity and the inevitable conflicts and misunderstandings faced by every arrival to the United States on their own. Latin American, Southeast Asian, and Islamic communities, to name a few, have sprung up all over the

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<sup>70</sup> National Endowment for the Arts, *New Dimensions*, 43.

<sup>71</sup> Straight, *Hanks*, 273-278.

country during this time. While today's younger majority and cultural democrats of all ages have proven more fully accepting of the United States' multicultural reality than could have been said in the twentieth century, we have simultaneously seen an upsurge in anti-immigrant hate groups and relentless repetition of anti-immigrant fears in right-wing media.

This core manifestation of changing cultural identity in our archetypally diverse nation is offers rich terrain for cultural development. *E pluribus unum*, though never made official, was our de facto national motto until Cold Warriors placed the nation under God, in whom we now officially trust, in the Fifties. Assuring an atmosphere of mutual respect, protection, and promotion for cultural diversity — recognizing diversity as among our greatest national assets, irrespective of religious belief or multicultural identity — and healing the deep wounds of centuries-old racism remain our primary challenges as a nation.

The challenge of articulating an inclusive social vision that could address the nation's fundamental cultural issues and articulate a more inclusive vision and agenda was effectively left to insurgent movements for social change. The human impulse to break out of conformist straitjackets explains the eventual proliferation of these movements in the later Sixties and Seventies, as the Baby Boom generation came of age. Regardless of political and governmental resistance and interference, these movements would have profound impact, reaching well beyond the activist communities where they originated.

The women's movement offers the best example: since the Sixties, the status and role of women in national culture was raised as a vital issue and irreversibly changed. This was not due to any more focused statement of cultural policy than had already been set into the Declaration of Independence and Constitution, but because activists' changing consciousness



reached critical mass and resonated with the general public — especially with women and girls. The centuries-old idea that all men are created equal thus came to encompass women as well. Ever since, the very words we use to describe our social goals have had to be chosen more carefully, to convey our national commitment to the welfare and equal standing of women as well as among men. Countless changes have been made in policy, to reduce their sexist valence. Though many people today do not think of themselves as “feminist,” society has shifted to the point where we are all walking and quacking much more like the feminists of the Sixties and Seventies than had this popular movement not taken place.

The civil rights movement also exemplifies the more or less continuous fours for Democratic change. Despite the muscular efforts of federal officials like J. Edgar Hoover and Southern Democrats of the Fifties (now Reagan Republicans) to cast civil rights leaders as communist, they were not. Anti-communism had successfully pushed actual communism beyond the margins of the acceptable in American life. Democratic leaders of the postwar era had been affected, too: their sales have been trimmed to weather the harsh anti-Communist wind. But these activists were quite consciously positioning themselves as threats to the status quo, and its defenders tried to stop them by any mean necessary. But it fell largely to the younger generation to resurrect Marxist analysis as an intellectual tool, if not (except in extreme cases) its perspective on social change. But social change requires some attention on its own.

### ***The McCarthy Effect, Part Four: Aversion to Social Content***

By the time the Sixties cultural agencies came into being, social aims in the arts and humanities had long since been flung out the postwar window, demonized in the anti-

communist fever of the late Forties and early Fifties. By the early Sixties, a post-McCarthy sanction had fallen over the art world: modernism reigned in visual art, the European classics dominated the world of “serious” music, and pure anti-communist Americanism was assumed in intellectual pursuits and institutions. It was in the matter of social content and context that the strictures of the early NEA most significantly reflected the ethos of postwar anti-communism.

Michael Straight’s thumbnail sketch of New Deal cultural programs epitomizes their dismissal by even the liberal wing of postwar cultural elitists:

[P]ublic patronage of the arts under the New Deal was instituted for two primary reasons: employment and propaganda. ... The use of artists to advance the social programs ... came to an end when these programs were phased out, leaving a legacy of distrust in the postwar world. ... Republicans and conservatives assumed that artists were radicals, and equated public patronage of the arts with social programs that they were pledged to oppose.<sup>72</sup>

Arts-supporters sought a safe stance by couching policy as a value-neutral, specialist concern of the professional arts and humanities, divorced from social action and ideally insulated entirely from “political interference” of the governmental kind. By the mid-Sixties, outright government interference was unnecessary to assuring compliance with the de facto ban on social engagement. Qualifying grantee institutions performed and presented work that was safely status quo. Self-censorship sufficed to marginalize critical intelligence in academic contexts as well as among individual artists. One might best understand censorship as the

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<sup>72</sup> Straight, *Twigs*, 118.

most successfully and thoroughly decentralized of all the aims our de facto cultural policy comprises.

Disdain has consistently been expressed for the consideration of any factor other than artistic or scholarly “quality” or “excellence” — a highly loaded, incredibly complex, and ultimately subjective standard, defined practically by the tastes and interests of those doing the funding. “Peer panels” were dispatched to deflect attention from the NFAH agency Chairmen, in whose sole charge the enabling legislation placed grant-making authority. The lion’s share of funding decisions have been ground out in a mill of panel meetings, supported by often highly influential staff review, then approved — generally unchanged — by a National Council whose Presidentially-appointed and Senate-confirmed members (except Council Chairs and Deputies, who act as chiefs of staff) serve as uncompensated but nicely wined-and-dined citizen-volunteers. Focused, but diffuse taste-based decision-making thus became a core element of the federal agencies’ architecture and of all the state and local agencies that followed their lead. The entire apparatus operates comfortably within the demographic confines of the arts as the U.S. postwar cultural elite conceives them.

Here, the contrast between federal cultural officials of the Thirties and those of the Sixties is profound. In describing the constituency she envisioned for the Federal Theatre Project, Hallie Flanagan quoted a *Stage* magazine advertisement that described the people in the first ten rows of a theater as those who “possess the gowns, the jewels, the furs, the country estates, the town cars — in short, all the appurtenances of fine living around which the smart world of the theatre revolves.” She then flatly states, “[T]he first ten rows ... were not our audience,” insisting that her federal program aimed instead to serve the “larger

public.” She and her WPA colleagues thought the way to reach that larger public was to present “ideas for penetrating and illuminating our own age, finding quicksilver ways in which to express the mercurial present.”<sup>73</sup> The very topicality of New Deal cultural projects and their brilliance at capturing attention from diverse new publics were of course what drew attacks from anti-communists in Congress, leading to the FTP’s abrupt and early termination and the toning-down of its surviving sisters.

Especially as the generation gap between Cold Warriors and Baby Boomers widened, young organizers focused their counter-cultural work on marginalized community cultures, and socially-engaged cultural activism became ever more widespread throughout the Seventies. Only slowly did our younger generation discover and pursue still-living connections with unrepentant veterans of the New Deal cultural programs — many of whom were delighted, even tearful, at being rediscovered by eager young people who cared not a whit about their shameful consignment to some blacklist, when many of them still lay in bassinets.

Even after Nixon took the White House, Great Society and New Deal aspirations of addressing social issues through government continued, and social activism did eventually flower among rebels against Cold War values, even as the postwar civil rights movement dissipated. Fear of urban unrest growing out of this rebellious spirit — still actively inflamed by COINTELPRO, one must remember — motivated even Nixon to invest federal funds in keeping young people employed and off the streets.

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<sup>73</sup> Flanagan, 42 and 44.

Building on the extensive organizing of the era — the movements against the Vietnam War and for the rights not only of blacks, but also native Americans, farmworkers, women, gay people and others — a growing cadre of young people became adept at securing federal support to launch community cultural projects. As in FDR's first term, a flotilla of experimental programs had been launched under the flag of Johnson's Great Society, housed in the Office of Economic Opportunity and the Department of Labor, but all eventually landing in Labor when Nixon terminated the OEO, consolidated and massively enlarged with CETA's passage in 1973 (the Comprehensive Employment & Development Act). Cultural organizers quickly began using CETA to employ cultural workers in new community cultural projects — the first time since the WPA when this has happened. CETA and many other federal programs of the Seventies operated through 460 state and municipal agencies whose staff and Board members focused on wider social concerns like community development, economic revitalization, integration of previously marginalized minority communities, crime prevention, health promotion, and social services. For young artists, social engagement was a plus, not a minus. National leadership encouraged community-based cultural projects, primarily through national network of community-based organizations (CBOs), The DOL's active encouragement emanated mainly from the office of Assistant Secretary of Labor Ernest G. Green, a sociologist who was one of the eight African American students involved in integrating Little Rock's Central High School in 1957.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Agency figures from "CETA: A Citizen's Action Guide," Washington, DC: Center for Community Change, April 1979, 6. Green's biography accessed 25 December 2013 at [http://www.cau.edu/Board\\_of\\_Trustees\\_Bio\\_Ernest\\_Green.aspx](http://www.cau.edu/Board_of_Trustees_Bio_Ernest_Green.aspx).

Supported by sophisticated technical assistance — initially provided by nonprofit organizations staffed through CETA, though later amplified by the Department of Labor — a new generation of cultural organizers became expert in utilizing non-arts funding sources for cultural purposes. Many leaders of these well-timed efforts were able to build alternative cultural institutions and to sustain their creative work consistently enough to produce projects not only unique in content, but mind-blowing as art.

Especially in rural regions, where the urban elites still running the federal cultural agencies were few and farther between, the initiatives taken by younger artists using these means were of special interest to state and municipal arts agencies, who in some cases responded by opening their granting programs to socially-engaged projects in the arts, community history, and other cultural pursuits. In the aggregate, funding for cultural initiatives from non-arts sources came to exceed federally appropriated cultural budgets: in 1979, it was estimated that some \$200 million in CETA funding alone was employing artists in community-based projects — a third again of Congress appropriated to the National Endowment for the Arts in that year.

In some cities, CETA arts programs drew political fire reminiscent of HUAC's charges against the WPA — even from staff of the arts agencies having CETA artists working under their jurisdiction. San Francisco Arts Commission personnel, for example, revealed to the political reporter of a local paper that “employees ... attempted to organize along ‘socialist or leftist lines,’ going so far as to draw an organizational chart calling for a politbureau, commissars, and workers’ cells.” The Commission had 127 artists at work on

community projects in the city, but administrative staff anonymously complained, “They acted like they weren’t working for the commission at all.”<sup>75</sup>

Attempts also arose to censor work funded by the federal agencies — as when the state arts agency in Tennessee was pressured into cutting funding for The Play Group, a Knoxville theater company then touring a show based on the region’s interracial Southern Tenant Farmers Union organizing. In the tenor of the times, such cases were isolated and could be used to promote their work. (The Play Group was advised to book and promote its show as “the play the Tennessee Arts Commission doesn’t want you to see.”) Public arts grants were generally small anyway, and instances of censorship could also be harnessed to help raise funds from other sources.

Occasional Congressional critics of federal grantmaking were easily silenced — until Jesse Helms riled up wider opposition to the NEA in 1989, building on a protest launched by the American Family Association against an NEA-funded exhibition in North Carolina that included Andres Serrano’s now-notorious “Piss Christ.” By targeting a handful of controversial artists from among the thousands who’s received federal fellowship grants, members of Congress succeeded in adding an anti-obscenity clause to the NEA appropriations bill that to ban federal funding of anything that might be considered “obscene, including but not limited to, depictions of sadomasochism, homoeroticism, the sexual exploitation of children, or individuals engaged in sex acts and which, when taken as a whole, do not have serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value.” That the federal

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<sup>75</sup> W.E. Barnes, “S.F.’s unchecked artists and their leftist leanings,” *San Francisco Examiner*, Dec. 15, 1976, 3.

cultural agencies had operated primarily as specialist professional preserves deprived them of the broad-based political support that the New Right networks seemed to enjoy. They had to live with this language, despite the constitutional issues at play with regard to freedom of expression.

As in the late Thirties, socially engaged cultural activism inspired successful efforts among anti-democratic forces to deprive them of support. Cutbacks in public cultural funding began in California with passage of Proposition 13, the property-tax limitation initiative, in June 1978, then nationally with Reagan's election at the end of 1980. An estimated 450,000 CETA job slots<sup>76</sup> were eliminated within months of his election — some prior to his inauguration, when his transition team advised the hundreds of state and local “Prime Sponsor” agencies involved that they might best instantly re-budget CETA funds to cover unemployment benefits that would be owed to laid-off workers. Many projects disappeared practically overnight.

Those relatively few alternative cultural groups that managed to survive the Eighties by finding private-sector support were able to do so primarily as experienced producers of high-quality art, not generally because of the content and context of their work. Community engagement had been their lead argument in winning support from municipal, state, and federal non-arts officials in such strange quarters as the Bureau of Prisons, the Economic Development Administration, and most importantly the local “Manpower” Authority (a piece

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<sup>76</sup> From a Feb. 22, 1980, letter to the Department of Labor from the Washington-based CETA Coalition, urging rebudgeting to enable increase employment levels (Institute for Cultural Democracy papers, Kansas City, MO), 1. At its peak in FY 1978, CETA paid salaries for 725,000 public-service jobs, according to “CETA: A Citizen's Action Guide,” Washington, DC: Center for Community Change, April 1979, 3.



of sexist language that was slow to change). Token grants usually had come from arts-agency programs like Expansion Arts, or for a few years, larger grants from the Duffey NEH, but most often from state and local agencies whose interest in minority cultures and community-wide cultural participation was genuine, making diversity and social engagement real priorities for them.

Helping people retool themselves from the late New Deal that was the Seventies to catch the “rising tide” of Reaganism is how my consulting work began — stem-to-stern overhauls for groups established and developed through public funding programs, but challenged to survive on private philanthropy, driven in its very nature by the interests of those with wealth. This required revisiting basic questions of identity, purpose, direction, organization, public engagement, and financial support, all at once. Our nation is today the beneficiary of the continuing work of many of these cultural institutions, born of Seventies activism. But most of this generation of cultural organizations was lost. And there has not been another time of democratically accessible, public-sector investment in culture since Reagan took office.

My conscious commitment ever since, explicitly shared with colleagues working throughout the United States and abroad, has been to keep these new traditions of cultural activism alive until conditions improve and a new generation of cultural workers arises. We will be able to help them, we have assured ourselves, assuring that the nation will not suffer the discontinuity of experience and practice that the McCarthy era created between the Thirties generation and that those of us who came of age in the Sixties. It was our hope that President Obama’s election heralded this time of renewed investment in democratic cultural

development; but instead we have seen resurgent pressure from the right to roll back New Deal notions of government for the people and many of the substantive cultural gains made vis-à-vis diversity and democracy in national cultural life.

### ***The McCarthy Effect, Part Five: Disavowing Democracy in U.S. Cultural Policy***

The postwar generation of cultural agencies was built on a foundation defined by the “freedom-totalitarian” opposition set up in the anti-communist era, limited in scope to the same conceptions of U.S. culture that reigned in the corridors of the CIA. Democracy irritated the elites who drove this process. Ironically, this distanced the U.S. ideologically from the leading idea in international cultural-policy discourse at the time: “cultural democracy,” which on its face would seem to be a very American idea. We’ll discuss how we behaved on the global stage next, but first we must attend to perhaps the most sinister of the McCarthy effects: the disavowal of democracy in U.S. cultural policy here at home.

Why not use the prevalent commercial coinage to describe our loss? The nation has paid a tremendous opportunity cost by favoring “free enterprise” over “democracy” in the nation’s political culture, and in adopting Cold War values in domestic policy. The collateral damage in cultural policy could not be more obvious: what happens to cultural democracy when democracy itself is problematized and put on the back burner in favor of commercial development, and the ideology of capitalism?

The damage here lies in our failure to address the inadequacy of cultural infrastructure for the vast majority of the American people. Grassroots cultural activists did succeed in using federal resources to address this need in the Seventies, as discussed in the emergence of socially-engaged artwork; but these efforts were quashed. But this terrain is as

significantly damaged in its immaterial dimension: in our ability to raise the largest questions of community well-being, state our intentions, and agree on programs of cultural development?

This question of democratic capacity might read is overly idealistic, but cultural infrastructure did improve, despite the official inaction and heel-dragging — and the active, covert suppression and interference, already discussed — actually did improve as the nation as the nation prospered economically and, simultaneously, a generation of conscious counter-cultural activism blossomed. But even earlier, postwar circumstances had sometimes and in some settings required public-sector leadership and investment in community cultural life. California provides the best large-scale example: entirely new communities were popping up everywhere, requiring that public facilities be installed more or less instantly. The state's public educational system at this time was outstanding; cultural centers and various accessible community facilities were incorporated into schools and parks, and into an extensive, expanding statewide community college system, where community-services offices were often the community's primary "presenting organization" — having staff to program concert series, festivals, and all manner of cultural activities. Many California cultural programs derived their main financing from municipal sources. All were hit by the radical impact of the nation's first important right-wing electoral victory: the passage of Proposition 13 in June 1978.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard, "California Community Arts Under Proposition 13," *NAPNOC Reports* (Washington, DC/San Francisco: NAPNOC, 1978).

Addressing and undoing this I visible damage by anti-democratic forces in the nation's culture would require substantial reinvestment in noncommercial community development and in public-service employment for cultural workers. After four decades of professional work and study of cultural policy and development practice throughout the world, I have seen no other way. And why should this be surprising? Government offers us the sole, all-inclusive, and presumably accountable social mechanism for democratic change, aided by the countless non-for-profit community enterprises upon which cultural democracy relies. If the United States does believe in some other values than the unbridled pursuit of profit, we will have to invest in them. They are by definition not-for-profit, and must be sustained by the public sectors of government and community-based, nonprofit organizations.

From a cultural-policy point of view, I am convinced by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s conclusion, published in the year of his assassination: that there will be no hope of redress from the cult of racism plaguing the country — our deepest injury in relation to cultural diversity — without a strong, continuing commitment to universal social justice and, as its foundation, full employment. If business finds it profitable in to lay off workers, their creativity and energy must be harnessed for public service, compensated with a living wage that enables liberty and justice for all.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (New York: Harper & Rowe, 1968).

### ***The McCarthy Effect, Part Six: The U.S. Takes the World Stage***

The heyday of the CIA's cultural program ended in the late Sixties, just about the time that UNESCO launched its substantial international study of national cultural policies, which continued in various forms for the better part of two decades. The U.S. choice to remain at the sidelines in UNESCO in the early Fifties brought chickens home to roost. The international discussion that ensued naturally focused on the commercial cultural industries and electronic mass media, each dominated by U.S.-based producers and distributors. A virtual Animal Farm of imagery came to the fore as foreign policymakers sought to put a face of the forces of cultural hegemony they saw at work in the world: "the fox in the hen house," French cultural minister Jack Lang called the United States at UNESCO's 1982 General Conference in Mexico City; "the bull in the china shop" was often heard. But the ultimate bestial metaphor comes from Africa or Asia, well beyond the barnyard fence: the elephant in the room. The global reach of U.S.-based commercial mass media brought charges of cultural imperialism from all over the globe — echoed in rumblings from marginalized communities and regions here at home — as their products implicitly marketed the American way of life to potential consumers everywhere. The "Americanization of culture" anticipated concerns taken up by late Nineties "anti-globalization" activists whose analysis included concern for corporate culture's impact in the United States as well as abroad.

In retrospect, things were best for UNESCO and the family of nations while the U.S. sat out, from the Fifties through the Seventies. When the Kraken awakened, it was with a real vengeance. The Hollywood-connected White House of Ronald Reagan launched an attack on UNESCO that climaxed with U.S. withdrawal from the agency in 1984.

Ironically, the deeper forces that concerned world cultural ministers were identified with the United States because they manifest here first. What people on the planet have been more affected by these forces than Americans? Rapid urbanization, the proliferation of electronic mass media, and considerable displacement were disrupting traditional cultural patterns here long before and to a much greater extent than they were being felt in, say, Africa, Asia or Latin America — even in Europe.

It was realization of the common situation we faced that inspired what political scientists now call “transnational activism” on the part of U.S. cultural workers. Official documents published by UNESCO, the Council of Europe, and the Organization of African Unity and in various other international networks provided language missing from the U.S. political lexicon to describe our cultural development activism. Through the networks of other nation’s ministries, we were able to find our colleagues abroad, many of whom were benefiting from much greater acknowledgement and support on the part of their own national cultural policymaking apparatus than we were in the United States (however secondary they remained in relation to their own nations’ major cultural institutions, whose predominance is also a worldwide phenomenon). Foreign governments often provided travel bursaries that brought cultural development workers to the U.S., though our own government would not reciprocate; and many artists did come, curious about the challenges implicit in cultural work “in the belly of the beast.” We benefited from their inspiration and guidance, when they inevitably discovered those of us doing similar kinds of community-based work in this country.

Reagan's withdrawal from UNESCO, and the bureaucratic gyrations it caused in the international community, effectively ended this era of cultural-policy dialogue. Only one UNESCO General Conference has taken place since the 1982 conclave in Mexico City, convened in Stockholm in 1998. Young activists involved in the huge NGO conference attached to the official ministers' meeting in Sweden frequently characterized cultural democracy "an American idea," though they were also critically aware of the U.S. as the archetypal nation-state, which by the main flow of NGO enthusiasm in that year's sessions would surely soon wither away.

Obviously, it has not. Bush *fil*'s global War on Terror still lay beyond anyone's imagination. U.S. isolation from international cultural policy thinking continues to damage us. It has deprived us of the sense of standards, aspirations, and critical practice generated by the rich transnational discussion that took place over several decades. Our domestic dialogue about the forces being felt worldwide, and a cultural-policy embrace of cultural development in its inclusive sociocultural sense, might have been enriched, nourished, and challenged by our open participation. Our official action instead supported the perception that the United States of America doesn't real care about culture at all: only about its military might and economic domination. Regimes unfriendly to our corporate interests were at risk, and we were not above outright invasion or bombing. Since we present ourselves abroad as a democracy, it is commonly assumed that we all voted on the sometimes horrifying measures our government has undertaken on foreign shores and resource-rich hinterlands and supply routes worldwide. Meanwhile, our propagandists tout the United States as "the envy of the

world,” apparently without consciousness that pride and narcissism are perhaps not our greatest national virtues.

The standard apparatus of international relations functions better and more muscularly than any other aspect of U.S. cultural policymaking. We have long been projecting a definite national image to the world, and our interventions on behalf of our most powerful interests are clear, though many are cloaked. Our foreign policy has been inspired and shaped by what international relations scholars call “realism” — a steadfast belief in the inevitability of war. “Realists” prescribe constant attention to geopolitical concerns, and counsel relentless work investment to assure military superiority and readiness. The motivating threat has shifted from global communism to global terrorism, as the twentieth century passed into the twenty-first; but for the other nations of the world, what greater threat is there than the United States of America?

“Someone has to be the world’s policeman,” became a litany in the Eighties and Nineties among younger people who grew up with the Iran hostage crisis on their minds, rather than the civil rights or anti-Vietnam War movements, or later, after the Reagan era began. As if we weren’t already seen that way. The War of Terror declared by President George W. Bush created a prospect of endless threat and struggle, and state intervention strongly reminiscent of the Twentieth Century history summarized here.

Meanwhile, the Right continues to benefit from the ideological machinery established in 1936 by the National Association of Manufacturers, working in close collaboration with government since World War II, and cresting with the Reagan Era, which lingers to this day.



They have manufactured and marketed a mentality obsessed by threat and anxious to find armed defense against worst-case threats.

We might instead have been working things out, here at home and in the global arena, striving to devise better-case approaches, aiming to achieve the best, and supporting cultural development efforts toward clear, agreed-upon goals. This would be the subject of cultural policy, were we to find the courage to declare one.

## CHAPTER 11

### CONCLUSION: HEALING OUR COLLATERAL DAMAGE

Historian Walter Hixson closes the curtains in his examination of propaganda, culture and the Cold War from Truman to Kennedy with this insight, referring to Carl von Clausewitz, the great Nineteenth Century German-Prussian political theorist of the inevitability of war — the archetype of “realist” thinking in international affairs:

The Cold War stood Clausewitz on his head: in an age of mutual assured destruction, war was no longer a viable means to solve political conflict among superpowers. ... If the Cold War was, at its core, a battle for public opinion — a struggle for hearts and minds — its outcome could only be decided on cultural ground.

But Hixson also observes that “the men who conducted the Cold War, in both Washington and Moscow, failed to grasp the essence of the struggle.” What followed instead were heavy, decades-long investments in arms and military systems, despite President Eisenhower’s famous farewell warning against the military-industrial complex. Rather than apprehending that a different kind of struggle was taking place — instead remaining “[o]bsessed with military preparations — Washington squandered enormous energies and resources in preparation for a conventional ‘hot’ war,” when what was actually on the table was quite cold.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hixson, 232-233.

Much of the collateral damage suffered by U.S. culture because of the Cold War lies in the militarization of our national culture, heightened since 2001 by our War on Terror. Throughout the postwar period, a feeling of threat has spurred development of a national security state that might have shocked the Founding Fathers. Even “conservatives,” as they have been styled since Reagan’s election — those who profess to wanting government generally to wither away — consider social control to be the core function of federal power and obligation. Meanwhile, new technology is allowing concentrated power to make ever-deeper incursions into what were once considered private matters, whether personal or communal.

Huge practical implications arise from this obsession with military affairs, beginning with the monopolization of governmental resources that might otherwise be used to sustain the national commonwealth and contribute to global stability, if not peace. The United States’ hegemonic power from the end of World War II, carried into the twenty-first century, confers great potential for positive influence, were we able to abandon habits of twisting our thinking around possible threats. Might we rather imagine a harmonious, free world not obsessed with geopolitical threat, and committed to democratic values?

Our ability to do so is crucial to overcoming what is perhaps the most profound damage done in the century since anti-communism cropped up: the gross polarization that characterizes habituated thinking in politics today. Decades — generations — of Americans have been urged to think in terms of good and evil, black and white — Manichean dualisms drawn along practically any line that can be imagined in our diverse society. Polarization of political thought and ideology has been exploited along communist/free enterprise lines, and

American/un-American ones, and countless other either-or distinctions that affect not only political strategy, but our very patterns of perception and preconception in culture — most crucially in our political culture itself.

The institutionalization of political gridlock in today's Red/Blue parsing of politics ignores the importance of defining a foundation in national cultural policy that is more truly consensual, democratic, and inclusive than the one to which we have grown accustomed through the Cold War. Cultural diversity requires acceptance of a multiplicity of viewpoints as well as attention to complexity and detail as a basis for encompassing policies and structures that will serve everyone, not only powerful elites. And here, we return to the policy requirements of cultural democracy and its simple principles: protecting and promoting cultural diversity, encouraging and supporting cultural participation by all citizens, and to the greatest extent possible (while safeguarding the first two aims), decentralizing cultural decision-making to our communities, our families, and in keeping with our Constitution, our individual selves.

The very idea of cultural policy was nipped in the bud by the politics of anti-communism. Our resulting multi-generational silence makes it that much harder for us today to imagine, much less to have thought through, its unifying potential. Cultivating unifying, inclusive political leadership, inspired by some inclusive vision of cultural democracy is vital. The easy out taken by Truman and Eisenhower in sacralizing the American state must be undone, separating church and state in a constitutionally conscious way, free of any Judeo-Christian cult — recognizing that our sense of propriety was shifted by leaders who

blurred the line between public values and religious stricture, and between private morality and public justice.

The forces that carried Reagan into office in 1980 focused more strategically on “the base” of their power rather than on Us, the People. Meanwhile, what might be described as “political opinionating” has increasingly fractured democratic choice into a vast, confusing, black-and-white mosaic of binary bits, broken down into yes/no options by status quo interests. The emergence of domestic propaganda, recast as the emergent science of “public relations” in the late Thirties, coincides nicely with anti-communist campaigning against the un-American and the rollout of NAM’s voter-as-consumer version of “the American Way.”

Conventional ways of thinking and understanding determine our choices, offering no clear channel for integrative visions of political culture to emerge — the kind that could lead to inventive, culturally democratic action, extending from the federal level to the local and even individual. This would properly be considered the work of a public service-oriented cultural development program, had we a cultural policy to define and focus attention toward its democratic purpose and values.

The Civil Rights movement that crested in the Sixties helped rid us of many of the worst obstacles thrown up by the bad old world: segregated facilities, or racist barricades to voter registration. But the movement’s energy diffused before much had been done to start building the better world we could create in its place. Reagan’s puppeteers saw to it that the nation would be deprived of democratic cultural infrastructure when its importance was being recognized and discussed all over the world. And we have seen resurgent efforts to

create elements of the bad old world of official racism in voter-suppression efforts, racist law-enforcement and incarceration regimes, and relentless corporate brainwashing.

A climate of mutual respect has grown in many Americans' private lives and cultural circles, in spite of the diffusion of viable democratic movements. The impact of past movements towards democratic ends lives on. The civil rights movement is now celebrated in holidays and history books (except by crabby right-wingers). Popular attitudes toward cross-cultural relationships and unconventional gender or sexual identities have changed in ways that were marginalized and suppressed in the Cold War world. A surviving remnant of the many alternative cultural institutions that grew out of Sixties movements and took root in the Seventies has continued to encourage us as individual and communities to honor diversity in new ways, in a general climate quite more welcoming.

Against this general social shift, new ways have been invented to maintain old orders in new political contexts. The lion's share of investment here is "naturally" from the wealthy-friendly right. The Tea Party movement has been "astroturfed" with the same blend of solid financial support, skilled messaging, and capital-intensive organization that launched and sustained domestic propaganda throughout the twentieth century: starting with the NAM campaign in the Thirties, continuing with the Advertising Council in the Fifties, refocusing after the Goldwater defeat in 1964 to build the ideological foundation of think-tankery that produced what was called the "Reagan revolution."

Cynical activists laughed at the pretensions of describing the repackaged Spam of the New Right as any kind of revolution; but thirty years later, revolutionary changes have indeed been made in the very framing of our cultural politics. Very real collateral damage

was done by incorporating what Washington activists in 1981 called “the new Reagan rhetoric” into our political discourse and culture. We replaced “public service” and “social need” with “enterprise zones” and “social problems.” Aspiration for cultural development was gone altogether. Over time, this has changed our ways of thinking about government, privileging corporate interests over democratic ones in Washington, as they are in so many other centers of power.

The old New Deal consensus is largely lost to those who came to full consciousness after the Reagan era began. (One might, in fact, date this from the Iran hostage crisis, as Reagan’s storm gathered.) With the election of Barack Obama, we have the first representative of this generation in the White House. Public-service employment has been notably absent from his administration’s political lexicon, and completely so in the practical program it proposed at a time of national economic emergency. The corporate sector’s active, focused, and well-financed propaganda campaigns seem to have successfully reframed public issues and limited democratic threats to powerful interests.

The intergenerational transmission of ideological capitalism is the fattest fruit of this century of anti-communism. It helped bust unions. It associated social-change activists as against the nation. It justified the creation of state control apparatus, both overt and covert.

I had only one close friend among the Reaganistas, and he practically defined the Thirties-to-Fifties mold. The son of immigrants, he became an idealistic Young Communist League organizer in the late Thirties. After wartime military service, he signed up to fight in the Irgun after wartime service. Then, shocked at revelations of Stalin’s tyranny, he converted to Fifties conservatism, using his YCL experience to help form Young Americans

for Freedom and other right-wing outreach initiatives, in company with William F. Buckley. (It was his devotion to the Buckley family that inspired his eventual conversion to Catholicism, no small matter for a fellow Jew.) Like many in the New Right of the Reagan era, my friend credited his success as a “conservative” organizer to methods he learned from democratic organizing in the Young Communist League of the late Thirties.

By these means, along with the strategic use of the medium of advertising, have anti-democratic interests successfully held us in the polarized, confused state that has warped U.S. political culture since World War II. The grandfathers on whose knees we sat were already affected by this thinking, as were our parents, and ourselves, and now already a generation or two since, bringing us still broken into the second decade of the next century.

Concluding her account of the State Department jazz tours, historian Penny Von Eschen summed up some of the major changes from those days to these:

Today, the American nation is represented abroad by McDonald's, *Baywatch*, Nike, Microsoft, and Britney Spears. ... [T]he shift from state sponsorship to predominantly market-driven and corporate images is striking. The reductive logic of the market ... reminds us of what is lost when a potentially democratically accountable government does not assume an active role in supporting the arts and promoting its culture abroad.<sup>2</sup>

Can we recompose our vision not only of arts support and cultural promotion, but more fundamentally, of national cultural identity and democratic commitment in the twenty-first century United States? Out of the rubble of the Cold War and its terrorizing extension since the Berlin Wall was brought down, can we construct a cultural policy that is truly

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<sup>2</sup> Von Eschen, 258.



inclusive of — in fact, inspiring to —us all? Can we keep our heads about us as we try to replace diversionary thinking and divisive tactics with something that at this point would be revolutionary, in the best American sense of that word: a great leap forward into great, more effective and satisfying democratic lives for us all?

We the People can. The question is whether We the People will — and what we can do to bring about some authentic form of cultural democracy in the United States in the twenty-first century.

### **THE FIRST LADY’S RENDITION OF CULTURAL POLICY**

As we close the book on anti-communism’s impact — our Cold War’s collateral damage to U.S. culture — it’s time to make good on my promise at the start: that statement Michelle Obama made to formally introduce the President as a candidate for re-election in the Democratic national convention in 2012.

After a couple of extra viewings with friends who’d missed it live, I realized that the First Lady’s speech could be read as a statement of cultural policy. Simple, direct language like this can and must be used to convey an integrative, more fully inclusive vision in U.S. cultural policy.

“[H]ow blessed we are to live in the greatest nation on Earth!” the First Lady began. Speaking of her own and her husband’s experience, she described public service as “an honor and a privilege” that

reveals who you are. ... [A]t the end of the day, when it comes time to make that decision, ... all you have to guide you are your values and your vision, and the life experiences that make you who you are.

She proceeded to assert that protecting and promoting healthy families is central to the cultural vitality of the nation, because our values are rooted there. She drew upon her own and the President's family heritage to identify its deeper values and aspirations, describing these as common to all American families:

[F]amilies who didn't have much in the way of money or material possessions but ... something far more valuable — their unconditional love, their unflinching personal sacrifice, and the chance to go places they had never imagined for themselves. ...

... American families ... weren't asking for much. They didn't begrudge anyone else's success or care that others had much more than they did — in fact, they admired it. They simply believed in that fundamental American promise that, even if you don't start out with much, if you work hard and do what you're supposed to do, you should be able to build a decent life for yourself and an even better life for your kids and grandkids.

... [We value] dignity and decency — that how hard you work matters more than how much you make; helping others means more than just getting ahead yourself. [We value] honesty and integrity — ... the truth matters — ... you don't take shortcuts or play by your own set of rules; and success doesn't count unless you earn it fair and square. [We value] gratitude and humility — ... so many people had a hand in our success, ... [a]nd we ... value everyone's contribution and treat everyone with respect. ... That's who we are [as a people]. ...

[I]n the end, more than anything else, this is the story of this country — the story of unwavering hope grounded in unyielding struggle. That is what has made ... so many other American stories possible. ... If farmers and blacksmiths could win independence from an empire; if immigrants could leave behind everything they knew for a better life on our shores; if women could be dragged to jail for seeking the vote; if a generation could defeat a depression and define greatness for all time; if a young preacher could lift us to the mountaintop with his righteous dream; and if proud Americans can be who they are and boldly stand at the altar with who[m] they love. Then surely, surely we can give everyone in this country a fair

chance at that great American Dream. ... [T]hat is the story of this country — the story of unwavering hope grounded in unyielding struggle. ...

[I]f we want to give all [our sons and daughters] a foundation for their dreams and opportunities worthy of their promise, that sense of limitless possibility — that belief that here in America, there is always something better out there if you're willing to work for it — then we must work like never before.

... [W]e must come together and stand together ... [in] trust to keep moving this great country forward ... with patience and wisdom, and courage and grace, recognizing that change is hard and slow, and it never happens all at once, but that we will eventually get there. We always do, because of men and women who said to themselves, "I may not have a chance to fulfill my dreams, but maybe my children will, maybe my grandchildren will." We stand as the beneficiaries of their sacrifice, and longing, and steadfast love, as they swallowed their fears and doubts and did what was hard.

When the challenges we face start to seem overwhelming — or even impossible — we will never forget that doing the impossible is the history of this nation. It is who we are as Americans. It is how this country was built. Just as our parents and grandparents toiled and struggled for us, we will keep on sacrificing and building for our own kids and grandkids. Just as so many brave men and women have sacrificed their lives for our most fundamental rights, we promise, each and all, to do our part as citizens of this great democracy to exercise those rights.

[We who are its beneficiaries] know the American Dream because we've lived it. We want everyone in this country — everyone — to have that same opportunity, no matter who we are, or where we're from, or what we look like, or whom we love.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Remarks by the First Lady at the Democratic National Convention, Time Warner Cable Arena, Charlotte, North Carolina, September 4, 2012 Accessed at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/09/05/remarks-first-lady-democratic-national-convention> (18 November 2013).

Without using “policy language” — in fact, speaking so directly and simply, and apparently from the heart, she’d moved every delegate caught by TV cameras to tears of patriotic pride and joy. Michelle Obama evoked deep connections with my own sense of what the American people would really stand for, could we clear the smoke and focus back on what unites us, not rather than what worsens our divisions. Her speech reminds us that it is possible to describe ourselves as the people we are, to state our aspirations and values — the basis of our national consensus, maximizing freedom while improving our ability to use government as our primary tool toward democracy. Declaring our cultural policy — and revisiting and refining it progressively for decades to come — is essential to our making a start.

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## **VITA**

Donald Elwin Adams was born on July 13, 1953, in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, where he attended public elementary and junior high schools. His family relocated in 1968 to Vermillion, where he attended Vermillion High School, graduating in 1971. He began attending the University of South Dakota while still in high school, majoring first in psychology, then in history, while actively engaged in cultural development work and studying cultural policy independently, through 1974, when he was admitted to Sangamon States University's graduate program in Community Arts Management in Springfield, Illinois. He earned his Master of Arts in Arts Administration there in 1976.

Adams worked in various cultural development programs in South Dakota, Illinois, and Louisiana before being awarded a fellowship at the National Endowment for the Arts in 1976. He then went to the California Arts Council in Sacramento, where Gov. Jerry Brown appointed him Deputy Director.

Since 1978, Adams has worked as a consultant to cultural agencies and organizations throughout the United States and abroad. He has written extensively and spoken widely about cultural issues, and has taught offered seminars and courses in universities and professional settings.