



“UN-AMERICANS” AND “ANTI-COMMUNISTS”:  
THE RHETORICAL BATTLE TO DEFINE  
TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICA

by

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Jennifer,  
whose interest was most likely feigned  
but whose patience was unquestionably genuine;

To the family I love,  
and who love me;

To DFK and DLS,  
whose legacies still inspire me.

--mm, 2008

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## CHAPTER ONE

### OF UN-AMERICANS AND ANTI-COMMUNISTS: HISTORIOGRAPHY, METHODOLOGY, AND INTRODUCTION

In present-day Berlin, a thin brick inlay indiscriminately cuts through city streets and sidewalks. Little more than 12 inches wide, it traces a ring around the western portion of the city and marks the location of the former Berlin Wall. Perhaps no other line in the world so clearly separated the communist and the anticommunist. Here it was as much physical as psychological, rebarred concrete and barbed wire separating a city from itself and families from each other, demarking competing ideologies, economies, and empires.

In the United States, nothing neatly marked the contours of domestic anticommunism. For well over half a century, the greater part of society debated the true and legitimate definition of the United States' domestic anticommunism. Physical constructions could not so easily identify "them" from "us"; not even Joseph McCarthy—the single name most synonymous with domestic anticommunism—could build an Americanized Berlin Wall. Instead, it primarily fell to the realm of social and political rhetoric to define the terms of one of the most significant intellectual and ideological debates of the twentieth century United States: what was anticommunist and what was, by its negation, un-American.

This study traces the lines of that debate as it explores the measures of authenticity assigned to such terms in their social and political constructions. More than an excavation of the historical record, this project shifts paradigms. A great many historians have produced a number of substantial investigations into the events and actors of the Red Scare and McCarthy eras, and there is no substantive quarrel here with their facts. Nevertheless, a thorough examination of the historiography leaves a number of unanswered—or

unsatisfactorily answered—questions about the fundamental dimensions of domestic American anticommunism; what attitudes, actions, or speech constituted authentic “anticommunism,” and why? Indeed, the historiography debates the legitimacy of the anticommunism practiced by mainstream American society, rather than the definitions of authenticity that became national dogma. By understanding the creation of such definitions of legitimacy and authenticity, of anticommunism and Americanism, one may understand a great deal about the nature of contemporary American society—how it operates at the levels of symbol, rhetoric, and meaning-making.

Three basic trends emerge from the historiography of domestic American anticommunism. Historians, whether of academic or popular bent, typically assess the course of anticommunism’s means and ends. This approach draws value-judged conclusions of whether the threat justified the social and institutional responses referred to as Red Scares or McCarthyism(s). As such, the historiography reveals three essential sources for the program of domestic anticommunism, even as the conclusions of “traditionalists” and “revisionists” widely vary. The former school is actually the more recent chronological development, as newly-opened Soviet archives reveal a deeper penetration of United States social and political institutions by those with Soviet Communist sympathies, if not actual sponsorship. For these scholars, the record indicates that the end justified the means of domestic anticommunism—in other words, even McCarthyism’s unfortunate excesses are ultimately justified as a reasonable response to a legitimate threat.

The latter school, termed “revisionist” more by their historiographical antagonists than by any self-identification, argue that domestic American anticommunism served primarily as an ideological veneer for political repression and/or partisan politics. Self-

proclaimed anticommunists played this Machiavellian game at the expense of those deemed inauthentic or, as the definitions hardened to the “subversives” in a more damning way, un-American. These scholars more often emphasize the necessity that a constitutional democracy employ righteous means toward a just end. Some in this school downplay the significance of the communist (or, as Soviet-directed, Communist) threat to the United States, and indeed some dismiss the threat altogether as insignificant and irrelevant. Others emerge as more even-handed in their treatment, acknowledging that some threats existed in the ideological (communist) as well as the geopolitical (Communist) realms. Nevertheless, the distinguishing mark of this historiographical school is an unwillingness to spare withering criticism for the excesses of arch-anticommunists from A. Mitchell Palmer to J. Edgar Hoover, or from Joseph McCarthy to Richard Nixon. To a “revisionist,” domestic American anticommunism became a way for the majority to silence the minority by extralegal means, using the banner of anticommunism to direct the charge and deflect any criticisms encountered along the way.

Yet, many other works examine more narrowly construed aspects of domestic American anticommunism and thus fit neatly into neither of these major categories—traditionalist and revisionist. This study suggests the existence of a third historiographical grouping, an amalgam here loosely termed the “social construction” school. As implied, these scholars typically describe domestic American anticommunism as a social phenomenon more so than a political one. In so doing, they often dismiss the rationality of anticommunism—some going so far as deeming it a manifestation of social psychosis or a mass expression of paranoia. Other works in this category lean toward either a traditionalist or revisionist understanding of anticommunism, but nonetheless explicitly root its origins in



the society in which it existed. This approach, perhaps more than the others, emphasizes the highly contingent and contextual nature of domestic American anticommunism, a valuable concept for this study.

Moreover, these historiographical schools yield a variety of definitions for the key terms this study uses as its ideological basis. A more thorough examination of the literature of domestic American anticommunism follows, but one must address these complications, if only briefly. First, and perhaps most important for this study, is the definition and use of the term “anticommunist” (or “anticommunism”). The term sometimes appears “anticommunist,” and often hyphenated (“anti-communist”); the distinction appears purely stylistic within the literature. More relevant is the distinction many authors choose between “anti-communist” and “anti-Communist.” A relatively straightforward distinction, the former addresses opposition to the ideology of Marxism-Leninism in any of its forms, while the latter references opposition to the Soviet Union as a Communist geopolitical construct. For the typical approach to domestic American anticommunism (or, anti-communism; or, anti-Communism), this is often a critical distinction within the text, alerting a reader to ideological (or social) concerns versus political (or geopolitical) ones. Indeed, often the “little-c” anti-communism refers a reader to the author’s intentions to paint the program as anti-subversive in nature, rather than a rational response to a legitimate Communist threat (as indicated by the use of “anti-Communism”).

Here, a far simpler definition should suffice. While many authors in this field deeply concern themselves with the nature of domestic American anticommunism as anti-communist, anti-Communist, or anti-subversive in its purposes, this study acknowledges that the rhetorical construct served all these ends in different historical, political, and social

environments. Thus, the term “anticommunist” here indicates any rhetorical situation deemed authentic and legitimate by its user or its audience. Indeed, a central concern of this project is exploring the development of a rhetorical construct that proved so durable, and yet so flexible, as to touch American society and politics in distinct and historically contingent eras.

Similarly, few works in the field of domestic American anticommunism share definitions of key concepts like “American(ism)” and “un-American(ism),” legitimacy and authenticity, liberal and conservative (whether referring to political or social attitudes). Without deploying that semi-scholarly sleight-of-hand that argues these terms have no true and constant meaning, this study nevertheless does argue that these words as rhetorical constructs rooted in the broader nexus of twentieth century United States society became the contested battleground of domestic American anticommunism.

To explore this contest, one needs a firm footing in the current historiography of domestic American anticommunism. The traditionalist views the attitudes and actions of anticommunism as both reasonable and a direct response to a foreign—either ideological or geopolitical—menace. John Earl Haynes exemplifies the far flank of this school, with contributions including *Red Scare or Red Menace?* (1996) and the explosively titled *In Denial: Historians, Communism & Espionage* (2003, with Harvey Klehr). From the outset of each of these books, Haynes clearly connects the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) with the Soviet Union, marking adherence to any variation of communist ideology with the taint of infidelity to the United States. Indeed, he posits that “Communist ideology was incompatible with the values held by most Americans,” values which chiefly include private property, individualism, political democracy, and religion.<sup>1</sup> His clear disdain

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<sup>1</sup> John Earl Haynes, *Red Scare or Red Menace? American Communism and Anticommunism in the Cold War Era* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), 7.

for communist ideology as a foreign invader sponsored by the Soviet Union reverberates from his collaboration with Klehr, wherein communism survives as “a pleasant figment of the ‘progressive’ worldview.” Indeed, according to these authors, revisionists who question anticommunism “see their teaching and writing as the preparation of a new crop of radicals for the task of overthrowing American capitalism and its democratic constitutional order.”<sup>2</sup> In both cases, Haynes explains anticommunism as a threat-response mechanism, justifying it against the Cold War reality of Soviet expansionism.

Richard Gid Powers argues similarly, albeit with less vitriol and more sensibility in one of the most important works on domestic American anticommunism, his 1995 *Not Without Honor*. These authors agree on a fundamental premise, that anticommunism fundamentally was a pluralistic movement. While Powers rejects the certitude of Haynes’ declaration that all “anticommunists” were united by their endemic hatred of communist ideology and Communist tactics, he does insist that domestic American anticommunism remained inextricably linked to Soviet Communism. Additionally, both authors share a presupposition of mutual exclusion—that American exceptionalism naturally opposed Soviet Communism. Powers advances this straightforward dichotomy in phrases like the following: “Anticommunism expressed the essential American determination to stand against attacks on human freedom and foster the growth of democracy throughout the world.”<sup>3</sup> Powers offers an important consideration—there existed an important distinction between anticommunism and anticommunist extremism. He laments that “memory’s image of anticommunism was painted

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<sup>2</sup> John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, *In Denial: Historians, Communism & Espionage* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2003), 9.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Gid Powers, *Not Without Honor: The History of American Anticommunism*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 427.

by its enemies, a monolithic projection of McCarthyism writ large.”<sup>4</sup> One identifies much traditionalism in Powers’ approach, even as his work demonstrates the transition from traditionalist to revisionist schools via his definition of anticommunism as political repression or partisan political maneuvering. Nevertheless, Powers asserts that political repression of a foreign radicalism was perfectly justified as legitimate and authentic Americanism.

True “revisionist” scholars, as labeled more by Haynes than by themselves, seldom subscribe to this utilitarianism. For those categorized within this second historiographical school, the means and end must correspond to a static vision of justice, or, of authentic American behaviors, attitudes, or ideals. Thus, any use of the cloak of anticommunism to shroud simple partisan politics or more sinister political repression (here described less as “radicals” or “subversives” than as “political minorities” or “dissidents”) represents opportunism at best, and Soviet-style oppression at worst. An early analyst of anticommunism, Earl Latham observed a disconnect between the communist “problem” and its related “issue.” Any true threat, or problem, Latham argues, was dealt with quickly and effectively by the institutions of the U.S. government; thus, the communist “problem” was brief in duration and mild in effect, making it an insubstantial basis for the long tenure of domestic American anticommunism. Rather, the “issue” of anticommunism proved a highly-effective political pressure-release. For instance, Latham argues, “The failure of the electorate to effect a change of government in 1948...produced a political compression that exploded in McCarthyism. The corking of tensions laid an immediate and heavy stress on the

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<sup>4</sup> Powers, *Not Without Honor*, 426.

whole governmental system—in domestic matters at least.”<sup>5</sup> To Latham, domestic anticommunism became the political plaything of partisan conservatives. They used the specter of foreign radicalism to regain the controls of domestic policymaking assumed by progressive liberals during the New Deal era. In this way, anticommunism was “used by various fealties to serve sectarian ends—Republicans against Democrats (or rather, most Republicans against most Democrats); conservatives against liberals; and Congress against the Executive.”<sup>6</sup>

Walter Goodman’s portrait of the early years of the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) reflects a similar conception of domestic American anticommunism. His discussion of the Dies Committee (officially, the Special House Committee for the Investigation of Un-American Activities, in operation from 1938 through 1944) aligns very closely with Latham’s conclusions about the partisan uses of anticommunism. Here, especially, one sees the problematic use of traditional partisan labels to define the combatants—Martin Dies was a southern “conservative Democrat” and no great admirer of either President Franklin D. Roosevelt or the New Deal. From this emerges the traditional portrait (also revealed to a lesser degree by August Raymond Ogden’s *The Dies Committee*, which, published in 1945, serves as a virtual primary source for the activities of that iteration of HUAC) of Martin Dies as a conservative antagonist toward liberals (and liberalism), and a partisan anti-executive, anti-New Dealer. Unfortunately, this view assesses the Dies Committee as an inauthentic form of anticommunism, despite the committee’s clear

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<sup>5</sup> Earl Latham, *The Communist Controversy in Washington: From the New Deal to McCarthy*, 2nd ed. (New York: Atheneum, 1969), 398.

<sup>6</sup> Latham, *The Communist Controversy*, 4.

use of that rhetorical construct as its primary weapon in pursuing any partisan goals its chairman might have held.<sup>7</sup>

M. J. Heale continues the partisan politics theme but adds a useful dimension by rooting the “politicization of anticommunism” in the “evolution of the American polity” to an era where “class conflict and party conflict were intersecting.”<sup>8</sup> Where anticommunism as anti-radicalism boasted a long history within the United States, it primarily remained a battle between classes until the 1930s. Then, the ascendancy of New Deal liberalism generated an institutionalized anticommunist reaction, when political conservatives resurrected the old tactics used by socio-economic conservatives to combat rising class antagonism (via radicalized labor) and reoriented them to a partisan landscape dominated by political liberals. In this view, post-war domestic American anticommunism “represented the completion of a political cycle” in which conservatives, by the 1950s, reasserted their control over the mechanisms of policymaking.<sup>9</sup>

Both Regin Schmidt (*Red Scare*, 2000) and Kenneth O’Reilly (*Hoover and the Un-Americans*, 1983) more centrally focus on the role of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and its director, J. Edgar Hoover, in first propagating and then profiting from the so-called Red Scares of both post-world war eras. Schmidt traces the institutionalization of a domestic investigative body within the United States, and finds that Hoover benefitted immensely from the post-World War I paranoia toward communists and other radicals.

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<sup>7</sup> Walter Goodman, *The Committee: The Extraordinary Career of the House Committee on Un-American Activities* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968); August Raymond Ogden, *The Dies Committee* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1945).

<sup>8</sup> M. J. Heale, *American Anticommunism: Combating the Enemy Within, 1830-1970* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 97

<sup>9</sup> Heale, *American Anticommunism*, 190

While Schmidt does not assert Hoover's primacy in creating the panic, the author credits the subject with manipulating the concerns of both the general public and the government into an ever-widening range of powers for Hoover and his subordinates. The ultimate manifestation of this political power grab came in the institutionalization of the FBI as a permanent structure within American politics and society. O'Reilly's equally unflattering portrait of Hoover also emphasizes the fundamentally political maneuverings that characterized FBI activities during the second Red Scare of the 1950s and 1960s. A synergy of sorts developed between Hoover's FBI, HUAC, and the partisan and social conservatives who publically and politically backed HUAC's mandate as protecting the fundamental liberties of true Americans. Hoover, and others within the FBI, proved rather expert at manipulating this sizeable network into an almost limitless scope of inquiry and institutional power. As is characteristic of many accounts in this school, O'Reilly and Schmidt both decry an institution's use of extralegal and sometimes blatantly unconstitutional methods in the pursuit of their putative mandate—preserving both the law and the Constitution.<sup>10</sup>

No author better represents this “revisionist” school than Ellen Schrecker, who remains a preeminent voice on the patterns and purposes of domestic American anticommunism. Her works espouse a two-stage anticommunism, or, McCarthyism. First, Schrecker argues, an institutionalized or public arm of the anticommunist program—whether the FBI, HUAC, or a so-called professional patriot group like the American Legion or John Birch Society—publicized the existence or identity of an objectionable behavior, activity, individual, or group. In the second, more insidious, stage of McCarthyism, offenders

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<sup>10</sup> Regin Schmidt, *Red Scare: FBI and the Origins of Anticommunism in the United States, 1919-1943* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2000); Kenneth O'Reilly, *Hoover and the Un-Americans* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983).

received punishment. Although in rare circumstances this involved criminal charges, it most often meant some form of unofficial economic sanctions. Especially prevalent in academia, termination of employment became a way for certain institutions to rid themselves of undesirables—whether for political, social, or intellectual beliefs—all while publicly blaming the institutional forms of anticommunism (HUAC or the FBI) for tying their hands. Thus, to Schrecker, domestic American anticommunism stood for political oppression by the imposition of sanctions upon those espousing a certain system of beliefs. Schrecker first explored this process and its consequences within the academic community in her 1986 *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism & the Universities*; but her opus is the 1998 *Many are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America*, a work so consequential that no serious study of the last decade can escape its thesis. Indeed, even those for whom Schrecker serves as foil—primarily, John Earl Haynes—*Many are the Crimes* remains the chief exemplar of this branch of the historiography.<sup>11</sup>

Consequently, even Haynes and Schrecker agree on some fundamental truths about the domestic American anticommunist program. First, it was multi-faceted. Schrecker identifies ultra-conservative, anti-Stalinist, and partisan political anticommunists within the broader nexus of McCarthyism, thereby agreeing with Haynes that the label of “anticommunist” remained their only true commonality. Secondly, both authors admit—Schrecker explicitly, Haynes more implicitly—that the anticommunist program emerged from long-established patterns of American anti- or counter-subversive traditions. The key difference between these authors remains that Haynes praises anticommunism for defeating a

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<sup>11</sup> Ellen Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism & the Universities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1998).



significant threat to the United States, while Schrecker laments it as a top-down movement by political and social conservatives that inaugurated “the most widespread and longest lasting wave of political repression in American history.” Its lasting consequence was not, as Haynes might argue, the preservation of the exceptional American way of life, but rather the transmutation of “dissent into disloyalty,” which “drastically narrowed the spectrum of acceptable political debate.” Schrecker concludes this ultimately created a social construct that valued “national security above the Constitution and Communism below it.”<sup>12</sup>

Joel Kovel, among others, subscribes to a similar theory, but expands it into—ironically—a rather Marxian critique of anticommunism. For Kovel, big-“C” anti-Communism represented political oppression of Communist ideology or practice, while anti-communism denoted purely repressive social controls. Explicitly, he defines anticommunism as “the powerful set of repressive forces that so succeeds in devaluing the alternatives to capitalism as to make them essentially unthinkable.” Kovel’s anticommunism arose from “diabolization and a fierce defense of class interest,” and “took full form during the heightened class conflicts that arose since workers’ movements challenged the dominant power, [and it] became state religion during the cold war.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, argues Kovel, American anticommunism says more about the United States than it does about the program’s putative enemy—the Soviet Union, Communism, or alien subversion of any stripe. Many of Kovel’s quasi-biographical sketches indicate political opportunism and political repression as the motives and means employed by the typical anticommunist of the twentieth century. This approach might place his work (*Red Hunting in the Promised Land*, 1994) in the

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<sup>12</sup> Schrecker, *Many are the Crimes*, x-xiii.

<sup>13</sup> Joel Kovel, *Red Hunting in the Promised Land: Anticommunism and the making of America*, 2nd ed. (London: Cassel, 1997), x.

“revisionist” category. Certainly no other author here discussed offers as much proof for Haynes and Klehr’s charge that revisionists are mere apologists for communist ideology. Indeed, Kovel goes so far as to argue—hysterically, one might reasonably suggest—that by demonizing alternatives to the standard conservative doctrine, this oppositional anticommunism forced Americans to reenact the same choices despite new historical environments; “Thus,” he concludes, “anticommunism destroys time itself.”<sup>14</sup>

While this study cannot aspire to prove such a point—nor is it imagined that any scholar could, or should attempt to, prove it—Kovel’s work possesses important considerations for this discussion. Despite his tendency toward the grandiose, Kovel notes anticommunism’s role in the individual battle to define oneself as an authentic American. This is a key reason why he insists anticommunism speaks more to its actor than its target. Thus, while he does not dispute that anticommunism provoked severe political repression, Kovel leads to a new historiographical school wherein domestic American anticommunism should be viewed as some sort of social construct—inclusive of but broader and more contingent than the definitions offered by either traditionalists or revisionists. Kovel offers class conflict and repression in addition to political forces, even labeling domestic American anticommunism as an “enemy psychosis,” a thesis shared by other works in this historiographical category.<sup>15</sup> More central to this study is the dichotomous opposition already identified in Kovel’s work. Explicitly, he laments “the two-point moral logic which holds that to come out against one side of an antagonistic pairing means support for the other.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Kovel, *Red Hunting*, 242-3.

<sup>15</sup> Kovel, *Red Hunting*, 236.

<sup>16</sup> Kovel, *Red Hunting*, x.

More an editorial comment than an evidentiary conclusion for Kovel, the social construction of this sort of Manichean dilemma constitutes a central element of this project.

This is because the “social psychosis” theory tends to strip away the historical significance of an era like McCarthyism or the first Red Scare, dismissing any connections to a broader historical theme (or, of any theme other than one of mass, ongoing “social psychosis”) by marking the event as a fundamentally inauthentic expression of “anticommunism.” Such is the case with Robert K. Murray’s still-impressive analysis of the Red Scare of 1919-1920. The first and still one of the few works dedicated to in-depth exploration of the Scare, Murray described it as mere “phenomenon,” a “state of mind,” whose “significance was more peripheral than basic” because at its core it represented something akin to a Freudian transference of wartime paranoia into a new medium and onto a new enemy. According to this thesis, the Red Scare was not really so much about Bolshevism as it was about extending the political and social repressions brought on by a mostly-legitimate fear of German subversion during the Great War. Murray explains that the so-called “professional patriot” groups of the war era searched for a new, equally threatening enemy to justify their continued existence, and they found it—although they greatly exaggerated its true danger—in Bolshevism. The social psychosis manifested in the Red Scare demonstrated that “psychologically and morally [the United States] was ill equipped to meet the simple basic challenge of democratic action, let alone solve successfully the many complex postwar problems which confronted her.” Thus, he concludes, the Red Scare transitioned the United States “from a victorious war into a bankrupt peace.”<sup>17</sup> In this way Murray demonstrates the nature of Red Scare anticommunism as a social construction, but

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<sup>17</sup> Robert K. Murray, *Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964), 4, 17.

neglects to assess both the deeper roots of its creation and the longer reach of its subsequent and related iterations.

Additional monographs variously reflect this theme of anticommunism as primarily a social construct, or, as something created and defined by its contemporary society. For Elaine Tyler May, the Cold War environment elucidated “previously unrecognized connections between political and familial values.” In her exploration of the nature of the Cold War family, May identifies the Soviet Union as little more than “an abstract symbol” to most Americans, and so “McCarthyism was fueled...by suspicion of the new secularism, materialism, bureaucratic collectivism, and consumerism that epitomized not only the achievement but the potential ‘decadence’ of New Deal liberalism.” This thesis approaches the “revisionist” conception of anticommunism as a political construct, but focuses more centrally upon the fundamentally social construct of family—specifically, a “family-centered culture” that became the “domestic version of containment.”<sup>18</sup>

Lisle A. Rose demonstrates that the entire Cold War existed, for the typical American, as a distinctly social process. To Rose, the year 1950 encapsulated this experience, because in 1949 most Americans exhibited a cautious optimism. By the end of the next year, after the “loss” of China, the Soviet acquisition of “the bomb,” and the onset of the Korean War, Rose argues that the Cold War as a socio-political reality “came home to Main Street America, and the nation began to fully experience its awful pressures.”<sup>19</sup>

Although not primarily focused on the course of domestic American anticommunism, Rose’s

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<sup>18</sup> Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: BasicBooks, 1988), 10-14.

<sup>19</sup> Lisle A. Rose, *The Cold War Comes to Main Street: America in 1950* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1999), 5-6, 311.

description of the social consciousness of the “Cold War” construct bears significance in the development of this study.

In *Cold War, Cool Medium* (2003), Thomas Doherty examines the role of a new medium in transmitting both the making and unmaking of McCarthyism. Doherty eschews “interpretive scholarship” and instead embraces a “televisual” approach to understanding the phenomenon of Senator Joseph McCarthy’s -ism. Still, Doherty finds it necessary in his introduction to place himself within the “polemical firefights that swirl around McCarthyism”—positing a middle ground common to the most contemporary scholarship wherein “it is not mutually exclusive to conclude that Soviet communism posed a menace to human freedom and that Joseph R. McCarthy was a scoundrel.”<sup>20</sup> This consideration is indicative of Doherty’s approach, in which the purpose of the historical inquiry is not to justify or criticize domestic American anticommunism, but to understand the nature of culture and, in the case of this study, socio-cultural discourse that created such a “polemical firefight.”

William M. Wiecek’s article exploring the “Legal Foundations of Domestic Anticommunism,” offers one particularly important consideration for this study. Law, according to Wiecek, “emerges from a matrix that blends ideology, social structures, economic relationships, and policy responses to problems both foreign and domestic.” Furthermore, anticommunism depended on a certain legal foundation. Because law “cannot sensibly be understood abstracted from that social and ideological environment,” it follows

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<sup>20</sup> Thomas Doherty, *Cold War, Cool Medium: Television, McCarthyism, and American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), vii-viii.

that neither may anticommunism be understood apart from its contingent socio-political environment.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, Ted Morgan's *Reds: McCarthyism in Twentieth Century America* (2003) merits consideration. A work of synthesis, Morgan's anticommunism is a political practice of routine and institutional oppression of dissent, yet largely justified by a substantial and credible threat to the American way of life. Nevertheless, Morgan offers no excuse for the excesses of extremists like Joseph McCarthy, who "capitalized on the fears of American society."<sup>22</sup> As bad as this brief phenomenon was, the era of McCarthy himself was but one of a recurring series of psychic crises along the lines of those defined by Kovel or Murray. These Red Scares originated with the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, and, Morgan asserts, they continue even into the modern era of counter-terrorism. This broaches a topic considered in a collection edited by Ellen Schrecker, provocatively titled *Cold War Triumphalism: The Misuse of History After the Fall of Communism* (2004). The work posits a durability to the social and rhetorical constructions that comprised domestic American anticommunism, allowing modern-day "anticommunists" to reorient them to a new perceived threat, and a new oppositional enemy. This also is a critical consideration for this study, especially as neither of these authors explore the possibility that the constructs of domestic American anticommunism existed even before the political creation of that Manichean enemy, the Communist Soviet Union.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> William M. Wiecek, "The Legal Foundations of Domestic Anticommunism: The Background of *Dennis v United States*," *The Supreme Court Review* (2001): 376.

<sup>22</sup> Ted Morgan, *Reds: McCarthyism in Twentieth Century America* (New York: Random House, 2003), xiv.

<sup>23</sup> Morgan, *Reds*; Schrecker, ed., *Cold War Triumphalism: The Misuse of History After the Fall of Communism* (New York: The New Press, 2004).

From this brief historiography of domestic American anticommunism, an outline of the parameters of this study emerges. For scholars who consider anticommunism an authentic expression—and not a psychic crisis of some sort—the origins of the movement are typically rooted in one of two events. The most obvious of these is the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, after which the Soviet Union came into existence as a Communist geopolitical construct. Certainly the particular American brand of anticommunism depended on the existence of such an enemy, one serving equally as ideological, economic, and great power foil. But other scholars—among them, Powers, Schrecker, and Heale—the immediacy of the first Red Scare to the establishment of the Soviet Union belies a deeper root. In this view, American anticommunism arose from world-wide angst toward Marxian revolutionary ideology following the rise and fall of the Paris Commune in 1871.

These perspectives reference both anti-Communism in its geopolitical sense and anti-communism in its more purely ideological character. In keeping with this study's simplification of terms, the origins of American anticommunism are explored not so much for the antipathy toward communist ideology—here one could not argue with the existing historiography—but for the social and political rhetoric of anticommunism, constructs which became the tools for legitimation and authentication of Americanness throughout a great deal of the twentieth century. Neither historical explanation for the origins of anticommunism fully explores this concern.

In addition, by exploring anticommunism as a social construct it becomes somewhat less important to engage the polemical firestorm identified by Doherty. Indeed, by shifting paradigms or perspectives away from an exploration of what anticommunism did, one more clearly comprehends—very fundamentally, and by its nature—the nature of anticommunism.

This may be best accomplished by engaging the historical record with tools learned from other academic disciplines. The study of rhetoric and discourse, for instance, offers especially promising avenues for assessing anticommunism's primacy in shaping contemporary American social and political life.

Nevertheless, this project is not a rhetorical analysis of the history of domestic American anticommunism, but a historical analysis of the rhetorical dimensions of that subject. This approach appears naturally suited to studying the American brand of anticommunism, a chapter in the national history particularly representative of the power of words and discourse within the social realm, where rhetorical labels are used to prove or challenge legitimacy and authenticity.

As Kathleen J. Turner notes in her introduction to *Doing Rhetorical History* (1998), historical inquiry and rhetorical analysis are inextricably linked. When a historian conducts archival research and contextual criticism of evidentiary sources, that scholar engages certain elements of rhetorical analysis and discourse studies. This conception of rhetorical history argues two essential points. First, "rhetorical processes have constructed social reality at particular times and in particular contexts."<sup>24</sup> This very accurately assesses historical inquiry as the discovery of contextualized understanding of social—or, human—reality. Secondly, this approach "stud[ies] the nature of history as an essentially rhetorical process," where meaning is made by communicating shared symbols. Turner argues that rhetorical history focuses on the chief concerns of traditional history: "human action and reaction."<sup>25</sup> This approach has merit, provided it focuses on the historical significance—the human action and reaction—

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<sup>24</sup> Kathleen J. Turner, "Introduction," in *Doing Rhetorical History: Concepts and Cases*, ed. Kathleen J. Turner (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 2.

<sup>25</sup> Turner, "Introduction," 2.



gleaned from the rhetorical dimensions of domestic American anticommunism.

Unfortunately, this may approach ahistorical analysis, where the interpreter divorces the text from its social context. Cautiously applied, rhetorical history promises new discoveries in domestic anticommunist historiography.

Indeed, this approach has precedent in Cold War studies. Beginning with Wayne Brockriede and Robert L. Scott's *Moments in the Rhetoric of the Cold War* (1970), communications scholars have long explored the rhetoric associated with the dominant theme of contemporary United States history. Writing at a time when the Cold War was still a sobering reality, Brockriede and Scott collaborated on the premise that although the conflict was far greater than symbolic, nevertheless "rhetoric played a leading role in the development of the Cold War." Their topical methodology bears significance for this study, in that their choice of "moments"—speeches and texts—for analysis satisfied two criteria. First, their examples "illustrate several ways in which rhetoric interacts with ideology and policy making." Secondly, they afford the authors a variety of critical analyses to demonstrate the value of a rhetorical approach to Cold War inquiry. While both criteria merit consideration, the first of these weighs more heavily on this study. As Brockriede and Scott conclude, "persuasion...is the defining attribute of 'rhetoric.'"<sup>26</sup> In this way, historical analysis of the rhetoric of anticommunism becomes a vital aspect of domestic American anticommunist history.

The collection *Cold War Rhetoric* (1990), compiled by another set of communications scholars and rhetoricians, descends from Brockriede and Scott's work. Indeed, Martin J. Medhurst devotes much of the volume's introduction to an explication of

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<sup>26</sup> Wayne Brockriede and Robert L. Scott, *Moments in the Rhetoric of the Cold War* (New York: Random House, 1970), 4-6.

the ground-breaking *Moments*, and Scott provides the first contribution in an essay on the method of Cold War rhetorical criticism. Ignoring Medhurst's ahistorical conclusion that "rhetoric was *the* issue" in the Cold War—or, that it was "used in place of instruments of death" to define the conflict—he offers a valuable definition of rhetoric as "a linguistic sign of who we are as a people."<sup>27</sup> Scott's methodological explanation demonstrates the importance of rhetoric to an academic mindset, equating rhetorical history to the study of intellectual history. Just as history traces human actions, it also follows and analyzes human thought; so, too, should it consider human symbology, such as rhetoric and discourse. Furthermore, Philip Wander's chapter on "Political Rhetoric and the Un-American Tradition" works toward an important component of this study—understanding how symbols or labels, like "American," became hardened and institutionalized into patterns of belief and behavior, like "Americanism." Wander correctly asserts that these rhetorical dimensions shift with changing time and circumstance, so that "un-American" is not and may never be a static set of constructs.<sup>28</sup>

Quite similar in nature is *The Cold War as Rhetoric* (1991), by Lynn Boyd Hinds, a professor of broadcasting, and Theodore Otto Windt, Jr., a professor of presidential rhetoric. In this study, rhetoric acts on history in a top-down way, where politicians used specific textual and linguistic cues to affect a "cold war consciousness that, in turn, created the political environment in which the perceptions of threat led to policies to meet that threat."<sup>29</sup> Thus, albeit indirectly, politicians bear responsibility for the creation of the (primarily

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<sup>27</sup> Martin J. Medhurst, "Introduction," in *Cold War Rhetoric: Strategy, Metaphor, and Ideology* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1990), xiv.

<sup>28</sup> See also: Medhurst, et al, *Cold War Rhetoric* (1990), specifically Chapters 1 and 10.

<sup>29</sup> Lynn Boyd Hinds and Theodore Otto Windt, Jr., *The Cold War as Rhetoric: The Beginnings, 1945-1950* (New York: Praeger, 1991), xvii.

political) construct of “the Cold War.” Here, too, rhetoric is public discourse meant to persuade, and which allows shared comprehension of social agents—people, events, ideas. It merits thoughtful study because its consequences are not merely symbolic; rather, “This ideological rhetoric became so embedded in American consciousness that it eventually limited the political choices leaders could make, created grossly distorted views of adversaries, and finally led to the witch-hunts of McCarthyism.”<sup>30</sup> The authors introduce two considerations for this study. First, even if rhetoric is considered largely symbolic, its consequences are real even in the most traditional historical sense. Secondly, the implicit notion that rhetorical constructs may limit acceptable choices indicates the inherent value-judgments attached to certain discourse—specifically, that the rhetoric of domestic American anticommunism possessed the power of legitimation and authentication within its socio-political environment.

Another volume headlined by Medhurst, titled *Critical Reflections on the Cold War* (2000), offers perhaps the single most important innovative methodological consideration for this project. Edited by Medhurst and H.W. Brands (a professor of history), *Critical Reflections* includes contributions from five traditional diplomatic historians and five rhetoricians in an attempt to explore the promise of rhetorical analysis in Cold War history. Medhurst’s introduction notes that Norman A. Graebner’s “Myth and Realty” is the most skeptical of cold war rhetoric, terming it kin to myth and so malleable as to possess hardly any analytical value whatsoever. At the other end of the interpretive spectrum lies Shawn J. Parry-Giles’s examination of military propaganda, which concludes that the Cold War

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<sup>30</sup> Hinds and Windt, *The Cold War as Rhetoric*, xix.

merely was one “of words.”<sup>31</sup> The remainder of the essays fall between these extremes, and thus the volume demonstrates the ease with which traditional historians and rhetoricians may cross the often artificial boundaries of academic discipline to more contextually analyze their subject. The approach of the present study aspires to a similar goal, albeit via a different focus. While *Critical Reflections* (as do the previously mentioned works on Cold War rhetoric) mixes the domestic with the international, its analysis aims principally at the Cold War as a multi-dimensional construct. Instead, this project focuses on contemporary U.S. society by more fully exploring the domestic sphere of anticommunism. This set of rhetorical and historical constructs were not those of geopolitical powers struggling for (or against) hegemony, but rather of individuals and groups wrestling for control of the historically contingent symbols of legitimacy and authenticity.

This approach is more closely rendered by Mary Stuckey’s *Defining Americans* (2004), which argues that presidents play a fundamental role in the shaping and defining of Americanness. Through their inclusion of certain ideals, and the exclusion—explicitly or implicitly—of others, presidents direct the national discourse toward the book’s title, defining Americans. Stuckey identifies three common themes in presidential constitutive rhetoric. The first balances continuity and change, rather than advocating unbridled progressivism or radicalism of any form. Secondly, presidents define citizenship, a socio-political construct marking an individual’s nationalistic legitimacy. Finally, Stuckey highlights a theme she terms visibility, or, those actions which are valorized and marginalized: “For most groups,

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<sup>31</sup> Shawn J. Parry-Giles, “Militarizing America’s Propaganda Program, 1945-55,” in *Critical Reflections on the Cold War*, eds. Martin J. Medhurst and H. W. Brands (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2000), 95.

the process of becoming visible and the process of becoming citizens overlap.”<sup>32</sup> Thus, Stuckey’s work also explores how rhetoric—in this case, presidential discourse—authenticates, asserting again the clear value of a rhetorical approach for better understanding the relationship between anticommunism and markers of legitimacy in contemporary U.S. society.

While this study follows a methodology similar to those of Stuckey, Medhurst and Brands, it must again be emphasized that what follows is not a rhetorical analysis of the history of domestic American anticommunism, but a historical assessment of that political and social rhetoric. As J. Lodge Gillespie, Jr., found in his study of the business community’s public statements of support toward containment and Southeast Asia, public rhetoric sometimes fails to generate a perceptible consequence, a correlative action. For Gillespie this is enough to agree with Norman Graebner, that “rhetoric” and “reality” are two different constructs. Although this demonstrates a loose grasp of the nature of rhetoric, it nevertheless demonstrates one of the most vexing problems for historians performing what Turner deemed “rhetorical history”; words may not always match actions, and this presents a rather tricky dilemma. Still, two considerations should mute this concern. First, as articulated by Medhurst, among others, rhetoric and reality are not mutually exclusive; furthermore, rhetoric is more than mere words. It is a means of communication, and in the act of communication—the transmission, reception, and interpretation of message—the historian should find much of consequence. Historical analysis of rhetoric need not necessarily prove causality. Hinds and Windt explicitly state so in their introduction, and fix their attention instead on the relationship between words and actions. Truly, few histories are so complete

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<sup>32</sup> Mary E. Stuckey, *Defining Americans: The Presidency and National Identity* (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 2004), 5.

and commanding in their evidence to prove a singularly acknowledged causality; nuance always remains. So it is with rhetoric, and with the historical analysis of the discourse of domestic American anticommunism.<sup>33</sup>

It should be clear that words carry symbolic—and, indeed, sometimes causal—power, even if one does not immediately comprehend them or their context. Put simply, words help form social constructions like perspective, legitimacy, and nationalist authenticity. John O’Laughlin and Richard Grant “map” the discourse of State of the Union Addresses from 1946 through 1987, asserting that the “rhetorical styles and the geographic distribution of speech-content of the most important opinion-leaders” serves as an “accurate reflection of the geopolitical perspective and political agenda of the President at the time of the speech.”<sup>34</sup> While this may seem a simplistically obvious conclusion, it argues in favor of the study of words as powerful agents of symbolism—here, as representing value, judgment, and concern in the geopolitical realm. John A. Noakes uses the intersection of three powerful socio-political forces—the FBI, HUAC, and the Hollywood industry elite—for exploring the sociological concept of “frame analysis,” whereby one’s perspective on their surroundings (including people, events, attitudes and behaviors) is modeled after an internalized interpretive schema. Noakes asserts the FBI indirectly promoted a “countersubversive frame” by funneling information to HUAC, which publicly promoted the “official frame” of Communist infiltration and corruption of Hollywood as witnessed by un-American themes in such movies as *The Best Years of Our Lives* and *It’s a Wonderful Life*. This claim seems

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<sup>33</sup> J. Lodge Gillespie, Jr., “Rhetoric and Reality: Corporate America’s Perceptions of Southeast Asia, 1950-1961,” *The Business History Review* 68, no. 3 (Autumn 1994): 325-63; Medhurst, “Introduction,” in *Critical Reflections*; Norman A. Graebner, “Myth and Reality: America’s Rhetorical Cold War,” in *Critical Reflections*: 20-37; Hinds and Windt.

<sup>34</sup> John O’Loughlin and Richard Grant, “The Political Geography of Presidential Speeches, 1946-87,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 80, no. 4 (December 1990): 505, 526.

nothing less than absurd to the reader in the present-day, but during the era of anticommunism these claims bore great significance and demanded public attention. Noakes concludes that interpretive frames promoted by the state “have a greater chance of triumphing in the struggle for cultural supremacy than do collective action frames mobilized by social movement entrepreneurs.”<sup>35</sup> Among the various reasons for this prediction must be the implicit legitimacy state-sponsored social constructions acquire because of their “official” sanction, just as presidents help shape the concept of Americanness.

In addition, a purer form of rhetorical analysis exists within the historical record of domestic anticommunism. Russel J. Reising discusses Lionel Trilling’s development of what Reising terms anti-Stalinist critique in Trilling’s opus, *The Liberal Imagination*. Reising argues that Trilling overstepped his footing in criticizing the Stalinist tendencies of certain literary works, indicating that even for one of the giants of twentieth-century American literary criticism the weight of anticommunism became overbearing. Barbara Foley argues similarly in regards to what many critics find an unsatisfactory ending to Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*. Instead of finding a deeply flawed ending to the novel, Foley suggests that a perspectival shift uncovers Ellison’s deep-rooted anticommunist tendencies. Ellison “substitut[ed] rhetoric for reference, myth for history” in the development of his story arc; in fact, Foley argues, “any student of Cold War discourse will be struck” by the similarities between Ellison’s characters and the archetypes of anticommunist symbology, even down to physical characteristics in some instances.<sup>36</sup> Although this does not necessarily redeem

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<sup>35</sup> John A. Noakes, “Official Frames in Social Movement Theory: The FBI, HUAC, and the Communist Threat in Hollywood,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (Autumn 2000): 673.

<sup>36</sup> Barbara Foley, “The Rhetoric of Anticommunism in *Invisible Man*,” *College English* 59, no. 5 (September 1997): 531, 542; Also: Russel J. Reising, “Lionel Trilling: The Liberal Imagination, and the Emergence of the Cultural Discourse of Anti-Stalinism,” *boundary* 20, no. 1 (Spring 1993).

*Invisible Man*'s concluding pages in terms of purely literary value, Foley suggests it is the logical conclusion to an anticommunist parable.

As these works demonstrate, the academic community has begun embracing all manner of anticommunist studies, with the common linkages being only their anticommunist era context and their contribution to an understanding of that era—as are all eras—as a social construct. John Sbardellati and Tony Shaw identify the FBI's investigation and HUAC's interrogation of Charlie Chaplain—resulting in the star's eventual deportation—served to promote a counter-subversive image in American society. Conservatives attacked Chaplain for his politics, but also for his social (and, especially, sexual) practices. Unapologetically opposed to marriage, Chaplain became a social subversive. Because, as Howard F. Stein elucidates, the Soviet Union was the “indispensable enemy” for the United States throughout this period, social and political subversion became synonymous with un-Americanism. Stein argues that “group self-definition and cohesiveness are achieved by contrast with and opposition to a historic enemy that is perceived through projection as embodying disavowed characteristics of one's own group.”<sup>37</sup> Thus, anything un-American or subversive became equated with acquiescence to the communist ideological or Communist Soviet geopolitical threat. K.A. Cuordileone confirms this in an analysis of the “gendered symbolic baggage” characteristic of political culture of the Cold War era. Hard and masculine rhetoric opposed the soft and feminine, with Americanism being the former and un-Americanism the latter.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Howard F. Stein, “The Indispensable Enemy and American-Soviet Relations,” *Ethos* 17, no. 4 (December 1989): 480; Also: John Sbardellati and Tony Shaw, “Booting a Tramp: Charlie Chaplin, the FBI, and the Construction of the Subversive Image in Red Scare America,” *The Pacific Historical Review* 72, no. 4 (November 2003): 495-530.

<sup>38</sup> K. A. Cuordileone, “‘Politics in an Age of Anxiety’: Cold War Political Culture and the Crisis in American Masculinity, 1949-1960,” *The Journal of American History* 87, no. 2 (September 2000): 515-45.



This is not to say there are no other avenues for anticommunist study. Two broad categorical examples may demonstrate the ever-increasing breadth of the field. One of the oldest branches in this historiography considers anticommunism an overt expression of latent American nativism. John Higham's classic *Strangers in the Land*, a 1955 expose of a particularly virulent brand of nativism that fueled the first Red Scare, characterizes this perspective. Here, anticommunism expressed only the combustible mix of nationalism and ingrained prejudice, all within an uneasy social environment. Mulford Q. Sibley argues this context bred the specific "professional patriot" groups that promoted the first excesses of domestic anticommunism. Sibley correctly identifies these groups as presenting "stability and permanence" to a "world of rapid change."<sup>39</sup> These authors promoted an analytical view of domestic American anticommunism from the very midst of the era.

The study of domestic American anticommunism has even penetrated a relatively new branch of historiographical focus, the history of science. Both Mark Solovey and Jessica Wang examine scientists' difficult adjustment to a new series of expectations and public-private relationships in the wake of the Manhattan Project and the onset of the Cold War. No longer merely human inquisitiveness, science became one of the primary arenas for geopolitical struggle. Thus, science became inextricably bound with ideology, a concept most scientists struggled to internalize.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Mulford Q. Sibley, "Ethics and the Professional Patriots," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 363, Ethics in America: Norms and Deviations (January 1966): 130; Also: John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925*, 2nd ed. (New York: Atheneum, 1971).

<sup>40</sup> Mark Solovey, "Introduction: Science and State during the Cold War: Blurred Boundaries and a Contested Legacy," *Social Studies of Science* 31, no. 2 (April 2001): 165-70; Jessica Wang, "Scientists and the Problem of the Public in Cold War America, 1945-1960," *Osiris*, 2nd Series, 17, Science and Civil Society (2002): 323-47.

Indeed, this points to perhaps the most interesting aspect of domestic American anticommunism: this rhetorical construct helped define, re-define, legitimate, and authenticate any and all aspects of contemporary U.S. society and politics. While each of the works here mentioned are important for exploring (and exploding) the boundaries of domestic American anticommunist history, they also serve to shape the parameters of the present study. This aspires to be an analysis of the creation, manipulation, challenging, and eventual rebirth of the social and political rhetoric of domestic American anticommunism. Through the chapters that follow, it will be clear that this was an exercise in social communication and, like any good conversation, ongoing. While no single, absolutist definition of anticommunism fits its varied uses over time, certain constants are immediately visible.

First, domestic American anticommunism arose out of a desire to mark authenticity and legitimacy, or, Americanness. Consequently, anticommunism served to mark inauthenticity, illegitimacy, and un-Americanness, often without any justification beyond its exclusion from the symbols of legitimacy. Anticommunism remained the primary means for proving one's Americanness for the vast majority of twentieth-century U.S. history.

Secondly, the record indicates that those definitions of Americanness and of anticommunism which held the most sway were fundamentally conservative. This was an apolitical conservatism in general, employed as often by social conservatives as by partisan conservatives. Anticommunism consistently stood as a marker of legitimacy for more traditional, static definitions of acceptable behaviors, ideas, and policies.

Finally, anticommunism became a Manichean rhetorical device, delineating "us" from "them," with definitions that, once hardened, proved extraordinarily difficult to

compromise. As it became a part of mass American culture and public vocabulary, the rhetorical construct of anticommunism acquired tremendous social and partisan consequence. Ultimately it became something that, quite simply, had to be addressed. Politicians could not avoid it, and neither could any citizen or group who engaged the American public in discourse during this anticommunist era.

As political historians ponder the decline of “liberalism,” this conception of anticommunism merits thoughtful consideration, as it should from those penetrating deeper into the complex constitution of contemporary U.S. society. Because this study’s focus lies in the concept of political and social rhetoric, certain evidentiary sources assert themselves more prominently than others. For instance, the reader will note an emphasis on records of public discourse more than those of private thoughts. This is not to say that a politician produces a policy announcement without forethought, but rather to emphasize the nature of certain types of discourse. For instance, the *Congressional Record* compiles statements and political behaviors (such as voting) that are by their nature for public consumption. Indeed, the very purpose of the *Congressional Record* is to record these proceedings for public consumption. Thus one may read great significance into the rhetorical choices made by politicians speaking directly into the public record. The same may be said for the use of contemporary newspaper sources, when politicians make statements directly to the press or when journalists shape certain types of storylines along anticommunist rhetorical lines. Furthermore, published memoirs represent the author’s retrospective attempts to legitimize their actions and ideas in the public mind, and thus constitute discourse primarily intended for public consumption. By emphasizing the rhetoric intended for public consumption, one sees both the author’s expectation of what the public will authenticate and—by tracing the use

of such rhetoric over time—what the audience ultimately perceived as legitimate or illegitimate. Both aspects are crucial to understanding the social and political environment of domestic American anticommunism.

The chapters that follow demonstrate the flexible, contingent dimensions of the social and political rhetoric of anticommunism. This begins with a necessary exploration of the origins of “anticommunism.” Chapter two intends to mark not a root of the ideological or geopolitical opposition (anti-communism took root in the United States after the Paris Commune’s bloody end, while anti-Communism arose following the Bolshevik Revolution and withdrawal from World War I). Rather, it explores the development of anticommunism as a socio-political construct, one used and interpreted by a wide, general, and public audience. It concludes that the process beginning with the nation’s first substantial overhaul of naturalization legislation eventually defined not just citizenship but the entirety of “belonging” to the body politic. As the chapter title indicates, it moved the rhetoric of legitimacy “From Americanization to Anticommunism.”

Chapter three, “Enough to Eat and Freedom of Spirit,” challenges the historiography of the Dies Committee through an examination of the ideals of one of its members, progressive liberal and New Deal Democrat H. Jerry Voorhis. Too often dismissed as serving for purely partisan reasons—to defend the Roosevelt administration from Dies’s own partisan attacks—his rhetoric and record of service indicate instead that Voorhis actively engaged the committee and the general public in a battle to define the legitimate course of institutional anticommunism.

For the legacy of James Forrestal, the nation’s first Secretary of Defense and one of its earliest “Cold Warriors,” the question of legitimacy also arises. Somewhat mysterious

circumstances surround his death at Bethesda Naval Hospital, where he received treatment for a psychological disorder. At a time when the Cold War was just beginning to take its ominous shape, but during an era where domestic anticommunism was already a cultural truth, the public eulogized Forrestal as a fallen hero, the first casualty of the anticommunist crusade. For some, this meant attributing his psychosis to overwork, a hero's tragic flaw. But for many others, this required the construction of sometimes elaborate conspiracy theories to explain the death of one so wholly committed to anticommunism. Regardless of their believability, such explanations for Forrestal's death indicate the public's willing consumption of anticommunist rhetoric—even to the point of defining a hero's death. This is the story of chapter four, “Things that Go ‘Bump’ in the Night.”

Next, this study explores the nature of political pragmatism during the anticommunist era by examining the attempts of the Johnson administration to portray the Great Society's War on Poverty as the opening salvo of a new (or, re-newed) brand of liberalism. While there is no quarrel with the standard historiographical conclusion that the Vietnam war served as the guns to the War on Poverty's butter, this chapter more meaningfully explores the rhetoric of legitimacy and authenticity. In selling his policies to the public, Johnson relied on standard liberal themes and narrative devices, transferred into his contemporary era. This made the policies “Old Wine in New Skins,” and, consequently, made the program vulnerable to the same red-baiting tactics employed by partisan conservatives against political liberals for decades. The plight of Adam Yarmolinsky, the chief policy architect of the War on Poverty, paints this in stark relief, as Johnson bowed to red-baiting pressures for the sake of a legislative victory with a greater margin.

In the end, of course, the U.S.'s increasing commitment to putative international anticommunism, the war in Vietnam, likely doomed the War on Poverty from its inception. Interestingly, the first Congressional actions to force the war to a conclusion were initiated by a Republican, Charles Goodell, the subject of chapter six. Once considered an up-and-comer within the G.O.P. ranks, and one entrusted with a great deal of policy formulation on behalf of the party, Goodell seemed as authentic a political conservative as one might find. This changed with the election of Richard Nixon to the presidency, and Goodell's ascent to the Senate. By the early 1970s, Nixon successfully branded Goodell as *persona non grata* within the G.O.P. ranks, recalling similar red-baiting tactics Nixon used to first win election to Congress in 1946—at the expense of a California Congressman named Jerry Voorhis. In little over a decade's time, Goodell's conception of authentic conservatism, emphasizing “Responsibility, Liberty, and Responsiveness,” became illegitimate if it did not also include full-throated support for the international anticommunism as practiced in the jungles of Southeast Asia.

A final substantive chapter explores the making of a Cold War icon, the “Doomsday Clock” of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. The creators of the atomic bomb became convinced their discovery threatened the survival of all humanity, and so a number of them committed themselves to advocating atomic disarmament and international cooperation in the atomic age. But to package these non-traditional policy innovations to the consuming public, the keepers of the clock wrapped them in two elements critical to the understanding of America's anticommunist culture: the rhetoric of anticommunism, and the rhetoric of fear. As the clock marked various “minutes to midnight” over the duration of the Cold War, its editors consistently advocated a unique anti-atomic anticommunism. Yet, in the post-Cold

War world, the clock means something very different. By exploring the dramatic alteration of this pop culture icon, one sees both the durability and flexibility of domestic American anticommunist rhetoric and its collection of social and political constructs.

Chapter eight concludes this study with a review of its findings and thoughts on directions for new research within the field.

The following pages demonstrate that before, during, and even after the Cold War, one was either for “us” or against “us.” One could no more be both (as, for instance, before September 11, 2001, the American public never conceived of the Afghan mujahedeen as un-American simply because they were, in the collective consciousness, fanatical anti-Communists) than be neither (as demonstrated by many of the cases in this study). Although not physical but rhetorical, there indeed existed a line in the United States during the twentieth century—one drawn through the mind rather than built up on city streets, but one just as purposefully marking the divide between the anticommunists and the un-Americans.

## CHAPTER TWO

### FROM AMERICANIZATION TO ANTICOMMUNISM: THE AUTHENTICITY OF NATURALIZATION, ASSIMILATION, AND ANTICOMMUNISM

With pen to paper he reflected on his life, as the good and the great typically do in their later years. Fundamentally, Edward Bok knew he had experienced a remarkable transformation in the fifty years since *The Queen* dropped anchor in American waters on September 20, 1870. Stepping off the ship as an almost-seven year old boy, Bok had quite literally grown up in America; more importantly, he realized, he had grown into an American. Not thirty years after his arrival, neither speaking nor reading—and certainly not writing—the English language, Bok became editor of the *Ladies' Home Journal*, soon to have the largest readership of any periodical in the nation. And so, as he pondered the rather extraordinary course his life had since run, the author contemplatively titled his memoirs *The Americanization of Edward Bok*.<sup>1</sup>

The title is not without historical significance, as Bok's environment influenced his perspective. Largely compiled by 1914 and first published in 1921, Bok wrote at the waning edge of a great social and political movement. Rooted in the Progressivist idealism most often associated with the character of Theodore Roosevelt—whom Bok admired—this multi-faceted movement rhetorically established both its legitimacy and its purpose in its very name: Americanization. As the word's constituent parts imply, Americanization described various efforts to systematize and institutionalize (the suffix, *-ization*) the methods of socio-cultural integration, assimilation, and legitimation (the root, *American*). These did not cohere into a formalized social movement until Congress established specific definitions for the state of “naturalization,” the point at which one might claim authentic self-definition as an American.

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<sup>1</sup> Edward W. Bok, *The Americanization of Edward Bok*, 2d ed. (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1926).



Following the Naturalization Act of 1906, the first significant reform of naturalization law since 1795, the federal government asserted itself as the primary arbiter of Americanness. Benevolent Progressives assisted immigrants in their journey toward this idealized identity through the efforts of various Americanization societies, which proliferated in the years following Congress's action.

Bok did not then have the historian's luxury of hindsight. He could not predict that this confluence of federal and individual effort would, in the post-war environment, offer an ambitious politician the opportunity to exploit the mood to his benefit. Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer premised his "Red Raids" of late 1919-early 1920 on a notion of "un-American activities" defined as the simple negation of the activities and beliefs of legitimate, naturalized Americanness. The federal government's role in defining, legitimizing, and defending this social construct—Americanness—made Palmer's raids, as future iterations of domestic American anticommunism, the politicization of a social, public mood. Thus, with the benefit of historical perspective and historiographical opinion, one may assert the following: the activity of the federal government and of generally well-intentioned Americanizers in this era unwittingly set the rhetorical course of twentieth-century domestic American anticommunism, which became a series of social, cultural, and political definitions of legitimacy.

Of course, one could not expect this particular nuance in Edward Bok's use of the term "Americanization" to describe the greater part of his life. Even so, his personalized description of the process, played against the various forces that together produced the naturalization procedure (at the governmental level) and the Americanization movement (at the social, or individual, level), offers a unique and symbolic perspective in examining the systematization of the rhetorical parameters of legitimacy.

What Bok clearly did know was that he had been part of a widespread socio-cultural movement. In the introduction to his memoirs, Bok explained: “The title suggests my principal reason for writing the book. Every life has some interest and significance; mine, perhaps, a special one.”<sup>2</sup> This significance, according to Bok, was the ability of one so utterly foreign to integrate himself so thoroughly into American society within a few short decades, and to then legitimately self-identify as an American. While his success came with little formal assistance, Bok intuitively understood that others might not so nimbly adapt themselves. In the Progressive Era, this spurred many well-intentioned reformers into action.

Edward George Hartmann offered the first systematic overview of Americanization, broadly defined as an educative movement aimed at assimilation through social instruction in traditional forms of American culture. Although perhaps lacking in nuance, Hartmann’s account produced a valuable distinction between well-intentioned but generally ill-equipped benevolent reformers, and nativist “100-percenters” who typically mobilized support more effectively, or, at least, more vociferously. John Higham’s *Strangers in the Land* developed this competition more thoroughly. Indeed, Higham saw the course of Americanization efforts as an inevitable conflict between “liberal” Americanizers advocating integration over pure assimilation and those nativist “100-percenters” who desired the opposite. According to Higham, anti-German sentiment and war hysteria swayed the contest irrevocably in the favor of the nativists, whose stricter and more oppressive form of Americanization lingers in the minds of many historians as characteristic of the entire movement. Indisputably, this became the dominant face of Americanization during the war era; but it was not always so, and both Hartmann and Higham demonstrate this. Perhaps because of Higham’s subtitle (*Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*), a generation of

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<sup>2</sup> Bok, *Americanization*, viii.

historians contented themselves with dismissing Americanization as merely one more ephemeral expression of nativism in a nation with many such examples in its history. This tendency drove historian John McClymer to lament: “Americanization may well be the least studied major social movement in American history.”<sup>3</sup>

In recent years, this is no longer the case. Scholars now deploy the construct of “Americanization” in a wide variety of paradigms. Both John Hennen and Frank Van Nuys identify the movement as belonging to what Robert Wiebe described as the Progressive Era’s bureaucratic reordering of American society. Hennen sees “Americanization” as the process to integrate the West Virginian economy into the larger American brand of capitalism, and Van Nuys identifies the process as cohering the West, economically as well as culturally, to the nation’s more established East. Other authors view the process in more personalized terms. David Roediger stridently asserts that Americanization required race suicide rather than the more moderate melting-pot imagery deployed by Hans P. Vought in his own examination of presidential rhetoric on the subject. Robert Rydell and Rob Kroes demonstrate the internationalization of “Americanization,” and explore the infiltration of American forms into other national cultural spheres.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> John F. McClymer, “The Federal Government and the Americanization Movement, 1915-24,” *Prologue* 10 (Spring 1978): 23; Edward George Hartmann, *The Movement to Americanize the Immigrant* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948); John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925*, 2nd ed. (New York: Atheneum, 1971). In comparing Hartmann and Higham, the analysis of Otis L. Graham, Jr. and Elizabeth Koed is most instructive (“Americanizing the Immigrant, Past and Future: History and Implications of a Social Movement,” *The Public Historian* 15, no. 4 (Autumn 1993): 24-49).

<sup>4</sup> John C. Hennen, *The Americanizing of West Virginia: Creating a Modern Industrial State, 1916-1925* (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1996); Frank Van Nuys, *Americanizing the West: Race, Immigration, and Citizenship, 1890-1930* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2002); Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967); David R. Roediger, *Working toward Whiteness: How America’s Immigrants Became White* (New York: BasicBooks, 2005); Hans P. Vought, *The Bully Pulpit and the Melting Pot: American Presidents and the Immigrant, 1897-1933* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2004); Robert W. Rydell and Rob Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna: The Americanization of the World, 1869-1922* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005).

As seen in the introduction, a similar degree of nuance eludes the historiography of the first Red Scare. Robert K. Murray's *Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920* remains the standard text for the study of these events, and its interpretation necessarily influences many subsequent scholarly considerations of the era. Murray insists that the Red Scare allowed industrial elites to manipulate war-time paranoia and nationalistic nativism into an anti-labor hysteria. One senses Murray's own anti-McCarthyism, as he describes the irrationality of the Red Scare as the nation's punishment for abjuring its international responsibilities and restricting its domestic liberties in the immediate aftermath of the First World War. His link to Americanization comes in the argument that "super patriots" co-opted and corrupted otherwise benevolent Americanizers as they engineered a new threat to justify their continued existence in a post-war world. Thus, the alien specter of communists replaced that of German saboteurs, but only symbolically, as Murray severs the first Red Scare from any hereditary link to the nation's later anticommunism. Rather, he argues it exists in history as an isolated and highly contingent episode in mass hysteria.<sup>5</sup>

The introduction also demonstrates that other scholars in fact posit a link between the first Red Scare and later iterations of authentic anticommunism. Regin Schmidt, for instance, links the institutionalization of the FBI and the character of J. Edgar Hoover, who also serves as the arch-villain in Kenneth O'Reilly's account of domestic anticommunism. Even M. J. Heale categorizes the Palmer-era Red Scare as class- and nativist-driven rather than an expression of the more modern (post-1930) anticommunism inspired by a national security imperative.

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<sup>5</sup> Robert K. Murray, *Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964).

Similarly, Joel Kovel characterizes these events as indicative of class conflict and political repression.<sup>6</sup>

While none of these accounts demonstrates how Americanization became inextricably bound in anticommunism, they offer an important contribution to this study: the Red Scare in particular, and domestic American anticommunism in general, depended on the politicization of a public mood, with the control of that movement (or hysteria, in Murray's view) transferred to the federal government. Indeed, the socio-political and rhetorical contours of this share significant characteristics with future iterations of domestic American anticommunism, just as there were important rhetorical connections between pre-war Americanization and post-war Red Scare anticommunism. In unique but fundamentally related ways, naturalization, Americanization, and the Red Scare all stand as episodes in legitimation, where governmental and social institutions negotiated that mark of authenticity—Americanness. Benevolent Progressive Americanization groups created a social movement to aid immigrants in self-improvement and eventual self-identification as legitimate Americans, while—especially during the Red Scare—the government reasserted itself as the arbiter of Americanization. By manipulating the social mood, these institutions created a powerful political tool and dangerous rhetorical device by defining what constituted American—and by their negation, un-American—activities, attitudes, and ideas. This expressly describes the broader pattern of twentieth-century domestic American anticommunism. Thus, naturalization and Americanization deserve greater scrutiny as the forebears of the Red Scare and later episodes of that same anticommunism.

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<sup>6</sup> Regin Schmidt, *Red Scare: FBI and the Origins of Anticommunism in the United States, 1919-1943*, (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2000); Kenneth O'Reilly, *Hoover and the Un-Americans* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983); M. J. Heale, *American Anticommunism: Combating the Enemy Within, 1830-1970* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990); Joel Kovel, *Red Hunting in the Promised Land: Anticommunism and the making of America*, 2nd ed. (London: Cassel, 1997).

*Naturalization: The Parameters of Legitimacy*

Edward Bok's connection to Theodore Roosevelt began at an early age. Bok became a confidant of Roosevelt's during the latter's presidency, but a muscular individualism took root in both their childhoods. Just as Roosevelt became a devotee of boxing, Bok records his first experience in Americanization as being of the pugilistic sort. When he and his older brother first entered an American school, they found themselves ostracized by the other-American-children on the playground. As children often do, the mob attacked the outsiders. Unable to communicate in English with his tormentors, young Edward employed a different mode: "After a few days at school, he cast his eyes over the group...picked out one who seemed to him the ringleader, and before the boy was aware of what had happened, Edward Bok was in the full swing of his first real experiment with Americanization." The young Dutch boy won both the encounter and, in the process, the respect of his American peers.<sup>7</sup>

Theodore Roosevelt, for his part, took a similar approach to politics. Historian Eric Rauchway, in ascribing an underlying method to Roosevelt's boisterous rhetorical madness, quotes the president: "[Observers who] think me indiscreet and overimpulsive...cannot understand what it is that makes me act."<sup>8</sup> By this rationale, it was not passion but reason that directed Roosevelt, in his December 1904 annual address to Congress, to call for thorough reform of the naturalization procedure. This message clearly demonstrates that a benevolent sort

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<sup>7</sup> Bok, *Americanization* 3. (Bok wrote these memoirs in the third person, saying he felt it afforded better authorial perspective. See "An Explanation," vii.)

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Eric Rauchway, *Murdering McKinley: The Making of Theodore Roosevelt's America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003), xiii.

of progressivism motivated Roosevelt's call to action. He expressed deep concern with the debasing of citizenship by the politically motivated and fraudulent naturalization of unqualified applicants, who were then expected to cast their newly won ballots for the political party whose officer granted them citizenship. Roosevelt decried the system as defective, and declared such electoral fraud as the nation's most sinister threat. He later appointed a commission to fulfill his call for "scientific inquiry" into the best means for protecting both the concept of American citizenship and the immigrant himself from exploitation at the hands of the corrupt.<sup>9</sup>

From the recommendations of this Naturalization Commission, Benjamin Franklin Howell (R-NJ), then chair of the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, introduced House of Representatives bill 15441 on February 22, 1906. It established a Bureau of Naturalization to oversee a fundamentally reformed system of naturalization. Just four days later, his committee unanimously reported the bill back to the House, and by March 9 the House resolved itself to the Committee on the Whole to debate H.R. 15441. The Senate took it up for consideration on June 6, and on the 23rd of that month reported it back to the House with a few inconsequential amendments. By June 29, both the House and the Senate agreed to a compromise bill that incorporated the bulk of the Naturalization Commission's initial recommendations. On June 30, President Roosevelt signed into law the Naturalization Act of 1906, providing the first systematic overhaul of naturalization procedure since 1795. Yet, the speed with which Congress dispatched with its presidentially-appointed task belies the complex rhetoric of its debate. Seen most especially in the House, Congress affixed a distinctly Progressive motive to their action, and sought to shape the law according to competing definitions of legitimacy—judging a provision by its Americanness or its un-Americanness.

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<sup>9</sup> The President of the United States, "State of the Union Address," *The American Presidency Project*, accessed on 10 November 2006 at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29545>.

Congressman Robert Bonyng (R-CO) bore the responsibility of steering H.R. 15441 through the House unscathed. In an era where an act's legitimacy stood on its Progressivism, Bonyng implicitly understood the proper rhetorical course for explaining the bill. Bonyng sourced H.R. 15441's origins to Roosevelt's call for reform. He cited numerous cases of fraud, which had produced 685 convictions in the preceding two years, as well as the revocation of some 1,916 fraudulent certificates of naturalization. The proposed law, Bonyng asserted, protected immigrants from these flagrant abuses of power. Edgar Crumpacker (R-IN) seconded this description, praising the bill for its "wholesome safeguards" against fraud and corruption. Primary among these safeguards was federal oversight of the newly standardized process of naturalization, promoted by the newly created Bureau of Immigration *and* Naturalization. If, as historian Robert Wiebe asserts, the establishment of centralized bureaucratic order characterized the Progressive Era, then this Naturalization Act was most definitely Progressive: "[T]here shall be one central body, having all the records of all the immigrants...and [having] general supervision of the subject of naturalization."<sup>10</sup>

When the House resumed debate on the matter in mid-May 1906, simultaneously debating the passage of the Pure Food Act, Henry Goldfogle (D-NY) agreed with the prior sentiment that any bill fitting this description and with such a benevolent purpose deserved rapid action by Congress. Yet, Goldfogle also introduced into the debate a highly significant rhetorical turn, asserting that "every American citizen" should lend their support to this preservation of the quality of American citizenship. Indeed, the debate record is bereft of any such rhetoric of legitimacy or authenticity prior to Goldfogle's call for "American" action or attitudes; thereafter, competing uses of the construct of "Americanness" as legitimation for a rhetorical stance

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<sup>10</sup> *Congressional Record*, 59th Congress, 1st Sess.: 3640-3, 7039; Wiebe, *Search for Order*, xiii.



thoroughly imbue the record. In early June, Bonynge, to applause resonating from the chamber, proclaimed his confidence that “every true American” would support the bill because it offered Progressive safeguards against corruption and fraud. Others disputed Bonynge’s claim to this tool of legitimacy, and phrased their criticisms of the proposal in similar rhetorical turns. As they did so, it became increasingly clear to the members of the House that their legislation would delimit the boundaries of Americanness.<sup>11</sup>

The impassioned debate, and the most strident uses of American and un-American rhetorical turns, focused on a provision of H.R. 15441 requiring that applicants demonstrate the ability to read, speak, and understand the English language, as well as the ability to write in either English or their native language. Some worried that this literacy test would set a higher bar for suffrage for immigrants than for native-born citizens. William McNary (D-MA) first voiced this particular concern, specifically noting that, while some did, the majority of American states did not require literacy as a prerequisite for the ballot. Bonynge deflected this criticism in so much as the Constitution makes the states the arbiters of voting eligibility; furthermore, he reasoned, the socio-cultural construct of citizenship implied far more than political action. Bonynge more thoroughly defined citizenship in response to Richard Bartholdt (R-MO), a past chair of the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, who labeled the literacy requirement as discriminatory and “possibly unjust.” Bonynge argued that assimilation, which made for a more successful naturalization of the immigrant, depended upon the adoption of the English language. Indeed, Bonynge asserted, one who possessed the English language was “more apt to be in sympathy with [American] institutions.” Apparently, this sympathy, or attraction to

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<sup>11</sup> *Congressional Record*, 59th Congress, 1st Sess.: 7042-3, 7764-5.

American ideals and structures, constituted a proper, naturalized, and legitimately Americanized immigrant.<sup>12</sup>

Still, critics denied that only English-language literacy legitimately demonstrated that properly American sentiment. Goldfogle and Bartholdt both expressed concern that this requirement placed literacy above sentimental attachment to American institutions in the nexus of legitimacy and naturalization. William Alden Smith (R-MI) engaged Bonyng in a colloquy on the subject, and passionately defined citizenship in similarly sentimental terms, referencing the devotion of both heart and mind to a patriotic love of country. Yet, with equal passion Smith denied that “any mere book learning” should preclude any person with such devotion from participating fully in the American dream. To the applause of the House, Smith closed his portion of the colloquy with a flourish, declaring that a literacy test that “circumscribes their rights or keeps them from participating in our Government when they are otherwise well qualified is an act of absolute injustice.” Charles Wharton (R-IL) moved beyond this rhetoric, explicitly labeling the requirement “un-American, unpatriotic, and ill-advised.” Literacy did not define legitimacy or citizenship, according to Wharton, but rather it was “the man’s heart and intentions toward our principles, our Government, and our country that should, must count.” Goldfogle agreed; Americans desired in their naturalized immigrants “character, quality, moral worth, and a loyal attachment” to national institutions. For these critics, one could not prove authenticity or legitimacy by a literacy test, because that discrimination was itself un-American.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Congressional Record*, 59th Congress, 1st Sess.: 3640-9.

<sup>13</sup> *Congressional Record*, 59th Congress, 1st Sess.: 3651-2, 7034-43.

The closest adherence to this rhetorical line came from William Cockran (D-NY) and John H. Small (D-NC), who, ironically, employed the construct in opposing directions. Cockran twice addressed the House at great length to voice his opposition to the literacy test as a component of naturalization, or legitimation of Americanness. He considered this requirement the bill's "most ludicrous feature." Cockran agreed with William McNary's assertion from the first day of debate, that the literacy clause created two classes of citizenship by requiring a greater intellect among immigrants—who must demonstrate proficiency in a second language, English—than among native-born applicants for the ballot. Cockran considered it "almost disloyal" to create consciously such class distinctions, especially at the cost of denying citizenship to hard-working immigrant laborers. After noting that he knew of no common laborer who stirred up radicalism, but rather that most "pests of society" were in some degree educated, Cockran won laughter and applause from the audience by suggesting that the literacy component was "a device to shut out the laborious and admit the loquacious." Returning to serious tones, Cockran appealed to his colleagues "in the name of American patriotism" to refuse any measure that might artificially reduce immigration along such lines.<sup>14</sup>

In an extension of his remarks inserted into the *Congressional Record*, Small followed Cockran's rhetoric but instead argued that the language test was fundamentally American in that it was egalitarian, leveling the playing-field for naturalized and native-born citizens alike. Furthermore, Smith approved of the language test as a natural barrier to unlimited immigration. Arguing that the nation was then struggling to properly assimilate the masses into its midst, Smith, too, won applause from the chamber by condemning Cockran's open-immigration stance. Smith declared that the Cockran position was "un-American in spirit," as well as "false to the

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<sup>14</sup> *Congressional Record*, 59th Congress, 1st Sess.: 7772-4.

ideals of a better democracy” and “absolutely inconsistent with the most cherished traditions of the [nation’s] past.”<sup>15</sup>

Although the amended literacy test required only spoken proficiency in English, the rhetorical lines of debate it generated remain highly significant. As these examples clearly demonstrate, both proponents and opponents of the measure deployed the rhetoric of “Americanness” to legitimize their position and the rhetoric of “un-Americanness” to assail the conflicting stance. This, in turn, demonstrates that the naturalization debate was primarily about proving this same authenticity, or, Americanness. Both sides of the language test debate maintained that proper citizenship involved a heart-and-mind devotion to “American” ideals and “American” institutions. Proponents of the literacy test generally asserted that assimilation of the English language ensured this affinity while offering naturalization commissioners an objective measure of that subjective sentiment. Conversely, opponents of the test believed it proffered a too restrictive definition of legitimacy.

With much less controversy, Congress compromised on provisions of the bill including a definition of beliefs or practices disqualifying one from naturalization. For example, a minutes-long debate in the Senate modified the terms of disqualification from those who believed in *or* practiced polygamy simply to those who actively engaged in it. Significantly, Congress made no such distinction for dangerous political philosophies, which during this era quite expressly targeted anarchists. It would later become clear that the federal government reserved the power to expand this disqualification to include communists. Nevertheless, none of these provisions

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<sup>15</sup> *Congressional Record*, 59th Congress, 1st Sess.: A147-8.

generated as much consternation as the demonstration of literate proficiency in the English language as a prerequisite to naturalization and citizenship.<sup>16</sup>

Interestingly, it was a desire for his sons to quickly assimilate the English language that led William J. H. Bok to enroll his young boys in an American school shortly after the wealthy Dutch's family's arrival in the United States. While Edward Bok, with tongue likely planted firmly in his cheek, maintained that his proficiency in school-yard scuffling propelled him down the path of Americanization, he more soberly identified his mastery of the English language as the true means of achieving egalitarianism in American society. After all, it was his ascension to the editorship of the widely read *Ladies' Home Journal* that demonstrated conclusively to all observers the Americanized success –materially and culturally–of Edward Bok.<sup>17</sup>

#### *Americanization: The Process of Legitimacy*

Bok credited “the linguistic gift inherent in [his native] Dutch race” for his ability to learn English by immersion. That he was still a young boy, with much to learn about the writing and speaking of his native language, doubtless contributed to his success in the second tongue, as well. Adult immigrants could not all be as lucky as Bok's wealthy parents, who acquired the language while still in their homeland. This situation, created in no small part by the machinations of Congress in the passing of the Naturalization Act of 1906, led to the proliferation of benevolent, Progressive societies seeking to aid the immigrant in this process of socio-cultural legitimation.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Congressional Record*, 59th Congress, 1st Sess.: 9009, 9691.

<sup>17</sup> Bok, *Americanization*, 2-7.

<sup>18</sup> Bok, *Americanization*, 2.

A number of excellent scholarly works examine the various Americanization groups, including private organizations and state and federal agencies. As discussed, Edward George Hartmann and John Higham stand foremost among these scholars, although more recently John McClymer adds to the discussion an examination of the inter-agency competition between the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization and the Bureau of Education. Similarly, Otis L. Graham and Elizabeth Koed offer a useful organizational historiography of the movement. These works share a method-focused approach, which is greatly informative.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, examining the literature produced by Americanizers themselves reveals a rhetorical similarity to the Congressional debate over the Naturalization Act of 1906. This suggests that Americanization involved more than just socio-cultural assimilation; perhaps also—and particularly—legitimation. As Americanization efforts expanded, the definition of legitimate Americanness consequently narrowed.

This expansion arose from the rhetorical base of “American” attitudes and sentimental attachments to “American” traditions—especially its government—as established by both the Naturalization Act of 1906 itself and the Congressional debate over its passage. The legitimacy described by the various Congressmen always returned to this attitudinal Americanness, and the primary disqualifiers in the naturalization process involved the violation of such guidelines. Yet, as exhibited by the brief discussion of polygamy’s un-Americanness, the next step clearly involved defining behaviors, as well as attitudes, as American or un-American—or, as legitimate or illegitimate.

One of the first demonstrations of this came with Grover G. Huebner’s “The Americanization of the Immigrant.” As Congress debated the Naturalization Act of 1906,

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<sup>19</sup> Hartmann, *Movement*; Higham, *Strangers*; McClymer, “The Federal Government...”; Graham and Koed, “Americanizing...”.

Huebner recognized that the pace and extent of Americanization efforts were already increasing; once signed into the law, the Naturalization Act gave the movement added impetus, primarily because most private Americanization organizations felt the Act did not go far enough in defining legitimate Americanness. Huebner identified precisely this attitude, opining that Americanization demanded a transformative assimilation extending beyond mere citizenship to the society and culture of the United States. It also involved “the actual raising of the immigrant to the American economic, social, and moral standard of life.” Huebner suggested that Americanization remained unfinished until the naturalized and the native-born “act and think together.” Still, Huebner cautioned that there might be “degrees of Americanization,” indicating he was unwilling in 1906 to too strictly delimit proper and authentic Americanness, the next rhetorical step.<sup>20</sup>

Huebner’s article was later reprinted in *Americanization*, a compendium edited by Winthrop Talbot and first published in 1917. A self-described handbook, entering a second edition just three years after the first, its collected historical and contemporary writings demonstrates a narrowing definition of legitimate Americanness. Talbot himself contributed the first essay, explaining that Americanization included the coherence of “attitude of mind” and “industrial, civic, and home practice and mode of living [to] American standards.” These words described more precisely the actions by which one might legitimately claim American identity, and other essays in the volume contribute likewise. John B. Torbert’s “The Meaning of Our Flag,” for example, also identified legitimate Americanness as adherence to a single “indivisible” set of ideals, while the text of a speech by President Woodrow Wilson asserted that one’s Americanness remained illegitimate until this assimilation included the principles as well as

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<sup>20</sup> Grover G. Huebner, “The Americanization of the Immigrant,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 27 (May 1906): 191-213.

“every purpose [or, action] of [one’s] will.” Edward S. Steiner’s “Essentials for Americanization” conclusively demonstrated the degree to which this legitimization surpassed Congress’s definition of naturalization. Steiner argued, “Citizenship is too valuable a possession to be thrown at people.” Rather than passing the mark of legitimacy to those who simply asserted a mere belief or attitude, Steiner proposed withholding citizenship until one’s “conduct” demonstrated the proper assimilation of those sentiments. In a second essay, Talbot explicated the avenues through which immigrants might acquire and demonstrate this action-based authenticity. Prominent among his list was public schooling, primarily because it socialized immigrant youths and, most importantly of all, taught them the English language.<sup>21</sup>

On this point, virtually all Americanizers of the era agreed. Helen Varick Boswell suggested the United States government should immerse itself in the teaching of the English language to immigrants, because true Americanization involved three essential commonalities: citizenship, language, and a high standard of living. By March 1916, when her “Promoting Americanism” was published, the Progressive Era federal government had long since established its willingness to take on the first and last of those components. Boswell called for social action in the interim, but declared that “teaching the English language and citizenship to immigrant workmen is a legitimate part of public policy.” Other reformers agreed that the language barrier posed a distinct problem in the course of Americanization. Ella Thorngate, writing from the immediate post-war period, noted that approximately 5.5 million people in the United States could neither read nor write English; the bulk of these, she implied, were unassimilated immigrants. She further lamented that the work of Americanization could not go on due to a

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<sup>21</sup> Winthrop Talbot, “Americanism,” in *Americanization*, ed. Winthrop Talbot, 2d ed. (New York: H.W. Wilson Company, 1920), 1; John B. Torbert, “The Meaning of Our Flag,” in *Americanization*, 66; Woodrow Wilson, “The Meaning of Citizenship,” in *Americanization*, 78-9; Edward S. Steiner, “Essentials for Americanization,” in *Americanization*, 95; Talbot, “Americanization,” in *Americanization*, 73-5.



“great gulf of misunderstanding, because of our language.” Published in the same year as Thorngate’s article, Peter Robert’s handbook, *The Problem of Americanization*, devoted an entire section to the teaching of English. While he suggested that “to be compelled to learn a language is un-American,” Roberts nevertheless maintained that immigrants who did not learn English quite obviously held the United States in low regard. Taken together, this rhetoric clarifies the notion that immigrants who did not willingly assimilate the language therefore willfully disavowed Americanization. So pervasive was this attitude that when Howard C. Hill analyzed the surveys of some 50,000 Americanization agencies in existence in 1918, he identified the learning of the English language as the most commonly agreed upon necessity in this process of legitimation.<sup>22</sup>

It would be inaccurate, however, to suggest that all Americanizers agreed on the course their broad-based movement should take, and just how deeply it should infiltrate the lives and homes of immigrant families. Writing as the Chairman [sic] of Education for the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, Helen Varick Boswell mobilized her constituents to penetrate deeply the lives of immigrants, especially those of women. Boswell described the typical immigrant mother as “the slave of all work,” who “does not learn English [and] gets the left-overs of America from her progressive family; she does not become Americanized.” Good Americanizers, therefore, should “[m]ake immigrant women good citizens.” Indeed, reforming the patterns of immigrant women’s lives was itself “in the highest sense a work of citizenship, a part of a national patriotic ideal.” Boswell’s ideal Americanizers would teach immigrant women

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<sup>22</sup> Helen Varick Boswell, “Promoting Americanization,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 64 (March 1916): 204-9; Ella Thorngate, “Americanization in Omaha,” *The English Journal* 9, no. 3 (March 1920): 123-8; Peter Roberts, *The Problem of Americanization* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1920), 70-2, 89-97; Howard C. Hill, “The Americanization Movement,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 24, no. 6 (May 1919): 629-31.

“to carry the English language and American ways of caring for babies, ventilating the house, [and] preparing American vegetables, instead of the inevitable cabbage.” By these actions would immigrant women become Americanized. One of the largest and most active organizations, the National Americanization Committee, seconded these and similar ideals in its official literature. Still, Howard C. Hill, for one, found it “difficult to see why true Americanism necessitates...the adoption of our foods or our methods of preparing food.” He suggested instead, “[O]ne may continue to eat goulash or garlic and forego the pleasures of pie and yet become a true American in mind, heart, and action.”<sup>23</sup>

Despite this humorous example, systematic Americanizers shared many more ideals. Not only did virtually all believe assimilation of the English language was central to their purposes, but most agreed that American industry and the federal government should institutionalize the programs of Americanization. Boswell and Hill, for example, concurred that the industrial workplace offered a unique setting for the inculcation of English and a wide variety of American attitudes and behaviors. Generally, Boswell credited American industry with the nation’s high standard of living. Specifically, Hill praised the D. E. Sicher Company, a muslin goods manufacturer in New York City, and Detroit’s Ford Motor Company for systematizing Americanization programs for their immigrant employees; indeed, Hill urged other industries to adopt these examples of successful Americanization for use in their own factories. Frances A. Kellor of the National Americanization Committee agreed, calling on industry to systematically Americanize its immigrant populations. Kellor’s rhetoric demonstrates the degree to which this was a process of legitimation: “*Americanizing America* is the task and responsibility of *Americans*.” Later she defined Americanization as “the unity of all peoples in *America* behind

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<sup>23</sup> Boswell, “Promoting Americanization,” 204-9; Hill, “The Americanization Movement,” 631-2.

*America's* flag on *American* soil.” If, as this rhetoric implies, such fundamental legitimation was the duty of industry, any thought or deed opposing the industrial order necessarily fell outside the parameters of *Americanism*.<sup>24</sup>

As to the federal government's role in this systematized legitimation, Hill identified the lack of organized direction as perhaps the private Americanization movement's most critical problem. Yet, by 1918—the time of the survey cited in Hill's article—the federal government was already involved in its own Americanization efforts. As John McClymer explains, both the Bureau of Education and the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization competed for bureaucratic superiority via their various Americanization policies, including sponsoring Americanization programs in public schools and publishing Americanization textbooks. Hill, without McClymer's fifty-some years of historical hindsight, noted even at the time that the lack of centralized bureaucratic order rendered even state and federal government agencies inefficient and ineffective. He blamed “a conflict of authority, duplication of effort, and a lack of coordination” for the ineffectual federalization of Americanization. Hill recommended Congressional oversight of a standardized federal program of Americanization as the solution for these problems and the best means for properly assimilating immigrants into a legitimate American identity. The call for better and more government involvement indicates the transference of legitimation or authentication from the hands of social organizations and back to the government that began the process with the Naturalization Act of 1906. The fundamental change since 1906 seems twofold: first, that a broad social movement lent its support to federal

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<sup>24</sup> Boswell, “Promoting Americanization,” 204-9; Hill, “The Americanization Movement,” 632-9; Frances A. Kellor, “Americanization: A Conservation Policy for Industry,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political Sciences* 65 (May 1916): 240-4 (emphasis added).

oversight of legitimation; and secondly, that the same social movement significantly narrowed the parameters of legitimate American actions and attitudes.<sup>25</sup>

Notable among those things Americanizers deemed fundamentally un-American was labor radicalism. Defending the timeliness of his 1920 handbook for Americanization, Peter Roberts suggested that only “an army of volunteer workers [and] a wide-awake press” exhibiting “a zeal for American democracy akin to apostolic fervor” could successfully eradicate the dual radical labor dangers of “Bolshevism and I.W.W.-ism.” Americanization alone stood against this radicalism, which Roberts asserted took root primarily in non-English speaking communities. The National Americanization Committee voiced similar opinions in its official literature, even that predating the Red Scare-era Roberts handbook. In 1918, the N.A.C. identified its organizational purposes along the same lines as those later identified by Howard Hill and other professional Americanizers: the assimilation of American traditions, ideals, and actions in immigrants, thereby uniting the nation in a common citizenship. Yet, the N.A.C. further defined its mandate as the “combating of anti-American propaganda activities,” and the “elimination of causes of disorder, unrest, and disloyalty which make fruitful soil for un-American propagandists and disloyal agitators.” Read in light of Progressive Era values, one might identify this as distinctly liberal—rooting out radicalism by ensuring equal access to the benefits of American society. Analyzed instead as a product of the war, and as the forbear of the Red Scare, this indicates the degree to which Americanizers interpreted their own mandate, indeed their own legitimacy, in American society. When these efforts coalesced into organized, government-led

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<sup>25</sup> Hill, “The Americanization Movement,” 627-42; McClymer, “The Federal Government...,” 22-41.

action to eradicate attitudes and actions falling outside the narrowed definition of authentic Americanness, a movement like the Red Scare became possible.<sup>26</sup>

And what of Edward Bok? Would he have approved of this Americanization effort? In many ways, yes, he likely would have. Bok suggested that a man should live his life in three distinct periods. One should devote the first period to education and self-improvement, and the second to achieving for himself and his family all that America could offer them. In this second period he cautioned against conspicuous greed in the accumulation of wealth. Indeed, Bok considered the third period, that of service to others, “the acid test.” He defined this period as the practical recognition of community in both thought and deed: “[W]e are our brother’s keeper [, and such] a brotherhood of man does exist outside after-dinner speeches.” And so in reflection of his own process of Americanization, Bok again identified the assimilation of the English language as the critical element. Yet, he “gained nothing” from American public schools; he insisted that nothing more than his own native linguistic gift enabled his assimilation of the language, and that in its “most important institution to the foreign-born, America fell short.” In these and other words, Bok lent his support to an Americanization movement aimed at not only the attitudes but also the actions of immigrants, especially if that movement improved the English-language instruction in the public schools.<sup>27</sup>

Nevertheless, in emphasizing education in the English language this social-based Americanization movement added to the construct of “Americanness” precisely that element which the federal government had not required for “naturalization.” As shown, the Americanization movement went far beyond this in defining legitimate American attitudes and

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<sup>26</sup> Roberts, *Problem*, v; Quoted in Hill, “The Americanization Movement,” 630.

<sup>27</sup> Bok, *Americanization*, 428-40.

activities, and by their negation, un-American thoughts and behaviors. By calling for mass mobilization to enforce these definitions, professional Americanizers contributed to the creation of the sort of mass fervor (or, hysteria, as Murray characterized it) characteristic of the Red Scare, of which Bok would have most definitely disapproved. Bok's writings, including a second set of more light-hearted memoirs addressed to his sons (*Twice Thirty*, published in 1925), indicated that legitimacy comes in many forms—pugilistic and otherwise. The Red Scare illuminated an American society unwilling to mark as legitimate any beliefs or behaviors falling outside an increasingly narrow standard of Americanness. Thus, it became the government's purview to test the legitimacy of the attitudes and actions in question.

*The Red Scare: The Proving of Legitimacy*

Edward Bok earned fame and fortune as the editor of the *Ladies' Home Journal*, but he did not ascend to that position until 1889. By that time he had already served as the editor for *The Brooklyn Magazine* and founded his own syndicate press. Prior still to those experiences, Bok entered the literary world as a stenographer, first for Henry Holt & Company, and then for Charles Scribner's Sons (who later published Bok's memoirs). A keen eye to textual detail thus corresponded to Bok's success in that professional world. When one applies a keen analytical eye to the rhetorical dimensions of Senate Resolution 213, sponsored on October 14, 1919 by Miles Poindexter (R-WA), one sees laid out in its text the course of the Red Scare of 1919-1920, a radicalized and hysterical defense of "legitimate" or "authentic" Americanism.<sup>28</sup>

Senate Resolution (S.Res.) 213, as first offered, resolved the Senate to ask the Attorney General, A. Mitchell Palmer, "the reason for the failure of the Department of Justice to take legal

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<sup>28</sup> Bok, *Americanization*, 453.

proceedings for the arrest and punishment,” including deportation, of any radical agitators in violation of the Sedition Act of 1918. It is no coincidence that Poindexter, representing the then-strike riddled state of Washington, took umbrage toward those who “openly advocated the unlawful obstruction of industry.” He claimed national interest in his inquiry, quoting what he believed were damning labor statistics. A total of 105 separate strikes plagued the United States in January 1919; the number doubled by May, and reached a high of 364 during July. Poindexter deemed it time for federal intervention, as did many of his fellow Senators. Charles S. Thomas (D-CO) wondered why the government demurred investigating such obviously un-American organizations as the International Workers of the World (I.W.W.) and the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA). Thomas suggested that their radical propaganda had proliferated unchecked since 1906—not coincidentally the same year when Congress first systematized the definition of legitimate Americanness. Thus presented with the means of legitimizing certain behaviors and attitudes as American, Thomas could also identify the I.W.W. and CPUSA as fundamentally un-American due to their belief in communally-held property—a negation of the basic American right to personal property. Poindexter bested his colleague’s rhetoric by labeling strikes themselves as “revolutionary” movements, obviously intending not to analogize the American but rather the Bolshevik Revolution.<sup>29</sup>

Agreeing that the situation demanded action, Thomas and Poindexter articulated differing solutions that nevertheless coalesced into the public-private partnership that characterized the politicized hysteria of the Red Scare. Thomas argued that “the remedy of these...very sinister [evils] lies entirely in the hands of the American people.” Indeed, Thomas considered it the duty of patriotic and authentic citizens to participate in the rooting out of such evils. Poindexter,

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<sup>29</sup> *Congressional Record*, 66th Congress, 1st Sess., 6865-72.

however, declared that the federal government needed “to take vigorous action to suppress” these un-American activities and attitudes. Henry L. Myers (D-MT) engaged Poindexter in a bit of show, asking whether the Sedition Act of 1918 required the Attorney General investigate one Robert Minor, who was alleged to have publicly agitated for a Soviet-style revolution in the United States. In a dramatic turn, Myers elaborated on the precise meaning of this Soviet-style revolution, saying it augured “a government founded on murder, assassination, robbery, rapine, rape, force, violence,” and, presumably, other—more unspeakable—crimes against mankind. Poindexter responded to his colleague’s thinly veiled assault on the Attorney General’s apparent dereliction of duty by joining with Henry Cabot Lodge (R-MA) in characterizing Palmer as “chasing the cost of living [while] the strike is chasing him.”<sup>30</sup>

Despite the rhetorical evidence mounting against Attorney General Palmer, a few brave souls spoke against the tone of the resolution. Irvine Lenroot (R-WI) and Duncan Upshaw Fletcher (D-FL) both objected to the resolution’s invective against Palmer. Fletcher worried that the text conveyed neglect rather than possible ignorance of the nature, scope, or immediacy of the problem. Along these same lines, Lenroot argued that the resolution assumed facts—that the Attorney General had not taken any steps to combat the problem—that were not actually in evidence. It is important to note, however, that neither these nor other Senators objected to the intent of the resolution. Thus, when a modified resolution came before the body on October 17, this time asking the Attorney General to inform the Senate “whether or not the Department of Justice has taken legal proceedings—and if not, why not; and if so, to what extent —” against the alleged un-American activities, the Senate passed it unanimously.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *Congressional Record*, 66th Congress, 1st Sess., 6865-72.

<sup>31</sup> *Congressional Record*, 66th Congress, 1st Sess., 6865-72, 7063.



The course of the Red Scare and the Palmer Raids followed the rhetorical outline of the resolution with surprising precision. The Attorney General directed the resources of the Department of Justice—as well as those of other federal agencies—to the uprooting of alleged un-American propagandists and organizations. As later reported to the Senate, the Department of Labor issued over 6,350 warrants for the arrest, and intended deportation, of suspected alien radicals. Yet, it is likely that over 10,000 arrests were made, with 3,000 imprisonments and at least 762 deportations. Palmer consciously focused these energies toward alleged “red” groups like the CPUSA, the Union of Russian Workers, and the Communist Labor Party (CLP), instructing his agents to infiltrate the organizations and help set up Department of Justice raids on their meetings. Of these raids, the most successful—according to Palmer’s apologists—came during CPUSA and CLP meetings on the night of January 2, 1920. The meetings had been scheduled for that night by a conspiracy of Justice Department infiltrators of these putatively communist (later, Communist) organizations, and any mere attendees were branded with the same guilt as the “true believers.” As directed by Congress, Attorney General Palmer had mobilized both public sentiment and his own bureaucratic powers toward eradicating alleged un-Americanism.<sup>32</sup>

This was not without the continued backing of Congress. On May 6, 1920, Representative William Rodenberg (R-IL) introduced a resolution similar to Poindexter’s S.R. 213, requiring the Attorney General to provide the House with information on the activities of American Bolsheviks and the I.W.W., again placing the two radical labor organizations under the same “red” rhetorical banner. In the following session of Congress, Poindexter offered a bill promising to “protect the property, processes, and agencies of the Government of the United

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<sup>32</sup> *Congressional Record*, 68th Congress, 1st Sess., 3005.

States from anarchy and bolshevism.” Representative Peter F. Tague (D-MA) presented a bill offering the Attorney General the authority to “determine that any society, organization, or association within the United States...is a menace to the welfare of the citizens thereof.” This afforded the Attorney General even broader discretionary powers in the detaining of citizens and the deportation of aliens accused of belonging to groups that he alone could define as illegitimate and un-American. Notably, both bills died in committee in their respective chambers. By April 1921, when Poindexter offered his bill, the fervor of the Red Scare had largely dissipated, and A. Mitchell Palmer had retired from public life following his failed bid for the 1920 Democratic presidential nomination. Nevertheless, his actions during the Red Scare represent the politicization of a public mood. The courses of naturalization and Americanization established that Congress possessed the power to define and defend legitimate Americanness; communism, it seemed, contradicted virtually any facet of the Americanness defined by mainstream politicians and the public alike. For as long as he had political capital and public support, Palmer attacked this particular un-Americanism with the sort of missionary zeal Peter Roberts called for in private Americanization efforts.<sup>33</sup>

Significantly, while Congress eventually repudiated Palmer’s methods, no member substantially objected to his motives or purposes. Indeed, as early as 1920, Senator Joseph I. France (R-MD) introduced a resolution (S.Res. 378) calling for oversight of Department of Justice expenditures in this activity. William Earnest Mason (R-IL) introduced resolutions in both 1920 (H.Res. 530) and 1921 (H.Res. 38) also demanding Congressional oversight. As it turned out, the Senate was already investigating the conduct of Palmer’s raids. In December 1920, the Senate Judiciary Committee appointed a special subcommittee to deal with the matter

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<sup>33</sup> *Congressional Record*, 66th Congress, 2d Sess., Index; *Congressional Record*, 67th Congress, 1st Sess., Index.

and issue a report of its findings. However, the members lamented in February 1923, they were unable to render a consensus verdict and begged off the task. With the Red Scare and A. Mitchell Palmer sufficiently forgotten, the Senate discharged the Judiciary Committee from further responsibility.<sup>34</sup>

Despite this absolution, Senator Thomas Walsh (D-MT) inserted into the record drafts of both his own report and the dissenting conclusions of Senator Thomas Sterling (R-SD). Fundamentally, the reports disagreed over the constitutionality of Palmer's use of Department of Labor resources in his investigations, as well as on the actions of Department of Justice agents in the detaining of aliens for deportation—a matter of the Department of Labor's statutory jurisdiction. Walsh contended that a “more or less hysterical state of mind...prevailed when the raids were in progress,” leading the public and members of the federal government to paint as “red” organizations—like the Communist Labor Party—when subsequent investigations of them found no substantive links to illegal, especially seditious, activities. He chastised the Department of Justice for flagrant violations of the Fourth Amendment's protection against unlawful search and seizure. Finally, he decried the Attorney General's abrogation of bureaucratic boundaries in using Justice Department officers to perform deportation raids for the Department of Labor, and using Labor Department resources to prosecute those targeted by the Department of Justice.<sup>35</sup>

Sterling, on the other hand, argued that Justice Department officers possessed arresting power during the raids simply because of the assumed illegality of the organizations being raided. To this effect, he cited the testimony of Charles T. Clayton, an attorney formerly affiliated with the Office of the Secretary of Labor. Clayton saw “no impropriety” in Federal

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<sup>34</sup>*Congressional Record*, 68th Congress, 1st Sess., 3004.

<sup>35</sup> *Congressional Record*, 68th Congress, 1st Sess., 3004-18.

Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents acting on behalf of the Department of Labor in detaining aliens on suspicion of being in the country illegally, regardless of how the FBI came to arrest those persons. Indeed, Clayton suggested, “there would be no impropriety in any citizen doing that.” In much the same way as Americanizers identified true patriotic citizenship as involving one’s self in the effort to Americanize the immigrant, government officials perpetuated anticommunism. Even in its propaganda did public anticommunism resemble private Americanization. In 1920, Attorney General Palmer directed the printing of a pamphlet titled “Red Radicalism as Described by Its Own Leaders.” For many of the same reasons as Americanizers published handbooks to organize and direct their myriad efforts, Palmer propagated the document “for the furtherance of a more realizing popular appreciation of the menace involved in the unrestrained spread of criminal communism among the masses.” While Walsh countered that the justification of the means by the end set a dangerous precedent for a civil government, it is critical to note that he never objected to that end—the repression and uprooting of un-Americanness.<sup>36</sup>

That Congress first initiated the Palmer component of the Red Scare, and then asserted itself as the final arbiter of Palmer’s righteousness, indicates the degree to which Congress reasserted itself also as the final arbiter of legitimacy. It claimed the ultimate authority to render judgment on the Americanness or un-Americanness of the activities of aliens, citizens, and government officials alike. This is a power the institution exercised just a few years later, with the creation of the Special Committee to Investigate Un-American Activities and Propaganda (1938-1945) chaired by Martin Dies (D-TX). This became the first iteration of American anticommunism’s infamous HUAC—the House Committee on Un-American Activities (1945-

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<sup>36</sup> *Congressional Record*, 68th Congress, 1st Sess., 3018-27.

1975), and its deep roots lie partially, but significantly, in this Progressive Era systematization and institutionalization of legitimacy and authenticity.

*Conclusion: of Americanization and anticommunism, and Edward Bok*

Edward Bok would have been most uneasy with this description of Americanization's role in the development of repressive anticommunism. Yet, both the evidence here and existing scholarship like Hartmann's and Higham's demonstrate the devolution of Americanization into a form virtually unrecognizable to Bok's own experiences. While his feelings on the Red Scare may linger in the realm of presumption, Bok made clear his feelings on the subject of restricted legitimacy, with no less a public figure than President Theodore Roosevelt as his audience. The occasion was a private meeting between the confidants, when Roosevelt renewed what was then a common refrain against "hyphenated Americans" who maintained too strong a tie to their native land. Bok gently quizzed the President about the extent of those from whom Roosevelt would exclude definition as legitimate Americans. When Roosevelt replied that birth was a fine distinction, Bok questioned where he, the putative Dutch-American, stood in the President's view of things. Furthermore, Bok prodded, Roosevelt's own ancestors had come from the Netherlands. If Roosevelt's ancestors had not come to the New World and become, at least for a time, hyphenated Americans, the nation might well have been "minus a few Roosevelts," including the president himself. Bok carried the logical fallacy to its conclusion, noting that a by-birth definition of legitimacy returned the nation's title to the American Indian: "All the rest of us," Bok informed the now bemused President, "had somewhere a hyphenated forebear, as you had. You put yourself under your own ban." With a trademark, toothy grin, Roosevelt retreated,

as the schoolyard bully once had: “Of course you are right, that’s the irritating part of a Dutchman,—he is nearly always right.”<sup>37</sup>

Unfortunately, Bok’s broad definition of legitimacy, of Americanization, is not the movement’s legacy. In a visceral way, the repressive nature of Red Scare and post-Red Scare American anticommunism reflects the oppressive form of Americanization that emerged from the war era. Increasing government influence over and direction of the various efforts at naturalization made the transition from benevolent to oppressive Americanization rather predictable, as first the public and then the government increasingly narrowed the terms of legitimacy. With the Naturalization Act of 1906, Congress first established itself as the authority on defining Americanness, while the subsequent social Americanization efforts gradually restricted this initial definition. The Red Scare and its aftermath together demonstrated that the federal government stood as the final arbiter of legitimate Americanness. In this light, the Red Scare is neither unexpected nor artificially limited to nativist post-war hysteria. It becomes as an authentic form of American anticommunism, one that helped establish the socio-cultural and political rhetorical boundaries of future iterations of anticommunism.

Yet, many historians dismiss both the Red Scare and the Americanization movement as nativist reactions of the wartime era. While no educated analyst disputes nativist elements in both episodes, this conclusion may be an over-simplification. Taken as a socio-cultural construct, nativism, anti-immigrant at its core, implies an attitude of hostility toward an outsider. Clearly, benevolent Americanization was not anti-immigration, and only anti-immigrant in so far as it preached assimilation into traditional social, cultural, and economic forms. This benevolent form of Progressive Americanization welcomed the immigrant into an Americanized definition of

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<sup>37</sup> Bok, *Twice Thirty: Some Short and Simple Annals of the Road*, New York: Charles Scriber’s Sons (1925): 253-4.

society; it is therefore atypical of nativism. Americanization may stand as paradigmatic of Progressivism, as a movement premised on the benevolent uplifting of one's fellow man through a centralized, bureaucratic ordering of the process of legitimation.

Indeed, Bok held firm to a definition of legitimacy, of Americanness, itself highly Progressive in spirit. In his second set of memoirs, *Twice Thirty*, Bok adopted the studied tones of a father writing to his two sons when he patiently explained: "Americanism is of one's inner self: a God-given responsibility; a faith; a trust; a devotion to an ideal; a belief in one's fellow-men stronger than a belief in one's self; a tenacious, unswerving confidence in service." One could scarcely find a better definition of benevolent Progressivism. Yet as the decade advanced, it must have been increasingly clear to Bok that "normalcy" had muted the Progressivist impulse. Few things could exhibit this shift in starker contrast than a repressive form of anticommunism lingering as the lasting legacy of once-benevolent Americanization.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Bok, *Twice Thirty*, 256.

## CHAPTER THREE

### “ENOUGH TO EAT AND FREEDOM OF SPIRIT”: LIBERALISM CONFRONTS ANTICOMMUNISM

As the Progressive movement faded from the American political scene, anticommunism rose as a critical discourse of legitimacy within the world of partisan rhetoric. While, as the previous chapter demonstrates, anticommunism was a popular and powerful tool even at its inception, a close examination of the rhetoric of Americanization and naturalization shows that both Republicans and Democrats might use it authentically. Anticommunism served equally as a tool of legitimacy for political conservatives, liberals, and progressives of either partisan stripe.

By the late 1930s, things changed. Dominated by the forces and faces of political conservatism, the rhetoric of anticommunism became something few political liberals felt comfortable—or authentic—engaging. Most scholarship depicts liberals of this era as either unequivocally opposed to investigations of so-called “un-American activities,” or as afraid of the political repercussions of voicing such opposition. In this traditional view of liberalism’s first institutionalized experience with anticommunism, the latter criticizes a liberal’s political pragmatism in the face of an illiberal movement, while the former plays more to the typical conservative attack of the era—that a liberal opposed investigation into communists whose ideology closely resembled their own. Indeed, the Special House Un-American Activities Committee, chaired by Martin Dies (D-TX), generated precisely these reactions from many liberals, and attacked them using these same criticisms. Dies proved especially effective in couching conservative attacks on both liberalism and the increasing power of the executive during the New Deal era in a form of red-baiting usually more closely associated with McCarthyism. As in the early 1950s, it proved highly effective; many of the Dies Committee’s



most outspoken critics fell in reelection campaigns throughout the committee's lifetime (1938-1944). In this way, the Dies Committee exemplified anticommunism as both publically popular and politically powerful.

One of the episodes in its institutional history that most confounds the standard liberalism-versus-anticommunism paradigm involves one of the Dies Committee's members. To H. Jerry Voorhis (D-CA), strong domestic anticommunism aligned naturally with the progressive liberalism he claimed as his political banner. In his estimation, moreover, authentic progressive liberalism demanded such a commitment. Nevertheless, Voorhis's definition of anticommunism often set him at odds with both his liberal colleagues and his conservative rivals. Throughout his career in Congress, and even long afterward, Voorhis actively engaged both the rhetoric and mechanisms of anticommunism, seeking to define, construct, and execute a program of domestic anticommunism that might be reconciled with—and linked to—other tenets of his progressive liberalism. Innovative in many ways, this exhibited the type of linkage not fully embraced by liberals until at least a decade later, and then generally in international rather than domestic terms. Unfortunately for Voorhis, the timing of his political career rendered his efforts all but futile. Because his unique status as a traditional progressive liberal willing to embrace domestic anticommunism was overshadowed first by war, and later by the reactionary theatrics of the post-World War II “big” Red Scare, historians generally relegate Voorhis to little more than a footnote in the complex and often tragic history of domestic American anticommunism.

Perhaps this should be unsurprising. After all, Voorhis grappled with the dominant definitions of legitimacy at a time when liberalism existed in something of a liminal state. Liberals of this generation struggled to define their collective post-New Deal political philosophy, a process beginning just as the Dies Committee reached the apex of its popularity.

Combined with their waning ideological and numerical influence in Congress from 1938 onward, perhaps it is easy to see why liberals could not control the rhetorical dimensions of anticommunism during an era when domestic American anticommunism solidified its place as a key arbiter of social and political legitimacy. Instead, what began with the Dies Committee continued through the post-war HUAC chaired by arch-reactionary John Rankin (D-MS), and saw perhaps its most infamous episodes in the red-baiting politics of Richard Nixon and the histrionic demagoguery of Joseph McCarthy.

Jerry Voorhis presented a different path. Unlike most of his liberal colleagues in Congress, Voorhis strongly supported the investigation of subversion. For this reason, he accepted a post to the Dies Committee and served vigorously on it for four years; this made him one of the few liberals of his generation with a legitimate claim to active anticommunism. Yet, Voorhis is also a remarkably complex figure in the context of the changing liberalism described by Alan Brinkley, among other scholars. While the “reform liberalism” of the New Deal and Progressive eras generally informed Voorhis’s politics, his desire and ability to reconcile domestic anticommunism with these ideals existed almost in a vacuum until the Cold War generation of liberals came to power. Even then, much of what Voorhis advocated as a platform for effective, beneficent, liberal domestic anticommunism became foreign policy instead.<sup>1</sup>

In almost complete opposition of its historically recognizable form, Jerry Voorhis’s domestic anticommunism advocated the following: exposure rather than suppression of subversion; a dispassionate presentation of facts rather than the deliberate inflaming of public fears; and, above all else, domestic solutions to the root causes of communist appeal, rather than a rhetorical or physical attack on those symptoms deemed radical, subversive, or un-American.

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<sup>1</sup> Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

Voorhis expressed this and his other political ideologies in many ways during his career, best summarized by his claim that “[m]en through all the ages have sought two things: Enough to eat and freedom of spirit.”<sup>2</sup> Repackaged in various rhetorical forms throughout his five-term career in the House of Representatives (1936-1946), Voorhis considered every political matter through this ideological lens. Understanding the immense political and social power behind the rhetoric of anticommunism—one of legitimacy and authenticity within the United States—helps explain why Voorhis actively engaged in a struggle to define both “anticommunism” and “un-Americanism” in his own particular way.

Historians have largely missed this complexity, oftentimes by examining his motives—was Voorhis a principled moralist, or simply a partisan New Dealer deflecting Dies’s anti-Roosevelt attacks?—rather than his engagement with the rhetorical dimensions of authenticity. Traditional progressive liberal precepts informed Voorhis’s politics, but he expressed them in a relatively new vehicle, domestic anticommunism, one largely eschewed by his liberal contemporaries and thus dominated by his conservative opponents. More than any other point, existing scholarship fails to satisfactorily engage the notion that Voorhis actively participated in the struggle to define and control what he recognized was, and would continue to be, a powerful social and political tool.

Indeed, in the two major works detailing the life of the Dies Committee, Voorhis plays a minor role. For Ogden, Voorhis’s principled idealism against Dies’s procedural abuses merits praise, while Goodman’s Voorhis is a civilized but partisan New Dealer. Richard Gid Powers and Kenneth O’Reilly extend this view of the Dies Committee as partisan playground—where, according to Goodman’s account of the partisan rhetoric, liberals were communists and

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<sup>2</sup> *Congressional Record*, 75th Congress, 3d Sess., 2388.

conservatives, fascists. Powers identifies the committee as an alliance of anti-communists and anti-New Dealers, but asserts the latter issue as more primary. O'Reilly underscores its partisan nature, as well, but identifies it as chiefly anti-executive. Ellen Schrecker and Alan Brinkley also dismiss it as a partisan organ of anti-New Dealism. Although this aspect of the committee is undeniably true, this perspective typically deflates the historical significance of the opposition to Dies and the committee as mere partisan politics. O'Reilly goes so far as to term liberal opposition to the Dies Committee “predictable.”<sup>3</sup>

The troubling question, then, is how a principled idealist like Jerry Voorhis would ever deign to serve on such a clearly partisan and anti-New Deal committee. It seems more likely, in this traditional view, that he would reserve the moral high ground and dismiss the committee's potency as politics-as-usual. It seems unthinkable that Voorhis would not only actively participate in the committee's work, but many times publicly praise it. As with the depiction of the first Red Scare as ambitious politics, mass hysteria, or anything less than an expression of anticommunism, such a view marks this era's anticommunism as a hollow vessel. Indeed, if the pre-war anticommunism was inauthentic, how could post-war conservatives rise to power on the back of this self-same issue?

That red-baiting emerged as such a successful—and sometimes indispensable—campaign tool, and that many conservatives, like Richard Nixon, built their careers on their records as anticommunists at home and abroad, suggests that the domestic anticommunism program had a great deal of political and popular appeal even in this early stage. As already discussed, domestic American anticommunism became in the early twentieth century a rhetorical discussion of

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<sup>3</sup> Kenneth O'Reilly, *Hoover and the Un-Americans* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 57; Richard Gid Powers, *Not Without Honor: The History of American Anticommunism*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 124; Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1998), 90-1; Brinkley, *Reform*, 141.

legitimacy and authenticity, of belonging and Americanness. Voorhis, it seems, intuited this. He entered the arena not primarily to defend liberalism against partisan attacks made under the guise of anticommunism, but rather because he steadfastly believed that the fullest expression of progressive liberalism was the most authentic form of Americanness, and thus of anticommunism.

### *The Social Gospel of Anticommunism*

Voorhis believed that liberalism based on beneficent expression of the Social Gospel offered the best defense against the allure of communism by offering all Americans “enough to eat,” something many could not look forward to with the nation in the throes of the Great Depression. Voorhis also realized that if any form of anticommunism came to impinge “freedom of spirit,” it threatened the democratic institutions it aimed to protect. To Voorhis, then, anticommunism as an authentic expression of Americanism bore both ideological and practical components.

Born April 6, 1901 in Ottawa, Kansas, Horace Jeremiah Voorhis led a life of privilege as the son of a wealthy big-businessman, matriculating at the prestigious Hotchkiss School and then Yale University. It was his involvement in the Yale Christian Association, however, that led to what Voorhis described as a “profound religious awakening.” Indeed, it directly influenced the course of the rest of his life: “Out of this [awakening] there developed the very disturbing and impelling idea that the Christian Gospel is to be taken seriously and that needless poverty and suffering on the one hand and special privilege and inordinate power on the other are entirely

contrary to its precepts.”<sup>4</sup> A trip to Europe in the 1920s cemented the place of the Social Gospel in Voorhis’s budding progressivism. His German host family’s plight moved Voorhis deeply, especially as he observed the disturbing social conditions, rampant inflation and the severe poverty of the nation. This only confirmed his burgeoning conviction that protecting and promoting the hard work, Golden Rule values of the American Midwestern farmer held the most promise for avoiding the creation of such conditions within the United States.<sup>5</sup>

His devotion to hard work and his compassion for the welfare of others took many forms throughout Voorhis’s adult life, all of them indicative of high moral character. Rather than exploiting his father’s wealth following his graduation from Yale in 1923, Jerry sought work as a laborer. His autobiography records the sad sight of coworkers at a rail-yard crushed to death while moving freight; Voorhis’s reaction speaks to his nature: “I wondered what would happen to their families.”<sup>6</sup> This type of concern for the welfare of others led him to collaborate with his father in opening a school for underprivileged boys near San Dimas, California. The younger Voorhis viewed this as an opportunity to invest his earthly inheritance in a way that might help the less fortunate, and so his father agreed to fund the Voorhis School for Boys, which opened in 1927 with Jerry as headmaster. Biographer Paul Bullock calls the school “an oasis of cooperation and unselfishness in a society gone mad with greed.” He continues,

The message imparted was...simple, but, in the 1920s, almost revolutionary: the Golden Rule must be observed in every aspect of life; service to others, not personal profit, and teamwork is superior to ‘rugged individualism.’ It was, in essence, a blend of the Christian principles so dear to the Voorhis family from the

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<sup>4</sup> Jerry Voorhis, *Confessions of a Congressman* (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1947), 10.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Bullock, *Jerry Voorhis, The Idealist as Politician* (New York: Vantage Press, 1978), 3-9; Jerry Livingston Voorhis, *An Idealist in Congress: The Early Life and Times of H. Jerry Voorhis: 1901-1946*, “Introduction and Chapter 1,” Accessed on 22 June 2004 at <http://www.csupomona.edu/~library/LibraryInfo/special/Voorhis/book1/introchap1.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Jerry Voorhis, *Confessions*, 11.

earliest days in Kansas and the democratic socialism which, by 1928, had become Jerry's political philosophy.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, when it came time to vote in the 1928 presidential election, Voorhis cast his ballot for Socialist candidate Norman Thomas, the nominee closest to Voorhis's own ideological convictions. Voorhis did so not only because he agreed with Thomas's economic platform, but because Thomas was a strong civil libertarian and, in Voorhis's mind, a committed anticommunist. While Voorhis was somewhat skeptical about the nature of capitalism—which, he believed, in its present form produced and perpetuated fundamental inequalities within U.S. society—he was nevertheless decidedly against the communist proposition of world revolution and the overthrowing of the democratic order. Instead, Voorhis believed God did not create humanity to live under the rule of totalitarianism, whether fascist or communist. In his own words, Voorhis supposed that “the highest values in human life can be preserved only under a government which guarantees to its people a full measure of liberty—religious, personal, political, and economic.”<sup>8</sup> It was therefore natural that Voorhis see a bright line distinguishing democratic socialism and pure communism. Yet, as Bullock notes, most anticommunists of the coming generation “buil[t] their careers on a systematic smudging of this important distinction.”<sup>9</sup>

In the early 1930s, Upton Sinclair's influence convinced Voorhis that the Democratic Party would under Franklin Roosevelt speak to the principle of liberty. Thus, Voorhis followed Sinclair's lead in switching his party affiliation from Socialist to Democrat. In 1934, Voorhis entered politics as a candidate for state office, running on the EPIC (End Poverty In California) platform headed by Sinclair's gubernatorial bid. Although he fell to defeat, this political

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<sup>7</sup> Bullock, *Jerry Voorhis*, 17-8.

<sup>8</sup> Jerry Voorhis, *Confessions*, 18.

<sup>9</sup> Bullock, *Jerry Voorhis*, 19 (quote); Also: Bullock, *Jerry Voorhis*, 10-25; Jerry Livingston Voorhis, *Idealist*, “Introduction and Chapter 1”; Jerry Voorhis, *Confessions*, 15-20.

experience energized Voorhis, convincing him in the process that political action offered him a chance to effect substantial change through the promotion of his progressive liberal values. Two years later, he defeated an incumbent Democrat to become the party's candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives from California's Twelfth Congressional District. Interestingly, one of the official planks in the candidate's platform was a strong commitment to anticommunism. Victorious in the general election, Voorhis readily credited Franklin Roosevelt's coattails with helping him to Washington, D.C.. Still, Voorhis proved anything but a blindly partisan New Dealer, supporting only those policies that spoke to his conception of progressive liberalism.<sup>10</sup>

Voorhis believed that only a constitutional democracy could satisfy both his political tenants, of "enough to eat" and "freedom of spirit." Later elaborating on this type of democracy, Voorhis identified four pillars supporting "the great superstructure of American civilization": civil and religious liberty; the right of all citizens to own property; constitutional popular government; and equality of social and economic opportunity. Civil and religious liberty, as well as social equality, address man's "freedom of spirit." The rights of property and of equitable economic opportunity address the issue of material needs, "enough to eat." According to Voorhis's ideological construct of the authentic American political ideal, the remaining pillar—constitutional, popularly elected, democratic government—demanded a steadfast defense against subversion by those who might seek to overthrow it. Even in articulating an anticommunist defense of democracy, Voorhis returned to his central principles: the allure of totalitarianism is utterly defeated if the United States better provides for her citizens than does any other nation ("enough to eat"), but does so in a manner that fulfills, rather than abjures or denies, its

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<sup>10</sup> Bullock, *Jerry Voorhis*, 24-44; Claudius O. Johnson, "Jerry Voorhis: What is Right rather than What Is Expedient," in *Public Men in and out of Office*, ed. J.T. Salter (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1946), 324-42; Jerry Voorhis, *Confessions*, 18-23; Jerry Livingston Voorhis, *Idealist*, "Introduction and Chapter 1", "Chapter 2", "Chapter 3".



fundamental commitments to human liberty (“freedom of spirit”). These facets identified the parameters of Voorhis’s entire political ideology of authentic Americanism, especially, as will be seen, his conception of legitimate anticommunism.

Even before the Dies Committee’s definition of anticommunism threatened it, Voorhis promoted the fullest possible measure of individual liberty. One key ingredient in this was protecting the freedom of political thought and speech. During the first days of the 76th Congress’s opening session, he expressed certainty that “from the Republican side there is going to come a good deal of gleeful, optimistic oratory” due to their gains in the 1938 mid-term elections, and that “there will be speeches made pointing out the fallacies of the New Deal and other progressive measures. This, of course, is as it should be.”<sup>11</sup> Such openness is rare in politicians, Voorhis’s contemporaries notwithstanding. Nor was this an isolated example of Voorhis’s willingness to welcome partisan political speech. He later advocated free speech and full civil liberties by offering that democracy “is, in a sense, government by self criticism.”<sup>12</sup> Such freedoms, especially the right of “all people in America...to hold such [political] views as they desire to hold” meant that “a man...in America can call his soul his own.”<sup>13</sup>

A consistent defense of this definition of authentic Americanness required that any acts of government restricting liberty in the defense of constitutional institutions must be narrowly construed. On January 13, 1939, Voorhis rose to do precisely that. Attached to a Works Progress Administration bill had been the Cole Amendment, which stated that workers who attempted to influence the politics of their colleagues forfeited their pay. Voorhis offered his own amendment,

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<sup>11</sup> *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 1st Sess., 147.

<sup>12</sup> *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 1st Sess., 3602.

<sup>13</sup> *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 2d Sess., A433.

which narrowed this restriction to supervisors, foremen, or other officials who might use the power of their position to unduly influence the political opinions of those under their authority. Voorhis feared the Cole Amendment might cost a WPA worker his pay for simply stating a political opinion. Furthermore, he believed that one of the goals of the WPA was to provide employment in an environment where the laborer would not have to ransom his vote for a day's pay, as had happened during the height of the big business/political machine era. This narrower definition of unacceptable behavior protected "the most elemental rights of citizenship," including and especially the freedom of individual political thought.<sup>14</sup>

As this indicates, Voorhis often found questions of personal liberty inextricably bound to economic matters. He once remarked, "Systems of government are not simply principles written in books and embodied in officials but efforts on the part of nations to gain the bread, the safety, and the freedom for which they long."<sup>15</sup> Voorhis invoked this very linkage a number of times in speeches from the floor of the House, as he offered his definition of authenticity for public consumption. Democracy, to him, was more than just protecting liberty; it was also a guarantee to its citizens that their welfare would be the concern of their government. Voorhis therefore considered economic opportunity a foundational element of constitutional democracy. Oftentimes he called unemployment the most serious problem facing the nation and its Congress. This was not mere pandering to a public in the midst of the Great Depression. Rather, Voorhis truly believed that without solving this crisis, any other actions taken to preserve national security and civil liberties were moot. Democracy's surest defense against all assaults would be its guarantee to citizens the rights to work and earn a living. When conservative politicians

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<sup>14</sup> *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 1st Sess., 340-1.

<sup>15</sup> *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 1st Sess., A3032.

asserted that unrest among the unemployed was the result of subversive elements, Voorhis quickly countered that the average man “is not a Communist, a Nazi, or anything else but a perfectly good American, like you and me.... This typical man wants a job, that is all.”<sup>16</sup>

Voorhis developed a strong sense of Keynesian principles in his solutions to this basic economic crisis, maintaining that the key to ending unemployment lay in several essential reforms—although not the complete abolition—of the current economic system. Primarily, he believed that the purchasing power of the nation’s citizens needed to match the vastly improved productive capacity of industry in the machine age. While curing rampant unemployment was an important step in this direction, Voorhis further advocated a social security system to reintegrate the elderly into the purchasing sector of the economy. He also urged the disbanding of monopolies, the leveling of the playing field for small producers (especially independent farmers) in the larger marketplace, and of controlling inflation through monetary and banking reforms. Voorhis’s travels to inter-war Germany showed him first-hand the dangers of rampant inflation and an unsound monetary system; these, he believed, led inevitably to economic depression, unemployment, and civil unrest. That Germany next fell into the clutches of totalitarian fascism indicated to Voorhis that “freedom and democracy could not stand for long side by side with bread lines of willing workers.”<sup>17</sup> He asserted that people’s sense of security lay in the simple guarantee that they had an opportunity to earn their daily bread. Monopoly, for one, threatened the equality of this opportunity, and unchecked inflation could easily lead—as in Germany—to unemployment and poverty, thus threatening and restricting the exercise of property ownership.

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<sup>16</sup> *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 1st Sess., 276-7 (quote); Also: *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 1st Sess., 150, 4892, 10375, A3192; *Congressional Record*, 75th Congress, 2d Sess., 533.

<sup>17</sup> Jerry Voorhis, *Confessions*, 82.

A passionate belief in the government's responsibility to guarantee such rights, especially when the putatively natural order of capitalism did not, distinguished Voorhis's progressive liberalism from other political ideologies, such as the era's laissez-faire conservatism he abhorred. In the midst of the Great Depression, when it seemed the "hidden hand" directed profit to monopolies and shooed the common man away from the marketplace, Voorhis felt it was the federal government's constitutional responsibility to modify or adjust capitalism to remedy the system's failures. Regarding the 1938 Wage-Hour Bill, Voorhis pondered whether the measure encountered difficulties in passing because it benefitted "a group of people who are in the main inarticulate, who are in the poorest position to speak for themselves of any group in America."<sup>18</sup> Later, speaking on the same issue, he considered this a trial of the responsiveness and beneficence of government, two marks of its legitimacy:

[I]ts passage will be proof that the Government of the United States has a sufficient sense of social responsibility so that once in a while the Congress will pass a law which is not wrung from it by political pressure, but which is passed just because it gives a small measure of justice to a group of our people all too long neglected....The test of our sincerity comes only when we are called upon to pass a bill like this one where only a sense of justice drives us to action.<sup>19</sup>

This greatly resonates with the ideological motives behind the origins of the Voorhis School for Boys, and quite apparently recalls the abiding conviction Voorhis first developed in college for the Social Gospel. These were the right things to do not just from a Christian standpoint, but also from the standpoint of a sincere patriot and an ardent defender of constitutional democracy, for, according to Voorhis, providing for these economic opportunities and civil liberties was every bit as important to national defense as funding battleships.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Congressional Record*, 75th Congress, 3d Sess., 5877.

<sup>19</sup> *Congressional Record*, 75th Congress, 3d Sess., 7323-4.

<sup>20</sup> *Congressional Record*, 75th Congress, 3d Sess., 914-5, 1736-7, 3671, 5300-1, 5877, 6705-8, 7211-2, 7323-4; *Congressional Record*, 75th Congress, 2d Sess., A532-3; *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 1st Sess.,

Nevertheless, Voorhis almost unfailingly supported traditional defense appropriations, although he loathed the prospect of another war. Interestingly, Voorhis maintained that the security of the U.S.'s constitutional democracy ultimately depended upon the maintenance not of a strong military but rather of a strong national spirit. The key to this was "protecting the people from insecurity" by guaranteeing them economic opportunity and civil liberties; this was the true definition of Americanness.<sup>21</sup> Voorhis demonstrated prescience in seeing the coming Cold War struggle, predicting that democracy's ultimate test would come not in wartime but in its ability to offer tangible proof that it was "a vital, dynamic and effective force for [its] people." He also recognized that the public discourse of subversion came less from concern over external attack than internal unrest. Believing this stemmed from a government's failure to address domestic concerns, and was thus the environment most favorable for the development of fascist or communist sympathies, Voorhis implicitly understood the course of anticommunist democracy's struggle against totalitarianism:

We cannot ultimately expect to destroy forms of government which we do not like or military dictatorships of one kind or another by force of arms, but we can expect such institutions to crumble by the weight of their own inadequacy to meet the needs of their peoples, if we can demonstrate in this Nation that democracy is a dynamic force capable of solving problems and offering to its people not only freedom, but likewise a basic, lasting security such as no other form of government can give.<sup>22</sup>

This is, of course, a remarkably accurate portrayal of the eventual demise of the Soviet Union, the root opponent of anti-Communism and (to most) anti-communism alike. While Voorhis did not intend this as an exercise in clairvoyance, it demonstrates nonetheless that he

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147-50, 276-80, 327, 854-6, 3060-3, 3751-6, 4892-4, 10375, A2934-5, A3031-3, A3191-4; Bullock, *Jerry Voorhis*, 57-63, 70-4, 90-4; Jerry Voorhis, *Confessions*, 82, 161-82, 207.

<sup>21</sup> *Congressional Record*, 75th Congress, 3d Sess., 1221.

<sup>22</sup> *Congressional Record*, 75th Congress, 3d Sess., 2387, 741 (quotes); Also: *Congressional Record*, 75th Congress, 3d Sess., 740-3, 914-5, 1221-3, 2383-8, 3671, 7212, A2175.

was attuned to the confrontation long before the onset of the Cold War. Perhaps more importantly, it also demonstrates his intuitive comprehension of the conflict as, at its core, a contest over the nature of legitimacy and authenticity—here, of political forms and institutions.

Voorhis couched his anticommunism in the rhetoric of liberty and democracy, stating at the opening of the 76th Congress: “I am against any sort of dictatorship of whatever type.”<sup>23</sup> This demanded from Voorhis a recognition that subversive elements could take advantage of America’s freedoms and spread their anti-democratic message from inside the borders, a tactic popularly referred to as “boring from within.” Thus, “from time to time it is necessary and proper that investigation be made into activities and organizations existing in the Nation that seek to undermine our constitutional democracy and substitute for it some form of dictatorship,” whether fascist or communist. Voorhis’s previous affiliation with the Socialist Party brought him into contact with many committed communists, and he immediately recognized that the “rule by the people” they advocated was not a form of the democracy he so loved but rather an insidious means of totalitarian dictatorship not altogether different from Nazi fascism. As such, even though he disapproved of some of the tactics employed by the Dies Committee during its first year of operation (1938)—and, indeed, voted against its continuation for this very reason—Voorhis nevertheless praised it for the important function to which it ostensibly aspired. Voorhis even suggested he would “certainly favor” the creation of a new investigatory body. This stance set him apart from many of his fellow liberals, some of whom simply believed that communist

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<sup>23</sup> *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 1st Sess., 147.

ideology and Communist infiltration posed little or no threat to the nation; others conceived of “civil liberties” as mutually exclusive of investigations of “un-Americanism.”<sup>24</sup>

This particularly distinguished Voorhis from his progressive liberal colleague, Maury Maverick (D-TX). Voorhis considered Maverick both a friend and a political mentor, especially for Maverick’s leadership of the progressive liberal cohort dubbed the “Young Turks.” Indeed, Maverick defended Voorhis when during debate over a WPA appropriation the then-freshman Congressman received a verbal harangue from a conservative colleague. From that time, Voorhis followed Maverick’s lead on issues such as the Wage-Hour Bill, pushing for increased funding for relief appropriations, and the expansion of both social security and public works programs. Nevertheless, Voorhis diverged substantially from Maverick on the parameters of reasoned and legitimate anticommunism. Maverick consistently opposed any investigation of the sort proposed by Martin Dies in 1938, and had done so for longer than Voorhis had even been in Congress. Yet, Voorhis believed he knew how to accomplish what Maverick, among many other liberals, though impossible: reconciling a domestic anticommunist program with the central tenets of progressive liberalism.<sup>25</sup>

The debate over the appointment to the Interstate Commerce Commission of Thomas Amlie, another former member of the “Young Turks,” offered Voorhis an effective test of this rhetoric of progressive liberal anticommunism. When several of the more doggedly conservative members of the House impugned Amlie’s character over alleged communist sympathies, Voorhis reasserted the sort of narrow definitions of “un-Americanism” that characterized his brand of

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<sup>24</sup> *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 1st Sess., A385, 1120 (quotes); Also: *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 1st Sess., A385-7; Bullock, *Jerry Voorhis*, 122-4; Jerry Voorhis, *Confessions*, 207-8; Jerry Livingston Voorhis, *Idealist*, “Chapter 4”.

<sup>25</sup> Richard B. Henderson, *Maury Maverick* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970), 163-7, 175-87; Bullock, *Jerry Voorhis*, 55-69; Jerry Voorhis, *Confessions*, 30-1.

authentic anticommunism. He suggested the House consider “what real disloyalty constitutes,” arguing it was not unpatriotic for a man to express radical, unpopular, or unconventional economic programs in an attempt to solve unemployment, for example, provided that man believed his proposals “[preserved] the fundamental liberties of the people of this country.” He continued:

Now, suppose a man believes sincerely and in his heart that danger to our democracy is real. Suppose he loves liberty and democracy and the rights of the common people and the preservation of constitutional liberties in this country with all his heart, and suppose he believes that certain economic measures, which may change certain monopolistic practices in this country, are essential to preserve those things....I do not ask that you agree with him...but I do ask that fair play be used, and I do ask that the real facts be given and not that irresponsible charges be allowed to take their place.<sup>26</sup>

One senses that Voorhis identified with Amlie’s plight. Indeed, Voorhis faced accusations in his 1936 Congressional campaign of being a communist sympathizer through his ties to the EPIC movement. Voorhis both feared and loathed such red-baiting, which so broadened the definitions of illegitimacy and un-Americanness as to make them meaningless categories of public discourse. With such irresponsibly inaccurate rhetorical labeling, how could the American people tell, for instance, a progressive liberal from a communist, or (less often a problem), a reactionary conservative from a fascist?<sup>27</sup>

This troubled Voorhis because he possessed a keen sense of the power of rhetoric and public discourse, and particularly information; this muckraking spirit perhaps hearkened back to his first political experiences under Upton Sinclair. When Chinese bombers dropped leaflets over

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<sup>26</sup> *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 1st Sess., 854-5.

<sup>27</sup> *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 1st Sess., 854-6; Bullock, *Jerry Voorhis*, 40-4, 122-4; Jerry Voorhis, *Confessions*, 56-9; Jerry Livingston Voorhis, *Idealist*, “Chapter 4”. Voorhis provided a moment of levity in the chamber when addressing this very concern on Feb. 1, 1940. In responding to questions by Representative Hoffman (R-MI) regarding such labels, Voorhis provoked laughter and applause from his colleagues by stating, “I reserve the right to call the gentleman a reactionary if he calls me a radical. As long as the gentleman calls me a progressive I will call him a conservative.” (*CR*, 76th Congress, 3d Sess., 958.)



the Japanese countryside in May 1938, Voorhis excitedly proclaimed this “a remarkable thing, one of the great things perhaps in all the annals of human history.” Hyperbole aside, this tactic impressed Voorhis because he believed it might give the Japanese people the information “to decide [for themselves] whether the Chinese are their natural enemies, as they have been told by [their own] propagandists.” Notwithstanding the fact that these leaflets were also propaganda, this anecdote reveals much about Voorhis’s thought process. If the American people might be empowered with the facts about truly subversive movements and their tactics—and Voorhis certainly believed such movements existed within the United States—they would seldom become “unwitting dupes” in support of a totalitarian movement. The political grandstanding that rhetorically labeled liberals “communists” and conservatives “fascists” hindered this effort.<sup>28</sup>

Similarly, acceptance of “popular fronts” dramatically obfuscated the danger of truly subversive movements. That many communist organizations wooed members by claiming to be merely anti-fascist or pro-reform in nature, and that fascist subversives drew from the ranks of otherwise patriotic anticommunists, created a dangerous atmosphere. First, it sparked the fear that hysteria over the one radical group might actually propel the other totalitarian faction into power. Voorhis believed this was partially true of places like Germany, Italy, and Spain, where fascist movements owed a great deal of their early legitimacy to their anticommunist propaganda. As such, Voorhis understood that American political movements could not cooperate with totalitarian movements, even on commonly shared goals. Indeed, Voorhis blamed the failure of the Progressive movement on this type of cooperation in the 1920s and 1930s: “As long as the bogey of the united front persists, one promising progressive movement after another will be first discredited and then broken to bits because of infiltration by communists and the

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<sup>28</sup> *Congressional Record*, 75th Congress, 3d Sess., 7211-2; Bullock, *Jerry Voorhis*, 122-4; Jerry Voorhis, *Confessions*, 56-9, 207-8.

impact of their rule-or-ruin philosophy.”<sup>29</sup> For him, not only was anticommunism consistent with and a natural outgrowth from authentic progressive liberalism, but, indeed, active anticommunism might redeem and refresh it.

Thus, when presented with an opportunity to join the very committee whose methods he had decried during its first reauthorization vote, Voorhis accepted. For scholars viewing the Dies Committee as a purely partisan venture, and Voorhis as an idealistic New Dealer, this quite simply fails the test of logic. When one begins to understand Voorhis’s definition of authentic Americanness—a definition wrapped in the threads of a progressive liberalism consistent with active domestic anticommunism—one understands his motives. A seat on the Dies Committee offered Voorhis an even more publicly recognizable, and politically powerful, platform from which to espouse his particular brand of domestic anticommunism, redemptive of and consistent with a more traditional progressive liberalism. Rather than simply complaining about the hardening of “un-American” rhetoric, Voorhis actively challenged its use and misuse.

A few days before joining the Dies Committee in February 1939, Voorhis stated that “democracy can be destroyed in three ways: First, by the subversive activities of groups devoted to other diametrically opposite forms of government; second, by too long a continuance of unnecessary poverty and industrial stagnation; and third, by the destruction of the [freedom of] spirit that alone enables democracy to live.”<sup>30</sup> He devoted his career on the controversial Dies Committee to answering these threats to the fundamental values of Americanness—enough to eat and freedom of spirit—in ways that reconciled legitimate liberalism with authentic anticommunism.

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<sup>29</sup> Jerry Voorhis, *Confessions*, 62-3.

<sup>30</sup> *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 1st Sess., A386.

*Anticommunism and Un-Americanism on The Dies Committee*

By the time Voorhis accepted a seat on the Dies Committee, it systematically concentrated on communist-related organizations and activities as the “un-American activities” it investigated. With the addition of Voorhis, called by Goodman “the liberal hope from California,”<sup>31</sup> the investigations took on a more balanced approach. Not only were fascist organizations more thoroughly scrutinized in the days leading to U.S. involvement in World War II, but also even the investigations into communists became more even-handed.

In early September 1939, the committee heard testimony from Earl Browder, then Secretary of the CPUSA, and Benjamin Gitlow, former Secretary General of the CPUSA. Thanks in no small part to the questions raised by Jerry Voorhis, these testimonies painted a damning portrait of Communist activities and the party line. From Browder, Voorhis solicited a statement on the origin of the party’s policies. While Browder proved quite adept at equivocation and all manner of verbal gymnastics, Voorhis doggedly pursued this question; although he would not explicitly say the CPUSA was a puppet organization of the Communist Soviet Union, Browder reluctantly admitted that there had never been a single point of disagreement between the CPUSA and the Moscow-directed Communist International. When Gitlow testified a few days later, he confirmed this ultimate loyalty. He expanded the description by affirming Voorhis’s suggestion that the Communist Party would willingly “sacrifice the basic economic or other interests of the rank and file of the American people if they felt that by so doing they could benefit the Soviet Union.” Indeed, this hypocritical, insidious prioritizing of the movement over the welfare of its people convinced Gitlow to leave the party. This established, quite

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<sup>31</sup> Goodman, *The Committee*, 55-6.

convincingly in Voorhis's mind, that the CPUSA was un-American in character and most likely in its activities as well. Its loyalty was to neither the American people nor the American form of government, a definition of "un-American" with which hardly anyone could quibble.<sup>32</sup>

Nevertheless, Voorhis was interested in moving beyond a reasonable and accurate labeling of "un-American," and sought also to understand how the subversive movement might be itself subverted. Gitlow first joined the party believing it offered solutions to the economic squalor of the common people; he left the party once his experiences convinced him "that the fundamental policies of communism, based upon dictation, abolition of liberty and democracy, would not improve economic conditions but would result in the contrary."<sup>33</sup> From this, Voorhis drew parallel conclusions as to how best to combat the subversive communist influence. At the most fundamental level, both Gitlow and—more reluctantly—Browder admitted that communism lost a great deal of its appeal upon the improvement of economic conditions, something Voorhis advocated for virtually his entire political career. Yet the communists might reserve a much more devious avenue into American society via front organizations, or communist "transmission belts." These were the organizations joined by otherwise well-meaning individuals who either by innocence or by the organizations' own obfuscation did not know the true nature (generally, communist) of that group. Under more forceful questioning from Voorhis, Earl Browder confessed that the anti-fascist movement, one of the broadest front organizations, was primarily composed of people genuinely concerned with the threat of fascism. The number of communists and sympathizers within that united front was, Browder admitted, only a "small minority."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *Hearings before a Special Committee on Un-American Activities*, Vol. 7, Testimony of Benjamin Gitlow, 4565 (quote), 4572-3, 4663-4; *Hearings*, Vol. 7, Testimony of Earl Russell Browder, 431-2, 4339-42.

<sup>33</sup> *Hearings*, Vol. 7, Testimony of Benjamin Gitlow, 4572.

<sup>34</sup> *Hearings*, Vol. 7, Testimony of Earl Browder, 4384.

Voorhis believed, and Gitlow essentially confirmed, that if these fronts could be exposed to the American people, they would not so easily become “transmission belts” capable of duping otherwise loyal and patriotic—or, legitimate—Americans into aiding subversion.

Voorhis remained committed to a careful exposure, however, ensuring that the public received only cautiously construed and factually accurate information. Here again Voorhis believed that the political branding of “un-Americanism” only confused the identification of true subversion. To emphasize this point, Voorhis recalled Browder’s own testimony on communists in the labor movement. Browder asserted these individuals were not acting like secret agents in concealing their political affiliation, but rather that such self-identification was unnecessary: “[E]veryone in the labor movement is quite familiar with the point of view and methods of work of the Communists. To the degree that there is any confusion, it is only because there are certain misrepresentations broadcast to try to make people appear as Communists who are not.” Voorhis thus believed that using the powerful political and social rhetoric of authenticity, of “Americanism” and “un-Americanism,” threatened disastrous consequences if carelessly politicized.<sup>35</sup>

This was true not just of the label “communist,” but equally that of “fascist,” since each totalitarian movement equally threatened American constitutional democracy. In questioning Fritz Kuhn, leader of the German-American Bund, Voorhis established that, like the CPUSA, the Bund owed its ultimate loyalty to a foreign power. Two especially damning pieces of evidence came from the Bund’s own propaganda journal, the *Weckruf*. One stated: “We may have lying in the closet different citizenship papers and yet we are all German men.” At another time, the paper routinely carried the banner, “Our eternal loyalty to Germany and our eternal loyalty to

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<sup>35</sup> *Hearings*, Vol. 7, 4456 (quote); Also: *Hearings*, Vol. 7, 4339-45, 4453-6; *Hearings*, Vol. 7, Testimony of Benjamin Gitlow, 4572-2, 4663-5; Bullock, *Jerry Voorhis*, 124; Ogden, *The Dies Committee*, 134-5.

Der Fuehrer.” When pressed to accept responsibility for these quotes—and, until shortly before his testimony in September 1939, the paper bore Kuhn’s personal statement of approval—Kuhn wavered, claiming he lacked editorial control over the paper at certain times in its publication history. As Voorhis pressed him, Kuhn folded, feebly offering a “no comment” to Voorhis’s charge of his responsibility for these issues.<sup>36</sup>

Voorhis held the line a few months later in February 1940 during the testimony of William Dudley Pelley, head of the Silver Shirt Legion. In examining a passage in a book written by Pelley, Voorhis asked if the Nazi fascist movement shared with communists the desire to create a revolutionary situation in the United States; reluctantly, Pelly agreed. As such, Voorhis justifiably labeled the Silver Shirts and the Bund with the same brand of “un-American” as the CPUSA. As each owed loyalty to a foreign power, they each fell outside the parameters of Voorhis’s conception of legitimate Americanness. Dies Committee historian August Raymond Ogden notes this was something of a new conclusion, since previously the committee directed the bulk of its time and energies toward the investigation and suppression almost solely of communist-related “un-Americanisms.” Ogden’s tabulations indicate that roughly one-quarter of the committee’s 1939 hearings concerned fascistic activities, a substantial increase from the previous year. Notably, the only substantive change in the committee’s makeup or operating procedures over that time was the addition of Jerry Voorhis and his more balanced use of the rhetoric of un-Americanism.<sup>37</sup>

It certainly seemed as though Voorhis largely vindicated his assumption that domestic communism and fascism were ideological kin. Both advocated violent revolution, gave their

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<sup>36</sup> *Hearings*, Vol. 10, 6049-54.

<sup>37</sup> *Hearings*, Vol. 12, Testimony of William Dudley Pelley, 7245-7; Ogden, *The Committee*, 132-3 (FN 113 inclusive).

allegiance to foreign powers, and owed much of their numbers in the United States to the duping of well-meaning citizens into joining innocuous-sounding front organizations—many of which asserted to be nothing more than a defense against the opposite totalitarian movement. Many individuals offered testimony to the Dies Committee clarifying that they had not intentionally joined un-American organizations, further vindicating Voorhis’s beliefs in the powers of information and exposure. It must have pleased him greatly to offer such individuals an opportunity to clear their names publicly with the committee. In October 1940, Voorhis reassured Pennsylvania policeman and one-time Bund member Herman A. Ries that the committee understood and appreciated innocent affinity for one’s former homeland. Chairman Dies, in an increasingly rare display of fair-mindedness, seconded Voorhis’s hopes that the committee’s findings regarding the German-American Bund would “prove of some benefit to those who [like Ries] have been misled and misguided.” Voorhis enjoyed a similar opportunity a couple of months later, when he offered to publicize the executive session testimony of Rudolph Mangold, a former member of the fascist front organization American Fellowship Forum. While Voorhis could not promise that newspapers would cover this finding with the same eagerness with which they had printed allegations of Mangold’s un-Americanness, he offered the public record as documentation that the committee cleared Mangold of any wrongdoing.<sup>38</sup>

These and similar events speak to the effectiveness and worth of the committee’s annual report for 1939. Submitted to Congress on January 3, 1940,<sup>39</sup> the report garnered rave public reviews. To the *New York Times*’s assessment of the report as “an astonishingly able and

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<sup>38</sup> *Hearings*, Vol. 14, Testimony of Herman A. Ries, 8330 (quote); Also: *Executive Hearings before a Special Committee on Un-American Activities*, Vol. 5, Testimony of Rudolf Mangold, 2149-71; *Hearings*, Vol. 14, Testimony of Herman A. Ries, 8323-30.

<sup>39</sup> The committee’s annual reports were labeled by the date of submission rather than in reference to their chronological content. Thus, for instance, the report detailing the activities and investigations of 1939 is termed the “1940 report.”

balanced document,” historian and contemporary observer Ogden added that it remains “probably the most valuable and outstanding piece of work [the Dies Committee] ever produced.”<sup>40</sup> As the examples above show, the expository information contained within the report obviously helped several individuals extricate themselves from compromising relationships with front organizations. Beyond this, the report is especially noteworthy for Voorhis’s evident influence in its cautious and narrowly-construed use of the rhetoric of anticommunism and un-Americanism. Goodman records that the original report, drafted by the committee’s chief investigator–Dies’s right-hand man and sometime ghostwriter<sup>41</sup>–J.B. Matthews, alleged that hundreds of government employees were Communists and that the Committee on Industrial Organization (C.I.O.) was nothing short of a communist front organization, along with a number of other inflammatory and largely inaccurate indictments. Voorhis and the committee’s other New Dealers–Joe Casey (D-MA) and John Dempsey (D-NM)–successfully lobbied Dies for a more palatable revision. Voorhis’s fingerprints appear visible from the edited report’s first sentence to its last. The report opens with an assertion that the people of the United States faced two primary concerns–the preservation of their constitutional liberties and the “problem of adjusting their economic life to the difficulties of the machine age.”<sup>42</sup> Voorhis often employed this rhetoric on the floor of the House, including during the speech from which this chapter’s title is drawn. Similarly, the report closes with the type of soaring, grandiloquent language which Voorhis occasionally indulged. It effectively dedicates

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<sup>40</sup> Quoted in Ogden, *The Dies Committee*, 179.

<sup>41</sup> In 1943, Martin Dies authored *The Trojan Horse in America*, a self-declared exposé of “fifth column” subversion within the United States; later analysis has proven quite conclusively this was actually the writing of J.B. Matthews.

<sup>42</sup> “Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States,” 76th Congress, 3d Sess., Report No. 1476 (3 January 1940): 1.



the report to the 131 million non-subversive Americans, “especially to the poor, the unemployed, the distressed among them,” stating that Congress “owe[s] them a solution to the economic and social problem of unnecessary poverty in the midst of possible plenty.”<sup>43</sup>

Between these two unmistakably Voorhis-ian passages appear a number of more subtle touches, themselves invocations of Voorhis’s fundamental principles of Americanism. The report repeatedly cautions that the uprooting of subversive elements must simultaneously preserve the full liberties of the innocent. It also often records the committee’s mission as one of exposure, of “protecting our constitutional democracy by turning the light of pitiless publicity” on subversive groups; yet, it also cautions that the politicized rhetoric of un-Americanism must not complicate this publicity, confusing the public. Finally, the 1940 report contains several moderating clauses sorely missing in future publications. Although highly critical of communist infiltration into the ranks of a few specific labor movements, the report asserts an “emphatic” belief that the labor movement remained an integral component of a healthy American democracy. The report expresses a similar faith in the loyalty of most German-Americans, despite the proliferation of numerous pro-German/pro-Nazi subversive organizations. Combined, these characteristics produced a legitimately informative report, one that struck a blow against truly subversive organizations yet minded civil liberties, and, in short, exhibited virtually everything Voorhis believed an investigation of un-Americanism should.<sup>44</sup>

Praise for the 1940 report in many ways expressed approval of the committee’s reformed standards and practices. These were largely attributable to Voorhis’s principled insistence that the rhetoric of anticommunism and un-Americanism be purposeful, meaningful, and cautiously

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<sup>43</sup> “Investigation...”, 25.

<sup>44</sup> “Investigation...”, 24 (quote); Also: “Investigation...”, 1-25; Bullock, *Jerry Voorhis*, 132-3; Goodman, *The Committee*, 85-8; Ogden, *The Dies Committee*, 179; Jerry Voorhis, *Confessions*, 213-6.

narrow in its construction. In retrospect, the committee's most productive and useful work came in 1939 and culminated with the submission of this report to Congress. This is not to say that the committee functioned blamelessly even then. Indeed, two events occurring within the last few months of 1939 very nearly overshadowed the positive impact and reception of the report, and in the end proved more indicative of the legacy of the Dies Committee than did the 1940 report.

The American League for Peace and Democracy (ALPD) often proved a pitfall for the committee. Despite its innocuous name, the ALPD was a clearly established communist "transmission belt" and, to the partisan delight of conservative and anti-administration members of the Dies Committee, many federal employees appeared on the various mailing lists of the ALPD and its surrogate organizations. As early as September 1939, ultra-conservatives on the Committee suggested publishing these names to "out" communist sympathizers within the Roosevelt administration. Voorhis resisted this method, recalling that Browder's testimony established that many putative "anti-fascist" leagues drew their membership largely from among authentic anti-fascists rather than closeted communists. Remarkably, Martin Dies agreed with the distinction; of course, he almost immediately changed his mind, calling a meeting in late October to discuss publishing some 563 names of federal employees culled from ALPD mailing lists. Among the liberals of the committee, Voorhis alone attended the meeting. On all the measures discussed, he was outvoted 3-1 by Dies, Noah Mason (R-IL) and Joe Starnes (D-AL).<sup>45</sup> Thus, on October 25, 1939, the committee issued a press release linking the names on the list to the

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<sup>45</sup> Starnes, like Dies, was a conservative southern Democrat.

communist-front ALPD in what appeared, correctly, as a blatant manipulation of the rhetoric of anticommunism into a partisan political attack on the administration.<sup>46</sup>

This reeked of precisely the thing Voorhis most abhorred, a false use of the rhetoric of legitimacy and illegitimacy. When the matter reached the floor of the House, Voorhis expressed his disappointment. He reminded the House that the task of protecting American democracy presented difficult challenges if the defense fulfilled rather than smothered the principles it hoped to protect. As such, he believed that “the only method democracy has to rely upon is the method of decent and full publicity.” Yet, this exposure was only effective if presented to the public with clarity and precision. While the publication of the ALPD mailing list publicized too broad a picture of “un-American activities,” what most galled Voorhis was the committee’s full knowledge—indicated by its press release—that they lacked any substantive evidence that the people named on the list had actually engaged in any sort of subversive or un-American activities. Such recklessly politicized innuendo represented, to those on the list as well as the public at large, “a grave injustice.”<sup>47</sup>

This was not the last time the Dies Committee sponsored this manner of inauthentic, partisan anticommunism. Indeed, a few months later Dies’s henchman Matthews leaked to the press a report criticizing virtually every consumer organization in the nation. Interestingly, but not ironically, the only organization escaping the report’s wrath was Consumers Research, Matthews’s former and his wife’s current employer. Strategically planted for publication in the Monday newspapers without opposing comment, Matthews released his hand-crafted report late

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<sup>46</sup> *Hearings*, Vol. 7, Testimony of Earl Russell Browder, 4383-5, 4453-6; *Hearings*, Vol. 7, Testimony of Benjamin Gitlow, 4707, 4722-3; Bullock, *Jerry Voorhis*, 127-30; Goodman, *The Committee*, 69-75; Ogden, *The Dies Committee*, 137, 153-63.

<sup>47</sup> *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 2d Sess., 885-8.

on the evening of Sunday, December 10, 1939. It alleged that communists controlled consumer organizations across the nation, and through them conspired to destroy first advertising and next the entire capitalist system. The *New York Times* reported viewing a transcript of the subcommittee hearing which approved the report; Dies was the lone committee member present. Immediately, the liberal trio of Voorhis, Casey, and Dempsey voiced their outrage. Not only had they not seen the report, they suggested that no other committee member even knew of this investigation. Voorhis drafted and released his own statement to the press, noting that while he defended the Dies Committee for its important work against authentic un-Americanism, he disavowed this reckless and baseless report. Voorhis revealed it to be the personal work of J.B. Matthews, although it was printed under the auspices of an official government finding; considering this in the ongoing rhetorical battle to define un-Americanism, Voorhis concluded: “If anything is undemocratic in the world certainly this procedure is.”<sup>48</sup> The fiasco still angered Voorhis as he composed his memoirs nearly a decade later. Voorhis writes that he believed Matthews’s claims were not wholly without merit, and that they likely warranted further investigation. Nevertheless, there is but one mention of this event in the official records of the Dies Committee—a short note of the note’s submission on December 3, 1939, stating it would not be published until hearings on the matter were convened. These hearings never occurred.<sup>49</sup>

Unwilling to allow the likes of Dies and Matthews an unfettered hand in defining for the public contours of legitimate anticommunism, Voorhis pushed Congress to prescribe a standard set of rules and procedures that might, in the wake of the ALPD list and Matthews report debacles, better equip the committee in generating sound product. On January 22, 1940, with the

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<sup>48</sup> Statement of Jerry Voorhis, reprinted in Jerry Voorhis, *Confessions*, 213.

<sup>49</sup> *Hearings*, Vol. 11, 7189; Bullock, *Jerry Voorhis*, 132; Goodman, *The Committee*, 83-4; Ogden, *The Dies Committee*, 172-3; Jerry Voorhis, *Confessions*, 211-3.

committee basking in the positive light generated by its fair and cautious 1940 report, Voorhis proposed to the Rules Committee four essential standards for the operation of the committee in the future—the better, he proposed, to replicate their positive actions of 1939. Repeating these for public consumption on the floor of the House the following day, Voorhis suggested the following. First, the committee should meet en banc at least once a week. Second, no public statements or press releases should be issued in the committee’s name unless first approved by a majority of the whole. Third, the committee should make every possible effort that those personally accused of subversive activities should be called to testify and answer such charges, and, if need be, have their names publicly cleared. Finally, committee members should refrain from commenting publicly on investigations, so that any statements attributed to the committee or an individual member remained grounded in evidence and in fact. Voorhis believed these principles, if unofficially, guided the committee’s operation throughout most of 1939 (with the notable exceptions mentioned above). Voorhis argued that failing these standards jeopardized the committee’s most important mission to the American people. Goodman reports, perhaps more symbolically than literally, that “there were smiles at the Rules Committee at the thought of Martin Dies being bound by such etiquette.”<sup>50</sup> This nevertheless captures the atmosphere of the moment. Voorhis was told that his proposals would “hamstring” the committee. Although he revisited the issue several times over the course of his three remaining years on the committee, Voorhis convinced neither the Rules Committee nor the other members of the Dies Committee to institutionalize and standardize these principles into the investigation of un-Americanism.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Goodman, *The Committee*, 87.

<sup>51</sup> *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 3d Sess., 582-3; Goodman, *The Committee*, 87; Ogden, *The Dies Committee*, 181-2, 191; Jerry Voorhis, *Confessions*, 218-20.

Voorhis did succeed, however, in authoring what is likely the only piece of legislation emanating directly from the Dies Committee. The “Voorhis Act” of October 1940 required all political groups controlled by a foreign power to register with the government and expressly publicize their ideology, organizational goals, and ultimate loyalties. This represented precisely the definition of un-American, subversive activities for which Voorhis had long fought, just as in the 1940 report. In advocating this legislation, Voorhis reaffirmed his conviction that democracy faced a serious threat by these kinds of underground, subversive, and un-American organizations. Yet, he also reminded that the defense against these organizations must fulfill the authentically American principle of liberty: “[T]he philosophy behind this bill is that the American people have a right to know the facts about an organization which is under the control of a foreign government.” Furthermore, he argued:

[I]n a democratic nation you have a right to require that an organization attempting to gain political ends in the Nation should use the methods of democracy to gain them....[W]e are not required in a democracy to put up with undercover political activity, and...we have a right to require that undercover political activity come out in the open and show itself. In my judgment this is the main thing we need to do. Certainly this bill denies no civil liberty. All it does is require these organizations to tell the truth and the whole truth.<sup>52</sup>

This exhibited all the hallmarks of Voorhis’s particular brand of anticommunism, which was simply one component of his anti-subversive Americanism. The statement clearly advocates exposure over suppression, places a high value on the power of information and factual evidence, and carefully and narrowly confines the rhetoric of illegitimacy, or of un-Americanism, while defending authentically American liberty. Nevertheless, Voorhis could not let the opportunity pass without reminding the House that the real root of this issue was unemployment, and that these measures might reduce but could never eradicate un-American subversion until conjoined

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<sup>52</sup> *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 3d Sess., 12146.

with economic reform for the improvement of all Americans. While the Voorhis Act accomplished little of substance—the CPUSA nominally severed its ties with Moscow and the Communist International, but this is widely regarded as purely symbolic—Voorhis gleefully remembered it as “the only measure to ever be considered by the Congress which was opposed by both the Fuehrer of the German-American Bund and the secretary general of the Communist party [of the United States of America].”<sup>53</sup>

Despite his best intentions, neither Voorhis nor the committee substantively investigated un-Americanism during the next two years while the nation anxiously watched the European conflict spread into a new world war. The committee’s 1941 annual report recapitulated the previous year’s findings, expanding them only insignificantly through additional testimony. In 1941, two developments in the war necessarily overshadowed what little work the committee did from that point forward. When in June 1941 Hitler launched his ill-fated and ill-advised Operation Barbarossa against the Soviet Union, many of the more moderate anticommunists seriously reconsidered their antipathy toward a nation now on the side of the Allies in the fight against Nazi Germany. On a much grander scale, the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 and the subsequent entrance of the United States into World War II subordinated virtually all domestic activities to that great cause.

It was during these years, though, that Martin Dies circled the proverbial bend. In the early months of 1942, he often exclaimed that he had personally directed his Dies Committee to investigate the subversive activities of Japanese agents, but the Roosevelt administration obstructed him; neither was quite accurate. After one such tantrum, Voorhis informed the House that, to his knowledge, the committee possessed no information whatsoever suggesting it might

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<sup>53</sup> Jerry Voorhis, *Confessions*, 216 (quote); Also: *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 3d Sess., 12145-7; Bullock, *Jerry Voorhis*, 133; Ogden, *The Dies Committee*, 210.

have predicted or prevented the attack of December 7, 1941. In an understated phrase perhaps all the more damning for its meekness, Voorhis said, “I think it was unfortunate for any such impression to have gone out.”<sup>54</sup>

Through the first months of 1942, the “Dies Committee” existed only in the person of Martin Dies and his one-man, traveling “executive committee.” Never once did it meet en banc. Thus, when Voorhis received an invitation to a June meeting, one wonders if he sensed the ambush that lay ahead. At the meeting, Voorhis received a copy of the committee’s “Special Report on Subversive Activities Aimed At Destroying Our Representative Form of Government.” Voorhis quickly discovered it to be little more than partisan political advertising, aimed at defending conservative Congressmen from attacks by the Union for Democratic Action (UDA) which was advocating their defeat in the 1942 mid-term elections. The UDA, in conjunction with *The New Republic*, published scorecards rating members of Congress on their support or opposition of President Franklin Roosevelt. The pamphlet, titled *A Congress to Win the War*, contained little beyond purely partisan rhetoric; Voorhis found the “committee’s” response no better. Dies compiled a blistering condemnation of the UDA, *The New Republic*, and even such institutions of American pop journalism as *Time* and *Life* magazines, and others, for collaborating to overthrow the legislative branch of the government. Perhaps this would have appeared hysterical—equally in the sense of psychosis as humor—were not the charges so serious, and the rhetoric of those charges so politically and socially powerful. Indeed, the report allegedly linked members of the UDA with the communist front ALPD (which had since disbanded, a success which Voorhis credited to the 1940 annual report), but this evidence was of questionable reliability. In its sweeping allegations, the report implied that any publication advocating the

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<sup>54</sup> *Congressional Record*, 77th Congress, 2d Sess., 2064 (quote); Also: *Congressional Record*, 77th Congress, 2d Sess., 2064-6; Goodman, *The Committee*, 129; Ogden, *The Dies Committee*, 254-5.



election of a liberal over a conservative member of Congress both undermined the war effort and the very foundations of the American system. Voorhis, at this point “a one man minority” according to Goodman, refused to sign the report and instead drafted a scathing rebuttal.<sup>55</sup>

In it, Voorhis clearly declared his views appeared not on behalf of the UDA or any of the organizations baselessly and recklessly attacked by the report, but simply because he refused to condone the manner in which the report was compiled and released. He lambasted the committee, which held no hearings, took no testimony, interrogated no witnesses and yet a report “was just issued all of a sudden.”<sup>56</sup> He assailed the majority for reverting to politicized libel, reiterating yet again that exposure remained the only legitimate means at a democracy’s disposal for the uprooting of un-American subversion. The report hindered that goal by its sloppy and inauthentic use of the rhetoric by which political enemies became “communist sympathizers” at best and, at worst, outright subversives threatening the nation’s survival. Voorhis warned this risked the deprivation of one’s freedom of spirit, the basic element of democracy of freedom of speech, and feared what this turn of events portended:

[F]or the majority of the committee to say in effect that, although the Union for Democratic Action is neither Communist nor Communist-dominated, nevertheless it is un-American because some of its members are radicals is to put the Committee on Un-American Activities in the position of judging people not on the basis of their fundamental loyalty to the United States and its constitutional form of government but on the basis of the particular economic beliefs which they may hold and which are not in accord with those of the committee.<sup>57</sup>

That Voorhis ardently defended the Dies Committee over the previous three-plus years should have given him the legitimacy to criticize its actions without being himself branded un-

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<sup>55</sup> “Special Report on Subversive Activities Aimed At Destroying Our Representative Form of Government,” 77th Congress, 2d Sess., Report No. 2277 (25 June 1942): 1-22; Bullock, *Jerry Voorhis*, 135; Goodman, *The Committee*, 134-5; Ogden, *The Dies Committee*, 264-5; Jerry Voorhis, *Confessions*, 221-3.

<sup>56</sup> “Special Report...,” Report No. 2277, Part 2 (7 July 1942): 1.

<sup>57</sup> “Special Report...,” Part 2, 5-6.

American. Yet, Voorhis clearly sensed such trouble on the horizon; as he had done while defending Thomas Amlie years before, Voorhis recalled his own history in the statement above, denying that atypical economic principles made one a subversive. All he wanted, Voorhis concluded in his dissent, was to protect “the right of loyal American citizens to disagree politically with a majority of the Dies committee without being branded as subversive and un-American.”<sup>58</sup>

As the rhetorical record of the committee began to indicate, this was not to be. The special report demonstrated nothing so well as the chairman’s ability and willingness to use the rhetoric of antismunism, anticommunism, legitimacy and illegitimacy to advance his personal position and his political attitudes. Indeed, it was through this rhetoric that Dies legitimized his own views and actions, believing his status as a chief anticommunist afforded him the right to conduct the committee as he saw fit. Goodman records that the committee did not meet in 1942—not even once. Indeed, the only hearings recorded in the committee’s official record are some nine executive sessions conducted exclusively by Dies. Of these, all but two took place before January 26, and none took place after April 17. Following the release of the special report in June and July 1942, the committee all but fades from the historical record.

Imagine Voorhis’s surprise, then, when on December 29, 1942 he received a draft of the committee’s annual report to Congress. Perhaps Voorhis pondered exactly how a committee that had not met in the preceding year could possibly have anything to report. Nevertheless, instructions appended to the report requested Voorhis submit a “yes-or-no” vote on the draft, since the committee would not meet to discuss the report before it was due to Congress in January 1943. Voorhis could recommend changes, but the instructions declared he was

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<sup>58</sup> “Special Report...,” Part 2, 7 (quote); Also: “Special Report...,” Part 2, 1-7; Bullock, *Jerry Voorhis*, 135; Goodman, *The Committee*, 134-5; Ogden, *The Dies Committee*, 264-5; Jerry Voorhis, *Confessions*, 221-3.

personally responsible for submitting amendments to each individual member of the committee—most of whom had left Washington over a week prior for the Christmas holidays. A cursory examination of the report’s rhetoric and alleged findings convinced Voorhis he must draft another dissent.<sup>59</sup>

Writing that Voorhis disagreed with the report understates his reaction by an order of magnitude. More accurately, the tone and sweeping allegations—equally dangerous in their scope as in their baseless nature—of the report fully shocked him. By the end of its second paragraph, the report established certain “rumors” and “whispers” of un-American activities as every bit “as dangerous as the saboteur’s bomb and flame.” The report moved then into three pages of self-congratulation, effusively praising the committee as “a veritable fountainhead of information for the various agencies of the Government charged with the internal security of the United States.” In a certain sense, Dies (or, more likely, Matthews) accurately deployed this claim. The committee had by this time a copious record of alleged un-Americanism, notwithstanding its somewhat less impressive record in proving the illegitimacy of its targets. At best, this information proved circumstantial, and at worst completely inaccurate, making the committee’s banks of information of questionable utility to those various government agencies. Nevertheless, this did not stop the committee’s majority from using the report to harangue the Attorney General—in a way reminiscent of Congress’s demands of A. Mitchell Palmer in 1919 and 1920, and, also, in a way prescient of the rhetoric of McCarthyism yet to come—for failing to prosecute more alleged subversives than he had. The report hailed the committee for submitting to the Department of Justice a list of 1,124 names of subversives, of alleged un-Americans, on the

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<sup>59</sup> Goodman, *The Committee*, 131, 137-9; Jerry Voorhis, *Confessions*, 223-5.

federal payroll. The D.O.J. disciplined just three of these, a record the report described as permissive and, it insinuated, sympathetic to un-Americanism.<sup>60</sup>

Records such as this report offer historians ample evidence in projecting the Dies Committee as anti-administration. The rhetoric seen above clearly evinces this notion. However, the report needed to couch its attacks on the popular and war-time administration in rhetoric that would demonstrate the committee's popular authenticity. Unsurprisingly, even in this era the committee turned to the rhetoric of American legitimacy and illegitimacy. Again Voorhis mounted a one-man defense against such inauthentic use of the rhetoric of un-Americanism. He saw a committee that seemed to be only a shell of its former self. No longer would it produce useful, careful, and informative reports like its 1940 annual, but now Dies took corporate credit for things the committee simply had not done. For instance, the special report hailed the internment of Japanese-American citizens, each of them, the report implied, demonstrably linked to un-American subversive activities first discovered by the Dies Committee. Gone was the rhetoric of inclusion, such as the 1940 report's praise of labor as a vital part of the American economic system. Instead, the 1942 report deployed the rhetoric of exclusion to harden definitions of legitimate Americanism and, conversely, un-Americanism. Now, the committee alleged links between the C.I.O. and "every instance" of interruption of the industrial war machine. Especially when compared to its 1940 counterpart, but demonstrably so on its own merit, the 1942 report was an embarrassing sham.<sup>61</sup>

By now, Voorhis knew he could do little to correct the committee's terminal velocity; it moved in directions and with enough popular support that he found himself in a most quixotic

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<sup>60</sup> "Special Report on Subversive Activities Aimed At Destroying Our Representative Form of Government," 77th Congress, 2d Sess., Report No. 2748 (2 January 1943): 1-13.

<sup>61</sup> "Special Report on Subversive Activities...", 1-13; Jerry Voorhis, *Confessions*, 223-4

episode. Nevertheless, he immediately drafted and appended to the majority report his thoughtful dissent. He dismissed the report's authority because, like the Matthews report three years earlier, no committee action produced it. Likewise, he disputed its legitimacy because it was presented to the members on a "take-it-or-leave-it" basis. While, quite technically, he did have the option of offering amendments, the report's late draft date and the subsequent nearness of its deadline for submission to Congress made this a practical impossibility; one might reasonably imply that Dies and Matthews presented precisely this. While most historians believe that an idealistic Voorhis dissented over little more than the committee's procedural flaws, a closer reading of his text reveals that Voorhis was still contesting the conception of "un-American activities" employed by the committee's conservative majority. Instead of what it did include, Voorhis argued it should "have consisted in large part at least of guidance to the American people as to how they might identify, avoid, and combat the propaganda and activities of agents and friends of enemy nations of the United States in the current war." Voorhis absolutely agreed with the majority that the federal government should purge from its ranks truly un-American subversives. Yet, Voorhis pointed out that, in reference to the 1,000-plus names, the key consideration remained what it had always, "whether [the] individuals in question are really 'subversive' on the one hand or whether they are simply people whose views don't agree with the majority on the other hand."<sup>62</sup>

Certainly, Voorhis criticized the committee's lax procedures, as most historians agree. While the report claimed the list of names was compiled through subpoena, Voorhis argued that the majority merely harvested them from mailing lists, a tactic the committee had used inaccurately in the past. Names entered this list without hearings, testimony, or credible evidence

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<sup>62</sup> "Special Report on Subversive Activities...", Report No. 2748, 14-5.

of any sort, despite, Voorhis reminded, that the committee learned long ago that one's name on a membership or mailing list seldom proved "un-Americanism." He furthermore labeled as "extravagant" the report's claims that the committee's work initiated the internment of Japanese-American citizens, although he did acknowledge this "relocation" as an important part of national security. In this, as in the dissent's conclusion, Voorhis again demonstrated that he was not the typical liberal anti-anticommunist. He closed his dissent by first praising the committee for the valuable work it had in fact done. He defended it against those critics—many from the liberal side of the partisan divide—who said the Dies Committee served no useful function, or, perhaps worse, purposefully ignored un-Americanism emanating from the extreme right. Voorhis dismissed these charges as baseless as the committee's list of names. Still, Voorhis believed the committee could—and should—do much more. He once hoped it would more fervently investigate pro-Axis propaganda and organizations, especially as this would aid the U.S. war effort. But, notably, Voorhis never forgot the threat from the communist left. Taking these challenges together, the committee should have "[built] a vigorous and unified democratic sentiment in the United States. Its annual report offered an opportunity to strike a blow in that direction. That opportunity [was] neglected." With this, Voorhis recognized the committee as too flawed for him to further support. Rather than remain a one-man minority, Voorhis set it in his mind to resign from the committee.<sup>63</sup>

Voorhis had a few weeks to consider matters before the committee's renewal bill reached the floor of the House for a vote.<sup>64</sup> He knew that he could not vote against the committee's

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<sup>63</sup> "Special Report on Subversive Activities...", 14-16; *Congressional Record*, 78th Congress, 1st Sess., 59-61, 131-3; Goodman, *The Committee*, 137-8; Ogden, *The Dies Committee*, 272-3; Jerry Voorhis, *Confessions*, 223-5.

<sup>64</sup> It should be recalled that this iteration of HUAC was a special committee, meaning the House voted each year on its continuing appropriation.

appropriation and continue to serve on it, but he likewise recognized he had invested considerable personal energy and political capital in the struggle to legitimately claim domestic anti-subversion and anticommunism as liberal issues. When Martin Dies, in a nearly hysterical fit indicative of his increasingly immoderate state, spoke on February 1, 1943, it “completely seal[ed Voorhis’s] decision.” On that date, Dies presented to Congress a list of 39 individuals whose ouster from federal government he demanded. Their crimes were not such un-Americanism as being admitted fascists, Nazis, or Communists. Dies admitted this much. Rather, their subversive un-Americanism came because they were, in Dies’s own words, “crackpots.” A rider to a billion-dollar postal service appropriation proposed cutting off the Congressional funding of those 39 salaries. While the measure was defeated, only a margin of seven votes stood between Martin Dies’s hysterical rhetoric and the blatant assault on due process and constitutional rights by a compliant Congress. In this “crackpot episode,” Voorhis found examples of nearly every problem he encountered during his tenure on the Dies Committee. It clearly recalled the worst aspects of the two most recent committee report (the 1942 annual and the 1942 special reports) in recklessly labeling political minorities with the powerful rhetoric of un-Americanism without the benefit of investigation or substantive evidence. This also abjured the fundamental principle of freedom of spirit within a democratic society, which Voorhis had once described as “government by self-criticism.” Voorhis agreed with Dies that fascists, Nazis, and communists of any stripe did not belong in the ranks of the federal government, and that a strong national legislature remained vital to the maintenance of a healthy democracy. These were no longer the issue, but instead whether the government might legitimately deprive its citizens of their livelihood simply because one member of Congress, no solid rock himself, considered them to be “crackpots.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Jerry Voorhis, *Confessions*, 227; Goodman, *The Committee*, 139-41; *Congressional Record*, 78th

Furthermore, Voorhis knew that the power of Dies's assertions came because he controlled the marks of legitimacy and illegitimacy handed down by one of the most popular bodies of its time—the Special Committee to Investigate Un-American Activities. Had Voorhis's recommended procedures been in place, the report would have clearly denoted the opinions as Dies's alone; the public would not mistake it as bearing the weight of the federal government through the entire Dies Committee. Voorhis stated that he would never suppress Dies's fundamental right to self-expression, while subtly but obviously sniping at his colleague's increasing penchant for demagoguery, noted that neither would “anyone doubt the great effectiveness with which he always [speaks his mind].” Voorhis held members of Congress, and especially members of the Dies Committee, to a higher standard. Because they controlled the mechanisms of legitimacy and authenticity in the realm of un-Americanism—rhetorically, yes, but also criminally—these owed greater care to the preservation of “freedom of spirit.”<sup>66</sup>

Beyond this, Dies's accusations represented the worst kind of assumptive logic. The names were culled from the mailing lists of front organizations with such innocuous names as the “American League for Peace and Democracy” and the “Washington Book Shop.” Although committee hearings of previous years had conclusively demonstrated that the ALPD was a communist front organization, it had a great many surrogate organizations; some of these had little or no ideological connection with the front at all. In fact, Dies Committee investigator Mary Spargo testified that some of the tainted organizations were often easily confused with other groups, especially when dealing solely with mailing lists. The committee also recorded vast testimony indicating that many individuals simply did not know their names were attached to any

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Congress, 1st Sess. 689, 721-4.

<sup>66</sup> *Congressional Record*, 78th Congress, 1st Sess., 722 (quote); Also: *Congressional Record*, 78th Congress, 1st Sess., 689, 721-4.



mailing list at all, much less an “un-American mailing list.” R.W. Lett testified in October 1941 that he had once donated a single dollar to a supervisor at the Rural Electrification Administration who was collecting funds to rent a hall for a “political meeting.” When the supervisor recorded Lett’s contribution, his name became a part of the ALPD’s mailing list. He attended a single meeting, thinking to himself, “Well, I am for peace and I am for democracy,” but never contributed directly to the group or willingly submitted his name to their mailing lists or membership roll. Similarly, Theodore Projector of the Department of Commerce’s National Bureau of Standards gave one dollar to a coworker, and was also added to the ALPD’s mailing lists without his express consent. That Dies so completely ignored the findings of his own committee appalled Jerry Voorhis.<sup>67</sup>

Excerpts from his closing statements on the “crackpot affair” serve as a sort of eulogy for Voorhis’s service as a member of the Dies Committee:

For the past 4 years I have been a member of the Dies committee. As a progressive in my political beliefs, I believe the committee has rendered a service to the cause of true American progressives by exposing the methods used by Communists to attempt either to dominate, use, or destroy progressive organizations....To a lesser extend the committee has [likewise] rendered a service to sincere conservatives....A committee of this sort can serve a useful purpose....My position has been, and is, that the committee’s work should constitute exposure of all types of prototalitarian activities, Communist, Fascist, or Nazi, and especially to expose disloyalty to the United States and propaganda seeking to undermine that loyalty. I do not believe it is in the committee’s province to sit in judgment on the political views of any loyal American, be he reactionary or radical....It has been no particularly easy task to constitute a minority of one on a committee of this sort....I should like to close by stating that I am devoted to this Congress. My service in it has been the greatest privilege I have ever known....Because, however, I am thus devoted to the Congress, I am at times concerned that its work be dignified and effective, and I do not want anything done by us here to be recorded in the chronicles of the future as narrow-minded, bigoted, foolish, or unfair.

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<sup>67</sup> *Executive Hearings*, Vol. 6, Affidavit and testimony of R.W. Lett, 2951 (quote); Also: *Executive Hearings*, Vol. 6, 2949-53; *Executive Hearings*, Vol. 5, Testimony of Mary Spargo, 2340-6; *Executive Hearings*, Vol. 6, Testimony of Theodore H. Projector, 2993-3001; Jerry Voorhis, *Confessions*, 227.

Voorhis also might have added that he hoped future generations would not consider *them* to be “crackpots.”<sup>68</sup>

When the committee came up for renewal just a few days later, Voorhis cast his vote against it for the first time since January 1939. Both times, he indeed protested the committee’s methods and procedures, and recognized it as a partisan anvil against which the administration was hammered by the conservative right. Yet, a view of Jerry Voorhis’s membership of the Dies Committee portraying him as a mere ideologue misses a greater complexity and deeper significance to his service. The Dies Committee proved domestic anticommunism was a powerful political vehicle, one that made and broke countless political careers through its rhetoric of legitimacy and illegitimacy. Voorhis recognized this, and committed himself to contesting the Committee’s definitions of anticommunism and un-Americanism with his own, progressive liberal constructions.

In purely political terms, Voorhis could not succeed because liberalism itself was in flux and the influence of liberals in Congress was in decline. The New Deal seemed to breathe new life into the Progressive movement, but from 1938 onward there were increasingly fewer liberals in Congress; those who remained largely failed to grasp the significance of Voorhis’s battle, and how powerful promise of his brand of anticommunism. Many liberals simply could not reconcile themselves to any investigation of so-called “un-Americanism” because they could not believe this could happen in a manner that protected civil liberties and political pluralism. Undoubtedly, some liberals had no particular desire to see communists purged from their ranks; but others, the vast majority, simply dared not risk opposing the popular Dies Committee in any significant, public way. Goodman records that one of the committee’s most vocal opponents and Voorhis’s

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<sup>68</sup> *Congressional Record*, 78th Congress, 1st Sess., 724.

fellow progressive, John Coffee (D-WA), was reelected to Congress in 1940 by incorporating into his campaign the slogan: “The Dies Committee endorses John Coffee’s reelection.”

Goodman also quotes Hamilton Fish (R-NY) as gloating on the floor of the House shortly after those elections, “There is hardly a handful of the House today that will speak or vote against the continuation of the Dies Committee. Some of those who spoke against it only a year ago are not back in the House.”<sup>69</sup>

### *From an Anticommunist to an Un-American*

While this shows that politicians and the public credited the committee with a great deal of influence in practical politics, it likely also demonstrates the decline of liberalism. Historian Alan Brinkley identifies the New Deal as the closing chapter in the era of “reform liberalism,” as the following decades witnessed a fundamental redefinition, or reorientation, of liberalism as a philosophy of political action. Although he is too dismissive of the Dies Committee’s primary role in establishing conservative ownership of the rhetoric of domestic anticommunism, Brinkley does recognize the political power of the type of slanderous labeling Voorhis had long sought to avoid. Brinkley writes that “the campaign by conservatives to link liberalism with communism—which became devastatingly effective in the late 1940s and early 1950s—was already becoming a factor in national politics” by the beginning of Franklin Roosevelt’s second term.<sup>70</sup> What Brinkley misses is that conservatives could increasingly link liberals with communists simply by a Manichean opposition: conservatives were the authentic anticommunists, ergo liberals were illegitimate un-Americans. In examining the role of media bias in the coverage of the Dies

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<sup>69</sup> Goodman, *The Committee*, 117.

<sup>70</sup> Brinkley, *Reform*, 141.

Committee, Kenneth Heineman concludes, quite accurately, “The public’s perception of communist subversion was more important than the reality.”<sup>71</sup> From the time of the Red Scare and through that of the Dies Committee, conservative social and political forces claimed the legitimacy to control this powerful rhetoric of anticommunism and un-Americanism.

This helps explain the power behind red-baiting, especially as a political tool. Charges of illegitimacy bore substantial weight when levied by political conservatives against political liberals—even if those liberals possessed a far more authentic resume of anticommunism. Indeed, the expert red baiting of a young and politically inexperienced Richard M. Nixon proved the difference in his campaign against a five-term incumbent Congressman named Jerry Voorhis. Although Nixon later claimed that communism played no role in the campaign, mysterious telephone calls blanketed Voorhis’s district on the eve of the election; a voice on the other end of the line told listeners, “This is a friend. I want you to know that Voorhis is a Communist.”<sup>72</sup>

That anticommunism had played such a defining role in his politics only to be turned against him at the end of his career was the sort of heavy-handed irony that characterized Voorhis’s life as an anticommunist. Liberals inclined to sympathize with Voorhis’s positions seldom took the political risk to do so publicly. Others, like Harold Ickes, held Voorhis in utter contempt for participating in what they believed was an anti-liberal crusade; Ickes’s own estimation of Voorhis was, simply, “wobbly.”<sup>73</sup> In Voorhis’s words: “I wouldn’t say I lost any

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<sup>71</sup> Kenneth Heineman, “Media Bias in Coverage of the Dies Committee on Un-American Activities, 1938-1940,” *Historian* 55 (September 1, 1992): 37-52.

<sup>72</sup> Quoted in Alonzo L. Hamby, *Liberalism and its Challengers*, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 286. This anecdote is repeated in William Costello’s *Facts about Nixon* (1960) and Cedric Belfrage’s *The American Inquisition* (1973). Voorhis himself recorded Nixon’s claim that anticommunism was not his campaign strategy in 1946 (Jerry Voorhis, *The Strange Case of Richard Milhous Nixon* (New York: Paul S. Eriksson, 1972), 8).

<sup>73</sup> Quoted in Goodman (*The Committee*, 137) and Bullock (*Jerry Voorhis*, 134).

friends over this...but they didn't think I should have been as cooperative with the committee as I was."<sup>74</sup> Indeed, he often defended the committee against the attacks of fellow liberals, particularly Frank Hook (D-MI), Samuel Dickstein (D-NY), and Vito Marcantonio (D-NY), each of whom spoke against Dies and the committee at nearly every opportunity. Voorhis routinely offered answers to their caustic questions about the committee's worth or of its accomplishments; twice, when Dickstein asserted that the Dies Committee did not deserve its appropriation, Voorhis vigorously opposed his liberal colleague.<sup>75</sup>

Alternately, conservatives considered Voorhis "un-American" for his opposition to Dies's unfettered hand, although some used him as evidence of the converted in Dies's proselytizing brand of anticommunism. Voorhis keenly recognized this dichotomy: "As a member of the Dies Committee, my work never pleased any group wholly." Indeed, he recorded a sampling of one day's correspondence in 1942: "Letter telling me it was 'un-American' for me to resign from the Dies Committee. Two letters telling me I should have resigned from the Dies Committee long before I did, and one of them saying it was 'un-American' for me to go on the committee at all."<sup>76</sup>

Despite Voorhis's credentials as an anticommunist, the Nixon-Voorhis campaign of 1946 was just one of many instances in which conservatives rode the rhetoric of anticommunism to political power. Almost immediately after the war, conservative southern Democrat John Rankin (D-MS) successfully pushed through Congress legislation making HUAC a permanent, standing committee. Throughout these early days of institutionalized anticommunism, liberals remained in

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<sup>74</sup> Quoted in Bullock, *Jerry Voorhis*, 133.

<sup>75</sup> *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 3d Sess., 13905-6; *Congressional Record*, 77th Congress, 1st Sess., 217-8.

<sup>76</sup> Jerry Voorhis, *Confessions*, 228, 45.

flux, effectively powerless to challenge the definitions of legitimacy and authenticity offered by political and social conservatives of the era. Gary Gerstle and Warren Sussman argue that conservatives benefited most from deploying the rhetoric of anticommunism because, as Gerstle writes, it allowed them to self-identify as “the guardian[s] of ‘America’ against its ‘un-American’ enemies.” Susman calls this “playing the Americanism game,” and suggests political conservatives appeared more legitimate in this regard because of the intuitive rhetorical connection between “Americanism” with traditionalism, and traditionalism with conservatism. Gerstle adapts this theory into his own study of race relations, finding that “in the hands of [conservative] anti-Communist crusaders, it became a tool for narrowing the political and ideological boundaries of the American nation.”<sup>77</sup> Although he could not successfully change the contours of these rhetorical boundaries, Voorhis nevertheless articulated and fought for different conceptions of anticommunism and un-Americanism, ones that reconciled this powerful new political force to his traditional progressive liberal roots.

His politics linked Voorhis to what liberalism was and, simultaneously, to what it would eventually become. In his progressivism, Voorhis seems anachronistic, almost as if he were born a generation too late. His rooting of the appeal of un-Americanism in the fundamentally—he believed—un-American existence of economic squalor and hopelessness stemmed from his religious convictions and his life experiences. From this progressivism Voorhis advocated systemic reforms that might match the nation’s buying power to its industrial productive capacity. Ultimately, the war apparently disproved Voorhis’s claims that machine-age capitalism had been abused or corrupted in some way; full employment generated a post-war economic boom that matched output and consumption in a way Voorhis believed purely hidden-hand

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<sup>77</sup> Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 158, 267; Warren Susman, *Culture as History* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2003), 84 (quote), 57-85.

capitalism could not. At the same time, Voorhis's strong commitment to anti-subversion and anticommunism predicted the stance of the Cold War liberals yet to come. Brinkley argues that liberals of this era needed "a broad symbolic appeal capable of inspiring emotional as well as intellectual engagement."<sup>78</sup> Anticommunism provided such an appeal, and while Cold War liberals embraced it on the international stage, the domestic anticommunism Voorhis advocated remained largely unengaged. For instance, one sees Voorhis's ideological anticommunism in the economic rationale behind the Marshall Plan, as both constructs presupposed that economic plenty naturally repelled communist appeals. The Marshall Plan essentially exported those policies Voorhis believed would simultaneously end the Great Depression and any lingering Red threat on the homefront.

Even when liberals touted domestic initiatives as part of the anticommunist program, they still couched them in the rhetoric of "global struggle." Brinkley claims, for instance,

No single event did more to advance the liberal cause of increased public support for education than the Soviet Union's launching of Sputnik in 1958. John Kennedy, two years later, often justified his support for liberal domestic initiatives on race, poverty, education, and other issues by insisting that strengthening America at home was an essential part of battling the communist threat abroad.<sup>79</sup>

As is explored in chapter five, Kennedy's successor, Lyndon Johnson, attempted to reconcile his War on Poverty to international anticommunism—only to see the conservative opposition hamstring it from its inception through effective use of decades-old red baiting, the hallmark rhetoric of conservative domestic anticommunism. This must have disappointed

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<sup>78</sup> Brinkley, "Dilemmas of Modern Liberalism," in *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Future of Liberalism, A Conference Held on October 11-12, 1989* (Westport: Meckler Corporation, 1991), 18. The ideas in this speech later served as the impetus for Brinkley's 1998 *Liberalism and its Discontents*.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, 22.

Voorhis, as political liberals seemed still unable to strike a balance between progressive reforms and domestic anticommunism.<sup>80</sup>

Just as during his tenure on the Dies Committee, liberals abandoned Jerry Voorhis's brand of anticommunism as Vietnam derailed Johnson's ambitious Great Society program. While supportive of many aspects of the latter, Voorhis identified the former as anticommunist repression of the most explicit kind. Indeed, the entire Voorhis family campaigned for Eugene McCarthy for this very reason.<sup>81</sup> Ultimately, the Vietnam war played a significant role in the election of Voorhis's old nemesis, Richard Nixon, to the White House in the fall of 1968. Although the Watergate scandal ultimately afforded Voorhis an encore on the public stage—he briefly became a popular speaker on the political stylings of Nixon, having been the first in a distinguished line of red-baiting victims—that affair rekindled his disappointment that politics could not exist on a higher level. During one particularly tense debate during his tenure in the House, Voorhis decried the House to be “in a completely totalitarian state of mind,”<sup>82</sup> a sentiment echoed by some historians and social critics in an era where the rhetorical and legalistic tools of anticommunism may have been manipulated into those of antiterrorism.<sup>83</sup> Whether or not Voorhis would agree with this modern reinterpretation, he clearly recognized the power inherent in rhetorically defining legitimacy and authenticity in the social and political realms of American society.

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<sup>80</sup> In addition to chapter five, see also: Brinkley, “Dilemmas...,” 17-22; Brinkley, *End of Reform*, 266-71; Brinkley, *Liberalism and its Discontents* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 132-4.

<sup>81</sup> Jerry Livingston Voorhis, *An Idealist in the Private Sector: The Post-Congressional Career of H. Jerry Voorhis*, “Chapter Three,” Accessed on 22 June 2004 at <http://www.csupomona.edu/~library/LibraryInfo/special/Voorhis/book2/chap3.html>.

<sup>82</sup> *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 3d Sess., 13736-7.

<sup>83</sup> This is one of the chief arguments of *Cold War Triumphalism: The Misuse of History After the Fall of Communism*, edited by Ellen Schrecker (2004).



## CHAPTER FOUR

### “THINGS THAT GO ‘BUMP’ IN THE NIGHT”: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF AN ANTICOMMUNIST HERO

From ghoulies and ghosties  
And long-legged beasties  
And things that go ‘bump’ in the night,  
Good Lord, deliver us!

-- Traditional Scottish Prayer

His body fell, from sixteen stories up, onto the roof of a third-floor passageway at the Bethesda Naval Medical Center. Five minutes later, at 1:55 A.M. on May 22, 1949, hospital personnel arrived on the scene and pronounced him dead. They found him still clothed in his silk pajamas and bathrobe, watch still running despite his fall. His bathrobe sash was tied around his neck, but the sixteenth-floor kitchen, from which window he fell, neither bore signs of struggle nor attempted suicide. Mysterious circumstances notwithstanding, all who knew him said he died a patriot and a staunch anticommunist. Moreover, James Forrestal died a hero.

These are the facts upon which virtually all observers agreed. Beyond these few characteristics, the death and legacy of the nation’s first Secretary of Defense remain shrouded in controversy and conspiracy. From means to motive, scholars and unfettered conspiracy theorists alike disagree on a number of issues, all, seemingly, except his heroism.

For some, his death represents the classic fulfillment of a soldier’s call to duty, no different than a heroic death on the field of battle. For others, Forrestal’s legacy resembles that of a protagonist in a classic Greek tragedy, wherein the hero’s greatest strength ultimately becomes his fatal flaw. For still others, an insidious enemy—figuratively, or, more conspiratorially, literally—felled Forrestal by a stab-in-the-back. This Forrestal is a sort of pulp spy novel’s hero, too strong to have been undone by any natural force or straightforward challenge. These

archetypes remain consistent whether one believes that Forrestal took his own life, as is the unanimous scholarly opinion, or was the victim of some sort of murderous conspiracy. Indeed, even the most reputed account of Forrestal's life and the circumstances surrounding his death, the biography by Townsend Hoopes and Douglas Brinkley, reluctantly admits that "Forrestal's death fostered several enduring suppositions."<sup>1</sup> Yet the veracity of these theories is in some ways less important than exploring why and how they developed—and remain—as cultural artifacts of America's peculiar anticommunist Cold War culture.

Indeed, scholars and conspiracists, whether contemporaneous or contemporary, converge in their "heroic" eulogies of Forrestal's life. This suggests a more significant connection between their divergent uses of his death than is yet recognized. Three main source categories relate these events: immediate press coverage and commentary (with the *New York Times* as the exemplar), scholarly, and conspiracist. The "facts" as determined by contemporaneous press coverage, and in particular the tone of that coverage, exhibit the laying of rhetorical groundwork for the development of conspiracy theories by those for whom Forrestal's death must serve a meaningful purpose. As the quote from Townsend and Hoopes demonstrates, not even the expansion of scholarly analysis of Forrestal's death redeems it from the realm of social myth-and-meaning making. Indeed, it is in large part from the development of certain conspiracy theories that one more clearly sees the shared attribution of "heroic" elements to Forrestal's life and—especially—death. From immediate press coverage and through the development of conspiracy theories galore, the mysterious circumstances of James Forrestal's death comprised part of an ongoing social discussion about the nature and definition of a legitimate hero in the historically contingent environment of that anticommunist era.

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<sup>1</sup> Townsend Hoopes and Douglas Brinkley, *Driven Patriot: The Life and Times of James Forrestal* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1992), 468.

*Explaining the fall: Coverage and attribution of Forrestal's death*

Over the first few months of 1949, the *New York Times* presented its readers with little clue of what was to come of James Forrestal. On January 11, White House Press Secretary Charles Ross refuted and denounced rumors then circulating around Washington, D.C. hallways that Secretary of Defense Forrestal was on the verge of resignation. The most recent rumor had Forrestal set to resign that very week. The following day the paper quoted Forrestal as saying that this merely reflected the customary second-term political practice. In this, cabinet members routinely submit formal resignations to the newly re-elected president so he has the option of beginning with a fresh slate of advisors on his new term in office. Although widely recognized that Forrestal did not campaign as vigorously for President Harry S Truman's 1948 reelection as did some other cabinet members, the Secretary of Defense nevertheless believed he had no reason to expect President Truman would accept his resignation.<sup>2</sup>

As the President acknowledged publicly the following day, nothing of truth indicated Forrestal's ouster from the still-reorganizing National Military Establishment (which officially became the Department of Defense in August 1949). Forrestal was Truman's handpicked choice to direct the complex unification of the various U.S. military services under one bureaucratic chain-of-command; virtually all sources agree that Forrestal progressed more ably than might be expected given the unprecedented scope of the project. Perhaps because of his wartime cultivating of the press—evidenced by his friendship with *Times* columnist Arthur Krock—he received almost uniformly positive coverage in the post-war era. One observer labels the press's relationship with Forrestal as uncritical, largely because of their private agreement with

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<sup>2</sup> "Denies Forrestal Quits," *New York Times*, 11 January 1949, p. 15; "Forrestal Says He Expects to Stay in Cabinet as Secretary of Defense," *New York Times*, 12 January 1949, p. 15.

Forrestal's increasingly public anticommunism. Indeed, when Truman spoke against the resignation rumors, he did so by reiterating Forrestal's vital advisory role during those early days of the Cold War.<sup>3</sup>

As a president following the New Deal liberalism of Franklin Roosevelt—and the attacks upon it by conservatives wielding the rhetoric of domestic American anticommunism like a partisan club—Truman needed public legitimation of his own anticommunist convictions. As witnessed in the preceding chapter, liberals of the post-war era typically conceived of anticommunism as an international commitment, leaving the rhetoric of domestic anticommunism to more conservative voices. Indeed, even Forrestal focused most of his anticommunist energies on the geopolitical Cold War. Just weeks following the resignation rumors, Walter H. Waggoner published an interview with Secretary Forrestal on the state of the post-war world. Forrestal praised Truman for boldly reducing defense expenditures, which Forrestal believed encouraged the Soviets to do likewise and stabilize the bipolar world. Forrestal noted that this as a dramatic improvement over the previous spring, when certain “events” ratcheted up those same tensions. Through Waggoner, Forrestal identified those as: the Communist takeover of Czechoslovakia; the Berlin crisis and airlift; and—notably, for the purposes of this chapter—“the mysterious death leap of Jan Masaryk in Prague.” Recalled by some as the “Third Defenestration of Prague,” Masaryk’s fall from an open window seemed suspicious to Forrestal, who indirectly implicated Communist hardliners in the Czech government who opposed the more moderate Masaryk, then Foreign Minister. Forrestal clearly self-identified as a chief anticommunist, answering Waggoner’s question about lingering rumors

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<sup>3</sup> “Forrestal Stand ‘Plain,’” *New York Times*, 14 January 1949, p. 4; Karen M. Russell, “Building an Anticommunist Consensus: James Forrestal and the U.S. News Media, 1944-49,” Unpublished manuscript, reviewed 25 June 2008. In particular, the reader should note Russell’s conclusion that the press failed in its “watchdog” role (p. 47). Russell is an associate professor of journalism and mass communications at the University of Georgia.

of Forrestal's retirement by asserting: "I will return to private life...when I feel I can be of no further use to the national security."<sup>4</sup> Although Forrestal credited Truman for reducing the immediacy of the Cold War, his tone and rhetoric nevertheless communicated clearly the need for continued watchfulness.

Then, on March 3, the *Times* ran a front-page headline: "Forrestal to Quit Cabinet on April 1, Washington Hears." It further explained the move in a sub-headline that called Louis A. Johnson, Truman's chief re-election strategist, a "Loyal Truman Man, He Is Said to Have Refused Anything Less Than Defense Chief." The next day, *Times* columnists set in motion the rhetorical chain of events that ultimately resulted in the social construction of a mythological anticommunist hero. On March 4, at the White House's daily press briefing, columnist Anthony Leviero confirmed the seemingly stunning news. Truman announced March 31 as the date for the transition from the nation's first to its second Secretary of Defense. In an unsubtle jab at the administration, Leviero confirmed the news despite the fact that "such speculation [of Forrestal's imminent departure], inspired by sources close to the President right after Election Day, was publicly discouraged repeatedly by the Chief Executive."<sup>5</sup>

More critically, columnist and Forrestal admirer Arthur Krock initiated a public eulogy of Forrestal's service. Hailing him as the "Last of the World War II Cabinet," Krock effectively linked Forrestal's legitimacy to that popular war. By lamenting that Forrestal's "persistent detractors in the press and on the radio will rejoice"—referring almost certainly to Walter Winchell (later a supporter of Joseph McCarthy's anticommunism) and Drew Pearson (later a critic of McCarthyism)—Krock implied that such attacks were unfounded and illegitimate. For

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<sup>4</sup> Walter H. Waggoner, "Forrestal Holds Dangers Lessened," *New York Times*, 2 February 1949, p. 1, 6.

<sup>5</sup> Anthony Leviero, "President Appoints Johnson As the Successor to Forrestal," *New York Times*, 4 March 1949, p. 1; Also: "Forrestal to Quit Cabinet on April 1, Washington Hears," *New York Times*, 3 March 1949.

Winchell, Forrestal lacked sufficient commitment to domestic anticommunism, while for Pearson, the Secretary characterized of the type of hysterical reactionism that threatened the civil liberties he purportedly defended against communism. Krock acknowledged their withering attacks on Forrestal, seemingly from all sides at once, but clarified that Forrestal only resigned under their rhetorical assaults “because [they] never ceased.” He further asserted that Forrestal often broached resignation, but remained at Truman’s express urging. With this tone, Krock suggested that Forrestal continued in that vital service of his nation’s defense for two primary reasons rhetorically linked as one-and-the-same: opposing his critics’ baseless attacks, and fulfilling his loyal, legitimate, American duty.<sup>6</sup>

The paucity of discussion of the reasons for Forrestal’s seemingly sudden resignation from a life devoted to public service made the following month’s news appear even more shocking. Beginning on April 6, the *Times* published a series of updates on Forrestal’s medical condition following what it first termed a “routine medical check-up and physical examination” at Bethesda Naval Medical Center. The headlines from the weeks that followed were a sort of cinematic slow reveal, gradually publicizing the depth—if not the true nature—of Forrestal’s condition:

Forrestal Is Treated in Naval Hospital for Nervous and Physical Exhaustion (April 8)  
Forrestal Tests Go On: Condition of Ex-Defense Head Is Called ‘Quite Satisfactory’ (April 9)  
Forrestal Rests ‘Comfortably’ (April 11)  
Forrestal Reported In State of Fatigue (April 12)  
Forrestal Still Gaining: Recovery... Only a Matter of Time, Doctor Says (April 17)  
Forrestal Improving (April 21)  
Truman Visits Forrestal...in Hospital (April 24)  
Forrestal ‘Looks Fine’: Johnson So Reports, Thinks He May Be Out in Mid-May (April 28)  
Forrestal Gains 12 Pounds (May 18)

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<sup>6</sup> Arthur Krock, “In The Nation: The Last of the World War II Cabinet,” *New York Times*, 4 March 1949, p. 20. For more discussion on Pearson and Winchell, see also: Russell (passim), Arnold Rogow (*James Forrestal*, 1963), or Hoopes and Brinkley (*Driven Patriot*, 1992).

And then, suddenly:

Forrestal a Suicide at Naval Hospital (May 22)<sup>7</sup>

With full coverage beginning the following day, the *New York Times* set about eulogizing Forrestal as a hero, one who died in loyal and patriotic service of his country—or, in the rhetoric of authentic Americanness. Walter Waggoner’s article carried as one of its sub-headlines the words of President Truman: “He Was a War Casualty as if He Died at Front.” Referencing Forrestal’s seemingly tireless work, first as undersecretary—then Secretary—of the Navy during World War II and later as Secretary of Defense during the reorganization, this statement serves as Truman’s rhetorical pardon for any culpability Forrestal may have had in his own death. Just as a soldier is not held to account for his own death on the battlefield, neither would Truman blame Forrestal for working himself to the breaking point in the defense of his nation, most recently against communism. This statement also explicitly joined Forrestal’s death with his patriotism, as did statements by such authorities on Americanness as Herbert Hoover, Bernard Baruch, and Dwight D. Eisenhower. Each agreed in their own way that Forrestal died as a soldier in war, the most loyal of civic servants. Eisenhower considered Forrestal a “citizen of heroic mold,” while the *Times*’s more formal eulogy, carried on page 22 of that day’s paper, explained that Forrestal’s “tragedy is directly traceable to his overwork on behalf of his country.”<sup>8</sup>

In fact, the *Times* reported these very circumstances in explaining Forrestal’s hospitalization. What the headlines termed “nervous and physical exhaustion” or “fatigue,” the articles clarified as “occupational fatigue,” a sort of civilian shell shock, a “physical and emotional reaction that came from fighting too long without respite.” Forrestal lost twenty-five

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<sup>7</sup> *New York Times* headlines from 6 April through 22 May 1949.

<sup>8</sup> “Mourned in Britain,” *New York Times*, 23 May 1949, p. 3; “James Forrestal,” *New York Times*, 23 May 1949, p. 22; Walter H. Waggoner, “Forrestal Killed in 13-Story Leap,” *New York Times*, 23 May 1949, p. 1, 3.

pounds in the days before his admission to Bethesda Naval Medical Center for unspecified treatment, but the *Times* reported often of his “progress” in regaining that weight and “recovering” from his occupational fatigue. In further defending this “rest” as legitimate for a heroic public servant of Forrestal’s stature, the *Times* argued that “his untiring efforts and self-sacrifice have earned for him the gratitude and respect of his fellow-citizens, and the rest he so richly deserves.”<sup>9</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the *Times* columnists thus extended the rhetoric of heroic soldier-patriot in their coverage of his death. A special column by Harold B. Hinton, one of Forrestal’s last professional secretaries, expounded the causal link between Forrestal’s legendary work habits, the pressures of presiding over various wars—including World War II, the “turf” wars within the National Military Establishment, and the Cold War—and Forrestal’s demise. Hinton suggested that the anticommunist battle wholly consumed Forrestal in his final days of public service, right up until his resignation took effect on March 31, 1949: “[T]here was never a day when he could not be absolutely certain the struggle with the Soviet Union would not turn into a conflict of bombs and bullets.”<sup>10</sup>

As the *Times* transitioned its coverage to Forrestal’s funeral and burial, the mythology of a hero continued emerging. In one *Times* article, Bernard Katzen, the head of the Republican Club, argued Congress should posthumously award Forrestal the Medal of Honor for his bravery and courage under (presumably rhetorical) fire; the headline read, “High Honors Held Due to Forrestal.” The *Times* similarly followed discussion of Forrestal’s interment at Arlington National Cemetery, that final honor for self-sacrificing, patriotic American soldiers. Yet, while

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<sup>9</sup> “Forrestal Is Treated in Naval Hospital,” “Forrestal Rests ‘Comfortably’”; “The Patient at Bethesda,” *New York Times*, 13 April 1949, p. 28; “Forrestal Still Gaining...”; “Forrestal Gains 12 Pounds”.

<sup>10</sup> Harold B. Hinton, “Burden of Defense Bore on Forrestal,” *New York Times*, 23 May 1949, p. 2.



Anthony Leviero reported plans for “simple rites,” Walter Waggoner depicted the actual ceremony of Forrestal’s funeral service as, “Forrestal Buried With Hero’s Rites.” Explicitly emoting both tragedy and hero-worship, Waggoner reported that “Forrestal received a military hero’s burial...in the resting place of Americans who have given their lives for their country.” To what specific conflict Forrestal gave his life—whether military (World War II?), internal (unification?), or geopolitical (Cold War anticommunism?)—Waggoner left his readers to decide.<sup>11</sup>

Not even sober scholarly opinion, with the benefit of half-a-century’s objectivity, fully escapes this hero rhetoric when describing the legacy of James Forrestal. Biographers Townsend Hoopes and Douglas Brinkley confirm Forrestal’s heroism, albeit in a decidedly different rhetorical sense. Where the *New York Times* recorded the contemporaneous eulogizing of Forrestal as a (Cold) war hero, most scholarly opinion—as represented by Hoopes and Brinkley—portrays Forrestal along the lines of a tragic hero of the classic Greek dramatic genre. In their concluding analysis of his life and death, Hoopes and Brinkley write of Forrestal as a “figure of fate in the classic sense,” comparing him to the heroes of various works of fiction. In this view, Forrestal reflected “a character in a Theodore Dreiser tragedy, or the hero of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*.” They extend the analogy by offering that “John O’Hara, John Dos Passos, and George Backer all wrote novels whose central figures were modeled on Forrestal.” The most critical element of this perspective on Forrestal’s legacy is the notion that the very strengths for which Forrestal won praise during his life became his tragic and fatal flaws. Hoopes and Brinkley consistently portray Forrestal as a man driven by a keen intellectual patriotism, borne

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<sup>11</sup> “High Honors Held Due to Forrestal,” *New York Times*, 25 May 1949; Anthony Leviero, “Forrestal Burial to be at Arlington,” *New York Times*, 24 May 1949, p. 1; Walter H. Waggoner, “Forrestal Buried With Hero’s Rites,” *New York Times*, 26 May 1949, p. 15.

out in his everyday actions by way of a legendary work ethic—hence the title of their authoritative biography, *Driven Patriot*.<sup>12</sup>

This theme replays itself in a variety of settings throughout the pages of their biography. It culminates in the exhaustion of the hero's "extraordinary physical stamina and disciplined drive." Like the title character in Sophocles' "Chorus from Ajax," the hero's intense lifestyle propelled him to great success. Yet, stricken like Ajax with debilitating madness, Forrestal reconciled suicide as the only acceptable outcome once his body betrayed his habits. Ultimately, Hoopes and Brinkley postulate, Forrestal's extraordinary devotion to public service later impelled him to set down the pen he had used to copy a stanza from the "Chorus," walk unnoticed from his room on the sixteenth floor of the Bethesda Naval Medical Center, into the kitchen across the hallway, and toward the unprotected window from which he fell—not to disgrace, but to his fate. This was not the suicide of a coward seeking escape from his burdens, but the irrational choice of one who could no longer serve his country with the same, once legendary commitment.<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, a slight literary twist deploys Forrestal instead as the hero protagonist of a pulp spy novel. Just as the circumstances and public knowledge about his death allowed for the legacy's manipulation into the construct of a heroic soldier, Forrestal's demise may be reinterpreted in light of the burgeoning anticommunist hysteria that bred all manner of conspiracy theories—culminating most recognizably in McCarthy's unverified claim of widespread communist infiltration of the federal government. All great conspiracies, like McCarthy's list, begin with at least a kernel of truth; the real debate is where the conspiracy ends

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<sup>12</sup> Hoopes and Brinkley, *Driven Patriot*, 472-4.

<sup>13</sup> Hoopes and Brinkley, *Driven Patriot*, 464-80.

and the myth-making begins. For Cornell Simpson, a lay historian who allegedly began his investigation into the conspiracy surrounding Forrestal's death in the mid-1950s, Forrestal exists as a hero of the pulp fiction genre, a dime-store spy novel's protagonist too powerful and too righteous to be undone by natural or straightforward causes.

In the introduction to his well-crafted conspiracy theory, *The Death of James Forrestal* (1966), Simpson claims that for almost a decade publishers rejected his tome as "too controversial, too 'dangerous.'" One should not confuse Simpson's work as scholarly; rather, from unattributed quotes such as this example, to its lack of source documentation and the mysterious origins of its Western Islands Publishers, numerous characteristics place it as archetypal conspiracy mythology. Taken at his word, Simpson drafted the work in the mid-1950s, following a number of watershed moments in the Cold War and domestic American anticommunism. Chief among these are four events that followed Forrestal's death in relatively quick succession: the "loss" of China to Mao's Communists, the Soviet detonation of an atomic bomb thanks in part to the treasonous espionage of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, the outbreak of the Korean war, and the onset of Joseph McCarthy's accusatory brand of domestic anticommunism. All of these rekindled the peculiarly American Red Scare hysteria during the time when Simpson pieced together the puzzle of James Forrestal's suspicious death, a critical context. As the author engaged in the essentially social process of constructing a myth, he did so influenced by his surroundings—a particularly powerful era of anticommunism. Furthermore, by the time Simpson found a publisher for his (enduring) suppositions, the United States had witnessed both the Cuban Missile Crisis and the assassination of President John F. Kennedy by a gunman (presumably a lone gunman, although this conspiracy lies far beyond the parameters of this chapter) with demonstrable ties to the Soviet Union. Like the hero of a spy novel, then,

Simpson's Forrestal fell from the kitchen window not because his own mind and body betrayed him, but because he was, perhaps not unlike Simpson's manuscript, "too dangerous."<sup>14</sup>

This genre's hero is undone by external, not internal, forces. An added layer of intrigue comes when a close and trusted associate betrays the hero—or exploits the hero's fatal weakness. To better sell the consuming public on the surprise of the hero's death, and often the shock of his betrayal, this hero must be relatively uncomplicated. Thus, in Simpson's work, Forrestal's heroism more closely matches the rhetoric of the soldier-hero model deployed in contemporaneous newspaper accounts than the complex portrait of a psychically-convulsed tragic hero of scholarly biography. But Simpson's Forrestal is even more directly a martyr of the anticommunist crusade than credited by press coverage calling him a "war hero." Indeed, where scholarly biographers like Hoopes and Brinkley consider Forrestal's committed anticommunism as but one of his many facets, to Simpson this is key and causal—the reason for the hero's assassination.

After establishing his theory that the events of Forrestal's death were not suicide but politically-motivated murder—a theory supported by little more than the tautological reasoning that suicide makes little rational sense to a (presumably, in the case of Simpson) sane observer—Simpson exposes the sinister motives and agents behind the defenestration. When a section heading asks, "Who Could have Murdered Forrestal—and Why?," the supporting epigraph answers in classic domestic American anticommunist catechism: "The Communists and the international Communist conspiracy." The text raises Forrestal as the archetypal anticommunist American patriot, so steadfast that he posed a significant threat to Communists and their sympathizers who had by then infiltrated the highest echelons of the government. According to

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<sup>14</sup> Cornell Simpson, *The Death of James Forrestal* (Boston: Western Islands Publishers, 1966), viii.

Simpson's hagiography, Forrestal almost single-handedly saved France and Italy from communism in the immediate aftermath of World War II, and "inspired" arch-reactionary (and arch-opportunist) Joseph McCarthy's loosely-defined outing of communist influence in Truman's administration. Indeed, Simpson effusively eulogizes, no other single figure "battled and bested Communism on so many fronts as did James V. Forrestal. It was, therefore, absolutely imperative to the success of the world Communist conspiracy that he be liquidated."<sup>15</sup>

According to Simpson, Forrestal entered Bethesda involuntarily, essentially duped by his closest friends and held continually against his will. Simpson claims the medical staff routinely drugged Forrestal and denied him visitors or any other contact with the outside world. Then, early in the morning of May 22, 1949, "they" struck. Garroting him with the sash from his bathrobe, assassins dragged Forrestal out of his room, forced him onto the windowsill, and flung him down. Their murderous task complete, the conspirators hastily scribbled lines from the "Chorus of Ajax," conspicuously leaving it as a substitute suicide note before fading back into whatever shadows from which they had come. Yet, thanks to Simpson's keen detection, a number of facts betrayed their perfect crime. The newspapers, for instance, reported scuffmarks on the kitchen windowsill. While Walter Waggoner theorized Forrestal intended suicide by hanging, but tried unsuccessfully at the last minute to scramble back inside, Simpson instead saw this as evidence of a struggle—of one pushed unwillingly out the window. Upon discovery of the body, Forrestal's watch still ran; yet, the disfigurement of the corpse was so complete that only a bed-check positively identified the body. More sinister still, to Simpson, the White House seized and refused to release Forrestal's personal diaries. Simpson alleges these formed the basis of Forrestal's upcoming exposé of communist influence within the United States. Similarly, the

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<sup>15</sup> Simpson, *The Death of James Forrestal*, 49-79.

Navy steadfastly refused to publicize the record and findings of the Willcutts Commission—headed by Admiral M.D. Willcutts, and which investigated Forrestal’s hospitalization, care, and suicide for any signs of professional culpability—despite such unanswered questions as the obvious: why was a “suicidal” patient housed on the sixteenth floor, across the hall from an unprotected window? and, Why did a patient whose doctors said publicly he was “improving” commit suicide? Because official sources neglected to answer these questions by the time of Simpson’s work, the public freely interpret them. Perhaps, Simpson prodded his readers, Forrestal was neither suicidal nor improving, nor sick at all, but held against his will until such time as his enemies could fabricate sufficient circumstances to kill him with impunity.<sup>16</sup>

Most central to this conspiratorial view of Forrestal’s demise is his own repeated assertion that “they” stalked him; while the standard accounts (contemporaneous press reports and subsequent scholarship alike) attribute this to his psychological break, the conspiracist confirms Forrestal’s paranoia. Various sources record Forrestal’s increasing belief that he was the subject of illicit wiretapping, secret electronic and physical surveillance, and a purposeful public smear campaign. On the very day Louis A. Johnson took his oath as the incoming Secretary of Defense, Forrestal told close friend Ferdinand Eberstadt that “they” had finally succeeded in ousting him from public service. Furthermore, “they” bugged his home, and, gallingly, sent an agent to his door while Eberstadt ignorantly observed. A few days later, at Hobe Sound, FL, for a physical and mental “rest,” he confided similar worries to another close friend—Robert Lovett. Even as they walked along the beach, Forrestal identified such innocuous items as beach umbrella-stands as cleverly disguised surveillance devices. There he intimated to Lovett his fear that the communists had targeted him for purging from office because of his

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<sup>16</sup> Simpson, *The Death of James Forrestal*, 1-44.

strident and public anticommunism. At his friends' urging, he accepted a convalescent stay at Bethesda Naval Medical Center and there received treatment for symptoms ranging from "occupational fatigue" to depression. Forrestal's brother, Henry, grew dissatisfied with his care—and the limited access the hospital afforded family members—and planned to withdraw the former Secretary of Defense from the hospital on the very day Forrestal was found dead. Taken together, these events convinced Henry, as they later convinced Cornell Simpson, that James Forrestal "positively did not kill himself," but rather "they" had murdered him.<sup>17</sup>

*Eulogizing the fallen: The shared social construction of an anticommunist "hero"*

The lasting irony of this conspiratorial bent is that conventional interpretations of Forrestal's death rely just as heavily on this purported evidence of Forrestal's paranoia. Arnold Rogow's psychohistory categorizes Forrestal's statements as paranoid delusions symptomatic of the very type of mental fatigue or illness that precipitated his suicidal ideation. Thus, for the more conventional view of Forrestal as a hero undone by the mind that once made him great, as well as for the conspiratorial view that Forrestal was undone by a sinister "them" of the flesh-and-blood variety, there exists an element of stab-in-the-back mythos. The scholarly world confines this to a sort of Greek or Shakespearian tragedy, with Forrestal's own psyche betraying him. For conspiracists, even these accounts only obscure the true conspiracy behind Forrestal's murder. As the mythology expands and envelops other genres of Forrestal literature within the web of conspiracy, these accounts nevertheless maintain the authentic American hero metaphor in describing Forrestal's death.

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<sup>17</sup> Simpson, *The Death of James Forrestal*, 1-44; Hoopes and Brinkley, *Driven Patriot*, 449-51; Arnold A. Rogow, *James Forrestal, A Study of Personality, Politics, and Policy* (New York: MacMillan, 1963), 5-18.

Unwittingly, the tone of the *Times*' coverage of Forrestal's resignation, hospitalization, and prognosis provides the rhetorical basis for these enduring suppositions. As seen, the *Times* first reported rumors of Forrestal's ouster—willing or otherwise—from Truman's cabinet from election night through January 1949, but also carried official denials just as consistently. From the White House Press Secretary, to Truman, to Forrestal himself, the *Times* repeatedly printed categorical denials of any impending resignation. Thus, when on March 3, 1949, the paper confirmed Forrestal's resignation, the implication was that of a political stab-in-the-back. The following day, Arthur Krock opined precisely that, and even Anthony Leviero felt compelled to defend his newspaper's coverage of the rumors, essentially blaming Truman for misleading them.<sup>18</sup>

Two additional elements in the *Times* coverage of Forrestal's final months inadvertently contributed the context for the social construction of an elaborate stab-in-the-back mythology. First, the *Times* employed seemingly changing terminology in publicizing Forrestal's condition; secondly, they reported his violent end despite continually reporting a seemingly positive prognosis. While the record indicates that the *Times* deserves blame for neither of these factors, they nevertheless played a critical role in shaping the public's perception of Forrestal's demise, and, as already discussed, in the public eulogy of him as a legitimate American hero of one genre or another.

On April 6, 1949, the *Times* reported that Forrestal unexpectedly entered Bethesda Naval Medical Center, but characterized it as a "routine medical check-up." Just two days later, the terminology changed: "Forrestal Is Treated in Naval Hospital For Nervous and Physical Exhaustion." Still, Forrestal's rapid improvement left doctors "very much encouraged,"

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<sup>18</sup> "Denies Forrestal Quits"; "Forrestal Says He Expects to Stay..."; "Forrestal Stand 'Plain'"; "Forrestal to Quit"; Krock, "In the Nation: The Last..."; Leviero, "President Appoints Johnson..."



according to *Times* reports. Even as the “very tired” Forrestal’s hospitalization extended over the next several days, the outlook remained “quite satisfactory” as he rested “comfortably.” By April 12-13, the *Times* clarified Forrestal’s condition with the official diagnosis of “occupational-” or “operational fatigue.” Aware that the connection of this condition to that of shell shock experienced by soldiers in combat zones, the *Times* reassured its readers that, “fortunately...the outlook for recovery from operational fatigue is excellent.”<sup>19</sup>

On April 17, the *Times* updated Forrestal’s condition and again expressed confidence that the former Secretary of Defense enjoyed nearly restored health. Quoting Captain B.W. Hogan, the executive officer at Bethesda, the *Times* assured the public that Forrestal “would not suffer any ‘turns for the worse.’” Four days later, the Associated Press wire also reported him “Improving.” On April 24, this prognosis received yet more backing, as President Truman visited Forrestal at the medical center. Following the visit, Truman offered his unprofessional—but socially important, because it was presidential—opinion that Forrestal was “recovering.” Four days later, Forrestal’s successor—and, some pundits believed, the politico most directly responsible for Forrestal’s ouster—Louis A. Johnson visited and later voiced the most positive outlook yet. Johnson confidently predicted that Forrestal’s full recovery and release from doctors’ care by mid-May. It was not until mid-May, the 18th, that the *Times* next updated the public on Forrestal’s status, relaying the positive news of Forrestal’s regaining 12 of the 25 pounds he had lost at the onset of his illness. Four days later, he was dead.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> “Medical Check-Up for Forrestal,” *New York Times*, 6 April 1949, p. 31; “Forrestal Is Treated...”; “Forrestal Tests Go On,” *New York Times*, 9 April 1949, p. 19; “Forrestal Rests...”; “Forrestal Reported In State of Fatigue,” *New York Times*, 12 April 1949, p. 31; “The Patient At Bethesda,” *New York Times*, 13 April 1949, p. 28.

<sup>20</sup> “Forrestal Still Gaining”; “Forrestal Improving”; “Truman Visits...”; “Forrestal ‘Looks Fine’”; “Forrestal Gains 12 Pounds”; “Forrestal a Suicide...”.

Certainly this shocked reporters as thoroughly as it did the American public. Indeed, virtually every article detailing Forrestal's death employed rhetoric of "surprise" in its descriptions and explanations of the event. For the *Times* and as a purely journalistic device, this helped make the story shocking, poignant, or even titillating to the public. Unintentionally, this rhetoric also served the stab-in-the-back mythology that soon developed in the wake of Forrestal's death. Even the *Times*' initial report of Forrestal's suicide reminded readers that Forrestal "had shown improvement," and that Secretary of Defense Johnson—ostensibly a trusted government official—had just recently "announced that he was recovering rapidly and would be a completely restored man." Further demonstrating the sudden and unexpected nature of Forrestal's death, the *Times* reported that his wife had only a few days prior traveled to France in search of a suitable location for her husband's continued rest and relaxation following his imminent release from Bethesda Naval Medical Center. Walter Waggoner's more detailed account bore the provocative headline: "Had Seemed to Be Improving in the Naval Hospital—Admiral Orders Inquiry." As to the first of these elements, Waggoner quoted hospital officials regarding Forrestal's positive prognosis in the weeks leading up to the suicide. Regarding the second component of the headline, Waggoner reported that due to the unexpected turn of events Rear Admiral Morton D. Willcutts, director of the National Naval Medical Center, convened an official inquiry into Forrestal's care at Bethesda.<sup>21</sup>

According to the May 24 *Times*, Forrestal's chief psychiatrist, George M. Raines, diagnosed the secretary with depression. Raines confirmed that his patient showed considerable improvement in the weeks preceding his death—so much so that Raines determined he could relax some of the restrictions on Forrestal's daily routine and that Raines himself might travel outside

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<sup>21</sup> "Forrestal a Suicide..."; "Mrs. Forrestal and Son Are Flying From Paris," *New York Times*, 23 May 1949, p. 2; Waggoner, "Forrestal Killed...".

the city for a few days. In the doctor's absence, Forrestal committed suicide "during a fit of despondency 'extremely common' to the severe type of mental depression he suffered," but which the *Times* had never before reported to the public. Even so, Raines reiterated that neither he nor anyone else at the hospital expected this dramatic turn of events; they had all seen encouraging signs of Forrestal's recovery.<sup>22</sup>

For those who see Forrestal as a hero betrayed by an external foe, as one stabbed-in-the-back by someone or something, the apparent inconsistencies in these public accounts raise serious questions about the validity of the "official story" of Forrestal's suicide. Conspiracists, like Simpson, point to the jarring nature of the suicide as lacking logical sense. They base this claim almost entirely on the low levels of public awareness of Forrestal's condition, treatment, and prognosis (although, taken at their word, Forrestal's doctors themselves believed his condition warranted a positive prognosis even if, in the end, it proved inaccurate). In the use of Forrestal as sort of spy novel hero, conspiracists "debunk" ambiguities or seeming inconsistencies in the "official" story behind his treatment and death. They seize upon the public statements of Forrestal's chief caregiver, George M. Raines, and wonder why the hospital housed an allegedly suicidal patient in a sixteen-story tower, and why Raines left Forrestal increasingly unattended during a period that Raines admitted offered both the best chance for Forrestal's recovery and the biggest risk of relapse. They argue that traditional accounts, especially scholarly literature, unsatisfactorily answers of these questions, especially since neither Rogow nor Hoopes or Brinkley enjoyed access to two key evidentiary sources in constructing their narratives: Forrestal's unadulterated diaries, and the Navy's Willcutts Report. Conspiracists have

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<sup>22</sup> "Forrestal's Leap Laid to Depression," *New York Times*, 24 May 1949, p. 10.

long used the absence of these documents as proof of some manner of un-American cover-up, with Forrestal the immediate casualty—but with the American public as the lasting victim.

This is not to say that all Forrestal conspiracies share a single perspective. Interestingly, these particular conspiracy theories arise from precisely the same latent causes—ambiguity in press coverage and public awareness, incubated in a particular Cold War, anticommunist environment, and steeped in the rhetoric of authentic American heroism—but spiral outward toward vastly different conclusions. A brief examination of contemporary Forrestal conspiracies perpetuated by the Internet demonstrates the malleability of this archetype. The public-source Wikipedia article on James V. Forrestal acts as a clearinghouse for Forrestal conspiracies, with an entire subsection of the article devoted to these myths. As much text in the article details his death and its legacy as covers Forrestal’s career in public service, itself an indication of the degree to which these suppositions endure. Wikipedia’s entry considers the so-called Zionist conspiracy as the most plausible alternative explanation for Forrestal’s death. This stems from interpretations of Forrestal’s anti-recognition stance toward Israel—which some critics label anti-Semitism, although this seems by all reputable accounts a drastic overstatement. Thus, either Zionists within the United States, or more insidious still, assassins from the Irgun, targeted Forrestal for liquidation. The latter part of this theory gained traction in 2006 with the publication of an article in the *London Times* (Online) by Peter Day, purportedly exposing an Irgun assassination attempt on an anti-Zionist official in Great Britain in 1946.<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps the World Wide Web’s most dogged proponent of an alternative Forrestal narrative is “DC Dave” David Martin ([www.dcdave.com](http://www.dcdave.com)). Self-styled as a poet, economist, and

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<sup>23</sup> “James Forrestal,” *Wikipedia*, Accessed 29 June 2008 at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James\\_Forrestal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Forrestal); “DC Dave” Martin, “Who Killed James Forrestal?” and related links, 10 November 2002 – 29 April 2008, Accessed on 29 June 2008 at <http://www.dcdave.com/article4/021110.html>.

political commentator, Martin self-publishes various articles on the illegitimacy of the “official” story. His website exemplifies the complexity of conspiracy mythmaking, as all new evidence is collaborated into existing webs of information which point to a more sensational explanation for Forrestal’s death. Martin successfully petitioned the U.S. Navy, via the Freedom of Information Act, to release the Willcutts Report in 2004. Instead of using its findings as the Navy did, to exonerate those in command of Forrestal’s care of significant wrongdoing leading to his death, Martin pulls a variety of quotes to suggest that Forrestal’s doctors did not consider him “insane.” Even so, rather than using them to perpetuate the “surprise” element of Forrestal’s suicide, Martin deploys these statements in a contradictory way. While the doctors were presumably wrong in detaining Forrestal for hospitalization in the first place, here their judgment appears as infallible—if the doctors did not think Forrestal would commit suicide, surely he did not and was instead murdered. Similarly, Martin points to contemporary press accounts of “scuffs” or “scuff marks” on either the building’s exterior or the sill of the kitchen window as signs of a struggle, like the “broken glass” that was reported in Forrestal’s room but removed by the time a picture— included in the Willcutts Report—of the scene was taken a few hours later. Yet, nothing in the room or in the kitchen bore signs of a failed hanging, leaving unexplained the knotted sash around Forrestal’s neck, so tightly tied that it had to be cut to be removed from the corpse. Here, the conspiracist’s question is, if so tightly tied around the neck, how could it slip from its mooring in the kitchen without disturbing something? While Occam’s Razor suggests attributing these seeming inconsistencies to innocent mistakes in the rush to publish the first facts of Forrestal’s death, or of the tragic misdiagnosis of Forrestal by fallible medical professionals,

Martin coalesces them to prove there is, as the old conspiracist's bromide maintains, "more to the story."<sup>24</sup>

For some conspiracy myths, the "more" is a Zionist assassination attempt; for others it is the suggestion that the U.S. government murdered Forrestal to prevent his publicizing of evidence evidence that President Roosevelt withheld knowledge of the Japanese plan to attack Pearl Harbor prior to World War II. Still other conspiracists argue that Forrestal's intimate knowledge—as Secretary of Defense—of alien landings and UFO technology led to his assassination by the government he faithfully served. Yet another theory asserts that the CIA executed Forrestal during experiments in mind-control, along the lines of the MK-ULTRA program. After all, CIA biochemist Frank Olson died in 1953 following a fall from the window of his New York City hotel room—located, like Forrestal's hospital room, sixteen stories up.<sup>25</sup> And, in perhaps the ultimate pop acculturation of this conspiracy mythology, contemporary composer Evan Hause links Olson and Forrestal (along with Philo Farnsworth) in the macabre operatic "defenestration trilogy."<sup>26</sup>

Ironically, even Hause's opera on Forrestal's defenestration would raise the ire of conspiracist Dave Martin. Titled "Nightingale," Hause's opera recalls the long-standing belief that Forrestal copied lines from Sophocles' "Chorus from Ajax" in a sort of substitute suicide

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<sup>24</sup> Martin, <http://www.dcdave.com>.

<sup>25</sup> Some sources say it was merely ten stories, and it is unclear if the sixteenth-story element is a critical component in linking the deaths of Olson and Forrestal or merely a titillating coincidence happily perpetuated by some conspiracists.

<sup>26</sup> Joan d'Arc, "The Skeleton in Uncle Sam's Closet," *Paranoia Magazine*, Accessed on 24 March 2006 at <http://www.paranoiamagazine.com/skeleton.html>; Richard M. Dolan, "The Death of James Forrestal," 2001, Accessed on 24 March 2006 at <http://www.keyholepublishing.com/Death%20of%20James%20Forrestal%20.htm>; H.P. Albarelli, Jr. and John F. Kelly, "Mid-century deaths all linked to CIA?" *World Net Daily*, 2 September 2001, Accessed on 24 March 2006 at [http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE\\_ID=24305](http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=24305); Evan Hause, "The Defenestration Trilogy," Accessed on 28 June 2008 at <http://www.hausemusic.com/Conservatory/PressReleases/Defenestration.html>.

note. Hoopes and Brinkley suggest that Forrestal stopped after writing the word “nightingale,” which perhaps sparked recognition of a similarly named secret military program dealing with amnesty for the WWII Ukrainian death squads and for which Forrestal bore responsibility as Secretary of Defense. While Martin’s conspiracy theory long centered around apparent inconsistencies between the copied text of the poem and other, confirmed samples of Forrestal’s handwriting, columnist Hugh Turley added in December 2007 that the stanza stopped well short of the lines referencing a nightingale. Here again one sees the social construction of conspiracy mythology that replaces confirmed knowledge in an environment of anticommunist hysteria and ambiguous public awareness—even the *Washington Post*, as Martin and Turley both chide, continued reporting the “nightingale” connection as recently as on the fiftieth anniversary of Forrestal’s death.<sup>27</sup>

Like Simpson’s original conspiracy theory—which also criticizes the “official” attribution of the poem as a suicide note, instead of as the first piece of an elaborate cover-up—these more current examples also cite the seizure and redaction of Forrestal’s private diaries as evidence of government betrayal of the legitimate American hero Forrestal. According to some, including Simpson, the diaries documented Forrestal’s staunch and unwavering anticommunism, while for others they may have held the “truth” about his anti-Zionism, his knowledge of UFOs, or other grand secrets. Viking Press published Forrestal’s diaries in a single volume in 1951, but its editor, Walter Millis, admitted to his own redactions atop those made by the government for reasons of national security. Naturally, Simpson and his more contemporary kin attack Millis for a heavy editorial hand; Simpson, not ironically, uses the same red-baiting rhetoric employed by Joseph McCarthy during the hey-day of anticommunist politics, pondering what exactly Millis

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<sup>27</sup> Martin, <http://www.dcdave.com>; Hugh Turley, “Hugh’s News: Handwriting tells dark tale?,” *Hyattsville Life and Times* 4, no. 12 (December 2007): 3, 15.

whitewashed in Forrestal's private writings. Although, as Hoopes and Brinkley point out, even the unpublished sections of this collection are available for public consumption at Princeton's Seeley Mudd Library, conspiracists continue unabated the attacks on the legitimacy of Millis's edition of the Forrestal diary as an authentic, scholarly source. Similarly, the release of the Willcutts Report in 2004 would seem to undermine its absence from the historical record as de facto proof of a government cover-up. Instead, its publication offers even more fodder for committed conspiracists.<sup>28</sup>

While this exploration demonstrates the social construction of an archetypal anticommunist hero through the various eulogies of James V. Forrestal, responsible scholarship must emphasize that the scholarly interpretation of Forrestal's death faces no substantive threat to its credibility. The simplest, best evidenced, and most rational explanation remains that Forrestal suffered a mental break-down and committed suicide on May 22, 1949. His doctors explain the inconsistencies in his prognosis as relatively common in dealing with diseases of the mind, and Raines himself testified to both the inquiry and the general public that Forrestal had entered a crucial cross-roads period in his recovery. Apparent contradictions in the reporting of the events and immediate aftermath of Forrestal's death are easily dismissed by noting the general inaccuracy of eye-witness accounts, and the relatively common misreporting of specific details in the press's rush to "scoop" a story. These elements are neither uncommon nor insidious. More vexing is the government's handling of the Willcutts Report, withheld until 2004 and only released pursuant to a FOIA request. Nevertheless, the government's seizure and redaction of Forrestal's diary during an era of such heightened national security seems perfectly

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<sup>28</sup> Simpson, *The Death of James Forrestal*, 80-92; James Forrestal, *The Forrestal Diaries*, ed. Walter Millis (New York: Viking Press, 1951), ix-xiii; Hoopes and Brinkley, *Driven Patriot*, 483; Dave Martin, <http://www.dcdave.com>.



reasonable. Ultimately, the divergence of the hero mythology from standard to alternative interpretations of Forrestal's death reflects a process of social construction of an anticommunist hero during, and even after, a unique public debate over the legitimacy and authenticity of certain American ideals. It should be unsurprising that the nation's anticommunist era touched even the public's understanding of what constituted a proper American hero.

Two conclusions emerge from this discussion. First, the role of the press should not be underestimated. In her examination of James Forrestal's role in cultivating an "anticommunist consensus" within the U.S. press establishment, scholar Karen M. Russell finds rather damning evidence that the press—to include the *Times*—withheld first-hand knowledge that Forrestal's performance during his final weeks in office bordered on the incompetent. Hoopes and Brinkley recorded what Forrestal's doctors discussed privately—an inability to make decisions or focus on tasks at hand, and increasingly paranoid delusions. Instead of serving their watchdog function to the public, Russell argues, the press kept quiet in order to preserve the positive public image of one of the nation's chief anticommunists. Rogow presupposes this view in explaining the press's failure to report adequately the seriousness of Forrestal's condition, adding also that the press and public alike shared a great deal of ignorance about mental illness during this era. A negative stigmatization of psychological trauma, in an era of dogmatic anticommunism, meant the press felt an intuitive need to protect Forrestal from the consequences of public knowledge of his true condition.<sup>29</sup>

Secondly, if the previous pages explain the how, this explains why the press and the public needed a heroic eulogy to legitimize James Forrestal's death. To avoid tarnishing his legacy of committed public service—especially in the dangerous Cold War world in which

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<sup>29</sup> Russell, "Building an Anticommunist Consensus"; Rogow, *James Forrestal*, ix-xv, 1-48, 344-51.

Forrestal died—the press offered and the public consumed more cautious terminology and more positive prognoses than were accurate. The propagation of “fatigue” was, to Rogow, “misleading [and] dangerous.” He provocatively asserts that Forrestal’s public status delayed his diagnosis and treatment and necessitated his isolation in a sixteenth-floor ward rather than one specifically designed for care of the mentally ill or those with suicidal ideations. Rather than any conspiracy of assassins, Rogow writes that Forrestal fell victim to “the peculiar mythology of official Washington, a mythology which...reaches not only into the Pentagon but into all the departments and agencies of the government. The essence of this mythology...is the denial that any Very Important Person can become mentally ill while in office.” Writing in 1963, Rogow predicted Brinkley and Hoopes’ recognition of “enduring suppositions” by concluding: “Certainly it can be argued that there would have been fewer rumors, fewer distortions, fewer half-truths and outright falsehoods, had the official mythology yielded for once to reality.”<sup>30</sup>

This battle exists even within standard, scholarly interpretations of Forrestal’s death. Mary Akashah and Donald Tennant thoroughly critique Rogow in their 1980 article, “Madness and Politics,” offering “alternative” explanations for many of Rogow’s psychohistorical assertions. Where Rogow attributes Forrestal’s severe weight loss (25 pounds) to a physical manifestation of a psychological disorder, Akashah and Tennant note this could simply indicate an undiagnosed stomach ailment of which Forrestal had complained and was otherwise unrelated to any psychological cause. Rogow’s noting of Forrestal’s increasingly common head-scratching is, to Akashah and Tennant, merely a “long-standing habit”—not a “nervous habit” as identified by Rogow. Although this may appear as a mere parsing of words, it is clearly the attempt of

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<sup>30</sup> Rogow, *James Forrestal*, xii-xiii, 351.

Akashah and Tennant to redeem Forrestal's historical legacy from the stigmatized realm of psychohistory, if not to redeem Forrestal from the stigma of psychological illness itself.<sup>31</sup>

As Paul Roazen notes in his exploration of the theory of "as if" (borderline symptomology) in politics—and Roazen subscribes to Rogow's conclusion that Forrestal committed suicide attributable to severe depression—Forrestal's role as an anticommunist likely contributed to his mental stress. While Roazen argues that all politicians maintain a gap between the "inner" self and the public, political "outer" persona, this separation was in Forrestal much wider than normal. Such severe separation might alleviate the tensions of a public life fraught with significance—such as being a chief anticommunist during the onset of the Cold War—but it ultimately rendered Forrestal unable to cope with the loss of his public persona. Roazen theorizes that "to some extent success in politics requires...the acceptance of one's identity as defined by one's political position." For Forrestal, this involved a role as public servant and, more critically, as one of the nation's foremost anticommunists; it was a role he could not replace.<sup>32</sup>

Moreover, this theory holds utility for explaining why they public needed a heroic eulogy for Forrestal, despite the seeming ignominy of death by suicide. Indeed, Forrestal's role as a public anticommunist likely affected how the press and public each interpreted and accepted—or reconciled to their expectations—the circumstances of his death. K. A. Cuordileone explores the Cold War political culture as a "crisis in American masculinity," and, perhaps not ironically, begins the study in 1949. Noting that the "polarization of images" in the anticommunist culture produced "a premium on hard masculine toughness and rendered anything less than that soft and

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<sup>31</sup> Mary Akashah and Donald Tennant, "Madness and Politics: The Case of James Forrestal," *Proceedings of the Oklahoma Academy of Science* 60 (1980): 89-92, Accessed on 24 June 2008 at <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/oas>.

<sup>32</sup> Paul Roazen, "As If and Politics," *Political Psychology* 4, no. 4 (December 1983): 685-92.

feminine, and, as such, a real or potential threat to the security of the nation,” one may see the dilemma Forrestal’s death presented to the press and the public. On the one hand, society may have stigmatized Forrestal’s mental condition as weakness—not illness—and thus dismissed it as a legitimate or authentic downfall for a true American hero. On the other, attributing the condition instead to a form of battle fatigue rooted the mortal wound in the rhetoric of anticommunism—or, the *Cold War*—and allowed for the reconciliation of Forrestal’s anticommunism with his suicide, seen here as a soldier’s death in battle.<sup>33</sup>

Many in the press and the public likely feared that, if they publicized it, the Soviet Union would propagandize Forrestal’s illness into anti-Americanism. As the *Times* and other accounts record, however, not even the public eulogy of Forrestal as a soldier with battle fatigue prevented the “indispensable enemy”<sup>34</sup> from using the story for their own purposes. In one cartoon cited by the *Times*, Forrestal appeared in a straight-jacket while formulating anticommunist policy at his Washington desk. Another sardonically memorialized Forrestal as an “active organizer and first victim of war psychosis, on [this] the day of the fifth anniversary of his atomic, hysterical leap.”<sup>35</sup>

Finally, one must consider why there remain so many enduring suppositions referenced by Hoopes and Brinkley, and why, as Rogow recognized, rumors, distortions, half-truths and outright falsehoods so quickly proliferated after Forrestal’s death. Two elements seem critical

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<sup>33</sup> K. A. Cuordileone, “‘Politics in an Age of Anxiety’: Cold War Political Culture and the Crisis in American Masculinity, 1949-1960,” *The Journal of American History* 87, no. 2 (September 2000): 516 (quote), 515-22.

<sup>34</sup> This terminology (see: Howard F. Stein, “The Indispensable Enemy and American-Soviet Relations,” *Ethos* 17, no 4 (December 1989)) furthers the conception of domestic American anticommunism as a fundamentally Manichean exercise; Stein describes the relationship as a cultural pair, even arguing that the “image of the enemy” is “one of every group’s most treasured possessions.” (Quotes, 480, 483.)

<sup>35</sup> Quoted from *Krokidil* in “Forrestal Cartoon is Protested by U.S.,” *New York Times*, 18 June 1954, p. 6; “Contempt for U.S. Stressed in Soviet [Press],” *New York Times*, 1 January 1951, p. 7; Rogow, *James Forrestal*, 344-51.

here. First, these originated in an environment of espionage and investigation, of fifth columns and fellow travelers and boring-from-within, and of—in Senator Joseph McCarthy’s case—the most hysterical of red scare hysteria. Secondly, the public reconciles ambiguous levels of knowledge with elements of its socio-cultural surroundings. Here it may be instructive to consider the description by Mulford Q. Sibley in 1966 of a so-called “professional” patriot: “More often than not, he has a conspiratorial view of history, associates patriotism with the waging of war, and concentrates his ideological attack on a central enemy. In modern American life, that foe is communism, the crusade against which is often used to condemn any basic social change.” Such a person is a “talker” of patriotism, with an “outlook...of negatives,” who “sees devils everywhere.” One might be excused for seeing in these descriptions the images of several of the conspiracists mentioned in this study.<sup>36</sup>

Certainly, there are unanswered questions, as there are with virtually any episode in history. Equally certain, the government’s actions in withholding first the diary and then the Willcutts Report unwittingly contributed to the creation and expansion of enduring suppositions regarding Forrestal’s death. These suppositions coexist, with more standard interpretations of his death, each representing hero archetypes influenced by the broader narrative of domestic American anticommunist culture. The debate will likely continue unabated, thanks in no small part to the ease with which anyone with an opinion and access may publish information to a blog, a webpage, or a Wikipedia article. Perhaps this is ultimately a manifestation of reaction against an anticommunist-era’s insistence on uniform standards of legitimacy and authenticity. That is a question lying outside the parameters of historical inquiry. Nevertheless, both standard and alternative explanations perpetuate—and Forrestal’s legacy even today exists as an artifact

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<sup>36</sup> Mulford Q. Sibley, “Ethics and the Professional Patriots,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 363, Ethics in America: Norms and Deviations (January 1966): 126, 129.

of—an anticommunist era debate about the nature and legitimacy of an anticommunist, Cold War hero.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### OLD WINE IN NEW SKINS: ANTICOMMUNIST RHETORIC, POLITICAL PRAGMATISM, AND THE WAR ON POVERTY

Throughout the Cold War, the rhetoric of anticommunism still defined the legitimate from the illegitimate, the authentic from the inauthentic, and the American from the un-American. Equally true of partisan as it was of social politics, this indicates the degree to which the American public embraced the dogma of domestic anticommunism. This complex calculus of legitimacy played heavily upon the political pragmatism of President Lyndon Johnson's attempts to redefine liberalism through his Great Society programs.

A surprising continuity existed in the rhetoric of domestic American anticommunism, from its inauguration in the first decades of the twentieth century, through its institutionalization in the form of HUAC, and penetrated even the realm of social construction and myth-and-meaning making. As the previous chapters demonstrate in various ways, the rhetorical tools of this anticommunism dealt primarily with legitimacy, defining, for instance, what was authentically American in thought, deed, policy preference, or social legacy. These definitions remained conservative not so much in a purely partisan sense (although political conservatives indeed dominated this brand of domestic anticommunism) as in an apolitical sense, one resistant to new or non-traditional interpretation. As chapter three discusses, this domestic anticommunism appeared incompatible with the socio-political ideology of liberalism as understood by most of Jerry Voorhis's colleagues. Rejecting Voorhis's attempted reconciliation of domestic anticommunism with progressive liberalism, they instead forfeited political control of this powerful weapon to partisan conservatives. In the Cold War world, these political conservatives controlled the political brand of domestic anticommunism, while social

conservatives (witnessed in chapters two and four) managed the cultural conceptions of legitimacy. Combined, this made for a domestic anticommunist program that was conservative–tradition-oriented, resistant to change or reinterpretation–in all its definitions of authenticity, including and especially in its recognition of Americanness.

Lyndon Johnson believed he could change all that. A true veteran of the political system, Johnson’s ascent to the vice presidency represented the triumph of political pragmatism. Rising first to leadership positions in the House and then the Senate, where his style of “friendly” coercion and forceful agenda setting remain legendary, Johnson next parlayed his influence into a slot on the Democratic presidential ticket in 1960. It is widely recognized that the Kennedys generally disliked Johnson, although they nevertheless tabbed him for the “number two” spot because they recognized that the election likely hinged on Texas’s 24 electoral votes. Indeed, Johnson delivered the state and several others from Franklin Roosevelt’s once “solid” south, and John F. Kennedy became the nation’s thirty-fifth president. Barely three years after Kennedy’s electoral victory, Johnson became the nation’s thirty-sixth.

Never a man of shy ambition, Johnson recognized in this moment great opportunity. While the nature of his ascendancy required that he demonstrate his presidential legitimacy in some form or fashion, he also intuitively understood that the shocking nature of Kennedy’s assassination afforded him far wider political latitude for demonstrating that legitimacy than Johnson could otherwise expect. Building on Kennedy’s own public record, Johnson initiated a rhetorical reinvigoration and redefinition of liberalism for a post-New Deal generation. Doing so required authentic use of the rhetoric of legitimacy–of anticommunism and of un-Americanism–and ultimately presented Johnson with perhaps his greatest political challenge.



Two major rhetorical dimensions appear in the public presentation of Johnson's Great Society program. First, Johnson consistently urged unanimity in the building of this Great Society. Formulating this consensus on liberalism's own legacy, as well as the personal legacy of his predecessor, Johnson pragmatically understood that the public must recognize the Great Society as authentic "Americanness" to make it a legitimate social and political enterprise. Second, Johnson's own rhetoric prodded liberals in Congress toward a redefinition of "un-Americanism" as a significant step in the political legitimation of the Great Society in general, and the War on Poverty in particular. In witness to the durability of the apolitically conservative conception of "Americanism" in this anticommunist era, Johnson ultimately disengaged the second rhetorical form for the sake of preserving a tenuous political consensus as he plunged the nation deeper into war—not on poverty, ultimately, but ostensibly against communism in Vietnam.

*Presidential Rhetoric: Liberalism's "New Skin"*

Three of President Johnson's early speeches initiated this rhetoric: his address to a Joint Session of Congress following the Kennedy assassination; his first State of the Union address just a few weeks later; and the "Great Society" speech at the University of Michigan on May 22, 1964. The first of these examples, delivered on November 27, 1963, combines rhetorical forms seen in eulogy with those of a more typical presidential inaugural address. This symbolically demonstrates the unique situation Johnson inherited. His many references to the legacy of John F. Kennedy served both as praise for the slain president as well as the foundation of Johnson's own legitimacy as the new president. Notably, of all the ways in which Johnson might have emphasized Kennedy's legacy, he asserted that Kennedy "lives on" through Johnson's visionary

social programs including, and for Johnson especially, in “the fight against poverty.” Johnson needed a special type of consensus to accomplish these ambitions of Kennedy’s, reminding his audience that “These are the United States—a united people with a united purpose.” As a president following this national tragedy, Johnson “need[ed] the help of all Americans, and all America” to overcome the shock of the assassination and fulfill Kennedy’s promises to the American people. The rhetoric of unanimity pervades this speech, as Johnson deployed such phrases as “let us continue”; “let us meet in action”; “America must move forward”; and, in conclusion, that the assassination would ultimately “bind us together in new fellowship, making us one people.”<sup>1</sup>

This unanimity depended upon a shared national identity and common socio-political markers of authenticity. Johnson needed next to define his social programs via the rhetoric of Americanism and un-Americanism to demonstrate their legitimacy during this era. On January 8, 1964, Johnson availed himself of one of a president’s most clearly established means of legitimizing social policy—the State of the Union address. Johnson called on Congress to declare “all out war on human poverty.” He marked this as a legitimate policy by reasserting the rhetoric of American unanimity, arguing that what Franklin Roosevelt once called “freedom from want” was only possible “by forging in this country a greater sense of union.” In just a few lines of text, Johnson wove a tapestry of social, political, economic, and national policy. This was not mere charity, but a “war” on poverty—a war that all true and authentic Americans should support, uniting their efforts behind this most legitimately American cause.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> President of the United States, “Address to a Joint Session of Congress,” 27 November 1963, Accessed on 30 October 2005 from <http://millercenter.virginia.edu>.

<sup>2</sup> President of the United States, “State of the Union Address,” 8 January 1964, Accessed on 30 October 2005 from <http://millercenter.virginia.edu>.

An “unconditional war on poverty,” Johnson suggested, “help[ed] each and every American citizen fulfill his basic hopes” by “replac[ing] their despair with opportunity.” Johnson maintained that the American government must devote its efforts to eliminating poverty’s root causes rather than merely its symptoms—a rhetorical line closely mirroring Jerry Voorhis’s argument that the appeal of communism was undone by the mutual assurance of “enough to eat and freedom of spirit.” Johnson next mixed the themes of unanimity and authentic Americanness by predicting that his new socio-economic proposals would benefit every community and individual taxpayer across the nation. Concluding with another claim to the Kennedy legacy he controlled so masterfully, Johnson called for action “not as partisans, but as patriots,” establishing a hard line of rhetoric that defended his proposals as legitimate and authentic, and any opposition as inherently antagonistic to the well-being of U.S. society; or, as “un-American.”<sup>3</sup>

Johnson’s most idealistic presentation of these germinating ideas came in a commencement address at the University of Michigan, on May 22, 1964. Known popularly as the “Great Society Speech,” it expanded the themes Johnson had already deployed—Kennedy’s legacy, a unanimity among true Americans, and a desire to “combat” poverty. Throughout, the rhetoric of authentic Americanness legitimizes Johnson’s idealism in general and his policy initiatives in particular. He first told the students that he had come to “speak about the future of your country,” a future utterly dependent on the ability to achieve the final and most elusive of the founders’ goals—happiness. Theirs was the next chapter in the American narrative, as Johnson referenced first the nation’s territorial growth, followed by its industrial and economic expansion. Yet Johnson did not just claim the legacy of the American experience, but also he

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<sup>3</sup> President of the United States, “State of the Union Address,” 8 January 1964, Accessed on 30 October 2005 from <http://millercenter.virginia.edu>.

asserted the propriety of his speaking at the place where President Kennedy's Peace Corps initiative began. There seemed to Johnson a perfect progression from these most authentic expressions of Americanness, of legitimacy, and to a move "upward to the Great Society," one "rest[ing] on abundance and liberty for all." Collectively these constituted nothing less than a "destiny" for all true and authentic Americans.<sup>4</sup>

The battleground for this war for America's future, according to Johnson's rhetoric, occupied three distinct places: the city, the countryside, and the classroom. Expansion and rapid urbanization—often without the infrastructure necessary to support it—threatened traditionally American values from "community" to "communion with nature." It was not enough, Johnson suggested, that the United States remain a place where people wanted to come to live, but instead it must be a place where they could "live the good life." The "goodness" of this life was not just material but also physical, as Johnson warned of the loss of traditional American farmland and pollution of the U.S.'s natural resources—including its natural beauty. Finally, this war required commitment to educating future generations. Johnson told his audience that he would form "working groups" at the White House, which would "inspire" the specific policies that promised to guide America toward its destiny, led by a "generation...appointed by history" to achieve the Great Society.<sup>5</sup>

Again Johnson cautioned that this was not an uncontested ascension, but a war. Four times in the speech's conclusion, President Johnson asks the audience, "Will you join in the battle?" The rhetoric was not mere showmanship—although certainly it was also this, intended to

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<sup>4</sup> President of the United States, "Remarks at the University of Michigan," 22 May 1964, Accessed on 30 October 2005 from <http://millercenter.virginia.edu>.

<sup>5</sup> President of the United States, "Remarks at the University of Michigan," 22 May 1964, Accessed on 30 October 2005 from <http://millercenter.virginia.edu>.

sweep up the audience in the fever pitch of nationalistic, crusading spirit. More importantly, it extended Johnson's claims to legitimacy and calls for unanimity. While a president cannot unilaterally declare war, it is generally by a "war message" to Congress that the United States so acts. (A lasting irony is that Johnson's presidential legacy rests largely on the erosion of this constitutional check.) Once committed, the United States generally—and certainly until 1964—enjoyed full-throated public support for a war effort. According to the old political bromide, once unleashed it is the president who directs the dogs of war. Thus, Johnson would also direct the crusade toward the Great Society, via the War on Poverty. Furthermore, just as if the United States were making the world safe for democracy or fighting against the illiberal grips of fascism—or, as will be seen, communism—Johnson expected and demanded the support of true and loyal patriots. The speech remains perhaps the finest example of a recurring Johnsonian form, expertly dissected by biographer Doris Kearns: "[I]n the opening, an expression of dire need; in the middle, a vague proposal; in the end, a buoyant description of the anticipated results—all...presented in a manner that often failed to distinguish between expectations and established realities." Yet, it also serves as an exemplar of Johnson's expert rhetorical abilities. Calling on commonly held and mutually intelligible themes of American exceptionalism, Johnson presented his policy proposals in the form of authentic and singularly legitimate Americanism.<sup>6</sup>

These were not isolated occurrences. Indeed, an examination of Johnson's presidential press conferences through the end of 1964 display similar rhetorical turns as through the press he engaged the public in a definition of his socio-economic proposals as fundamentally and

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<sup>6</sup> President of the United States, "Remarks at the University of Michigan," 22 May 1964, Accessed on 30 October 2005 from <http://millercenter.virginia.edu>; Doris Kearns, *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream*, New York: Harper & Row (1976): 219.

authentically “American” against inherently “un-American” problems, consistently demanding unanimity and consensus behind these legitimate pursuits. To better achieve these purposes, Johnson increasingly embraced the rhetoric of anticommunism by describing the War on Poverty as a basic component of the United States’ “commitment to the world” (or similar phrasing)—a bipolar, Cold War world.

Johnson’s first formal presidential press conference, held on December 7, 1963, reasserted the joint themes of unity and continuity first developed in his address to Congress following Kennedy’s assassination. Johnson linked his own proposals to the Kennedy legacy by acknowledging that his predecessor “had some plans” aimed at problems like unemployment. At his next press conference, eleven days later, Johnson infused the themes with foreign policy implications by asserting that essential domestic reforms maintained the United States’ position as the world’s economic—and, thus, its moral—leader. Even in answering a question about U.S.-Soviet relations, Johnson pressed themes of continuity and unity as he cautiously described the need for all peoples of the world to, “learn how to live together” in spite of their differences. In this way, Johnson effectively drafted the Kennedy legacy and the concept of America as world leader into service in his own war against want.<sup>7</sup>

Johnson’s next several press conferences demonstrated further refining of that rhetoric of authenticity. In April and May 1964, Johnson stepped into the language of “Americanness” and “un-Americanness” to maintain the consensus of both Congress and the American people behind his policy proposals. On April 4, Johnson proffered the notion—practically Voorhisian in its fundamental logic—that both unemployment and poverty were inherently un-American. By hurting the individual citizen, but more corporately by tempering the productive capacity of the

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<sup>7</sup> George W. Johnson, ed., *The Johnson Presidential Press Conferences.*, Vol. 1 (New York: Earl M. Coleman Enterprises, Inc., Publishers, 1978), 3, 10, 13.

American economy, these existed as blights on U.S. society. A week later, Johnson confirmed this rhetorical linkage. In response to a question about forthcoming anti-poverty initiatives, Johnson described it as a “benefit all Americans. . . . I think we should approach this on what is good for America” and repeated his now-standard call for the “support of all good Americans of all [political, but presumably equally *American*] parties.” On May 9, Johnson described the poverty-ridden areas of the south as the homeland of “great Americans.” These patriots served in battle, more than their share, and thus, Johnson implied, did not deserve an economic condition so ill befitting their loyal contribution to the nation. Just as they served their patriotic duty in war, according to Johnson’s rhetoric it they now depended on all true and authentic Americans returning the favor by joining a war against un-American poverty.<sup>8</sup>

Johnson’s descriptions of both the program and the means for its implementation expressed the unified theme of patriotic consensus, or loyal and legitimate unanimity: in a word, “Americanism.” At the May 9th presser, a reporter quizzed the president on how he hoped to engage a generally affluent—and often disinterested—public in this War on Poverty. Johnson’s response returned to his rhetorical roots, calling on business and labor alike (normally antagonists but here serving a united purpose), as well as federal, state, and local governments (again, typically inefficient in cooperation) to corporately address the general causes and consequences of poverty. Once Congress initiated the War on Poverty, passing the Economic Opportunity Act on August 20, 1964, Johnson praised the government with the following themes of unanimous patriotism: “All week long the Americans [sic] have been doing what Americans do best—working together.” Johnson reiterated such calls for loyal unanimity well into the election cycle of late 1964, consistently equating support for his domestic agenda with good,

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<sup>8</sup> Johnson, ed., *Press Conferences*, 80, 132.

patriotic, “American” activity. In a press conference on September 5, in the midst of his suddenly initiated re-election campaign, Johnson explicitly identified the “Nation’s most important concern...is and should be the unity of this country.” This not only demanded partisan unity behind his War on Poverty, but, more implicitly—and Johnson excelled at subtext—laid continued claim to his own presidential legitimacy despite the electoral challenge of Barry M. Goldwater in that November’s election. This press conference featured the following exemplars of the rhetorical legitimization of both Johnson’s presidency and his policy initiatives:

-- “We must subordinate our loyalty to any group to a greater loyalty and commitment to the moral principle upon which this Republic was founded, that is, to freedom and to justice and to the brotherhood of man.”

-- “An underlying theme in the history of the Republic has been the...reconciliation of different people into one national community of Americans.”

-- “We need a recognition that...all that most Americans want is the right and the opportunity to be treated as Americans, as members of our national community.”

Failing this call to unity, Johnson claimed, bred a dangerous hostility. And, “By hating, we indicate that express that poverty of spirit which is far more dangerous to a nation’s future than the economic poverty that we are making war on.”<sup>9</sup>

Beyond an implicit play on the political rhetoric of domestic American anticommunism (the competition to control the authentic or legitimate definitions of “American” and “un-American”), other examples indicate that Johnson did, although abortively, expressly define the Great Society as naturally anticommunist. In his memoirs, Johnson asserts that during his administration “two great streams of our national life converged—the dream of a Great Society at home and the inescapable demands of our obligations halfway around the world,” linking the

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<sup>9</sup> Johnson, ed., *Press Conferences*, 210.



War on Poverty to a “hot” war in Vietnam ostensibly fought to contain Communism. Even more explicitly, RAND historian David R. Jardini quotes Adam Yarmolinsky, a key ideological and political architect of the War on Poverty and would-be Deputy Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity, as identifying the War on Poverty as “one of our most effective tools in the war against communism.” Thus, the Johnson Administration, including and especially President Johnson himself, drew the rhetorical lines for Congressional debate over the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, the opening salvo in the War on Poverty yet destined to represent the unfulfilled promise of Johnson’s new brand of liberal anticommunism.<sup>10</sup>

*Congressional Rhetoric: Americanism, Anticommunism, and the “Old Wine”*

Indeed, when the Senate took up the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (EOA), both sides of the partisan divide deployed the rhetoric of “Americanness” and “un-Americanness” in defending their own position and assailing their opponents. Patrick McNamara (D-MI), Chairman of the Committee on Public Works that reported the bill favorably to the Senate, stated the EOA’s addressed the problems of “hidden Americans.” By a simple turn of phrase, McNamara indicated his position that the policy was authentic–American–and that the problem it attacked–poverty–was un-American because it made its victims somehow less than fully vested in American society. John Tower (R-TX) established the rhetorical pattern of the political opposition to the EOA, attacking the broad, discretionary powers granted to the Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO). While McNamara and the bill’s proponents interpreted these as the minimum necessary for effecting the efficient cooperation demanded by President

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<sup>10</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson, *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency, 1963-1969*, New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston (1971): 324; David R. Jardini, “Excerpts of ‘Out of the Blue Yonder: The RAND Corporation’s Diversification into Welfare Research, 1946-1968,’” Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Carnegie Mellon University, 1996, Accessed on 9 October 2005 from <http://www.rand.org>.

Johnson's rhetorical outlines, Tower and the bill's opponents decried this centralization of power via the rhetoric of anticommunist. Tower's introductory remarks negatively appraised the "absolute power" of the "poverty czar." While one may freely point out that czarist Russia was not the geopolitical equivalent of communist Russia, in the world of popular and political rhetoric this may not necessarily be the case. One may reasonably presume, as many examples in this study indicate, that any statement made for public consumption referencing either totalitarianism or Russia (historically or as the Soviet Union) accomplished the same red-baiting purpose thanks to the uniquely American anticommunist Cold War environment. Already one observes rhetorical lines similar to those witnessed by Jerry Voorhis a political generation earlier—liberals promoting social change as authentically American, and social and political conservatives attacking the same as communistic and un-American.<sup>11</sup>

Other Senators followed these rhetorical principles in constructing their own statements on the legitimacy of the EOA. Tower's Texan counterpart, Ralph Yarborough (D-TX), implicitly defended the program's Americanness by explicitly labeling poverty itself as un-American. The American dream, according to Yarborough, remained the promise of equal opportunity toward economic independence for all. Those lacking this opportunity, McNamara's "hidden Americans," on Yarborough's rhetorical map occupied only the outskirts of citizenship and did not enjoy a full share of the American dream afforded to a more legitimate citizen. While these were not immigrants struggling, perhaps like Edward Bok on the schoolyard playground, to prove their legitimacy by a process of naturalization, they did need an avenue to fuller citizenship. For Yarborough, the EOA offered nothing less than their national birthright to a group of disadvantaged, but still authentic, Americans. Kenneth Keating (R-NY) expanded upon

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<sup>11</sup> *Congressional Record*, 88th Congress, 2d Sess., 16611, 16614.

this definition of “Americanness” the following day by more explicitly linking the War on Poverty to the Cold War against communism. Of the many ways in which he might have defended his political position—a Republican supporting a Democratic president’s social policies in an important election year—Keating read into the *Congressional Record* a letter from a constituent from Buffalo, NY. A mother of eight, she wrote to Keating: “Nothing aids communism more than to watch Americans ignoring the poor in their own country.” Jerry Voorhis could not have said it better himself.<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, no less a figure of American political thought than J. W. Fulbright (D-AR) could scarcely more effectively—and certainly not as efficiently—posit the same ideological and political linkage. While not a part of the Congressional debate over the EOA, Fulbright’s seminal writings on the Cold War liberalism of the 1960s, *Old Myths and New Realities* (1964), offer valuable perspective into this method of rhetorically linking social policy with geopolitical struggle. In an essay titled, “The Cold War in American Life” (1964), Fulbright notes that the Cold War—in both its geopolitical and domestic manifestations—stripped American society of its trademark “buoyant optimism.” Primarily one sees this in the regrettable “inversion of priorities” of increasing defense budgets while nearly one-fifth of U.S. society lived in poverty, seemingly without much acknowledgement from their government. This reckoning—of the poverty-stricken one-fifth—mirrors almost precisely language chosen both by President Johnson and by Fulbright’s likeminded colleagues in Congress in discussing the merits of the EOA and other Great Society legislation. Fulbright concluded that, simply, the Cold War remained unwinnable until the United States won its War on Poverty.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Congressional Record*, 88th Congress, 2d Sess., 16756.

<sup>13</sup> J. W. Fulbright, *Old Myths and New Realities, and Other Commentaries by J. W. Fulbright*, New York: Random House (1964): 111.

On the other side of the Congressional coin, Strom Thurmond (R-SC) and Gordon Allott (R-CO) advanced the conservative counter-point first proffered by John Tower. Thurmond focused his criticism of the EOA on the unfettered authority granted to the “poverty czar.” Allott even suggested that perhaps “propaganda czar” might be a more appropriate title for the Director of the OEO, since nothing in the EOA provided for governmental oversight of the Director’s discretion in disseminating information about the OEO and its programs. Where Thurmond’s conservatism was primarily racial in nature—indeed, he complained of the bill’s forced integration within its programs—Allott’s rhetoric more closely resembled the old red-baiting tactics of social and political conservatives of previous anticommunist generations. Intentionally or not, Allott connected his criticism of the EOA with previous governmental investigations into propaganda activities within the United States. Perhaps the most recognizable of those, in recent social memory, was the Dies Committee. Just as its legacy is a linking of un-American activities and propaganda primarily with communist leanings, Allott’s red rhetorical turn maintained the conservative counter-attack against the War on Poverty. This suggests what was soon seen in stark relief: the nation survived two great Red Scares and yet anticommunism remained a potent rhetorical weapon.<sup>14</sup>

Equally interesting, few Congressmen viewed the EOA as anything particularly novel. Proponents hailed its foundation in the best traditions of true Americanism, while critics recalled the failure of similar initiatives in the nation’s past. Certainly, Congressional rhetoric remained on a far more practical plain than did Johnson’s grandiose ambitions. John Tower, for instance, remarked that several of the EOA’s youth employment programs merely resurrected the Civilian Conservation Corps of Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal. Jennings Randolph (D-WV) agreed—but

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<sup>14</sup> *Congressional Record*, 88th Congress, 2d Sess., 16704-5, 17777.

wondered how exactly his colleague intended this as criticism. Randolph noted that, in discussing the matter informally, he and Minority Leader Everett Dirksen (R-IL) agreed that “sometimes we...can answer these new problems with an old instrumentality.” Albert Gore (D-TN) also questioned the administration’s portrayal of the EOA as innovative, and Ralph Yarborough sourced it in Congress’s 1946 Employment Act. Progressive liberal Hubert Humphrey (D-MN), agreed; and, like Randolph, Humphrey saw neither criticism nor contradiction in this, saying, “When old solutions are effective, there is no need to abandon them.” Even so, Humphrey recognized the pragmatism of Johnson’s rhetorical course. Establishing a program’s legitimacy lay in more than just demonstrating its potential effects—which are open to varying interpretation. Thus, Humphrey deployed Johnson’s rhetoric of legitimacy by linking the program to the Kennedy legacy, noting that by the time of Kennedy’s assassination the Washington machine had begun formulating policy based on the findings of economic advisor Walter Heller. Whether or not the program was new mattered little, in Humphrey’s estimation—although this soon proved a faulty assumption—and what mattered far more was its legitimacy within the realm of authentic “Americanness.”<sup>15</sup>

Debate in the House of Representatives proved longer, more impassioned, and far more vitriolic than in the Senate, although it nevertheless exhibited virtually identical rhetorical elements. Conservatives assailed the EOA as an antecedent form of liberalism, attacking it with many of the same tools they once used against the New Deal. Clarence Brown (R-OH) opened debate for the minority party, fervently arguing that the EOA represented a “conglomeration” of programs rejected by past Congresses or abandoned as ineffective by various administrations. Robert Taft, Jr. (R-OH) extended this argument, suggesting that his subcommittee acted on a

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<sup>15</sup> *Congressional Record*, 88th Congress, 2d Sess., 16614, 16620, 16629, 16783.

Domestic Peace Corps bill only to find the same program folded into the EOA—and in a much more loosely defined fashion. Harold Gross (R-IA) and Howard Smith (D-VA), respectively considered the EOA nothing more than the same old partisan “political gimmickry” and “legislation by labels” of political epochs past. Smith further recalled the land resettlement and CCC programs of the New Deal when appraising elements of the current legislation. Meanwhile, Don Clancy (R-OH) unflatteringly called the bill an “[attempt] to wage war on poverty in 1964 with the weapons of 1934....It is the same old soap with a different label.”<sup>16</sup>

As this suggests, many observers in the House agreed with their colleagues in the Senate—whether they supported or rejected it, the EOA appeared to be a repackaged initiative generated by previous liberal movements. Edward Roybal (D-CA) praised it because of his own positive experiences in the CCC. Joseph Minish (D-NJ) not only legitimized the EOA in this way – linking it to the positive progressive legacy of Franklin Roosevelt—but also, as Johnson had done, describing it as an authentic extension of the Kennedy legacy. Minish followed Johnson’s rhetorical lead even further, as Fulbright had done, by linking the traditional rhetoric of anticommunism to the debate over the merits of the EOA. Poverty was to Minish what communist infiltration had been to the likes of Martin Dies and Joseph McCarthy—“the Nation’s most dangerous domestic enemy.”<sup>17</sup>

Predictably, conservatives from both sides of the partisan divide challenged this validation of the EOA, rejecting liberal definitions of legitimate Americanness (the EOA) and un-Americanness (poverty). Some commentators engaged this battle with more subtle undertones, while others employed more provocative rhetoric. As to the latter, the minority

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<sup>16</sup> *Congressional Record*, 88th Congress, 2d Sess., 18198, 18195-9, 18304.

<sup>17</sup> *Congressional Record*, 88th Congress, 2d Sess., 18231-2, 18309.

report from the committee examination of the bill stated that “a Democratic member of the committee publicly described [a land reform program of the EOA] as looking like something from behind the Iron Curtain.” John Anderson (R-IL) quoted Socialist Norman Thomas’s praise for the EOA, a red-baiting tactic favored by Richard Nixon in his 1946 bid to unseat California Congressman Jerry Voorhis. Anderson further damned the program by implying it represented a sort of creeping communism: “The great society [sic] is one which envisions an era where man becomes increasingly dependent upon the state and increasingly despairs of being able to achieve the goals of a better life through the mechanisms in the private sector of the economy.” Albert Watson (D-SC) questioned the validity of the Johnson Administration’s poverty numbers—the “hidden Americans” who comprised one-fifth of the citizenry—and stridently asserted that false inflation of such negative aspects of American society might well push foreign nations into the economic (and, thus, ideological) embrace of the Soviet Union. He pondered how the United States could persuasively counter Soviet Communist claims of equal abundance for all while publicly fighting war on a pervasive, endemic American poverty. Benton Jensen (R-IA) turned this logic in a slightly different direction, claiming it was un-American to authorize such a substantial appropriation in the face of U.S. casualties in what was just then becoming the American war to contain communism in Vietnam.<sup>18 19</sup>

Perhaps the most extensive and eloquent use of this rhetoric was by Peter Frelinghuysen (R-NJ), who very subtly redefined the program as inherently un-American. Cautioning against giving too much discretionary and unchecked authority to the “poverty czar,” Frelinghuysen

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<sup>18</sup> The House debated H.R. 11377 on August 5-7, 1964, and passed on August 8 – less than twenty-four hours after Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution that effectively authorized the president to wage war against the communists of Vietnam.

<sup>19</sup> *Congressional Record*, 88th Congress, 2d Sess., 20680, 20322, 18200, 18313.

raised the specter of totalitarianism. Indeed, he warned that the EOA threatened “the furthest extension of Federal authority and centralized power which has ever been proposed” in the United States and that the program was not one of progressive liberalism but rather “a radical proposal.” He argued that this centralization of power—and, indeed, that the program would make citizens utterly dependent on it—represented “the kind of power...that has smothered and destroyed liberal institutions.” Abandoning all subtlety, Frelinghuysen concluded that that “creation of a Federal poverty czar in possession of unlimited authority would not inaugurate a ‘war on poverty’; it would initiate a turning away from the path of liberal democracy.”<sup>20</sup>

Liberal proponents of the EOA also deployed the rhetoric of Americanness and un-Americanness in urging the bill’s passage. Jacob Gilbert (D-NY) invoked the religious rhetoric President Johnson often employed, portraying this “crusade against poverty” as the answer to a nation’s prayers. This effectively legitimized the program via the nation’s traditionally shared belief in a religious heritage, but also as a contrast with the communists widely understood as “godless.” Gilbert, from this righteous foundation, admonished the United States as “stand[ing] shamed in the eyes of the world because of [its] gross neglect [of the poor].” Adam Clayton Powell (D-NY) argued similarly, considering the War on Poverty less than a “moral obligation.” The EOA, to Powell, was inherently American because it expanded the American economy. As Jerry Voorhis once argued, Powell insisted that the nation could only benefit as the purchasing power of the poor came into line with the market’s productive capacity. Moreover, Powell asserted this required an attack on the various root causes of poverty. While costly, Powell reasoned the EOA would ultimately save the nation money as its economy rapidly expanded with the reinsertion of one-fifth of the nation’s potential consumers into the market. Yet, Powell

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<sup>20</sup> *Congressional Record*, 88th Congress, 2d Sess., 18210-1.



warned, such an ambitious program required a director with broad discretionary powers to nimbly address the myriad causes of poverty. Phillip Landrum (D-GA) thus defended the much-maligned (at least, by conservatives) director's powers, and indeed the program as a whole, as inherently conservative by preserving the traditional American values of self-reliance, opportunity, and material happiness. Furthermore, Landrum asserted, even if the causes of poverty were perhaps natural, its consequences (specifically, economic non-participation) were wholly un-American. Defining poverty as "a condition which prevents an individual or a group of individuals from enjoying the full benefits of citizenship," Landrum seconded Johnson's assertion that the EOA promised legitimate but disadvantaged Americans their national due. Dominick Daniels (D-NJ) affirmed that the EOA thus represented economic conservatism, while Carl Albert (D-OK) reiterated the paradox of selling capitalist democracy abroad while "operat[ing] under the resignation that the poor we will have always with us" at home.<sup>21</sup>

Because the EOA passed both the Senate (61-34, 5 nv) and the House (226-185, 20 nv) by healthy margins, it is easy to assume that progressive liberals succeeded in redefining poverty as inherently un-American. It is easy to assume that President Johnson succeeded in legitimizing his new brand of progressive liberalism to Congress, if not to the general public that elects them. Indeed, hindsight makes it is easy to attribute the eventual failure of the War on Poverty to the increasing commitments of men and money to the hot war in Vietnam. With apologies to William of Occam, these assumptions reflect only the most simplistic of interpretations and not the significance of this episode. Closer examination reveals that a particularly successful conservative counterassault hamstrung the War on Poverty from its inception. The conservative

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<sup>21</sup> *Congressional Record*, 88th Congress, 2d Sess., 18230, 18202-8, 18276-7.

reaction expertly employed that most conservative of twentieth-century American socio-political constructs—domestic anticommunism.

*Political Pragmatism and Domestic Anticommunism: “The Yarmolinsky Sacrifice”*

By most accounts, Adam Yarmolinsky played a vital role in the intellectual creation and political passage of the War on Poverty. Impeccably educated and well-credentialed for government service, Yarmolinsky boasted degrees from Harvard University and Yale Law, a clerkship for Supreme Court Justice Stanley Reed, and even service in the armed forces during the last days of World War II. Upon publishing *Case Studies in Personnel Security* (1955), which repudiated many of that era’s charges of communist infiltration as little more than simple partisanship, Yarmolinsky earned the notice of Robert McNamara. When the latter became Secretary of Defense, he brought this liberal “wunderkind” with him to the DOD. By the time President Johnson decided to make the War on Poverty the first priority of his own legacy, Yarmolinsky already possessed a hard-won reputation as an intelligent policy troubleshooter—if perhaps one utterly lacking in diplomatic charm.<sup>22</sup>

Unfortunately for both Yarmolinsky himself and Johnson’s War on Poverty, unapologetic straightforwardness was not Yarmolinsky’s only unappealing trait. According to political commentators Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, Adam Yarmolinsky had “the misfortune of looking like the anarchist bomb thrower in old political cartoons.” Combined with an obviously ethnic name and the persistent but dubiously documented allegations that his parents were radical poets with communist sympathies, Yarmolinsky became a prime target for red-baiting

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<sup>22</sup> James L. Sundquist, ed., *On Fighting Poverty: Perspectives from Experience*, (New York: BasicBooks, 1969), viii; Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, “The Yarmolinsky Sacrifice,” *Esquire* (February 1965): 80-1.

politics in an era long after most historians believe they had died . Although Joseph McCarthy was, and other chief anticommunists of the 1940s and 1950s long ago moved on to more fertile political pastures, a latent form of the same accusatory anticommunism remained just below the surface of social and political rhetoric. The ultra-conservative John Birch Society propagated rumors through its press arm that since his college days Yarmolinsky served as a fundraiser for radical, communist groups, a role he maintained even while employed by the federal government. Evans and Novak reported a more explicit charge, when in 1963 an unnamed member of the Young Republicans confidently informed them that “the top Communist agent in the U.S.A. [is] Adam Yarmolinsky.”<sup>23</sup>

Ironically, the Communist propaganda bulletin *Daily Worker* had once labeled Adam Yarmolinsky as a chief red-baiter. Nevertheless, these charges clung to Yarmolinsky even as he rose in prominence and influence within the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. By early 1964, Johnson tapped Yarmolinsky as the chief deputy to Sargent Shriver, titular director of the War on Poverty. But Yarmolinsky acted as the driving ideological force behind the program, and Shriver as its more refined—and, less vulnerable to red-baiting politics than Yarmolinsky—public face and legislative tactician. This was a deliberate arrangement by the always-pragmatic Johnson. He needed Yarmolinsky’s liberalism and policy expertise, but needed equally Shriver’s political savvy. Johnson also maintained close ties to the Senate leadership he believed held the key to the EOA’s passage. The House of Representatives, to the contrary, presented Johnson with something of a Faustian dilemma, forcing a choice between pragmatism and idealism. The dilemma and Johnson’s choice reveal much about the nature of practical politics even a decade

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<sup>23</sup> Evans and Novak, “The Yarmolinsky Sacrifice,” Reprinted in *Congressional Record*, 88th Congress, A4247; Evans and Novak, “Yarmolinsky (*Esquire*),” 80; Gary Allen, “Think Tanks: Where the Revolution is Being Planned,” John Birch Society, March 1971, Accessed on 9 October 2005 from <http://www.jbs.org/>; Irving Bernstein, *Guns or Butter: The Presidency of Lyndon Johnson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 109-10.

after most observers buried the “Red Scare.” For Adam Yarmolinsky, and for Johnson’s War on Poverty, little but time distinguished post-McCarthy anticommunism from its prior iterations.<sup>24</sup>

On August 11-12, 1964, the widely syndicated “Inside Report” columns of Rowland Evans and Robert Novak detailed “The Yarmolinsky Sacrifice.” Expanded into a feature-length article for February 1965’s issue of *Esquire*, it reveals the behind-the-scenes maneuvering that rebuffed Johnson’s War on Poverty. Of the many avenues conservative southern Democrats might have chosen, they attacked the program with the same tool political and social conservatives had wielded for decades—domestic anticommunism. Of their potential targets, Yarmolinsky, as the chief ideological force behind the EOA, was the most enticing.<sup>25</sup>

The public sacrifice occurred on August 6, 1964, two days before the House passed the EOA. In debate on the floor of the House, William Ayres (R-OH) questioned Adam Yarmolinsky’s role in establishing the Office of Economic Opportunity. Ayres, like many of his conservative (mostly Republican) colleagues, had already criticized the Johnson Administration for heavy-handed lobbying tactics. An up-and-comer in the Republican Party, Charles Goodell (R-NY), remarked that the Johnson Administration’s political maneuverings seemed “unprecedented,” with rumors of political favors given to loyal Democrats and feeble candidates sponsored to run against Republicans who supported the EOA. If these pragmatic offers failed to entice support of the bill, Goodell noted, “the final pressure” suggested those inclined to oppose the bill “take a walk” rather than vote. Galling as this was to partisan (and ideological) opponents of Johnson’s, Ayres pressed his own attack from a more oblique angle. He vocally criticized

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<sup>24</sup> Evans and Novak, “Yarmolinsky (*Esquire*),” 80-2; Bernstein, *Guns or Butter*, 109-10; *On Fighting Poverty*, viii; Adam Yarmolinsky, “The Beginnings of OEO,” in *On Fighting Poverty*, 34-42; W. Marvin Watson with Sherwin Markman, *Chief of Staff* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2004). 113, 116, 121; Mark I. Gelfand, “The War on Poverty,” in *The Johnson Years, Volume One*, Robert A. Devine, ed. (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1987), 131-3.

<sup>25</sup> Evans and Novak, “Yarmolinsky (*Esquire*).”

Yarmolinsky's role as liaison between the War on Poverty brain trust and various Cabinet departments, especially the Department of Defense. Ayres described a letter sent by Yarmolinsky to Joseph Califano, then General Counsel for the U.S. Army, in which Yarmolinsky urged Califano to ready the military bureaucracy for a speedy implementation of this new social policy. Ayres and others, notably Gerald Ford (R-MI), complained that this politicized the issue of poverty—which all partisans disliked—and materially subverted Congress's legislative role. There was no coincidence, in their eyes, that this maneuvering took place on the eve of a presidential election. During debate the following day, conservatives continued their counterattack. Now they linked questions about Yarmolinsky's ideological direction of the program to their standard attacks on the unfettered discretionary powers of the Director; specifically, they wondered precisely how much influence Yarmolinsky—and the persistent allegations against his “Americanness” were well known in political circles—would have over the Director's decision-making. Suddenly the bill's sponsor, Phillip Landrum, interjected that Adam Yarmolinsky would have no place at all in the program's administration. While shocking and seemingly inexplicable to liberals like James Roosevelt (D-CA), this pledge apparently satisfied conservative Republicans. More fundamentally, it represented Johnson's choosing political pragmatism over a more unyielding commitment to the new brand of liberal intellectualism that Yarmolinsky characterized. Evans and Novak described this more succinctly; it was “the execution.”<sup>26</sup>

The trial and sentencing occurred in private on the day before, when the Democratic delegations from North and South Carolina informed Speaker of the House John McCormack (D-MA) and Majority Leader Carl Albert that they would vote against the legislation—siding with the Republicans—so long as Yarmolinsky remained affiliated with it in any way. Dissatisfied with

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<sup>26</sup> Evans and Novak, “Yarmolinsky (*Esquire*),” 122; *Congressional Record*, 88th Congress, 2d Sess., 18262-3, 18574-82; Bernstein, *Guns or Butter*, 110-11.

ambiguous and non-committal responses they received from Shriver and President Johnson, the cadre of conservative Southern Democrats, led by Harold Cooley (D-NC) and Mendel Rivers (D-SC), demanded demonstrable proof of Yarmolinsky's ouster—proverbially, his head on a platter. To rally support among their colleagues, Basil Whitener (D-NC) circulated HUAC's file on Yarmolinsky's parents. Counteracting this obvious red-baiting, Shriver and Speaker McCormack met privately with the Carolinians, but to little discernable effect. Further efforts of the Democratic leadership proved equally ineffective, as the renegade members remained dug into their anticommunist trenches. Instead, Cooley presided over what one unnamed observer described as a “kangaroo court” during which Shriver and McCormack telephoned the White House for President Johnson's personal assurances that Yarmolinsky would be removed from the program. As demanded, “Yarmolinsky's head had been delivered.”<sup>27</sup>

Evans and Novak attributed this to a political power struggle, positing that the Carolina delegations had dutifully advanced the Kennedy-Johnson legislative agendas until recognizing in the EOA an opportunity for greater prominence in policymaking. Indeed, at the time of their *Esquire* feature, no representative from North Carolina served on any of the House's three most powerful committees (Rules, Appropriations, Ways and Means). In the next legislative session, Mendel Rivers of South Carolina received the chair of the House Armed Services Committee, granting this theory sufficient plausibility. Other observers, like Johnson historian Irving Bernstein, consider this the retribution of latently racist southerners for Yarmolinsky's role in formulating and implementing the Department of Defense's integration policy.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Evans and Novak, “Yarmolinsky (*Esquire*),” 80-2, 122.

<sup>28</sup> Evans and Novak, “Yarmolinsky (*Esquire*),” 81; Bernstein, *Guns or Butter*, 110.

Whatever their motives, it remains deeply meaningful that these opportunists chose domestic anticommunism as their primary weapon in this battle of political wills. Despite its dormancy for perhaps as much as a decade, anticommunism remained a powerful political tool—especially when in the hands of social or political conservatives who might use it to resist “radical” change. Furthermore, despite Johnson’s proclamation of a new era of liberalism, liberals remained vulnerable to the self-same anticommunist attacks as their ideological forebears. Nothing in the historical record documents conclusive ties between Adam Yarmolinsky and communism (even less, to Communism). Rather, this episode appears as a conservative-led character assassination, targeting a progressive liberal intellectual with the familiar and still deadly effective weapon of red-baiting, or, domestic anticommunism. Perhaps most interesting, as Evans and Novak identify, is that the EOA’s margin of victory in the House (226-185) greatly outnumbered the votes held by the united Carolina delegation (at most, 16). Whether because he overestimated the numerical strength of his opposition, or because he wanted as wide a margin of victory as possible, Johnson pragmatically sacrificed Yarmolinsky for a broader consensus. Here, expediency trumped ideology.<sup>29</sup>

This rendered two significant consequences, each of which undermined the Great Society to one degree or another. First, many recognized immediately what historians later confirmed, that Yarmolinsky’s ouster crippled the OEO from its inception. On August 8, Representative Charles Vanik (D-OH) protested the news that Yarmolinsky was denied a place in the program’s administration. Vanik accurately noted that no evidence existed to substantively link Yarmolinsky to any questionable activities or associations, and just as accurately predicted that “this vital program would suffer a distressing loss if Mr. Yarmolinsky were denied a part in its

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<sup>29</sup> Evans and Novak, “Yarmolinsky (*Congressional Record*),” A4247; Bernstein, *Guns or Butter*, 111.

implementation.” Irving Bernstein’s assessment of the historical record confirms Vanik’s projections: “The loss of Yarmolinsky was keenly felt. In fact, the OEO did not get a ‘permanent’ deputy director [the position for which Yarmolinsky had been slated] until...June 1966.”<sup>30</sup>

A second consequence is more distant. Johnson’s legacy from the “Yarmolinsky Sacrifice” bore the very sort of “credibility gap” that, during the Vietnam war in the coming years, eventually scuttled Johnson’s entire presidency and haunts his political legacy into the present. John Anderson (R-IL) twice addressed the House regarding President Johnson’s categorical denials of any political “deal” over Yarmolinsky. Anderson extended his remarks in the *Record* and included the text of the “Inside Report” columns by Evans and Novak detailing the “sacrifice.” According to Johnson, Yarmolinsky had never left his office at the Pentagon and never shared affiliation with the War on Poverty in any way. Evans and Novak believed differently, and the historical record confirms their findings. Yarmolinsky’s policy formulations led directly to the creation of the EOA in 1964, although he thereafter returned to the Defense Department where he was one of Robert McNamara’s “whiz kids.” Nonetheless, this “disappointment” even played a significant role in Yarmolinsky’s obituary, published in the *New York Times* on January 7, 2000.<sup>31</sup>

### *Political Pragmatism: Old Wine and New Skins*

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<sup>30</sup> *Congressional Record*, 88th Congress, 2d Sess., 18675; Bernstein, *Guns or Butter*, 113.

<sup>31</sup> *Congressional Record*, 88th Congress, 2d Sess., A4247, A4280-1; Johnson, ed., *Press Conferences*, 191; Bernstein, *Guns or Butter*, 111-2; Evans and Novak, “Yarmolinsky (*Esquire*),” 80-2, 122-3; Neil A. Lewis, “Adam Yarmolinsky Dies at 77; Led Revamping of Government,” *New York Times*, 7 January 2000, Accessed on 9 July 2008 at <http://www.nytimes.com>.



By late 1964 political and social conservatives had already laid the basis for a “credibility gap” between what President Johnson told the public and what could be independently confirmed. In historical perspective, a similar skepticism accompanies Johnson’s claim of novelty in Great Society liberalism. Instead, these politics lacked any evolved defense against the red-baiting form of domestic American anticommunism, bringing its fundamental “newness” into question. Instead, the public still expected Johnson’s liberals—like Voorhis and his liberal colleagues of the previous generation—to legitimize their progressive agenda in the rhetoric of anticommunism. They tried, defining poverty as inherently “un-American” while the EOA and the War on Poverty, by attacking that un-Americanism became authentically “American.” How, then, might a liberal defend the “Yarmolinsky Sacrifice” as legitimately American, especially in this “new” era of liberalism?

Most likely, none could. Johnson’s political rhetoric in light of this example of impersonal pragmatism clearly evinces his overriding need for consensus. As demonstrated, Johnson imbued even the most idealistic calls for a Great Society with the rhetoric of unity and cooperation. Instead of successfully repackaging his anti-poverty program as legitimately “American,” Johnson achieved political legitimacy (the bill’s passage) only through a sort of ritual cleansing—the sacrifice of Yarmolinsky to red-baiters within his own political party. Thus it seems clear that Johnson and his partisan allies in Congress used the rhetoric of domestic anticommunism merely to reinforce their calls for national unity behind their social agenda, rather than using a new form of progressive liberalism to redefine what was legitimately or illegitimately “anticommunist.”

Conceiving of the Great Society within the nexus of consensus liberalism reconciles much of the existing Johnson historiography. Carl M. Brauer notes the explicit and implicit ways

in which Johnson collected the Kennedy legacy and remnant policy proposals into a repackaged War on Poverty. Where Doris Kearns emphasizes the role of “converging historical circumstances” in Johnson’s pragmatic introduction of the issue, Brauer deems it “the right issue for the right man at the right time.” Indeed, Gary Donaldson suggests Johnson implicitly recognized the unique era in which he became president, not just for the convergence of Kennedy’s assassination with renewed Cold War tensions and the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement, but—to Donaldson—even more critically in the year 1964. In assessing the role of Barry Goldwater’s presidential campaign in transitioning political conservatives from an old guard to what eventually became the “Reagan Revolution” of the 1980s, the year 1964 may have been a low water mark for Republican opposition to Democratic initiatives.<sup>32</sup>

Still, one wonders why Johnson conceded Yarmolinsky to a numerically insignificant challenge to the EOA’s passage. Mark Gelfand ponders whether the passage of the EOA on the heels of Civil Rights legislation represented a Pyrrhic victory: “Had [Johnson] deluded himself into believing that a valid consensus existed? Was the nation really committed to all-out war against poverty?” Gelfand finds the answer in tracing the next years of the Johnson Administration. As the president increasingly used the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution to pour greater money and manpower into the war in Vietnam, the OEO progressively and inexorably became “a presidential orphan.” Outside of the contingent consensus surrounding the EOA’s passage and in the face of mounting pressures posed by the war in Vietnam, the Great Society proved unsustainable—a mere flirtation of liberalism with the politics of consensus.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Carl M. Brauer, “Kennedy, Johnson, and the War on Poverty,” *The Journal of American History* 69, no. 1 (June 1982): 99, 119; Kearns, *Lyndon Johnson*, 211; Gary Donaldson, *Liberalism’s Last Hurrah: The Presidential Campaign of 1964* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2003), passim.

<sup>33</sup> Gelfand, “The War on Poverty,” 133-4.

Even those historians who insist that Johnson presided over a fundamentally new form of progressive liberalism concede the centrality of consensus in Johnson's political calculus. Bruce J. Schulman describes Johnson as a liberal who "spent his whole life fashioning consensus," and who as president thus "sought to unite all elements of American society behind him and his liberal agenda." Schulman argues, "Johnson saw building consensus as the central task of his presidency." In explaining his theory of "managerial liberalism," John A. Andrew, III also emphasizes the role of consensus in Johnson's conception of modern liberalism. Andrew argues that only the "[federal] government could balance the interests of various social and economic groups and sustain a consensus." Andrew discovers an irreconcilable paradox in that "the issues addressed by Great Society programs were...bound to be divisive," making consensus a practical impossibility. Joseph Califano, a Johnson advisor and confidant, personally witnessed Johnson's all-consuming preoccupation with consensus. Following the assassination of Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., Johnson worried "that King's opposition to the war [in Vietnam] and his radical connections would provoke a conservative backlash, not just against King but against the Great Society." Thus, Califano recalls, "Johnson consciously decided that—for our nation's sake, to end the divisiveness and complete as much as he could of the Great Society—he had to act to enhance King's reputation."<sup>34</sup>

While these observers agree that Johnson's rhetoric embodied a substantively new form of liberalism, the most discernable facet of these politics was neither practical innovation nor ideological rededication. Rather, the need for political and popular consensus overrode all other factors. Historian Mitchell B. Lerner assessed the Johnson historiography as an "emerging

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<sup>34</sup> Bruce J. Schulman, *Lyndon B. Johnson and American Liberalism* (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1995), 70, 78, 84; John A. Andrew, III, *Lyndon Johnson and the Great Society* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1998), 8; Joseph A. Califano, Jr., *The Triumph and Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson: The White House Years* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 227.

picture of the Great Society as a moderate collection that reflected LBJ's combination of idealism, New Deal liberalism, and political pragmatism."<sup>35</sup> Just as clearly as Johnson's rhetoric embraced liberal idealism and authentic "Americanness," his actions denoted a concern for consensus—even to the point of sacrificing ideology for political expediency. By the end of his presidency, Johnson had not redefined the patterns of legitimacy along substantively new or progressively liberal lines. Instead, he left the White House in January 1969 with a credibility gap and without a Great Society, as social and political conservatives alike rejected both the old wine and the new skin.

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<sup>35</sup> Mitchell B. Lerner, "Lyndon Johnson in History and Memory," in *Looking Back at LBJ: White House Politics in a New Light*, Mitchell B. Lerner, ed. (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2005), 12.

## CHAPTER SIX

### RESPONSIBILITY, LIBERTY, AND RESPONSIVENESS: ANTICOMMUNISM AND THE CRISIS OF THE CONSERVATIVE CONSCIENCE

As Lyndon Johnson was exiting political life, Charles Goodell appeared to be reaching the apex of his. A five-term Republican Congressman from western New York, considered a “Young Turk” and a chief policy wonk within the party, Goodell accepted a special appointment on September 10, 1968 by Governor Nelson Rockefeller to fulfill the unexpired U.S. Senate term of the recently assassinated Robert F. Kennedy. A little over two years later, Goodell, too, was out of politics, branded—like Jerry Voorhis three decades earlier—by Richard Nixon as a radical.

But the links between the political career of Charles Goodell and the socio-political rhetoric of anticommunism run even deeper. To understand the unpopular, but ideologically consistent, choices of conscience made by Goodell during the depth of the nation’s involvement in the Vietnam war, one must recall the U.S.’s first real experiences in “anticommunism.” In the summer of 1919, the nation suffered a series of “dastardly bomb outrages”—including the explosion of a device outside the home of Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer—that triggered the first Red Scare. For the next several months, and at the direction of the federal government, Palmer initiated a series of raids against the radicals assumed to be responsible for the unrest. As seen in chapter two, Palmer, J. Edgar Hoover, and the majority of Congress who debated the necessity of the raids, all concluded that these raids must focus on “red” radicalism. As also seen in chapter two, the Senate legitimized the raids through the passage of Senate Resolution 213, but soon recognized Palmer’s rather flagrant disregard for bureaucratic jurisdictions, due process, and various civil liberties. Senator Thomas Walsh of Montana instigated a review of

Palmer's actions by the Judiciary Committee, but that body could not reach a consensus despite months of testimony and debate, and collecting mountains of evidence.<sup>1</sup>

Although in early February 1921 the Senate discharged the Judiciary Committee from further responsibility in the matter, Walsh remained committed to exposing the nature of Palmer's investigations, which, he believed, targeted a palpable threat but whose means nevertheless threatened the nation's best traditions of individual liberty and constitutionalism. He insisted the Committee submit a draft of his proposed report into the *Congressional Record* for public, and historical, consumption. It held that, while the cause was unquestionably just, these "Palmer Raids" willingly flouted rules of procedure, abrogated boundaries of institutional jurisdictions, and displayed an utter disregard for the Fourth Amendment's protections of due process and individual liberties. Put simply, the end could not justify these means. Walsh concluded that, thankfully, few Americans ever needed to appeal to their traditionally sacrosanct constitutional rights. The notable exception, he wrote, was "when the public mind is stirred by some overwhelming catastrophe or is aghast at some hideous crime, or otherwise overwrought." He closed the report with a rhetorical flourish: "If, in such times, the Constitution is not a shield, the economiums which statesmen and jurists have paid it are fustian." Almost a half-century later, a growing and vocal segment of U.S. society considered the Vietnam war an overwhelming catastrophe, and some, a hideous crime. One might imagine Walsh's final lines, those rhetorically weighing the cost of civil liberties against the preservation of ideological consensus, echoing through the generations to a fellow Senator—himself trying to reconcile such seemingly incompatible ideas as traditional conservatism and the antiwar movement.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Congressional Record*, 68th Congress, 1st Sess., 3004-27.

<sup>2</sup> *Congressional Record*, 68th Congress, 1st Sess., 3026-7.

### *The “Traditionalism” of Charles Goodell*

Charles Ellsworth Goodell’s pedigree appears stereotypically “all-American.” Born in Jamestown, NY, on March 16, 1926, he served as a seaman second class with the U.S. Navy from 1944 through 1946. During the last year of the police action in Korea, he served as a second lieutenant with the U.S.A.F.’s Judge Advocate General corps. Between these periods of public service, Goodell matriculated first at Williams College in Williamstown, MA, and later earned advanced degrees in both government and law from Yale University. Following his admittance to the New York Bar in 1954, Goodell served as a congressional liaison for the Justice Department. In 1959, the death of Representative Daniel Reed (R-NY), stalwart of an incredible 21 consecutive terms in Congress, began Charles Goodell on a political collision course with the Republican party—one premised utterly on the concepts of legitimacy and authenticity, and occurring largely within the rhetoric of un-Americanism and anticommunism.<sup>3</sup>

The few scholars who discuss Charles Goodell in any depth focus almost solely on his equally vocal and—to the G.O.P.—controversial antiwar stance. The oddity of a seemingly staunch Republican veteran of the House who, once appointed to the U.S. Senate, became one of the most outspoken critics of U.S. government policy toward the Vietnam war, irrespective of party label, certainly piques the historian’s interest. Most, perhaps understandably, conclude that Goodell was, like Governor Rockefeller or fellow New York senator Jacob Javits, a “liberal Republican” of the old guard. Typically isolationist and open to more liberal social policies, these Republicans might be expected to oppose the war in Vietnam. In this view, Goodell’s vocal opposition and his eventual excommunication from Nixon’s Republican party are not

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<sup>3</sup> “Charles Ellsworth Goodell,” *Biographical Dictionary of the United States Congress, 1774-Present*, Accessed on 11 October 2006 at <http://bioguide.congress.gov>.

particularly surprising. Yet, a close reading of Goodell's public statements while in office—from his first day in the House and through his last day in the Senate—instead reveals a moral and ideological consistency rooted in his own conception of traditional, authentic, and legitimate conservatism. In articulating his own policy preferences, Goodell often returned to a paradigm he once articulated in reference to a consumer protection program: “Consumers must be protected against fraud and shoddy products; must have access to the information necessary to make an intelligent choice...; and must have an adequate forum where their legitimate complaints may be heard and rectified.” These attitudes correspond perfectly to the demands this lawyer believed the U.S. Constitution required of the government in service of its citizens. By social compact, the federal government pledges itself to the protection of its citizens and their constitutional rights—the first component in the paradigm. The government must allow its citizens freedom, which choices informed by that hallmark of democratic forums—the free and open exchange of information and ideas; the second component. Finally, the politician in a representative democracy promises responsiveness to the demands of the voting public whose interests he ultimately serves; the third component of Goodell's personal political paradigm. Labeled responsibility, liberty, and responsiveness, these in many ways formed the preamble to Charles Goodell's declaration of political independence. Indeed, this marks as intellectually and morally consistent even his dramatic and otherwise inexplicable transition from paradigmatic Cold War conservative Republican to one of the most active antiwar critics in the entire government.<sup>4</sup>

In 1958, though, Charles Goodell was little more than a typical freshman Congressman, seen but seldom heard during his first months in the House of Representatives. Even so, when

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<sup>4</sup> *Congressional Record*, 91st Congress, 1st Sess., 32340.



Goodell spoke he did so with an eloquence and ideological certitude that won him the notice and respect of many of his colleagues. Indeed, John Taber, a fellow Republican Congressman from New York, submitted to the *Record* the text of a Fourth of July speech Goodell presented to the Chautauqua Institution of Chautauqua, NY, in 1959. Titled, “Rendering Unto Caesar the Things Which Be Caesar’s,” it unconsciously outlined the very principles that defined Goodell’s politics in general, and his Republicanism in particular. In the speech’s introduction, Goodell referenced his choice of title, noting that the Fourth of July was the day for all authentic Americans to render their loyalty to the national, corporate Caesar. However, he warned his audience, Jesus of Nazareth’s maxim referred also “to the authority that human government exercises over its citizens.” This relationship was proper because that government, in return, pledged itself to the protection of those citizens and their rights. Goodell noted that this symbiosis allowed liberty to flourish within the United States to the point where citizens could refuse military service for reasons of religious conscience. His own experiences in the Justice Department cemented this view, as he identified conscientious objection as his most difficult cases in balancing the expectation of duty to country with that country’s guarantee of individual religious liberty. Goodell explained: “[T]he Constitution and its amendments are not so worded as to require the Government to...affirmatively guarantee you and me freedom[s]....They just bar the federal Government...from denying us those rights.”<sup>5</sup>

Goodell also described the responsibilities of that federal government in traditionally conservative terms. He posited that if the “Framers” of the U.S. Constitution joined him for the House’s first order of business in the wide-eyed freshman Congressman’s career, they would share his shock at the nearly \$40 billion budget request for the armed forces. Goodell noted, in

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<sup>5</sup> *Congressional Record*, 86th Congress, 1st Sess., 13937-8.

the rhetoric of a classic political conservative, that “all of us could do with less tribute to Caesar in the form of our taxes to our Federal Government.” He disputed that increased budgets and bigger bureaucracies served the people simply by their existence, and decried those who wanted the “federal Caesar” to “spend [the nation] into a wild and illusory prosperity.” Even in self-identifying himself as an anticommunist, Goodell further deployed the rhetoric of a traditional brand of conservatism. He identified the sources of the United States’ prosperity as free enterprise within an incentive-based economy, a form of capitalism inherently opposed to communist economic principles. To this effect, he referenced an unnamed friend who bemoaned the big-business friendly economic system of the United States; Goodell suggested that if his friend compared this system to that of Soviet Russia, he would “have a little different perspective on this word ‘freedom.’” Even so, such freedom could not persevere without the system responding to the needs of its citizenry. As such, Goodell embraced his status as “a hidebound, earthbound old conservative,” a philosophy to simultaneously “conserve the good” and “attack the things about [American] society that are unworthy of [its citizens].” If the people rendered loyalty unto Caesar, he should responsibly return service unto them.<sup>6</sup>

In mid-August 1959, Goodell spoke in support of the Landrum-Griffin labor bill, which eventually passed the House by an overwhelming margin. Goodell first praised it as making unions more democratic. Next, he noted it would make them also more responsive, by “restor[ing] union management to the workingman himself.” Furthermore, it allowed workingmen a free choice in choosing these leaders by bringing union elections into the open. He specifically condemned the methods of Jimmy Hoffa’s Teamsters as illegitimate and un-American, passionately declaring, “This is the Hoffa method of organizing: Throw out the ballot

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<sup>6</sup> *Congressional Record*, 86th Congress, 1st Sess., 13938-9.

box, who cares what the workers want, we are taking over.” By curing these ills and ensuring both liberty to the workers and responsiveness on the part of their union, Goodell legitimized the bill as “‘prolabor’ in the truest American sense.”<sup>7</sup>

Not only did Goodell immediately articulate a personal political philosophy based on his view of traditional conservatism, but he also very quickly assimilated the methods of traditional partisan politics. In late May 1960, Goodell inserted into the *Record* an article defending President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s Cold War record and criticizing Adlai Stevenson for stating a willingness to make diplomatic concessions to the Soviet Union. Written by William H. Stoneman for the *Chicago Daily News* on May 16, 1960, its strident tone matched its provocative title: “Was Nikita Influenced by Adlai?” Goodell seconded the article’s conclusions, suggesting that Stevenson’s gesture of goodwill exhibited “a naive and unrealistic conception of Communist motivations,” and the Congressman sardonically hoped the article “did not actually reflect the views of Adlai Stevenson.”<sup>8</sup>

Thus ensconced as both a political conservative and a partisan Republican, Goodell continued refining his personal political philosophy. In March 1961, Goodell lent his support to the renewal of funds for the still controversial, if less slightly less venomous, HUAC. While qualifying his support by noting that the committee—like all others—had not always operated as Goodell would have liked, he nevertheless considered its purposes in line with his own principled Republicanism. The committee’s “unrelenting vigilance [against] the Communist conspiracy” protected authentic American liberty against the “insidious infiltrations perpetrated by that power [seeking to] destroy the social, economic and religious life” of the American

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<sup>7</sup> *Congressional Record*, 86th Congress, 1st Sess., 15852.

<sup>8</sup> *Congressional Record*, 86th Congress, 1st Sess., A4543.

people. Yet, a legitimate American government must also mind its citizens' liberties; it must not "curb freedom of the press or of speech," but instead make efforts to "uproot" communism "in honest fashion and under constitutional procedure[s]." He hoped no future generation would lament their state because of the inaction—or, equally dangerous, the inappropriate actions—of Goodell's own Congress.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, one of the primary components of Charles Goodell's anticommunism was a commitment to the free and open exchange of information and ideas—a hallmark of his personal political philosophy not so different from the anticommunism of Jerry Voorhis decades earlier. Lending his voice to support a 1961 address given by Kenneth B. Keating, the junior U.S. Senator from Goodell's New York, the Congressman agreed that the public schools, as a moral imperative, should educate the American people on the meaning of communism and the objectives of Communists. He considered this education nothing short of "essential" to the continued survival of the nation as one of free people, making explicit the intellectual and rhetorical linkage of information and liberty. Yet, Goodell articulated not only ideological anticommunism but also, at times, a more militant brand of anticommunism. On February 23, 1961, he inserted into the *Record* the transcript of a radio interview given by Capt. Eddie Rickenbacker on the subject of "The Communist Threat." In it, Rickenbacker called for armed interdiction in Cuba to overthrow the repressive communist dictatorship of Fidel Castro and restore those peoples' liberties. That Goodell articulated his own positions by inserting into the *Record* what were essentially public texts—including newspaper articles and interview transcripts—substantiates his commitment to a responsive government. Clearly, he believed this

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<sup>9</sup> *Congressional Record*, 87th Congress, 1st Sess., 2966.

demonstrated that his constituents supported and in many cases informed his own political actions.<sup>10</sup>

In September 1962, Goodell acted similarly in criticizing President John F. Kennedy's decision-making during the ill-fated Bay of Pigs insurrection in Cuba. Goodell lamented that the nation's precarious relationship with Communist Cuba arose from "past errors" and the failure of Kennedy to act "purposefully and courageously in April 1961." As information about the bungled rebellion became known, Goodell criticized Kennedy for expressing "continued confidence in the same misguided and weak-kneed advisors who led him to tragic error" in withholding air support from the Cuban counter-revolutionaries. He believed this weakened America in the eyes of the Soviet Union, bringing the world "closer to nuclear disaster." He chided the Democratic President for allowing Stalin reportedly to opine to poet Robert Frost that the United States was "too liberal to fight." He defended this strident and partisan position by inserting into the *Record* the text of a September 17, 1962 article from *US News and World Report* entitled "Kennedy's Fateful Decision: The Night the Reds Clinched Cuba." Ultimately, Goodell's anticommunism appeared fully aligned with that of the majority of his minority party; certainly, it squared with his own belief that the federal government owed its citizens both political responsiveness and the preservation of their way of life—including and especially their liberties. Allowing communism's unchecked growth in the United States—or, presumably, even in the Western Hemisphere—abrogated this commitment to responsiveness, and threatened to allow communist ideology to overturn the liberties and institutions Goodell believed defined the authentic conception of America.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Congressional Record*, 87th Congress, 1st Sess., 12525, A1181.

<sup>11</sup> *Congressional Record*, 87th Congress, 2nd Sess., 19265.

This strongly partisan rhetoric demonstrates how far Goodell had come within the Grand Old Party in such a short time. Indeed, by the time of this speech on the floor of the House of Representatives, Goodell had already garnered press recognition as an up-and-comer within the party. On May 19, 1962, Goodell's colleague from New York, Walter Riehlman, offered for the *Record* an article by Jules Witcover written for the March 11 edition of Syracuse, NY's *Herald-American*. From its title—"He Sparks 'Positive' GOP Thinking"—to its conclusion, it effusively praised Charles Goodell. While perhaps an otherwise unremarkable "puff piece," the article offers insight into Goodell's standing within his party. It notes that Goodell was then only in his second Congressional term yet already performed several substantial legislative feats. Not only did he win bipartisan support for a manpower retraining bill, but Goodell's status as a strong Republican led also to his increasing consultation by fellow Republicans for his position on important policy matters. Indeed, Goodell, at just 36 years old, offered his counsel to the House Republican policy committee, party committee task forces, and a joint House-Senate campaign platform committee. Notably, the article defended Goodell as both a legitimate conservative and a true Republican: "Goodell is particularly effective because he is a party regular conservative who can suggest an alternative without raising suspicions among his colleagues."<sup>12</sup>

Goodell's remarks on "The Expanding Federal Government and Its Intrusion Into Everyday Life" rhetorically demonstrate his synthesis of legitimate Republicanism with his own, perhaps more accurately libertarian, political philosophy. He acknowledged that the government played a necessary role in the preservation of the essential goodness of American society. Yet, he spoke also of an oppressive tax system and ever-expanding federal bureaucracy, both typical Republican targets, as restricting individual liberty. He acutely recognized the seriousness of this

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<sup>12</sup> *Congressional Record*, 87th Congress, 2nd Sess., A2079.

situation because of his “daily contact with [his] constituents.” Indeed, he legitimized his thoughts on the subject by quoting a letter from one of his constituents, a small-businessman suffocating under an increased tax burden. It represented a sample of “the growing dissatisfaction of the average citizen with the expanding Federal Government and its intrusion into everyday life.” As he rose in prominence within the party, Goodell legitimized his ideas and actions always by the unique paradigm that defined his Republicanism.<sup>13</sup>

By 1963, it appeared as though Charles Goodell possessed a brilliantly bright future with the Republican party. Not only had he emerged as a rising star in some policy realms, but he was also a charter member of the GOP’s “Young Turks” of the era. Among others, this group also included Donald Rumsfeld of Illinois, first elected at the age of 30 in 1962, and Robert P. Griffin of Michigan, who ascended to the House in 1958 at the age of 35. As the Republican party of the 88th Congress caucused to elect its leadership, these three “Young Turks” engineered a stunning coup by wresting the House Minority Leader post from Charles Hoeven of Kansas, who held the respect of most of the party’s old guard. Instead, led by the vanguard Goodell faction, the Republicans chose as their leader Gerald R. Ford of Michigan, then beginning his eighth Congressional term. In his analysis of the post-World War II Republican party, Nicol C. Rae labeled Ford’s election a “major rebellion” against the old party leadership. Interestingly, when scholar A. James Reichley interviewed Charles Goodell about their selection of Ford as minority leader, Goodell took a rather more pragmatic view: “It wasn’t as though everybody was wildly enthusiastic about Jerry....It was just that most Republicans liked him and respected him. He didn’t have enemies.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Congressional Record*, 87th Congress, 2nd Sess., A3610.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in A. James Reichley, *Conservatives in an Age of Change: The Nixon and Ford Administrations* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution Press, 1981), 274-5; Nicol C. Rae, *The Decline and Fall of the*

A number of major issues occupied Goodell's time and political energies through the mid-1960s. As a member of the House Committee on Education and Labor, Goodell lent consistent support to civil rights and liberties issues in public education, especially concerning racial desegregation. Goodell also sponsored a number of bills prohibiting gender discrimination in the federal pay ranks. While John D. Stinson, in a preface to the Charles Ellsworth Goodell Papers at the New York State Library, suggests this indicates an increasing liberal tilt to Goodell's politics, in reality it proves as consistent Goodell's longstanding commitment to a strict interpretation and implementation of the promises of the Bill of Rights. Goodell, with a lawyer's training, doggedly pursued any measure that extended liberty to the American people. Moreover, he believed that the federal government bore a responsibility to maintain and protect liberties—these were indeed two fundamental components of his political philosophy. That he supported such measures during an era when the Civil Rights movement, and soon thereafter the Women's Rights movement, became a widespread public phenomenon again indicates his commitment to a responsive government. Goodell's efforts in these areas also demonstrate consistent adherence to his personal political philosophy of Republicanism, even if it did not necessarily conform to the overly generalized definition of Republicanism generally echoing from the ascendancy of the Goldwater faction from 1964 onward.<sup>15</sup>

Clearly, one issue held increasing importance to Charles Goodell, likely because it became more important to the American people—the war in Vietnam. By August 1965, Goodell

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*Liberal Republicans From 1952 to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 165; "Donald Henry Rumsfeld," *Congressional Biographical Dictionary*, Accessed on 1 November 2006; "Robert Paul Griffin," *Congressional Biographical Dictionary*, Accessed on 1 November 2006; "Gerald Rudolph Ford, Jr.," *Congressional Biographical Dictionary*, Accessed on 1 November 2006.

<sup>15</sup> *Congressional Record*, 88th Congress, 1st Sess. through 90th Congress, 2d Sess., Index volumes; John D. Stinson, "Charles Ellsworth Goodell Papers, 1950-1979," New York: The New York Public Library, Manuscripts and Archives Division (February 1992), Accessed on 1 November 2006 at <http://www.nypl.org/research/chss/spe/rbk/faids/goodell.pdf>; Donaldson, ix.,



was the Chairman of the House Republican Committee on Planning and Research, one of the party's central policy clearinghouses. Under the auspices of this body, Goodell entered the debate over the course of the Vietnam war with full voice. In response to a Department of Defense memo defending both the legality and the progress of the war, the Committee issued its own white paper, titled, "Vietnam: Some Neglected Aspects of the Historical Record." Its rhetoric belies its obvious partisanship, but more importantly betrays the significant impact Goodell had on its drafting. Tracing the course of U.S. involvement in Vietnam back to President Harry S Truman's initiation of economic and military aid to the nation in 1950, the paper asserted that "there was no crisis in South Vietnam" until the end of the Eisenhower Administration. As the U.S. commitment deepened during the Democratic administrations of Kennedy and Johnson, the situation rapidly deteriorated. The report's unrelenting attacks on the budding problem later termed Johnson's "credibility gap" align almost perfectly with Goodell's commitment to informed choice as the hallmark of liberty: "Conflicting statements have been issued. Deeds have not matched words....Both because it invites miscalculation and because it confuses the American people, the administration's lack of candor about the situation in Vietnam and about its own plans and actions is regrettable." Rather than manipulating opinion or suppressing dissent, the paper suggested "greater national unity" would naturally flow from greater openness in policymaking; this, of course, in addition to enacting certain policy recommendations made by the Republican party. Quoting at length from the public statements of both President Johnson and his Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, it concluded that "neither the Congress nor the public is being accurately and fully informed about the Nation's involvement in Vietnam." Indeed, it asserted that the war's most significant impact on the American system was a shortage—not of war materiel, but rather of truth and openness. Perhaps

most significantly, the paper presaged Goodell's future with the antiwar movement when it argued: "Criticism of administration actions, when well-founded is not inconsistent with support of [anticommunism] nor of the methods needed to attain it [the defeat of communism]. Indeed, such criticism can help in the attainment of the Nation's objective without unnecessary loss or delay." This commitment to free and open exchange of information and ideas had deep roots in Goodell's ideological soil, informing both his intellectual conservatism and his ideological anticommunism.<sup>16</sup>

For the remainder of his career in the House, Goodell continued leading the partisan opposition to Johnson's Vietnam policies, if not necessarily the war itself. In early summer 1966, Goodell outlined a proposal for legitimate elections for South Vietnam. The proposal, like the white paper he helped draft, emphasizes Goodell's own conception of legitimate American conservatism and authentic Republicanism by highlighting his personal political philosophy. He addressed the House for thirty minutes on June 1 on the subject of "Vietnam: Election Hazards." He believed the recent civil unrest in the most populous regions of South Vietnam, specifically Da Nang, Hue, and Saigon, generated negative public opinion in the United States as to the legitimacy of the war. Certainly, he believed, the international community doubted the U.S.'s benevolent intentions toward the region. As many historians later identified, the R.V.N. needed "unity and stability" if the U.S. was to succeed in combating communism there. Goodell argued this could only occur if the United States sponsored free and open elections in South Vietnam; none of the five elections held there since 1954 rose to meet Goodell's standards. Rather, he offered the qualifications for an election that, he insisted, would offer to the people of South Vietnam the same standards that the United States stood for in the Manichean world of

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<sup>16</sup> *Congressional Record*, 89th Congress, 1st Sess., 21838-44.

Cold War symbology. A primary test of this system's legitimacy would be a plebiscite, wherein the Vietnamese people publicly and freely declared their approval or rejection of communism. Goodell believed not only that the people would overwhelmingly disavow their Communist cousins, but also that this would prove the legitimacy of U.S. presence in Vietnam. Much as he believed legitimate government was responsive to its own citizens, Goodell suggested America also responding to the will of the non-communist peoples of the world in protecting them from such aggression. In this way, Goodell rhetorically identified the responsibility of the U.S. government in the Cold War world as the protection of liberty wherever it existed.<sup>17</sup>

Importantly, though, Charles Goodell did not at this time support any troop withdrawals from the theater. Much to the contrary, he indicated that a unilateral truce only promised the communist forces an unfettered opening to further repression. In answering sharp criticism from Democratic rivals in the House—Samuel Stratton of New York and Roman Pucinski of Illinois—Goodell bluntly retorted that “the people who are raising the questions that could cause miscalculation among the Communists are primarily members of [the Democratic] party.” Specifically, Goodell referenced an unnamed Democrat who recently suggested that the United States might soon consider a withdrawal, to which the Republican swung a stern and resolute riposte: “[T]hose are not my words. Those are not my sentiments.”<sup>18</sup>

Goodell continued refining his position on the Vietnam war as the situation changed, although throughout he remained ideologically consistent. He even legitimized his entry into the debate itself by claiming the backing of his constituents—making Goodell himself as a responsible, responsive politician. In September 1966, a few months after the release of and

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<sup>17</sup> *Congressional Record*, 89th Congress, 2d Sess., 11918-20.

<sup>18</sup> *Congressional Record*, 89th Congress, 2d Sess., 11918-27.

debate over the GOP's white paper on Vietnam, Goodell inserted into the *Record* a rather stinging rebuke of the work. Professor David M. Leach, then chair of the Alfred (NY) University department of history and political science, criticized its chief authors—Goodell, Gerald Ford, and Melvin Laird—for failing to go far enough in offering alternatives to the Johnson Vietnam policy. While Goodell defended the paper as mere analysis—which he defined as the limit of a “white paper”—he nevertheless shared Leach's desire for clear Republican contrasts to the Democratic policies. Whether or not they stood directly in line with what was then becoming “mainstream” Republicanism, Goodell from this point forward would indeed offer his own policy alternatives.<sup>19</sup>

In one of his last major speeches in the House of Representatives, on August 17, 1967, Goodell addressed the chamber for a full hour on “A Means to Achieve an Honorable and Lasting Peace in South Vietnam.” Its text demonstrates Goodell's growing dissatisfaction with the war's direction, as well as his conviction that this accurately represented the sentiments of his constituency. He generally cited “most analyses” as agreeing on the major causes of the crisis in Southeast Asia, also agreeing that an American failure there threatened the onset of the “Domino Theory.” Nevertheless, Goodell argued that the present emphasis on military options over pacification efforts represented “a true ‘Americanization’ of the conflict,” deepening the nation's commitment to Vietnam in a way that never adequately addressed the competition for Vietnamese hearts and minds. Goodell discounted the “body count” method of assessing progress, rhetorically questioning, “Can we kill enough?” in a section heading of the speech. He articulated a staunch belief that even “the killing of 1,000,000” communists could not itself

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<sup>19</sup> *Congressional Record*, 89th Congress, 2d Sess., 24646.

guarantee “peace or stability [in] that area.” As such, he wondered, “will the United States ever be able to withdraw honorably from Vietnam or Southeast Asia?”<sup>20</sup>

Rather, Goodell concluded that only Asian could provide the stability and liberty that would legitimize the South Vietnamese social order. Because the U.S. government premised the war on faulty ideas and sold its legitimacy to the American public through insincere means, Goodell increasingly questioned whether the manner of the war’s prosecution adequately reflected the actions of a responsible government, whose citizens made informed choices, and whose representatives responded to their will. While just a year prior Goodell adamantly rejected the notion of a troop withdrawal, by late 1967, considering the course of the war and the changes in public opinion, he felt compelled to change his stance. If the United States could not win the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people, military actions would never represent the will of the people and would thus remain illegitimate and, effectively, un-American. In such an environment, “the armed phase of the confrontation may be prolonged to ultimate defeat.” Goodell concluded that only “an effective Asian accommodation program [could] rescue the United States from [what had become] an essentially untenable position in the conduct of a totally frustrating war.”<sup>21</sup>

By late 1967, although he remained committed to them and despite his continued prominence within the caucus, Goodell’s views were no longer those of the “mainstream” of his own political party. In mid-November 1967, another member inserted into the *Record* a newspaper article describing the defeat of a Republican antipoverty bill. Cosponsored by Charles Goodell and Albert Quie of Minnesota, the bill represented the partisan alternative to the

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<sup>20</sup> *Congressional Record*, 90th Congress, 1st Sess., 23178-80.

<sup>21</sup> *Congressional Record*, 90th Congress, 1st Sess., 21378-80.

Johnson Great Society programs Goodell himself challenged during 1964's debate over the EOA. Indeed, Goodell rather combatively suggested that the summer's riots in Detroit, MI and Newark, NJ demonstrated dissatisfaction not with poverty itself but with the Democrats' broken promises and failed antipoverty initiatives. Nevertheless, his bill fell to resounding defeat as both liberal and conservative southern Democrats united in opposition to it—as did a faction of renegade Republicans. The article predicted this as the death knell of the GOP “positivism” Goodell once symbolized; perhaps more than that it demonstrated the existence of significant fissures within Goodell's own partisan base. It was from this unsound political position that Charles Goodell stood ready to launch the most individual and unique gambit of his career.<sup>22</sup>

### *The “Radicalism” of Charles Goodell*

The year 1968 was a turbulent one for American politics. First the Tet Offensive captivated voters' attention in the weeks leading up to the primary season, and then ultra-dove Eugene McCarthy stunned observers with a strong second-place finish in the New Hampshire Democratic Primary. By late March, President Johnson withdrew his name from the race. In August, violent antiwar protests wracked the city of Chicago while it hosted the Democratic National Convention, where Hubert Humphrey won the presidential nomination.

Two assassinations most clearly demonstrated the tumult of the times. First, on April 4 in Memphis, TN, Civil Rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was slain. Almost exactly two months later, on June 5 in the ballroom of Los Angeles's Ambassador Hotel, an assassin murdered the front-running Democratic presidential candidate and junior Senator from New York, Robert F. Kennedy. It fell to New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller to appoint a

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<sup>22</sup> *Congressional Record*, 90th Congress, 1st Sess., 33013.

successor for Kennedy's unexpired term in the Senate. On September 10, he chose Charles Goodell, who later described these years as "certainly among the most tempestuous [in the nation's] history." The era ultimately witnessed a growing dissatisfaction with the war in Vietnam, a rising public outcry to that effect, and—not coincidentally—the increasing use of the rhetoric of "radicalism" in and around Charles Goodell's Republicanism.<sup>23</sup>

On April 19, 1969, militant members of Cornell University's Afro-American Society took up arms and seized a campus dormitory. Grabbing headlines across the country, the event struck a discordant note within the now-Senator Goodell. Although anti-racism rather than anti-war in its intent, Goodell believed it nevertheless demonstrated the fundamental alienation of the nation's youth from the political system. Besides Cornell University's location in his home state, Goodell felt a deep connection to the school because it had been the site of perhaps the most important event in Goodell's reevaluation of his convictions regarding the Vietnam war. Approximately three weeks prior to the armed siege, Goodell attended a Cornell student assembly on the subject of the war. Later recalling the event, Goodell carefully wrote that he "attended" the meeting, rather than that he "spoke" there, for: "There was no speech. Four student leaders were chosen to question me at the outset, and there-after was a free-for-all debate. And debate it was. The questions were each preceded by an exposition of strong opinions, including harsh and ugly ones about the junior senator from New York." Even as a highly trained lawyer with years of experience debating similarly-trained colleagues in the well of the House of Representatives, Goodell found himself fighting a losing battle—not unlike the battles he and the students agreed were being fought in Vietnam. Always the loyal Republican, Goodell suggested the students give newly-sworn President Richard Nixon at least as six months

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<sup>23</sup>Charles Goodell, *Political Prisoners in America* (New York: Random House, 1973), 151.

to live up to his campaign promises to end the war. At this, Goodell later recalled, the auditorium “almost broke up.” He took no solace in their irritation; that they were aware of the situation and expressing political opinion was not what Goodell hoped to see. Instead, he found just how far outside the system these young people believed they were: “Their alienation was a repugnant thing and my reaction to them was totally negative, as they seemed to want it to be.”<sup>24</sup>

Yet, as Goodell reflected on this episode he realized, “[T]heir unreasoning vehemence and their arrogance was born of a helplessness and frustration. The war in Vietnam was so totally indefensible and the hope of ending it so seemingly remote, that no moderate protest within the system could be adequate for them.” Goodell’s unswerving and career-long commitment to the American system compelled him to act to preserve it. As 1969, Goodell’s first full year in the Senate, drew to a close it became clear to him that he must respond to the will of his constituency to preserve the soundness of the American system. Because their alienation stemmed primarily from one cause, the only thing that could restore them to right standing with their government was resolving the overwhelming catastrophe—and, to some of the students, the hideous crime—of the Vietnam war.<sup>25</sup>

Even so, Goodell did not act with haste. His first efforts toward restoring responsiveness came in early May 1969, when he proposed a wide-ranging overhaul of the Selective Service System. As with his other legislative offerings—his 1972 re-election campaign boasted a record of “forty-four major pieces of legislation”—Goodell’s draft-reform proposal satisfied each of the components of his personal political paradigm. In describing the bill to his colleagues in the Senate, Goodell questioned how they reasonably expected the unquestioned obedience of young

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<sup>24</sup> “Flying Eggs, Sit-ins, and Machine Guns: C.U. Students Make Their Voices Heard,” *The Cornell Daily Sun*, 20 November 2005, Accessed on 1 November 2006 at <http://www.cornellsun125.com>; Goodell, 152-3.

<sup>25</sup> Goodell, *Political Prisoners*, 152-3.



men to a law “so patently unfair and out of date.” Furthermore, Goodell deemed it “intolerable” that the nation still operated under a system that variously the President, the Pentagon, members of Congress, and an ever-increasing body of the public criticized as such. Not only was reform the responsible action, but it would be responsive, too.<sup>26</sup>

Regarding the principles of conscientious objection, Goodell maintained the lawyerly commitment to personal liberties that characterized his discussion of the issue in his Fourth of July speech of a decade prior. Goodell asserted that the doctrine was well established in American jurisprudence since the days of World War I, when Quakers comprised the majority of objectors. This developed into the conflation of “conscientious objection” with “religious objection,” which Goodell considered a violation of the establishment clause of the First Amendment by marking as illegitimate and un-American other-than-religious objections to involuntary military service. Similarly, Goodell proposed revoking the Director of the Selective Service System’s personal power to reclassify draft-eligible men. This vested extraordinary and unchecked power in a single government official, with documented abuses of the power in stripping antiwar demonstrators of legitimate deferments. He expressly decried this “misuse of the draft as a means of punishing dissent.” Rather, registrants deserved legal counsel at their draft proceedings, including any appeals. Goodell argued further that independent judicial review oversee the final decisions of the Director of the Selective Service System. Goodell truly believed that authentic, American reform of the draft system demanded the actions of a responsible, responsive government that protected its citizens’ liberties.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *Congressional Record*, 91st Congress, 1st Sess., 11770-1.

<sup>27</sup> *Congressional Record*, 91st Congress, 1st Sess., 11770-3.

Despite Goodell's attempt to restore responsiveness to the system, the rising tide of public antiwar sentiment flowed unabated. By late September, Goodell grew restless waiting for the unveiling of President Nixon's long-promised "secret plan" to end the war. He instead forced the issue, as he believed was his duty as a responsible member of a responsive government. On September 25, then, Charles Goodell authored Congress's first bill mandating a specific date for the withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Vietnam; that he was a Republican, and still adamantly self-identified as such, made the move all the more surprising. Senate bill 3000 (S.3000), the "Vietnam Disengagement Act," required the removal of all American military personnel from Vietnam by December 1, 1970. It combined Congress's war powers—those to declare war, and to raise and support armies—with its power of the purse in enforcing the timeline by prohibiting to maintain such forces in Vietnam.<sup>28</sup>

In defending this legislation to his colleagues, Charles Goodell returned to his foundational political principles. Interestingly, though, he applied them equally to the United States and the ostensibly free and democratic Republic of Vietnam whose armies the United States propped up. For his own country, Goodell parsed the bill's legality in the strict Constitutional terms of a well-trained lawyer. He believed it upheld and reinforced the separation of powers doctrine that Lyndon Johnson's overly broad interpretation of the Gulf of Tonkin resolution eroded. It restored Congress's full war powers, and emphasized its power of the purse without unconstitutionally infringing on the President's legitimate authority as Commander in Chief. Under S.3000, the President retained the authority to direct the pace and manner of U.S. withdrawal, up to the specified date of complete removal; he also possessed the authority to direct the manner of combat operations until withdrawal. What S.3000 disallowed was the

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<sup>28</sup> *Congressional Record*, 91st Congress, 1st Sess., 27106-7.

President's continued and unfettered prosecution of an undeclared war, ad infinitum. Instead, Goodell suggested the solution to the crisis of American involvement in Vietnam lay in joint action by the President and Congress, rather than the Congress—stripped of its Constitutional war powers—passively asking the President to act voluntarily and unilaterally. Goodell possessed an unequivocal belief that victory in Vietnam was by this time “impossible through any military means acceptable to the American people.” A responsible, responsive exchange of information and ideas between government and its citizens looked forward only to withdrawal, not continued escalation.<sup>29</sup>

A similar government in the Republic of Vietnam could not continually depend on the mighty arm of the United States military for its authenticity. Goodell believed that the publicly announced date of withdrawal would force the R.V.N. to acknowledge its illegitimacy in the eyes of its own people, and to reshape itself as a responsible, responsive body. Examining Vietnam's sordid political history, Goodell recognized that American military pressure generally failed to produce such meaningful reforms. If the U.S. forced the South Vietnamese government to demonstrate on its legitimacy to its people, it could become truly authentic: “We have been fighting for 6 years...to give the South Vietnamese the opportunity for self-determination.” The situation now hinged on whether “the South Vietnamese people support their government and are determined to maintain their independence.” Therefore, the government of the R.V.N., not the American military, bore the responsibility of initiating the process of “reforming itself and broadening its popular base.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Congressional Record*, 91st Congress, 1st Sess., 27106-7.

<sup>30</sup> *Congressional Record*, 91st Congress, 1st Sess., 27106-7.

Even so, Goodell maintained that his immediate purpose in offering the amendment was promoting the sort of spirited debate that he witnessed at the Cornell student forum. He desired little more than “a full debate with a specific objective in mind.” It quickly became apparent to his peers that the American people desired such a debate, as well. As before, Goodell legitimized his legislative proposal—as well as his standing as a responsive, responsible Congressman—by inserting into the *Record* various indicators of public support. In early October, six RAND Corporation employees circulated a cosigned letter expressing their scholarly recommendation that the United States pursue an immediate and full withdrawal from Vietnam. Goodell praised it as “extremely significant that men with such expertise—men who normally shun publicity”—shared his belief in a specific timetable for withdrawal. On October 27, Goodell read into the *Record* a newly-released Gallup poll in which 57 percent of the American public supported his S.3000 proposal. Two days later, he referenced the Gallup poll again when inserting an article from the *Wall Street Journal* detailing the “dramatic turn [toward antiwar] sentiment” in Dodge City, KS, presumably an arbiter of the opinion of average Americans. Notably, Goodell also referenced a student-led moratorium against the war, which occurred on campuses across the nation on October 15. In addition to the petitions signed and submitted to Congress, thousands of students—including a sizeable contingent from Cornell University—engaged in rallies to symbolize their resolve. Goodell ardently believed his S.3000 responded to their will and met their needs.<sup>31</sup>

Fellow senator William Fulbright, by now one of the foremost critics of the war in the U.S. government, promised Goodell’s S.3000 prompt and rapt attention from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee he chaired. But as word leaked from the White House that President Nixon

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<sup>31</sup> *Congressional Record*, 91st Congress, 1st Sess., 29633-4.

planned an address to the nation in which he would outline a major new Vietnam policy initiative, Fulbright delayed hearings on S.3000 in favor of hearing Nixon's proposals first. Nixon spoke in a prime-time, nationally-televised address on November 4, 1969, and the following day Goodell completed his metamorphosis into a so-called "radicalized" Republican. On November 5, Goodell took to the floor of the Senate, thoroughly excoriating Nixon's speech as little more than a stalling tactic. Perhaps Goodell sensed that Nixon viewed him as a radical political challenger—a dangerous position for any Nixon opponent, to which Jerry Voorhis, Helen Gahagan Douglas, and others could attest—for the Senator implied that the President's address accomplished little but squelching the public debate he hoped to initiate with S.3000. Just two days later, Goodell again spoke in opposition to a Nixon Administration policy, this time relating to the issuance of an antiwar march permit. A rally planned for November 15 petitioned the Department of Justice for permission to parade down Pennsylvania Avenue, which, Goodell noted, was the traditional route for political protests in Washington, D.C.. Citing concerns about the protest's potential for violence, the DOJ refused the permit. Goodell decried this as a restriction of a fundamental liberty, declaring, "American citizens have a clear constitutional right to come to the Nation's Capital to demonstrate in a dramatic fashion that they oppose the Government's policy on a particular issue." As to the march's peaceful nature, Goodell noted that he had agreed to participate in the rally upon receiving steadfast assurances of its nonviolence. Thus, he reasoned, the Justice Department lacked substantive rationale for denying the permit. If their intransigence continued, Goodell feared violence as the people, deprived of their due liberty, turned their backs on the coercive power of an unresponsive government. To this effect, he cited the riots in Chicago of the previous year, which Goodell specifically

attributed to the Chicago Police Department's refusal of permits for peaceful protest in Grant Park, the traditional site for such nontraditional political activity in that city.<sup>32</sup>

Only later would Goodell discover that the permit was caught up in the machinations of classic domestic American anticommunism. J. Edgar Hoover, longtime director of the F.B.I., believed he had information tying small numbers of the protest group to communist elements. Although the F.B.I. knew then that only a few of the demonstrators could be described as fellow travelers, let alone true believers, the "involvement of a few communists was enough to loose the incubus that haunted J. Edgar Hoover: if communists were involved, they had to be dominant and the cause had to be wrong." Despite this, the DOJ eventually relented, and the march proceeded with Senators Goodell and George McGovern, joined along the route and at the rally by Coretta Scott King. Goodell defended his involvement as his responsibility as a responsive member of government. Although the nation had been at war for almost ten years, "at first there was almost no opposition; at the end almost all Americans were convinced that Vietnam was a mistake. In the span of a decade, a nation was converted."<sup>33</sup>

Over the course of that same decade, Goodell was himself converted. Where he once gingerly trod, recommending only that the administration alter its stance on Vietnam, Goodell now called for total repudiation of the policy and for complete withdrawal from the theater. Some, contemporaries and later observers alike, considered this a conversion of Goodell's politics from moderate to radical liberal. Despite his participation in the peace march and his deepening friendship with the scion of liberal Democrat war opposition, Senator George McGovern, Goodell continuously identified himself as an authentic Republican, and a loyal one

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<sup>32</sup> *Congressional Record*, 91st Congress, 1st Sess., 34528-9; Goodell, *Political Prisoners*, 153-4.

<sup>33</sup> *Congressional Record*, 91st Congress, 1st Sess., 34528-9; Goodell, *Political Prisoners*, 154-9.

at that. When the Senate Foreign Relations Committee finally scheduled their hearings on S.3000, Goodell took great pains to praise President Nixon where he could. Goodell quite clearly disagreed with Nixon's Vietnam policy from first to last, but in his introductory statement placed the blame for the entire quagmire at the feet of Democratic presidents Johnson and Kennedy. Even so, Goodell once said that constructive dissent was not disloyal, and in criticizing Nixon's own policies Goodell offered that the president's Guam Doctrine perhaps offered a more useful paradigm for Vietnam than the "stay the course" attitude of the administration. When Nixon declared that Asian nations, like Guam, bore the primary burden for their own national security, Goodell believed it proved true his argument from two years prior that only Asian nations could provide stability and legitimacy for themselves—and that gun-barrel diplomacy simply could never stabilize a fundamentally illegitimate South Vietnamese government. Goodell asserted that Kennedy and Johnson erred in implementing such a doctrine as early as 1963, instead increasing the commitment of the United States to what became an unwinnable war.<sup>34</sup>

Again defending his proposal, S.3000, Goodell once more asserted the three basic principles underpinning his Republicanism. He reiterated that the bill absorbed no powers from the executive except those that Congress unconstitutionally ceded in the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution; a responsible Congress must reclaim those war-making powers. Even here Goodell could not resist throwing a partisan jab, explicitly blaming Democrat Lyndon Johnson's overly broad interpretation of the resolution, not any linguistic or legalistic ambiguity in the resolution, for Congress's lost authority. Goodell did not accuse Nixon of culpability in this, but stated that it was irresponsible of the government to expect "one man—the President, but also the leader of a political party"—to bear singularly the burden of extricating the United States from Vietnam.

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<sup>34</sup>*Congressional Record*, 91st Congress, 2d Sess., 2233-6.

Rather, responsible government action demanded that the president share “the responsibility with members of Congress, who represent both parties and a wide spectrum of opinion.” This cooperation, according to Goodell, stood a better chance of producing a truly responsive solution, one that “command[ed] the confidence of the people.” Yet, Goodell clearly believed the people must have access to the information required to make an informed choice. He backhandedly praised President Nixon for opening his televised address of November 3 by stating his belief that the American people “should not be asked to support a policy which involves the overriding issues of war and peace unless they know the truth about that policy.” Goodell told the committee he fully supported this idea, yet asserted the American people lacked a transparent administration. He warned that “secrecy about the real intentions will ultimately confuse ourselves more than...the enemy. Secrecy breeds the twin evils of suspicion and illusion....Let us seek to inform the public, not to mollify it.”<sup>35</sup>

Instead, Goodell found the system increasingly intransigent and unresponsive, even to one of its own members, and his “radicalization” continued apace. On April 30, 1970, Goodell cosponsored, with Democrats George McGovern and Stephen Young of Ohio, Amendment 604 to a Cambodian aid bill, prohibiting the use of any of the bill’s appropriation to support military operations on the ground or in the airspace thereof. While he could not end the war immediately, Goodell at the least might prevent its spreading. On May 5, 1970, Senators Mark Hatfield (R-OR), Harold Hughes (D-IO), and Frank Church (D-ID), joined McGovern and Goodell in cosponsoring Amendment 609 to another appropriations bill. Called the “Amendment to End the War,” it prohibited the use of any appropriated funds for the support of U.S. military operations in Vietnam beyond December 30, 1970, the original date for U.S. withdrawal proposed by

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<sup>35</sup> *Congressional Record*, 91st Congress, 2d Sess., 2336-7.



Goodell's own S.3000. The amendment specified June 1971 as the deadline for the total withdrawal of all U.S. military personnel from the theater. Its one qualifier, however, respected the power of Congress, as did Goodell's S.3000: a declaration of war by Congress nullified the cut-off date in the amendment. All told, some twenty Senators joined as cosponsors, a sizeable if politically insignificant number in the majority-rule U.S. Senate. On May 13, 1970, the "gang of five" led by McGovern and Goodell purchased airtime on NBC to explain their amendment to the American people.<sup>36</sup>

As debate over Amendment 609 continued, Goodell moved further away from the contemporary definition of mainstream Republicanism and toward radicalization and ostracism. Ironically, his principled commitment to the philosophies that made him a Republican actually propelled him down this path. On August 13, the former JAG lawyer took to the floor of the Senate, calling for reform in the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Goodell believed it unconstitutionally infringed on soldiers' rights to personal political belief, a significant component of the First Amendment. The inciting event for this was the "Presidio Case" where roughly a dozen servicemen engaged in a sit-down strike at the military stockade in San Francisco, CA. Investigated by Goodell and Senator Alan Cranston (D-CA), it revealed inhumane conditions in the stockade and "the use of military courts to punish servicemen who dissent[ed] on the war." While Goodell acknowledged that service in the military required a certain limitation of free speech, he steadfastly rejected the interpretation that this denied to soldiers all rights of political expression. The actions at the Presidio were "clearly beyond the proper reach of military discipline. Political freedoms do not end when a person dons a uniform."

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<sup>36</sup> *Congressional Record*, 91st Congress, 2d Sess., 15372-3.

This situation violated the responsibility and liberty aspects of Goodell's personal philosophy, and thus stood as illegitimate in his eyes.<sup>37</sup>

Unlike this case, the "Amendment to End the War" stood as the responsible action of a responsive government. On August 19, George McGovern inserted into the *Record* a Harris Poll of public opinion, which found a plurality (44 percent to 35 percent) of the American public supported a specific plan to withdraw American troops from Vietnam. Goodell interpreted this as a mandate for action. The public supported their plan over the President's "because the American people [did] not know what the President's plan [was]....[T]hus, a poll of this nature [lent] specific support for Congress ending the war by a specific date—and acting legislatively to do so." Presented with the data necessary to make an informed choice, the American people demanded immediate withdrawal; Goodell believed a responsible, liberty-preserving government possessed a duty to act accordingly. Speaking again on August 27, Goodell noted the dramatic conversion of the U.S. Senate to this course of action: "At the time I offered [S.3000], I encountered little support and much hostility. Only two Senators were ultimately willing to announce their support of the legislation. The President of the United States and the Governor of my own State denounced it." Yet, by the end of August, roughly one-fourth of the Senate supported a deadline-withdrawal plan. Goodell believed the Senate was slowly but surely responding to the will of a "converted" people.<sup>38</sup>

Perhaps most importantly to Goodell, the Senate offered the American people both a legitimate choice and the information required for intelligent choice. Goodell remained committed to the political philosophies that defined his conservatism, especially including his

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<sup>37</sup> *Congressional Record*, 91st Congress, 2d Sess., 28711-3.

<sup>38</sup> *Congressional Record*, 91st Congress, 2d Sess., 29416-7; 30226-7.

conception of anticommunism, even as those precepts turned Goodell increasingly against a Republican administration. Twisting the American Cold War paradigm on its head, on August 27 he condemned the Vietnam war by the very terms that once justified its origin, its expansion, and its interminableness. Contrary to the promises of three administrations, the war successfully repressed neither communist ideology nor Communist aggression in Southeast Asia. Rather, Goodell noted with a hint of satisfaction, it appeared the war actually triggered the Communist Chinese promotion of a “war of national liberation” in Cambodia. Goodell concluded that although war was “advertised as a deterrent to Communist expansion in Asia [the war] thus far...succeeded chiefly in being a magnet for it.” By implication, then, the withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam became authentic anticommunism in that it removed from the region the chief accelerant of communist expansion. The accuracy of this stance is, in some important ways, less important than the fact that Goodell adopted such a contrarian position and legitimized it by pointing to public support. Because, he said, the war had not strengthened but instead weakened American influence and power abroad, the responsible, responsive course for the Cold War superpower was withdrawal and retrenchment.<sup>39</sup>

Although he stood increasingly as an individual within the broader party caucus, Goodell remained firmly wedded to the personal political philosophy that defined and authenticated his Republicanism. On April 24, 1970, Goodell spoke before the Los Angeles Constitutional Rights Foundation on the subject of youth alienation and dissent. Titled “Bridge Over Troubled Waters,” Goodell argued that in the eyes of disaffected youth who lacked the ballot but could yet be compelled to fire Uncle Sam’s bullet, the government appeared unresponsive, irresponsible, and thus illegitimate. Goodell identified this perception as the root of the younger generation’s

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<sup>39</sup> *Congressional Record*, 91st Congress, 2d Sess., 30267-8.

endemic dissatisfaction. It was not simple misunderstanding: “[T]he young are not merely returning the anger of their elders; the deeper cause of their alienation is the failure of the system to respond.” In turn, many of the nation’s youth “responded to the evidence of [the] system’s failures with a rage for social justice [without] precedent.” It was not counter-culture that impelled their behavior, but a determination to literally and liberally apply the promises of authentic American liberties, equally and to all citizens. Goodell deemed the so-called radicals as conservatives in the truest sense: these “youth have been hooked on the American dream more thoroughly than any super-patriot. This is why so many of the young are super-disillusioned—by the realization of the failure of the nation even to begin to be what it claims.” Goodell’s indictment of the system clearly turned on its responsiveness vis-à-vis the Vietnam war. He praised the student-led, nonviolent protest movements, and claimed that if the system responded in a responsible manner, their liberties would be ensured. He hoped to redeem the radicals to the political process by making it more responsive, whether through his S.3000 or some other measure.<sup>40</sup>

Thus consistently identifying himself as a conservative, Goodell also continually self-identified as an authentic Republican—even as it became increasingly clear that prominent Republicans considered him a particularly noisy and unpleasant albatross. In the midst of Goodell’s radicalization in the Senate, he rose to condemn the Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, Lawrence F. O’Brien, for remarks critical of Nixon’s handling of economic inflation. Goodell’s stinging rebuke exhibited traditionally partisan invective, as he declared that O’Brien should instead blame Lyndon Johnson for the inflation. Goodell explicitly declared that it was Johnson—under whom O’Brien served as a cabinet member—who “unleashed the inflation”

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<sup>40</sup> *Congressional Record*, 91st Congress, 2d Sess., 13662-3.

by his foolhardy insistence on funding the equally ever-expanding war in Vietnam and Great Society, without increasing taxes concomitantly. Ever the loyal Republican, Goodell suggested O'Brien could not blame a year-and-a-half old President for seven-and-a-half years' worth of Democratic economic quagmires. Ultimately, these instances proved the exception rather than the rule as it seemed Goodell stood apart from his Republican colleagues increasingly more often than he stood with them. For a politically appointed Senator waging an election campaign—with a vindictive politico for President and symbolic head of his Republican party—this was an isolated and dangerous political position. For Charles Goodell the politician, it proved untenable.<sup>41</sup>

### *The “Conscience” of Charles Goodell*

While his growing prominence as an antiwar politician certainly finalized matters, Goodell perhaps signed his GOP death warrant long before he brought S.3000 before the Senate. While actual riots marred the 1968 Democratic National Convention, a quieter sort of rebellion occurred during the Republican Convention. As word spread that the presidential nominee, Richard Nixon, desired Spiro Agnew as his running-mate, moderate and liberal Republicans grimaced. Charles Goodell—once considered a conservative stalwart—and John Chafee, then Governor of Rhode Island, conspired to counter Agnew's nomination with that of John Lindsay, a more liberal Republican Congressman from Goodell's New York. While Nicol C. Rae uses this to defend his classification of Goodell as, like Lindsay, a “liberal Republican,” A. James Reichley's account offers a slight but critical twist to the story. Although Lindsay publicly refused the post, Goodell and Chafee fought to place his name in consideration at the behest of Gerald Ford, who, according to Reichley, found Agnew's presumptive nomination nothing short

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<sup>41</sup> *Congressional Record*, 91st Congress, 2d Sess., 23378.

of “incomprehensible.” Ford turned to Goodell to make the pitch because the latter had served as one of Ford’s chief advisors in his early days as House Minority Leader. Considering Nixon’s political record, one might reasonably assume he bore a grudge against Charles Goodell even before he took the Oath of Office, and regardless of the fact that the rebellion was so wildly unsuccessful that it failed to convince even the would-be renegade candidate of its wisdom. Clearly, Nixon’s Vice President bore a grudge.<sup>42</sup>

As Goodell began campaigning for election to the Senate post he had inherited a short time before, he quickly discovered that Nixon and Agnew considered his defeat an utmost priority. Goodell later wrote that, while a Senator, his office telephone lines were tapped and that he was under surveillance by Military Intelligence. His antiwar stance vexed the establishment so grievously that despite his background and political pedigree, he found himself treated like any other “dangerous” radical or dissident un-American. Undeterred, Goodell pressed on, winning the support of New York’s Republican Party—as well as of its Liberal Party.<sup>43</sup> Despite having the state’s party apparatus’s official mark of legitimacy, Goodell learned that Nixon’s political hatchet-man, Charles Colson—the author of Nixon’s infamous “enemies list” and chief participant in the infamously bungled Watergate burglary—issued letters to state party leaders and Republican-friendly big businesses in New York prohibiting them from contributing to Goodell’s suddenly “radical” campaign. Instead, Agnew urged they give at least tacit support to Conservative party candidate James Buckley, brother of prominent conservative columnist William F. Buckley. Only later did the “Nixon Tapes” reveal to Goodell that from the White

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<sup>42</sup> Rae, *Decline and Fall*, 229 (FN 27 inclusive); Reichley, *Conservatives in an Age of Change*, 227, 293.

<sup>43</sup> New York State’s unique electoral system allowed a single candidate to represent more than one political party. The four typical contestants are the Republican and Democratic parties, as well as the Conservative and Liberal parties. Goodell in 1970 was considered a “fusion” candidate of the Republican and Liberal parties.

House Nixon personally directed this campaign against his candidacy. William Safire recorded Nixon's exact advice in handling the press as follows:

[W]e are not out for a Republican Senate. We are out to get rid of radicals. The point is that the only Republican coming up who is a radical is Goodell. Now about him I'll give you the line: Both major party candidates in New York oppose the President. The only candidate who doesn't is Buckley. The President's rule of endorsing all Republican candidates is being revoked in this case. We are dropping Goodell over the side. Everyone knows it.<sup>44</sup>

By the November election, Goodell was the candidate of yet persona non grata within the GOP. Goodell split votes with both the Conservative candidate Buckley and the Democratic party's nominee, Richard Ottinger. Buckley benefitted from the implicit backing of President Nixon, and the explicit anti-Goodell invective of Spiro Agnew. The Vice President personally campaigned against the "radical" Goodell in New York State, offering some of the most Nixonian political rhetoric outside of Nixon's own red-baiting. Agnew famously described Charles Goodell, the self-proclaimed antiwar convert, as "the Christine Jorgensen of American politics—a reference to a British call girl who had undergone a sex change operation." In his analysis of the growth of the ultra-conservative faction of the Republican Party since 1945, David W. Reinhard assessed Goodell's ouster as "one of the White House's more significant victories." Not ironically, it was not a full and open debate on the merits of Goodell's Republicanism, or even his antiwar stance, that turned the election in Buckley's favor, but largely the rhetoric of radicalism and illegitimacy—informally, of un-Americanness—slung at Goodell by the Nixon White House.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Quoted in Rae, *Decline and Fall*, 104; Goodell, *Political Prisoners*, 7.

<sup>45</sup> David W. Reinhard, *The Republican Right since 1945* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1983), 221; David P. Myatt, "Idiosyncrasy, Information, and the Impact of Strategic Voting," Address at Saint Catherine's College, Oxford (April 2002): 3.

Indeed, because of this issue and his association with Governor Nelson Rockefeller, scholars like Rae, Reinhard, and to a lesser degree Reichley mark Goodell as a “liberal Republican,” never an authentic conservative and, by the 1970s, an illegitimate Republican. In fact, Goodell held little in common with the politics of the man who appointed him to the Senate; as Goodell lamented, when he introduced S.3000 even Rockefeller rejected it out of hand. Additionally, it seems odd to label a politician based on a single policy preference—especially one so highly emotional, controversial, and historically contingent as the war in Vietnam. Most scholarly assessments of Charles Goodell typically look through the red-tinted glasses of Agnew and Nixon, although Nicol C. Rae lengthens the “liberal Republican” argument by noting also Goodell’s commitment to civil and equal rights. Yet, Goodell’s growing opposition to interventionism opposes his inclusion in this construct. Rae suggests further that the liberal Republicans coming to power in this post-World War II era were those who “sought to broaden the party’s electoral base by making some accommodation with the public philosophy of the New Deal.” Goodell may fit part, but not all, of this description. His willingness to modify rather than simply reject Democratic proposals earned him wide acclaim as a positivist. Nevertheless, if the overriding feature of this political philosophy was a focus on electoral politics, one must question the pragmatism of Charles Goodell’s campaign in 1970. Why did he stand as the “only Republican...radical,” as Nixon described him, rather than as a more mainstream Democrat against the war? James Buckley won the election despite fully 69 percent of the state voting for another candidate, either the Democrat or the putatively “liberal” Goodell. Perhaps if Goodell ran as a fusion candidate of the Liberal and Democratic parties he would have coalesced the anti-Buckley bloc into an electoral victory for himself. Why, then, did he remain committed to the Republican party even as its leader called for it to abandon him?<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Reinhard, *The Republican Right*, 221-8; Rae, *Decline and Fall*, 4-6, 104-5; Myatt, “Idiocyncrasy...,” 3,



He did so because Charles Goodell was, thoroughly, an authentic Republican. Even as Goodell waged his doomed campaign, his Republican colleagues in the Senate defended his loyalty to the long-standing principles of the party. Mark Hatfield, notably, articulated something very close to Goodell's own political philosophy, praising Goodell as a responsible politician. Whereas the first Republicans had been antislavery, Goodell, along with Hatfield and conservative standard-bearer Barry Goldwater, reformed an unjust draft that Hatfield described as the modern era's chattel system. He also praised Goodell's commitment to individual rights and liberties. Finally, he noted Goodell's responsiveness, crediting the Senator from New York with "revitalizing the relevance of the political system through the individual participation of its citizens." Hatfield explicitly considered these principles the heritage of the GOP, and unequivocally judged Goodell as faithful to them. Robert Griffin of Michigan noted that, in his position as Republican Whip, he constantly tested the loyalty of his caucus members. He described, with particular enthusiasm, that Goodell stood firmly with the President on any number of issues besides the Vietnam war, even helping the Nixon Administration enact changes to a manpower training bill that Goodell had helped author while a member of the House of Representatives. Griffin also recalled, "it was some 10 years ago when Charlie Goodell dared to propose revenue sharing. Today, of course, that idea is central to the new federalism concept advanced by the Nixon administration and which Republicans are working toward." Jacob Javits, the senior Senator from New York, concurred that his colleague was "no one-issue Senator."<sup>47</sup>

Still, Goodell fell in the election largely because his antiwar stance painted him outside the GOP family portrait. Returning to the Senate for his lame-duck days, Goodell felt compelled

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<sup>47</sup> *Congressional Record*, 91st Congress, 2d Sess., 31981-4.

to defend his political legitimacy and his conservative authenticity, and perhaps even his Americanness. On December 30, 1970, he inserted into the *Record* an article by Harvard Law student Richard L. Brodsky entitled, “Republicanism and the Constitution.” Goodell highlighted the author’s contention that “Republican leaders such as Lincoln, Sumner, Taft, and Eisenhower rose to assert the constitutional and political necessity that Congress maintain a firm, independent voice in the declaring and waging of war.” The paper’s conclusion equally aligned with Goodell’s idea of traditional Republicanism: “[T]he luminaries of the Republican Party have kept in sight the Constitutional limitations of the Presidency, and the need for cooperation among the branches of government. Those Republicans urging similar arguments today may claim the heritage of their distinguished Republican ancestors.” Indeed Goodell did, primarily through his unswerving allegiance to the principles of responsibility, liberty, and responsiveness.<sup>48</sup>

Perhaps a more nuanced description of Republican subtypes better places Charles Goodell, who seemingly defies the standard liberal-conservative continuum. Reichley describes many of Goodell’s peers, from Rockefeller to Hatfield and Javits, as Progressive Republicans, a “minority within the minority.” More federalist than even conservative Democrats, these progressives “remained essentially conservative in that they viewed reform as a means for preserving the underlying soundness of the existing system.” Their deep commitment to responsiveness drove many of them to the “dove” position far earlier than the “Fundamentalist Republican” subtype characterized by the conservatism of Barry Goldwater and, soon, Ronald Reagan. Certainly this paradigm better incorporates Goodell than does a simpler “liberal Republican” moniker. Goodell premised even his increasingly radicalized antiwar position on the

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<sup>48</sup> *Congressional Record*, 91st Congress, 2d Sess., 44047.

concept of preserving a fundamentally sound structure that had become dangerously unresponsive. He never preached radical revolution, but hoped that by demonstrating responsiveness he could restore the disaffected to faith in the political system. In this way, Goodell promoted fundamentally conservative aims. But because he opposed that most anticommunist of anticommunist activities—the war in Vietnam—the Republican leadership under that one-time chief anticommunist Richard Nixon deemed him as much a radical as Jerry Voorhis had once been. Yet, not even Agnew’s rather despicable attacks could dissuade Goodell from his conviction that his antiwar stance was at its most basic level that of a legitimate and authentic Republican.<sup>49</sup>

While not popularly understood, Goodell’s definition of Republicanism was not illegitimate. Neither was it transitory, as Goodell firmly held these principles even long after the 1970 senatorial race. Although “radicalized,” his attitudes and actions still preached a commitment to a conservative position that was inherently “anticommunist.” As Goodell prepared to leave the Senate in December 1970, he again found himself in contact with one of the RAND analysts who had cosigned the letter urging troop withdrawals that Goodell had inserted into the *Record* the year prior. Daniel Ellsberg, the source of the so-called “Pentagon Papers,” confided in the outgoing Senator, “They’re going to get me into jail one way or another, because I’ve got to tell the truth about this war.” Goodell’s returned private life in January 1971 but remained very much in the public eye, for he became co-counsel with Leonard Boudin and Charles Nesson in the defense of Ellsberg against charges of espionage—not for passing but rather for photocopying the papers. Goodell was utterly dismayed that the Nixon Administration considered the free and open exchange of information and ideas—which Goodell believed was

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<sup>49</sup> Reichley, *Conservatives in an Age of Change*, 21-36.

vital to informed choice and true, libertarian democracy—a criminal act tantamount to treason. The trial judge dismissed the case on learning that Nixon operatives G. Gordon Liddy and Howard Hunt had broken into the office of Ellsberg’s psychiatrist. Still, Goodell declared that the charges and the trial nevertheless transmitted “a sophisticated message to the American people, [that] anyone who deals this administration a serious political embarrassment will be the target of a concerted effort to punish him.” Writing just three years after his failed election bid, Goodell clearly identified himself in that category alongside Daniel Ellsberg. Indeed, his examination of the history of America’s repression of dissidents, radically titled *Political Prisoners in America*, is dedicated “to my friend, Richard Nixon—May he do more than listen.” Through the invective, one sees still clear evidence of Goodell’s deep and abiding commitment to personal liberties, which it was the duty of a responsible, legitimate government to preserve. When the government became unresponsive, as Goodell plainly believed Nixon’s had, it restricted liberty and in the process made itself less legitimate in the eyes of its people. Goodell predicted the ultimate triumph of personal liberties in the antiwar movement: “Repression is most likely to seem successful when the political threat is largely imagined. It is almost certain to fail when the ideas represented enjoy a genuine popular appeal.”<sup>50</sup>

In both theme and tone, Goodell’s *Political Prisoners in America* recalls the words of Senator Thomas Walsh a half-century prior. Goodell, too, decried the repressive actions of a government overwrought by an overwhelming catastrophe and/or ensnared by a hideous crime. Indeed, Congress soon thereafter responded to the will of the people with responsible legislation prohibiting the future funding of combat operations in Laos and Cambodia, and, eventually, Vietnam. Although too late to salvage his political career, Goodell’s vision for extricating the

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<sup>50</sup> Goodell, *Political Prisoners*, 3-12, 145-51, 171-2.

United States from that quagmire, by S.3000 or other means that reflected his consistent Republicanism.

Perhaps no-one offered a more apropos defense of Goodell's principled Republicanism than one of his Democratic colleagues, Senator Vance Hartke of Indiana. In eulogizing Goodell's brief but spectacular career in the U.S. Senate, Hartke noted that "Goodell, like Lincoln, believed that 'to sin by silence with they should protest makes cowards out of men.' Charlie Goodell spoke out clearly and forcibly on those issues which he believed had to be discussed lest this country lose its way entirely from the path of greatness." For Charles Goodell, three principles guided the nation to that greatness: responsibility, liberty, and responsiveness. They were the very same principles that defined and defended his Republicanism, even in the "radicalized" form that won him his widest acclaim and even as he engaged the mechanisms of political authenticity and legitimacy in the face of an unpopular anticommunist war.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *Congressional Record*, 91st Congress, 2d Sess., 44809.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### NO TERROR IN THE BANG: ICONIC ANTICOMMUNISM, THE “DOOMSDAY CLOCK,” AND THE RHETORIC OF FEAR

There is no terror in the bang;  
only in the anticipation of it.  
-- Alfred Hitchcock

In Chicago, IL, there is a clock that does not tick. Its hands hang in a sort of suspended animation, marking the current time as 11:55—or, more ominously, “five minutes to midnight.” As it has for six decades, this “Doomsday Clock” of the Atomic Scientists warns observers of the proximity of man-made catastrophe. First appearing on the cover of the July 1947 issue of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, the clock became imprinted upon Cold War popular culture and, eventually, part of the iconography of America’s anticommunist crusade. Beginning at seven minutes to midnight, the clock retreated as far as seventeen minutes to midnight in 1991, but has more often inched forward—as close as two minutes to midnight in 1953, three minutes in 1984, and, most recently, five minutes in 2007. According to the keepers of the clock, the *Bulletin’s* editorial board, these changes augured future trends, either positive or negative, toward the potentiality of doom. Intended to spark discussion on appropriate policy changes, the clock became an icon of fear, of atomic terror, whose movements the public greeted with increasing anticipation until the abrupt end of the Cold War. Yet, the clock remains, silently marking the minutes until humankind’s self-destruction.

The keepers of the clock stand at a crucial intersection of domestic American anticommunist history. They engaged the social and political rhetoric of anticommunism, bending it—as did others—to their own purposes and reinterpreting it in their own unique ways. As scientists, they deployed this rhetoric in the push for new discoveries, to legitimize the search for

new frontiers, and for the development of new paradigms of international relations. Even as they remained fundamentally convinced of the necessity of anticommunism, these scientists called for new directions in policymaking to meet the terrifying crisis of a world engaged in atomic brinksmanship. They pushed for the abandonment of flat-earth traditionalism and for the embrace of new conceptions of globalism and internationalism. The destructive power of the bomb was so all-consuming, so indiscriminate in its force, that it rendered old diplomatic paradigms impotent. These scientists knew intimately of the bomb's terror—after all, they were the first to build it.

According to the Atomic Scientists of Chicago, their discovery ushered the world into a new age, one with a slippery slope toward the midnight of atomic holocaust. They did not so much believe that this new era *should* not—in a moral sense—look like the last, with great-power wars for territorial or economic gain occurring every few decades; rather, because of the bomb, it *could* not. When the scientists determined to engage the public in their quest for a new mode of peace befitting this terrifying new atomic age, their basic fears shone through. Throughout its six decades of publication, the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, most especially through its iconic Doomsday Clock, exemplifies a unique linkage between the social and partisan politics of anticommunism, non-traditionalism, and the rhetoric of fear.

*Opening Pandora's Box: 1947 (seven minutes to midnight) to 1953 (two minutes)*

By mid-1947, the Atomic Scientists of Chicago recognized the need for a symbolic representation of the foreboding that impelled them to publish their *Bulletin*. The publication grew from a bi-monthly newsletter beginning on December 10, 1945, into a more formal, monthly journal, but something still seemed lacking. Hyman Goldsmith, who co-founded the

*Bulletin* along with Eugene Rabinowitch (who himself grew into something of an icon for his role as the *Bulletin*'s primary editor), turned to a woman named Martyl Langsdorf. The wife of Manhattan Project physicist Alexander Langsdorf, Jr., and an artist of some repute, Martyl experimented with various images and backgrounds, each conveying a different thematic element. On the back of a pumpkin-orange booklet of Beethoven sonatas, she sketched a design that became iconic, perhaps thanks to its deliberate simplicity. It showed the upper-left quadrant of a standard clock; no numbers, just the three dots marking the last five-minute intervals to the twelve o'clock hour, with the minute hand poised near seven to. Although Martyl herself claimed nothing but aesthetic significance in the specific positioning of the minute hand, the *Bulletin*'s lead editorial in July 1947 declared it, as she intended, a "symbol of urgency" for the very "survival of civilization."<sup>1</sup>

Penned by Rabinowitch (according to later *Bulletin* editions) but unsigned in the issue, the editorial inaugurated the Doomsday Clock simply by noting it as the design for the new cover of the *Bulletin*. Nothing in the article foreshadowed the iconic status the clock eventually achieved, only that it marked unease with the "slow progress of negotiations for the international control of atomic energy," the stated goal of the Atomic Scientists since their incorporation in 1945. Certainly this goal required the cooperation of both the United States and the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, Rabinowitch in particular missed few opportunities to editorialize against the Communists' muddling of policy initiatives, which pushed humankind closer to once again unleashing the atomic horror he helped invent. In the July editorial, for instance, he tempered the introduction of the clock—an icon of terror and fear—with the counsel of other, more optimistic

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<sup>1</sup> Mike Moore, "Midnight Never Came," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 51, no. 6 (November/December 1995): 16-27; "The History of the Bulletin Clock," *Bulletin* 58, no. 2 (March/April 2002): 36; "If the UN Atomic Energy Commission Fails," *Bulletin* 3, no. 7 (July 1947): 169.



observers. Their confidence, Rabinowitch wrote, “would be more convincing if the Soviet representative [at a recent summit] had chosen to fight over important material provisions...and not over false propaganda issues.” The *Washington Post* agreed, criticizing the negotiating style of Andrei Gromyko in a brief article on July 9. It concluded by mentioning the *Bulletin*’s adoption of the symbolic clock, and issued a warning that it be taken seriously: “Better than any of us, the scientists know the imperatives inherent in the tremendous force they have unleashed upon the world. They know that a momentous deadline is approaching and that one way or another we shall have to deal with it.”<sup>2</sup>

Despite the rhetoric of terror attendant upon the clock’s introduction, the editors of the *Bulletin* believed a way existed to “deal with” this crisis without initiating an atomic Armageddon. But doing so required the embrace of new frontiers, less of science than of policymaking, and the scientists soon found that they faced the same questions of authenticity, legitimacy, and Americanness as virtually all other non-traditional elements of twentieth century U.S. society. With the development of the atomic bomb through the unprecedented scope and science-government cooperation of the Manhattan Project, scientists entered the unfamiliar arena of social and partisan politics. There, they soon faced the anticommunist crusaders, and the *Bulletin* took note. Indeed, on October 7, 1949, the *New York Sun* published a charge that communists, in effect, influenced the *Bulletin* itself. The *Sun*’s evidence consisted of a recent article by a member of the red-tainted Lawyers Guild, as well as the association of one of the *Bulletin*’s editors, Alice Smith, with “the Communist-controlled” Abraham Lincoln School of Chicago. Predictably, the *Sun* focused on the *Bulletin*’s consistent calls for the elimination of atomic weapons from the national arsenal, claiming that the questionable article (by David F.

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<sup>2</sup> “If the UN Atomic Energy Commission Fails,” 169; “Atomic Deadline,” *Washington Post*, 9 July 1947: pg. 12.

Cavers) proposed to weaken the United States vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. In response, the *Bulletin*'s board of editors retained counsel and demanded a retraction. The *Sun* later complied, printing a clarification by Cavers redeeming his argument to national security, retracting the charges of Smith's communist associations, and noting in general the *Bulletin*'s ties to "many scientists who have been or now are actively engaged in atomic research for the United States government."<sup>3</sup>

Five months later, the *Bulletin* reprinted an update by Stephen White of the *New York Herald Tribune* on the progress of the Oak Ridge Hearings. Conducted to purge the Oak Ridge National Laboratory of communists, fellow travelers, and communist sympathizers, the hearings represented the typical red-baiting trials of the era. For instance, "Case II" rested on the following evidence: "A person with whom you associated closely in the years 1943-47 said you were very enthusiastic about Russia and seemed pro-Russian in your point of view." White reported, accurately it would seem, that "the nature of these charges...created a state of acute apprehension." In the name of domestic anticommunism, the laboratory's scientists faced removal from their tasks in the nation's atomic research. Many simply left the laboratory's increasingly oppressive work environment, including fully one-third of its senior physicists and chemists. A year later the issue was no longer Oak Ridge, but the Congressional attack on David Lilienthal for his perceived laxity in barring communists from receiving Atomic Energy Commission research fellowships. Lilienthal opposed requiring loyalty oaths and affidavits of applicants' non-association with Communists, believing this led inevitably to partisan discrimination in the awarding of those grants; in turn, the professional anticommunists descended in droves. Facing a withering attack until his resignation in 1950, Lilienthal stood as

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<sup>3</sup> "The *N.Y. Sun* Retracts Inaccurate Statements About the *Bulletin*," *Bulletin* 4, no. 2 (February 1948): 63.

an example of what the *Bulletin*'s editors interpreted as the slippery slope of anticommunism in the realm of ostensibly apolitical science. In defending Lilienthal in the June-July 1949 issue, Leo Szilard—the atomic scientist who convinced Albert Einstein to write his famous letter to President Franklin Roosevelt—advocated a far more cautious anticommunism. He suggested it was perfectly reasonable and legal to imprison a student advocating violent overthrow of the government; but if he merely believed in Marxist economic philosophies, and did not preach political revolution, Szilard found no danger in affording such a student his freedom of speech—and, if he applied and had merit, an AEC research fellowship. Szilard warned against the “persecution of a political minority” for beliefs, not actions, which seemed non-traditional to most Americans. Referencing the excesses of the Palmer Raids almost three decades prior, Szilard concluded that the legitimately American traditions of freedom and justice overrode what slight national security concerns might follow from a student with non-traditional political philosophies conducting unclassified, purely scientific research.<sup>4</sup>

In these and similar situations, the *Bulletin* defended its legitimacy as authentically American. Despite its non-traditional policy of (through late 1949) unilateral atomic disarmament, the *Bulletin* maintained its disassociation with communism and, thus, its fundamental Americanism. In opposing both atomic weapons and communism, the *Bulletin* effectively and efficiently opposed the twin threats to humanity upon the outset of the Cold War, threats that converged in October 1949 as the Doomsday Clock moved perilously close to midnight. Following President Harry S Truman's public announcement that the Soviet Union possessed the bomb—a claim the Soviets steadfastly denied but which the *Bulletin* documented as probable, even likely—Eugene Rabinowitch advanced the “clock of doom” by four minutes, to

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<sup>4</sup> Stephen White, “Report on Oak Ridge Hearings,” *Bulletin* 4, no. 7 (July 1948): 194-6; Leo Szilard, “The AEC Fellowships: Shall We Yield or Fight?” *Bulletin* 5, no. 6/7 (June/July 1949): 177-8.

three minutes to midnight. While it was never the explicit intention that the clock would become a moveable piece, Rabinowitch and the other *Bulletin* editors agreed that if their mutual work on the American bomb had loosed the lid to Pandora's box, the Soviet achievement of the same technology tore the cover completely off. Rabinowitch noted, somewhat sarcastically, that government officials urged Americans "to be calm, to lose no sleep, to avoid hysteria." While he denied that scientists ever intentionally "[create] public hysteria," Rabinowitch dismissed any optimistic review of this Soviet advance. He cautioned that while the *Bulletin* "do[es] not advise Americans that doomsday is near and that they can expect atomic bombs to start falling on their heads..., they have reason to be deeply alarmed and to be prepared for grave decisions." Where the *Bulletin* once urged unilateral atomic disarmament, it now encountered a bipolar, atomic armed Cold War. Rabinowitch maintained that lasting peace could not coexist with this state, and that only "an organized world community" might mitigate the atomic threat. This sort of internationalism rewrote the traditional American narrative of self-sufficiency and national independence; Rabinowitch understood this, but argued nevertheless for the consideration of "radical new decisions in foreign policy" to confront and control atomic bipolarity.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, the *Bulletin* remained "American" in its consideration of the Cold War arms race. If a race had to be run, certainly its contributors hoped for a Soviet loss. Harold C. Urey warned readers that the particularly virulent brand of anticommunism endemic in the United States threatened national security as it stripped the scientific community of the freedom it needed to make new advances to counter new Soviet threats. In assessing the poor progress of the Atomic Energy Commission's research projects over the preceding months, Urey blamed the paralyzing fear that any scientist at the AEC "must permanently be on guard to defend himself against

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<sup>5</sup> Eugene Rabinowitch, "Forewarned – But Not Forearmed," *Bulletin* 5, no. 10 (October 1949): 273-5, 292.

ridiculous accusations of real or imaginary violations of petty security regulations or against charges of having Communistic leanings.” To Urey, then, the truly “un-American” activity was the progress lost to baseless charges brought upon scientists by overzealous anticommunists.<sup>6</sup>

The world situation grew increasingly dire, according to the *Bulletin*'s now-mobile clock, through 1953 and the successful testing of “H-bomb” technology that increased the destructive capabilities of both atomic superpowers by several orders of magnitude. As they prepared for the clock's next move, the *Bulletin*'s editors, as well as its readers, confronted a number of important “anticommunist” moments in American history. To each, the *Bulletin* responded with its own unique brand of anti-atomic anticommunism. On the outbreak of anticommunist war in Korea, Rabinowitch penned an editorial warning of the uselessness of atomic weapons in that localized Cold War conflict. Playing again on the rhetoric of fear and terror, but simultaneously infusing his particular brand of anticommunist rhetoric, Rabinowitch predicted “the communists will do all in their power to prolong the Korean conflict,” and that “it is not impossible...that, either in accordance with Soviet plans, or despite them, the Korean conflict will not remain localized for long, but similar situations will erupt all over Southeast Asia, if not the whole world.” This effectively summarizes the concerns shared by Rabinowitch and the *Bulletin*: the destructive power of the atomic bomb rendered any local conflict a potentially global one, and thus the fate of all humankind depended upon the outcome of seemingly inconsequential proxy wars. Yet one must understand that Rabinowitch never advocated U.S. appeasement of the expansionist Soviet Communism. Rather, he hoped for a way to mute these tendencies through any means that avoided atomic war. If the United States reconstituted itself as a non-atomic military force, its productive capacity could certainly bear the burden of maintaining overwhelming conventional

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<sup>6</sup> Harold C. Urey, “Needed: Less Witch Hunting and More Work,” *Bulletin* 5, no. 10 (October 1949): 265.

forces to oppose any Soviet expansion, anywhere in the world. Indeed, Rabinowitch lamented that overreliance on atomic deterrence of direct war with the U.S.S.R. had rendered the United States all but incapable of winning wars on the “secondary fronts” where communism expanded its influence. Thus, he called for a “considerable expansion of our mobile land forces... if need be, with disregard of domestic inconvenience and a decline in the standard of living.” While this was certainly not Rabinowitch’s policy preference—that was for the creation of a peaceful, anti-atomic global community—it remained the best of the unpleasant alternatives: unchecked Soviet Communist expansion, or atomic war.<sup>7</sup>

If perhaps at arm’s length, the *Bulletin* advocated its uniquely construed anti-atomic anticommunism even as the United States entered the most infamous of its Red Scares. In November 1950, a news update described “McCarthy’s New Accusations” toward the scientific community. The Wisconsin Senator and erstwhile anticommunist labeled the Federation of American Scientists and the American Association for the Advancement of Science as virtual front organizations. One of the accused, Philip Morrison, drew McCarthy’s ire for a book review published in the February 1949 edition of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. While nothing further came of McCarthy’s reference to the *Bulletin*, the episode highlighted again the scientists’ uphill battle for public legitimacy for an anticommunism that was, like any other scientific discovery, novel and innovative. Unlike its attack on the *Sun* and its full-throated defense of David Lilienthal, the *Bulletin* could not engage all the seeming excesses of anticommunism directed at the scientific community. Many were simply noted, as were McCarthy’s wild accusations, in the form of news notes: the dismissal of Dr. Joseph W. Weinberg by the University of Minnesota for his “refusal to cooperate” (citing the Fifth

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<sup>7</sup> Eugene Rabinowitch, “Atomic Weapons and the Korean War,” *Bulletin* 6, no. 7 (July 1950): 194, 217.

Amendment, he declined to speak) with federal investigators; the indictment of M.I.T. professor Dr. Dirk Jan Struik, self-identified as a Marxist scholar but no Communist, for conspiracy to violently overthrow the government; even the conviction of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg as traitors.<sup>8</sup>

But defending their own against charges of communist sympathy or conspiracy again lost priority to the moving of the clock's hands. In October 1953, Rabinowitch declared that "the time, dreaded by scientists since 1945, when each major nation will hold the power of destroying, at will, the urban civilization of any other nation, is close at hand." Set at just two minutes to midnight, the clock now rested on the precipice of unbridled terror: "Only a few more swings of the pendulum, and, from Moscow to Chicago, atomic explosions will strike midnight for Western civilization." Rabinowitch, as he stated in the years leading up to the thermonuclear tests that now moved the clock, believed the terror had but one interconnected solution: "Elimination of atomic weapons from national arsenals, . . . substituting mutual interdependence for mutual fear." Here, the rhetoric of terror urged concentrated action toward the only promising means for permanently eliminating the fear. Soviet technological advances, according to Rabinowitch, made the continued safety and integrity of the non-Communist world precarious at best; the United States possessed a moral imperative—which Rabinowitch wholly supported—to oppose Soviet Communist aggression, but in this frightening new atomic condition such opposition risked nothing less than mutual genocide if pursued by brute force. Pushing the *Bulletin* even further into the political realm, Rabinowitch noted: "[T]he system of democratic checks and controls is still in operation, and the leaders cannot move unless they are supported

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<sup>8</sup> "McCarthy's New Accusations," *Bulletin* 6, no. 11 (November 1950): 352; "Scientist 'X' Dismissed by Minnesota," *Bulletin* 7, no. 7/8 (August 1951): 240; "M.I.T. Professor Indicted," *Bulletin* 7, no. 10 (October 1951): 316-7; "Spies," *Bulletin* 8, no. 4 (April 1952): 127; "The Rosenberg Case," *Bulletin* 8, no. 9 (December 1952): 310.

by the people. Furthermore, these leaders are *elected* by the people—the kind of leaders people choose depends on the kind of problems they believe these leaders will have to face.”<sup>9</sup>

This helps explain Rabinowitch’s conviction that the *Bulletin* might justifiably employ the rhetoric of terror while yet claiming that scientists did not peddle fear to the masses. To him, the terror was real, and only by heightened public attention could the *Bulletin* hope to effect motion—not of the clock toward or away from midnight, but of the public nation, and eventually the world, toward embrace of the *Bulletin*’s unique anti-atomic anticommunism. This demanded “a world-wide American anti-war campaign; the building of an adequate continental defensive system, whatever increase in national budget this may require; and revived American participation and leadership in the functional and organizational unification of the non-Communist world, whatever radical departures in American world policy this may entail.” While acknowledging its radicalism, Rabinowitch wrapped the policy in the rhetoric of more traditional anticommunism, seeking its legitimation in the public discourse. Nevertheless, the popular press did not note the clock’s motion in 1949 or 1953. Perhaps the public remained unwilling to consume the rhetoric of terror. Undaunted, the *Bulletin* exhibited the same thematic trends throughout the 1950s and 1960s, even though the clock would not move again for seven years—and then, in an unprecedented direction.<sup>10</sup>

*To the Brink and Back Again: 1953 (two minutes to midnight)—1972 (twelve minutes)*

It was not as though the *Bulletin* fell silent for the better part of a decade prior to its 1960 resetting of the Doomsday Clock; it was simply that, in the eyes of Rabinowitch and his fellow

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<sup>9</sup> Eugene Rabinowitch, “The Narrowing Way,” *Bulletin* 9, no. 8 (October 1953): 294-6.

<sup>10</sup> Rabinowitch, “The Narrowing Way.”



editors, the world remained on the brink of nuclear terror, no better but no worse than in 1953. The *Bulletin* continued engaging the machinations of domestic American anticommunism, all while maintaining a steady conviction that such politics meant little while both sides threatened all humanity with the bomb. In May 1954, the *Bulletin*'s editorial board published a statement criticizing the federal government's investigation of Manhattan Project coordinator Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer. Prior to his service on the Manhattan Project, Oppenheimer held and then broke a series of ties to communist individuals and related groups. The editors expressed disbelief that the government was just then, decades later, discovering well-known and well-publicized aspects of Oppenheimer's former life, and using those facts to assail his public reputation. Instead, the *Bulletin* indicated, the primary attack on Oppenheimer's credibility and authenticity seemed more closely related to his opposition to the development of the thermonuclear bomb. He should have retained the right, regardless of his official position or public standing, to express his personal morality regarding the subject; instead, noted the *Bulletin*, he became simply another victim of red-baiting politics.<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps unlike Oppenheimer, few could legitimately criticize the *Bulletin* as soft on communism, as it continued publishing typical anticommunist rhetoric in various policy offerings. In March 1955, the *Bulletin* featured a revised publication by the National Planning Association, billed as a nonprofit and nonpartisan civilian organization concerned with U.S. policy in various industries. The *Bulletin* described the organization "as a group of citizens 'who are gravely concerned over the visible evidences of recent Communist successes.'" The report exhibits the same familiarity with the rhetoric of terror as used by the *Bulletin* to legitimize the existence and maintenance of a "Doomsday Clock." It opens with an analysis of an

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<sup>11</sup> "The Oppenheimer Case," *Bulletin* 10, no. 5 (May 1954): 173.

unprecedented threat to the survival of Western civilization, rooted primarily in the preternatural expansionism of Soviet Communism. Acknowledging, as did the *Bulletin* with clock-work consistency, the impracticality of nuclear war, the article defends its call for a new internationalism via the classic rhetoric of domestic American anticommunism: “To avoid such a conflict...and yet at the same time to find a way to check, and eventually to turn back, the advance of Communist power, are the only rational and morally valid objectives of Western policy.” This Manichean opposition places a responsible U.S. internationalism as the only valid alternative to appeasement of communism, thereby legitimizing the non-traditional foreign policy by means of a socially and politically powerful agent—the rhetoric of authentic, American anticommunism. Indeed, the article condemns attacks on U.S.-led internationalism as giving aid and comfort to the Cold War enemy, inverting the red-baiting tactic on to the traditionalists rather than on the innovators of American policy. Its conclusion reasserts the rhetorical element of terror, noting that oppressive domestic anticommunism threatened the most traditional and American elements of U.S. society, “human liberty and the dignity of the individual,” just as Soviet Communism endangered the same elements worldwide. As Rabinowitch’s previous editorials concluded, in the absence of a spirit of global, anti-nuclear cooperation, the United States bore a moral duty “to carry on the cold war at whatever cost on all fronts.” Here, again, one sees the innovative wrapped in the authenticating rhetoric of the traditional, as anticommunism legitimizes internationalism.<sup>12</sup>

Rabinowitch expanded on these themes in his October 1956 analysis of the Republican and Democratic parties’ presidential platforms. Ambivalently titled, “Walking the Plank to Nowhere,” Rabinowitch first established his anticommunist credentials by attacking the parties’

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<sup>12</sup> National Planning Association, “American Policy in the New Phase of the Cold War,” *Bulletin* 11, no. 3 (March 1955): 97-9.

failure to compose a positive anticommunist foreign policy, but returned quickly to the familiar theme of advocating a non-traditional, international cooperation as the only means for mitigating the deepening terror of the nuclear-armed Cold War. In Rabinowitch's eyes, the present was terrifying precisely because "national destruction" might come without warning, "even when no enemy knocks audibly at the gates." The situation was so dire, he wrote, that "history has reached a dead end from which no way out exists along the paths of traditional national policies." But the *Bulletin* promoted a new way of thinking, an "enlightened humanitarianism—based on [an] understanding of the essential interdependence of all nations in the atomic age." This demanded the implementation of the two main proposals of the *Bulletin*—the abolition of atomic weapons from the Earth, and, especially considering the improbability of the former, the recognition of global interdependence for the maintenance of lasting peace. Even here, Rabinowitch could not resist demonstrating his anticommunism, arguing that the United States must lead this "peaceful world community [by] evoking a vision more inspiring and more convincing than that of the world federation of Communist dictatorships to which our competitors for the minds of men are committed." In the end, he concluded, the 1956 presidential race offered no new hopes, no policy innovations, and thus the world remained somewhere in the vicinity of two minutes to midnight.<sup>13</sup>

In January 1960, as the next presidential race loomed, Rabinowitch moved the hands of the clock once more; but for the first time in the clock's tenure, the minute hand moved in reverse. Returning to its beginning, at seven minutes to midnight, the clock symbolized both the peace of the previous decade and the renewed hopes that the next would bring about the sort of "new world of international cooperation" that the Atomic Scientists believed could peacefully

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<sup>13</sup> Eugene Rabinowitch, "Walking the Plank to Nowhere," *Bulletin* 12, no. 8 (October 1956): 282-3, 320.

navigate the nuclear era. Even in positing humanity's new lease on life, Rabinowitch mixed the *Bulletin's* peculiar rhetoric: one part fear, one part anticommunism, one part internationalism, packaged in the continuing rhetoric of fear. While the U.S.S.R.'s expansion of its nuclear arsenal destabilized the world, their cooperation with the United States in keeping the Korean conflict non-nuclear suggested to Rabinowitch the emergence of "a new cohesive force" that "is making the future of man a little less foreboding." For the first time, the clock's motion gained wider public recognition. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported: "Hopes Rise; 'Doom Clock' Pushed Back," noting the *Bulletin's* own description of the event as their "first expression of editorial encouragement in 15 years." Both the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* carried the Associated Press wire report of the event, with the *Times* reprinting the *Bulletin's* January 1960 cover art marking the five-minute reprieve won over the previous decade.<sup>14</sup>

A series of Cold War crises immediately tested Rabinowitch's optimism, as well as the responsiveness of the clock. In April 1961, the United States backed the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion designed to topple the Communist dictatorship of Cuban revolutionary Fidel Castro. Two months later, U.S. President John F. Kennedy, widely considered a foreign-policy neophyte and whose reputation suffered more following the Bay of Pigs debacle, engaged in what even Kennedy described as a fruitless summit with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev. Perhaps misperceiving Kennedy as weak because of his inexperience, Khrushchev raised the stakes of the Cold War by an order of magnitude when, in the fall of 1962, he ordered the shipment of Soviet intermediate-range nuclear missiles to Cuba. In mid-October, the U.S. discovered the installations, and for fourteen days the world came arguably as close as it has ever been to

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<sup>14</sup> "The Dawn of a New Decade," *Bulletin* 16, no. 1 (January 1960): 2-6; "Hopes Rise; 'Doom Clock' Pushed Back," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 16 January 1960, pg. 4; "Atom 'Doom Clock' Is Moved Back," *New York Times*, 16 January 1960, pg. 2; "A-Scientists Set Back 'Doom' Clock 5 Minutes," *Washington Post*, 16 January 1960, pg. A7.

nuclear war's "midnight." Even so, the clock held steady—at seven minutes to midnight—until October 1963.

Then, Rabinowitch moved its hands not forward, in belated recognition of the brinkmanship between Kennedy and Khrushchev, but back once more to celebrate the promises of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. The *Bulletin* deemed the treaty an important first step, the first documented progress toward the "new cohesive force" predicted in 1960. In an interesting twist of anticommunist rhetoric, the October 1963 clock editorial praises the Soviet Union for its participation in the treaty but pillories Communist China for its continued belligerence. Despite the budding threat of a second communist nuclear power, the world's superpowers "made concessions in Moscow—not so much to each other, as to new ideas, alien to their accustomed ideological systems." Here, the *Bulletin* praised the nations for acting as scientists do, by embracing innovation in the pursuit of progress: "Strengthening common security begins to appear a sounder aim than the pursuit of old-style national security. That the forces of realism seem to win out, on both sides, over those of obstinate dogmatism is the significant message of the treaty." It represented, in the *Bulletin*'s analysis, "a good beginning" and worthy of another resetting of the clock—to an optimistic twelve minutes from midnight.<sup>15</sup>

While the popular press did not note this movement of the clock, the *New York Times* later discovered that the *Bulletin* faced a subscription crisis. In mid-1964, Walter Sullivan explored the *Bulletin*'s self-professed "financial crisis" due to dwindling subscription renewals. Sullivan concluded, as the *Bulletin*'s editors believed, that the publication "[was] in trouble because it has been successful in its dedication to seeing that [atomic] weapons are never used again." Even in this seemingly straightforward news item, the *Bulletin*'s rhetorical elements

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<sup>15</sup> "First Step – To Where?" *Bulletin* 19, no. 8 (October 1963): 2-3.

appear. Sullivan reports that the clock's hands moved forward twice in its history, each time reacting to potentially destabilizing Soviet advances in nuclear weapons technology. This marks the *Bulletin* as effectively anticommunist in tone, while Sullivan's explanation of the clock's backward movements highlights the *Bulletin*'s calls for progress in international cooperation.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, a cautious optimism prevailed at the *Bulletin* for the greater part of the 1960s. Certainly it appeared as though American society was changing; perhaps, hoped the keepers of the clock, U.S. policy might embrace innovation and internationalism, and the world community might progress to a state of non-nuclear peace. One might easily dismiss the *Bulletin*'s goals as vapid idealism if the publication did not continually exhibit the same well-defined realism in both anticommunism and internationalism that characterized its previous two decades' work. A January 1962 article by Roger Fisher offers some of the most blatantly anticommunist rhetoric of this era of the *Bulletin*, yet still maintains the need for innovative, non-nuclear anticommunism. Using then-Senator Barry Goldwater's hawkish declaration that the United States must "win the Cold War" as his point of departure, Fisher counters that "winning" a war in this new, nuclear world is not "the defeat of others"; rather, winning "is survival." To Fisher, opposing communist expansion rested hand-in-hand with this simple and most basic of goals. He writes of "strong opposition" to "deceptive" communism, and characterizes the U.S.S.R. and the P.R.C. as "not unlike neurotic individuals, dangerous and extremely difficult to deal with. One must be careful. They must not be allowed to take control." Indeed, Fisher finds that "Communist talk of coexistence, like their talk of peace, hits a false note...because we have reason to doubt their sincerity." Even so, nuclear weapons rendered moot any discussion of "winning" the Cold War

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<sup>16</sup> Walter Sullivan, "Atom Magazine Too Successful," *New York Times*, 29 March 1964, pg. 35.

in a traditional sense, by military means. The new era required a more innovative conception of victory, of survival: “Our goal should be to temper—and so in time to end—the cold war.”<sup>17</sup>

Two other essays, both by Eugene Rabinowitch and each preceding the clock’s next move, extend the *Bulletin*’s dualism of anti-atomic anticommunism. In November 1965 and again in September 1967, Rabinowitch penned lengthy editorials describing the continuing terror of a world with ever-expanding nuclear weapons stockpiles, ever-progressing nuclear technology, and seemingly renewed Cold War hostilities. The dangers of “a third and much more terrible world war” had not propelled the nuclear superpowers toward a cooperative internationalism that would reduce the possibilities of a nuclear holocaust. By the close of the 1960s, both sides of the Cold War divide supported “revisionism” of the world map—but only in those places where the “revisionists” were on “their” side; elsewhere, each superpower opposed such changes, and usually with military force. Rabinowitch warned: “Sooner or later, one or the other side is likely to miscalculate and engage itself beyond the point of no return.” Instead, he advocated a geopolitical status quo—as had won out during the Suez Crisis of the mid-1950s, one of the key retreats from superpower war that influenced the clock’s optimistic turn in 1960. In addition, he reasserted the *Bulletin*’s traditional non-traditionalism, pushing for innovative approaches to cooperation, perhaps seeking a closer dialogue with Moscow at the expense of deepening the Sino-Soviet split. Under this anticommunist doctrine, the U.S.S.R. had become more realistic, while the P.R.C. remained the uncompromising ideologues, the most communist of the Communists. Still, this required abandoning decades-old beliefs in a monolithic communism, the same philosophy that triggered the domestic Red Scares from the time of Palmer on. Until the time that both sides recognized the absurdity of nuclear weapons, which

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<sup>17</sup> Roger Fisher, “Do We Want To ‘Win’ the Cold War?” *Bulletin* 18, no. 1 (January 1962): 33-5.

logic determined could not be deployed against a fellow nuclear power without in-kind reprisal, and chose disarmament over terror, the world remained poised on the brink. Rabinowitch closed his September 1967 article with what one may reasonably believe was a pun on the pro-atomic faction's belief in the stabilizing effects of Mutually Assured Destruction (M.A.D.): if the world's nuclear powers insisted upon traditional paradigms of national security instead of embracing the internationalism demanded by the atomic age, "the proverb may well fulfill itself: 'Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad.'"<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, by January 1968, dismayed at the proliferation of nuclear technology (France and China now possessed the bomb) and the continued rejection of international cooperation, Rabinowitch believed the clock required adjusting. Erasing the five-minute gain of the last move, Rabinowitch assessed mankind once more at seven minutes to midnight: "In sad recognition that the past six years have brought mankind no closer to choosing the creative path, but have brought it farther down the road to disaster, the *Bulletin* clock is moved, on this sad New Year's Day, closer to midnight."<sup>19</sup>

In twenty years, the clock moved just five times; between 1968 and 1974, it changed four times more. After the January 1968 reset, Rabinowitch observed with relief the United Nations' opening of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) for signing. This framework satisfied many longstanding goals of the *Bulletin*, primarily international cooperation toward nuclear arms control. While the NPT did not necessarily suggest that nuclear disarmament would follow, it represented a highly significant step toward peace in the atomic age, a peace where "all nations [recognize] that their political and ideological self-interests must be subordinated in the future to

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<sup>18</sup> Eugene Rabinowitch, "The New Perspective," *Bulletin* 21, no. 9 (November 1965): 2-3; Eugene Rabinowitch, "What Is Sauce for the Goose is Sauce for the Gander," *Bulletin* 23, no. 7 (September 1967): 41-3.

<sup>19</sup> Eugene Rabinowitch, "New Year's Thoughts, 1968," *Bulletin* 24, no. 1 (January 1968): 2-4.



mankind's common concern with survival." Rabinowitch was no blind optimist, noting that "the importance of the treaty is mostly symbolic." Still, to this chief ideological force behind one of the United States's most recognizable Cold War symbols, symbolism mattered. On the cover of the *Bulletin's* April 1969 issue, then, the clock reverted to ten minutes to midnight. The AP and United Press International (UPI) wires dutifully recorded the clock's reorientation, which soon thereafter marked the world even further from the brink—twelve minutes to midnight in 1972 upon the superpowers' signing of both the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) and the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. Despite the upheaval of the 1960s, including deepening Cold War crises in Cuba, Berlin, and Vietnam, and the widening use of "the bomb" as domestic political fodder (as exemplified by Lyndon Johnson's "Daisy" campaign ad of 1964), Rabinowitch and the *Bulletin's* other editors heralded the dawn of a new era, perhaps one less terrifying than they once anticipated.<sup>20</sup>

*Counting Down the Minutes: 1972 (twelve minutes to midnight)–1988 (six)*

Much to the contrary, the clock registered five consecutive ticks toward nuclear midnight over the next two decades. Perhaps even more significant, the clock lost its chief intellectual force when Eugene Rabinowitch died on May 15, 1973. For the first time since its creation, the motion of the clock depended on a new set of hands. Naturally, the *Bulletin* editors returned to their roots, and the work of Rabinowitch, in determining when and why to reset the Doomsday Clock. In mid-1973, the *Bulletin* published a short series of unfinished manuscripts found in

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<sup>20</sup> Eugene Rabinowitch, "NPT: Movement Toward A Viable World," *Bulletin* 25, no. 4 (April 1969): 48; "10 Minutes to War Is the Latest Time On Doomsday Clock," *New York Times*, 25 March 1969, pg. 13; "News of the Day," *Los Angeles Times*, 25 March 1969, pg. B2; "We Reset Our Clock," *Bulletin* 28, no. 6 (June 1972): 3; "SALT Pact Slows 'Doomsday Clock,'" *Washington Post*, 2 June 1972, pg. A15; "Man Gains Two Minutes On the 'Doomsday Clock,'" *New York Times*, 4 June 1972, pg. 71.

Rabinowitch's briefcase upon his death. Labeled as his "Heretical Thoughts," they represent Rabinowitch's final discussion of the *Bulletin's* role, and that of the clock, in American society. As always, his work bartered the rhetoric of fear into an innovative, but still anticommunist, policy. The third essay of the series, "After Vietnam, What?," declares, "The 'historic world' is ending" and in its place arises "a dimly recognizable new world." Because of the atomic scientists' discovery, now decades old, "war [is] unacceptable as an instrument for achieving political aims," at least, "without risking utter, mutual destruction." But again, Rabinowitch wrote not as an unreasonable idealist, but as a logical realist: "The problem is how to build a viable world without war, not out of pacifist idealism but for hard reasons of self-preservation." The bomb made the world so terrifying, especially as it proliferated throughout a Cold War world, that humankind's very survival depended on one of two things: either the elimination of all nuclear weapons; or the creation of new, cooperative, and global peace initiatives. He wrote also as an American anticommunist, defending at length the Domino Theory as perhaps oversimplified but "by no means a propaganda fiction." Especially with the rise of Communist China, the unapproachable ideologues to the Soviets practitioners of realpolitik, the danger of world-wide revolution—which the United States justly opposed—remained a constant threat. Nevertheless, and despite its original applicability, Rabinowitch suggested the Domino Theory and its intellectual kin, the line of containment, had outlived their usefulness as the continued proliferation of nuclear weapons made even proxy wars in third world countries increasingly dangerous propositions.<sup>21</sup>

Without this voice guiding the way, the *Bulletin's* editors needed a reaffirmation of their publication's perspective and goals. In April 1974, they offered a "Statement of Purpose" that

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<sup>21</sup> Eugene Rabinowitch, "After Vietnam, What?" *Bulletin* 29, no. 6 (June 1973): 13-5.

reiterated the two basic components of the *Bulletin*'s original *raison d'être*. The *Bulletin* existed as a forum for scientists concerned with "the social and political implications of scientific discoveries, and to define their responsibilities in helping to preserve peace." Furthermore, it served as a clearinghouse of information for policy-makers to reach "sound decisions on social issues of atomic energy." Certainly the *Bulletin* remained true to this mission under Rabinowitch's leadership, perhaps no more effectively than when he moved its iconic clock. The "symbol of the threat of doomsday hovering over mankind," the clock had, according to the *Bulletin*, become "a monitor recognized and trusted around the world." But where the clock once warned explicitly of atomic or nuclear doom, the *Bulletin*'s editors expanded its meaning as its popular cache grew. In 1974, the clock's new keepers identified a "broad range of interlocking concerns," ranging from environmental issues to overpopulation, playing into the clock's setting. But these remained secondary examples of "questions about the adaptability of man's attitudes and institutions to the challenge of science and technology." The most dire portent of doomsday remained how man's attitudes and institutions handled nuclear weapons.<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps the editors recognized the necessity of establishing a post-Rabinowitch tone for the journal. Equally likely, they recognized the growing popularity of the *Bulletin*'s clock—if not the *Bulletin* itself—and understood that with the symbol's broad incorporation into popular culture came the opportunity to shape the public's understanding of this fundamental problem of the post-war age. One sees the first component of this, the clock's becoming an artifact of popular culture, in a brief sampling of popular press coverage of the Doomsday Clock during the era. In a July 2, 1974 article in the *Washington Post*, Nixon aide John K. Andrews, Jr., established his public credibility by way of the clock. In assessing the success of Nixon's recent groundbreaking

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<sup>22</sup> Samuel H. Day, Jr., "The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists: A Statement of Purpose," *Bulletin* 30, no. 4 (April 1974): 2-3.

trip to Moscow, Andrews first establishes his legitimacy as a properly terrified anticommunist by recalling his first encounter with the clock, which then itself legitimized Nixon's accomplishments in Moscow:

In high school in the 1950s I had first read the grim warnings of the *Bulletin* of the Atomic Scientists, with its symbolic clock indicating only 'minutes to midnight' for mankind's survival in the age of nuclear war. Now in the spring of 1972...[I watched] President Nixon and Chairman Brezhnev sign an agreement that would begin to muzzle for the first time the superpowers' nuclear arsenals which those of us under 30—three-fifths of humanity—had worried under all our lives....The time, appropriately, 11:14 p.m.—46 minutes to midnight.

Even the simplest and least assuming sections of newspapers began recording popular recognition of the clock. One example is the *Chicago Tribune's* "Action express" question-and-answer column of December 24, 1973, when "S.W." from a Southwest Chicago suburb inquired "[W]here do the hands stand now? How much time do we have left before our planet blows up?" It seems interesting that the public turned to the press, rather than simply to a recent issue of the *Bulletin* to reckon the time. This perhaps indicates the beginning of the *Bulletin's* loss of control over the true meaning of the clock, which was never intended to inspire terror but rather to compel the United States toward less terrifying policy alternatives.<sup>23</sup>

Indeed, had S.W. from the Southwest suburb looked, he (or she) would have found that even the *Bulletin* was paying more attention to its clock. Beginning in April, following Rabinowitch's death, and continuing throughout the summer, the *Bulletin* published a "Minutes to Midnight" column in each issue. To the right of the generic headline appeared a small representation of the clock, then reading 11:48. The subheading, "A monthly monitor of man's race with the doomsday clock," preceded an epigraph whose quoting of Rabinowitch indicated the new directions and new emphases the clock would take: "Man can survive in this world of

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<sup>23</sup> John K. Andrews, Jr., "Reflections on an Earlier Summit," *Washington Post*, 2 July 1974, pg. A20; "Action express," *Chicago Tribune*, 24 December 1973, pg. 5.

incredible violence only by a similarly spectacular progress in social and political wisdom.” While the updates included pertinent information on arms control (or, more often, the lack thereof), proliferation, and other atomic issues, they contained far more coverage of domestic and foreign policy issues. An update on China’s Cultural Revolution preceded an evaluation of the Vatican’s new birth control directive (April, 1974); coverage of the unraveling Watergate scandal appeared next to a discussion of Panama Canal policy (May, 1974). Taking these together, the *Bulletin* editors decided in September that the clock must move once more. Samuel H. Day, Jr., contributed the explanatory editorial, which recognized that “hopes for an awakening of sanity were premature and that the danger of nuclear doomsday is greater today than it was in 1972.” Three minutes elapsed, as the clock moved to nine minutes to midnight.<sup>24</sup>

Interestingly, the press more enthusiastically covered this change than any other of the clock’s history. Both the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* reprinted Reuters newswire coverage of the move, while the *Los Angeles Times* used a staff writer. More important for this study is the continuing coverage of the clock, days and weeks after the *Bulletin* released word of its downward turn. The *New York Times* reported again on the clock’s move in their September 1 “Ideas & Trends” column, an appropriate venue for a clock whose optimism or pessimism its keepers purportedly based on domestic and international trends. The *Los Angeles Times* published an unsigned editorial that might have been culled directly from the pages of the *Bulletin* for its mix of the rhetoric of fear, anticommunism, and anti-nuclear agenda. Opening with a discussion of the clock’s history of foreboding, it next criticizes both Nixon and Brezhnev for their July 1974 summit failure to engineer workable arms control agreements. While the United States certainly bore some responsibility, “it is clearly the Russians who are most

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<sup>24</sup> “Minutes to Midnight,” *Bulletin* 30, no. 4-6 (April, May, and June 1974): 4-6, 6-9, 8-9; Samuel H. Day, Jr., “We Re-Set the Clock,” *Bulletin* 30, no. 7 (September 1974): 4-5.

unwilling to accept the existing nuclear balance.” The article warned that the Soviet Union might soon achieve “an intimidating advantage” in the Cold War arms race. Yet, as Rabinowitch postulated years before, “The main danger posed by overwhelming Soviet strategic superiority would not be a deliberate Kremlin decision to launch a nuclear war, however; the danger is that the feeling of superiority would tempt Soviet leaders to...make a miscalculation that would escalate into a nuclear holocaust.” Similarly, Irving A. Lerch’s article for the September 1 *Chicago Tribune* used the *Bulletin*’s clock as the opening salvo in his stinging rebuke of the N.P.T.’s failure—evident most especially on the explosion of an Indian bomb. As in the *Bulletin* monthly updates, Lerch’s article featured a small replica of the clock art, indicating the nearness of disaster. On the article’s second page, a top row of six pictures carried the almost hysterical banner: “Mushroom clouds for everyone.”<sup>25</sup>

Although these examples demonstrate significant resonance with the *Bulletin*’s own use of the clock, that symbol increasingly lost its connection to anti-atomic anticommunism and became instead, almost solely, an icon of fear interpreted by the public at large. Indeed, it did not register an optimistic turn for another decade-and-a-half. In the interim, the public increasingly used the clock to legitimize their own fears and, like the rhetoric of anticommunism that had helped give birth to the clock, for their own purposes. The clock appeared in another letter-to-the-editor in the *Los Angeles Times*’s March 26, 1975 edition, as Helen M. Beardsley of La Jolla wrote a rebuke of an editorial opposing defense cuts. Attacking the premise that a strong United States best served both national defense and world peace, Beardsley turned to the clock:

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<sup>25</sup> “‘Doomsday Clock’ Moves 3 Minutes Closer to Midnight,” *New York Times*, 26 August 1974, pg. 62; “‘Doomsday Clock’ Moved Up,” *Washington Post*, 26 August 1974, pg. A9; “Magazine Moves Up Its ‘Doomsday Clock,’” *Los Angeles Times* 26 August 1974, pg. A5; “Ideas & Trends,” *New York Times*, 1 September 1974, pg. 138; “The Nuclear Race: Out of Control?,” *Los Angeles Times*, 28 August 1974, pg. D8; Irving A. Lerch, “Are nuclear safeguards safe anymore?,” *Chicago Tribune*, 1 September 1974, pg. A1.

[M]y concern is not with figures but with a policy that will save humanity from nuclear holocaust. The clock on the cover of the 'Bulletin of Atomic Scientists' [sic] is now set at 9 minutes to midnight. Our peril, due to the uncontrolled arms race, is greater than ever before.<sup>26</sup> A wise American said, 'When you arm yourself, you arm your enemy.'

Similarly dire was the *Washington Post*'s January 4, 1976 summary of a recent Cambridge (MA) Forum discussion on the probability of "Nuclear War By 1999?" Again, the clock graced the opening discussion, setting the stage with its implication of doom. The *Post* went so far as to deem it "a prophesying clock." According to the Cambridge Forum, world events justified its concern. The article reported the following as probable: nuclear war before the end of the century, due largely to nuclear proliferation; continued proliferation, due largely to the failure of traditional political forms to check this new technology; the unlikelihood of an effective international control, because membership in such a body would require the ceding of sovereignty and would likely result in the lessening of democracy. One participant summarized his many concerns by simply noting, "I am not an optimist." As it approached its pop cultural heyday, the clock, it seemed, stood more as a symbol of pessimism than the spur of progress.<sup>27</sup>

The clock stood still until January 1980, although in 1978 the *Bulletin* seriously considered changing its hands. Then, Bernard T. Feld, editor-in-chief of the *Bulletin*, saw reasons for both optimism and pessimism. Citing this ambivalence, he recommended a stasis which the clock maintained for two more years when, according to the headline in the January 6, 1980 *Washington Post* it "lurched" ahead. Feld pushed the minute hand forward two minutes "to emphasize the accelerating drift toward world disaster in almost all realms of social activity." Not only did proliferation continue apace (both vertically and horizontally, as existing nuclear

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<sup>26</sup> In truth, the clock set the world closer to midnight five different times prior to 1974's setting.

<sup>27</sup> "Letters to The Times," *Los Angeles Times*, 26 March 1975, pg. D4.; "Nuclear War By 1999?," *Washington Post*, 4 January 1976, pg. 105.

powers poured resources into projects including the neutron bomb and the militarization of space), but the prospects appeared dim for the sort of international cooperation the *Bulletin* called for since the first days of Rabinowitch's editorship. Still the *Bulletin* pushed for innovation, specifically for the revocation of the traditional but "suicidal Roman dictum—"If you want peace, prepare for war.""<sup>28</sup>

Yet, the success of Ronald Reagan's neo-anticommunist rhetoric during the 1980 presidential campaign, in addition to his immediate prioritization of U.S. military spending vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, indicated the old axiom remained convincing among policymakers. A feature piece by Wade Greene for the *New York Times* echoed Feld's editorial opinion in again moving the hands of the Doomsday Clock in January 1981, this time to just four minutes to midnight; both Greene and Feld warned that the "unthinkable" had now become "thinkable," and thus the world stood closer to nuclear war than it had since, ostensibly, the early 1950s. While the keepers of the clock long maintained it responded only to long-term trends and not to immediate events—indeed, it did not respond at all to the Cuban Missile Crisis, for instance—Feld readily admitted that their symbol of doom reacted to the resurgent hawkishness of the 1980 election season:

We would be less than candid if we were to say that the recent U.S. elections did not figure in our pessimistic estimate of the world situation. We are concerned about the defeat of the experienced and committed Senators who in years of intensifying crises have spoken out for arms control and disarmament. Particularly in the uncertain and shifting times that lie ahead, their moderating influence will be missed. It is all the more welcome, therefore, that the new [Reagan] Administration has professed a desire to restrain the arms race with the Soviet Union and to seek new possibilities for negotiating a slowdown in the

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<sup>28</sup> Bernard T. Feld, "To move or not to move the clock," *Bulletin* 34, no. 1 (January 1984): 8-9; "Doomsday Clock Lurches Ahead," *Washington Post*, 6 January 1980, pg. A2; Bernard T. Feld, "The hands move closer to midnight," *Bulletin* 36, no. 1 (January 1980): 1-3.



introduction of new weapons of mass destruction. Such statements are always significant; subsequent actions consistent with them would be even more so.<sup>29</sup>

Yet, by May 1981, Feld reassessed the prospects of Reagan's anticommunism. Although the Soviet Union was not yet officially declared an "evil empire" (this occurred during a March 8, 1983 speech by Reagan to the National Association of Evangelicals), the Cold War reasserted itself as the primary geopolitical paradigm of the early 1980s. Feld found the doctrine of "negotiating from positions of strength" nothing short of "frightening," noting that despite the posturing of both poles, a war between the superpowers would "only imperil the future of humankind." The stakes were no less significant than this, and again the *Bulletin* deployed the rhetoric of terror in urging the reorientation of national concepts like anticommunism, security, and foreign policy. Along similar lines, Nobel laureate and Manhattan Project physicist Hans Bethe, termed the "dean of [American] atomic physicists" by the *Los Angeles Times*, reported harboring fears of his own. When asked if the *Bulletin's* cover inspired negative thinking, or whether the world was indeed in its final minutes, Bethe answered, in effect, "both." Indeed, his response offers a valuable insight into how the clock's manipulation of the rhetoric of terror perhaps mixed its symbolic metaphor with that of a double-edged sword:

The main increase of danger, in my opinion, is psychological. People are scared when the Reagan government says we are in mortal danger and need to increase our armaments. But I am scared when he claims that more arms, especially nuclear ones, can protect us....Human beings who are very scared don't act rationally. My greatest fear is that it will make the American people less rational, and then anything can happen....If there comes an all-out nuclear war, I think it will come because of fear.

Nevertheless, the clock stood still, just four minutes to midnight; this despite the increasingly hard-line rhetoric from both the United States and the Soviet Union, and despite the threat of

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<sup>29</sup> Wade Greene, "Rethinking the Unthinkable," *New York Times*, 15 March 1981, pg. SM12; Bernard T. Feld, "The hands move closer to midnight," *Bulletin* 37, no. 1 (January 1981): 1.

what Feld termed “a suicidally unstable arms competition that could only lead to mutual disaster.”<sup>30</sup>

In 1984, “hope [was] eclipsed by foreboding.” As both superpowers stubbornly embraced the “tortured logic” of traditional national security diplomacy, the *Bulletin* moved the clock’s hand one minute closer to midnight—closer than it had been since its most perilous setting in 1953. Again the *Bulletin* cited Ronald Reagan’s anticommunist rhetoric, suggesting it pushed both nations closer to war—either purposeful or accidental, but almost certainly nuclear. Still, the editors took solace in the growing public concern with the nearness of nuclear disaster. Perhaps the clock was doing its job. Indeed, Michael Conlon of the Reuters news service reported far greater press coverage of the *Bulletin*’s December 1983 announcement (regarding the cover change for the January 1984 edition) than that for any of its previous decisions. Quoting *Bulletin* editor Ruth Adams, Conlon attributed the increased interest to the public’s growing recognition of one of Eugene Rabinowitch’s key arguments; in the atomic age, the bomb touches everything. Adams suggested, “People are beginning to understand the impact on the economy, the impact on government controls and secrecy, the way society is organized, the impact on communications, the impact on their children. The nuclear issue is no longer out there somewhere. It has come home.”<sup>31</sup>

Indeed, the popular press continued bringing the issue home through increased use of the clock as a metaphor for U.S.-Soviet relations, among other issues. Also in January 1984, Charles

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<sup>30</sup> Bernard T. Feld, “The means to the END,” *Bulletin* 37, no. 5 (May 1981): 9; Robert Scheer, “America’s Dean of Atomic Physicists Says U.S. Not Vulnerable,” *Los Angeles Times*, 11 April 1982, pg. E1; Bernard T. Feld, “The Clock stands still,” *Bulletin* 38, no. 1 (January 1982): 3.

<sup>31</sup> “Three minutes to midnight,” *Bulletin* 40, no. 1 (January 1984): 2; Marjorie Hunter, “The Calendar,” *New York Times*, 19 December 1983, pg. B10; Terry Atlas, “On ‘doomsday clock,’ it’s 3 minutes to midnight,” *Chicago Tribune*, 20 December 1983, pg. 5; “A-Scientists’ ‘Doom Clock’ Gains a Minute,” *Los Angeles Times*, 21 December 1983, pg. B22; “Atomic ‘Doom’ Clock To Add a Tick-Tock,” *Washington Post*, 22 December 1983, pg. A4; Michael Conlon, “Doomsday Clock – a Timely Reminder,” *Los Angeles Times*, 29 January 1984, pg. 7.

William Maynes led off his article on the health of Yuri Andropov with reference to the clock. Maynes deployed the Doomsday Clock as a universally intelligible symbol of seriousness and trepidation. Against this, he invoked President Reagan's declaration that the world had never been safer from the prospect of a nuclear war. Maynes argued the views reconcile when considered alongside the debilitating illness of the Soviet leader, whose death threatened a leadership void atop the world's penultimate nuclear power. This, Maynes concluded, might erase all the gains achieved by the two powers over the last decade, and propel the world closer to doomsday.<sup>32</sup>

A few months later, in March 1984, the *Chicago Tribune* offered readers a rare look into the inner-workings of "the world's oldest and most influential journal dealing with the atomic age." It highlighted the *Bulletin's* apparent prescience in identifying policy hot-spots years before they became political fodder—including the militarization of space, and, especially, the lack of effective communication between the superpowers' diplomats. Over the course of the lengthy feature, editor-in-chief Ruth Adams answered one of the lingering questions surrounding the clock's motions—why it stopped at two minutes if the world was in such sorry shape. Adams's reply underscores the symbolic nature of the clock, but also demonstrates the degree to which it became an influential cultural icon of the anticommunist age: "We have to save ourselves a *little* time." Again, the atomic scientists never intended the clock as an object of dread, although this surely is what it represented to most observers. Rather more, the clock was meant to impress upon the general public a sense of urgency in casting aside the old confines of anticommunist policy; it intended to push its viewers toward the embrace of innovative

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<sup>32</sup> Charles William Maynes, "Andropov's Illness Poses Real Dangers to the U.S.," *Los Angeles Times*, 1 January 1984, pg. D1.

opposition of destabilizing forces like dogmatic communism and, by that, toward a lasting world peace.<sup>33</sup>

The *Bulletin* indeed remained true to these initial guiding principles. For example, a December 1986 article, “Reporting from Moscow: fiction and secrets,” contains rhetoric approaching invective against the endemic oppression within the Soviet Communist world. Author Kevin Klose found it “not surprising” that Soviet citizens struggled to reconcile what they knew to be truth with what their government told them. Indeed, Soviet society was little more than a “web of deceit,” and the Communist government steadily eroded its society’s positive gains made under Mikhail Gorbachev’s *glasnost*.<sup>34</sup>

Reading these uses of the clock, and the opinions contained within the *Bulletin*’s pages, one might logically presume the clock’s next move would mark humanity even closer to doomsday. In December 1987, U.S. President Reagan and Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev agreed at a Washington summit to reduce unilaterally but mutually their national inventories of nuclear weapons. Reagan assessed this as the single largest arms reduction framework since the end of the second World War. Although the U.S. retained the possibility of introducing the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) widely derided as the “Star Wars” defense system and potentially in violation of the ABM Treaty, the Cold War giants agreed to the complete elimination of intermediate-range ballistic missiles (via the Intermediate Nuclear Force, or INF, Treaty). While the Doomsday Clock always rejected movement based on transient events, the editors of the *Bulletin* deemed these negotiations and compromises the beginning of a positive trend toward the sort of international arms control cooperation envisioned by Eugene

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<sup>33</sup> Len Ackland, “Fighting for time,” *Chicago Tribune*, 11 March 1984, pg. 11-15, 17-21.

<sup>34</sup> Kevin Klose, “Reporting from Moscow: fiction and secrets,” *Bulletin* 42, no. 10 (December 1986): 22-3.

Rabinowitch. The *Bulletin* applauded the leaders of both nations, and despite the remaining existence of fully 95 percent of the world's nuclear weapons celebrated this progress. Mankind doubled its margin against doomsday, as the clock retreated to six minutes from midnight.<sup>35</sup>

And then, quite suddenly, the Cold War was over.

*Going Off the Scale: 1988 (six minutes to midnight)–1991 (seventeen)*

In the January/February 1990 issue, John Isaacs reported on the reluctance of the official Washington bureaucracy to relinquish completely the paradigms of the bipolar Cold War. But after the crumbling of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, the Soviet Communist empire appeared undeniably in retreat. While the *Bulletin* advocated innovation in foreign policy paradigms for decades, not even in the face of a withering “evil empire” could the United States’ senior policymakers bring themselves to enact “radical” changes. This provided ample reason to wonder whether the end of the Cold War augured well for nuclear peace, or, perhaps, signaled the beginning of a new and equally terrifying era. In April, the *Bulletin* moved the clock back to ten minutes—three minutes beyond where it began. The editorial accompanying the change once again reflected the hallmarks of the clock’s symbolism: anticommunism combined with innovation toward global peace (hopefully, through disarmament). The *Bulletin* “rejoice[d] in humanity’s momentous victory in Eastern Europe [where] people revolted against the communist leaders whose power...ultimately rested on the

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<sup>35</sup> Don Oberdorfer and Lou Cannon, “Reagan to Visit Moscow; Arms Talks to Continue,” *Washington Post*, 11 December 1987, pg. A1; “Six minutes to midnight,” *Bulletin* 44, no. 1 (January/February 1988): 3.

Soviet army.” With the destruction of the communist empire, the clock retreated in witness of the lifting of “a grim weight from the human psyche.”<sup>36</sup>

Before the next year was out, the clock retreated even further as the atomic terror long associated with America’s anticommunist crusade faded into memories more fond than fearsome. On October 13, 1991, the *New York Times*’s James Barron declared that the iconic 1950s Civil Defense character “Burt the Turtle can finally relax, at least a little.” Despite rampant fears of the bomb, portrayed in such pop culture artifacts as the movies “Dr. Strangelove” and “The Day After” (a television movie), to LBJ’s “Daisy” ad and the ubiquitous air raid drills (for which Burt the Turtle prepared school children), Barron notes “the flash never came.” Not even a decade prior, Ronald Reagan declared the Soviet Union to be an “evil empire;” by the end of 1991, the Soviet Union disbanded completely. Nevertheless, as Barron correctly pointed out to his readers, the Doomsday Clock of the Atomic Scientists continued its grim watch. Although, as announced on November 27 and depicted in the December issue of the *Bulletin*, humanity enjoyed its safest environment since the Trinity Test—at which Oppenheimer famously quoted Hindu sacred text: “I am become death; the destroyer of worlds”—there yet remained an estimated 47,000 nuclear weapons under various national control. While the *Bulletin* determined to move the clock “off the scale,” or, beyond its initial fifteen-minute capacity, to read an astonishing seventeen minutes to midnight, new threats loomed across the horizon.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> John Isaacs, “Clinging to the Cold War,” *Bulletin* 46, no. 1 (January/February 1990): 9-10, 44; “Ten minutes to midnight,” *Bulletin* 46, no. 3 (April 1990): 3.

<sup>37</sup> James Barron, “Nuclear Winter of the Psyche Fading Away,” *New York Times*, 13 October 1991, pg. E3; Lauren Ina, “Backing Away From Armageddon,” *Washington Post*, 27 November 1991, pg. A3;

*New Terrors for a New Age: 1991 (seventeen minutes to midnight)–2007 (five)*

As early as 1990 the *Bulletin* prepared its clock for life after the Cold War. In the April issue of that year, which announced the movement of the clock to ten minutes to midnight, editors first made mention of terrorism as a reason to fear the continued presence of nuclear weapons. Even before the official breakup of the Soviet Union, the *Bulletin* worried over the access of “unstable groups” to unsecured nuclear weapons. In December 1991, as the Soviet republics broke away from Moscow, the clock for the first time officially expanded beyond concern over nuclear weapons and into “new concepts of security,” including economic imbalance and extreme poverty among third-world nations. Still others bent the clock’s terror to fit their own purposes. For instance, Richard Cohen attacked the militant neo-nationalist rhetoric of oft-time conservative presidential candidate Patrick Buchanan by way of the clock. Noting first its unprecedented leap back to seventeen minutes to midnight, Cohen launched his salvo against Buchanan’s commentaries by lamenting they “could not have come at a worse time.” Cohen concludes his essay with an interesting twist on the metaphor of the clock and its timekeeping: “[Buchanan’s] policies—so reminiscent of the 1930s—only make it seem like he’s turning back the clock. Actually, they would be advancing the Doomsday one.”<sup>38</sup>

Albert Donnay agreed that the clock projected too much optimism, although not necessarily because of a specific politician’s rhetoric. Rather, as the founder of the interest group Nuclear Free America, Donnay used the clock to advance his organization’s specific political agenda. Although it seemingly aligned with that of the *Bulletin*—nuclear disarmament—it was apparently far more pessimistic than the keepers of the clock. In a letter to the editor of the *New York Times* on December 6, 1995, Donnay sarcastically questioned “where The Bulletin of

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<sup>38</sup> “Ten minutes...,” 3; ““A new era,” 3; Richard Cohen, “Time Bombs,” *Washington Post*, 12 December 1991, pg. A27.

Atomic Scientists and its subscribers have been since the end of the cold war.” In light of the lack of restrictions on domestic nuclear research—which Donnay called testing “against their own people”—he concluded the Doomsday Clock “should long ago have been moved forward beyond its misleading midnight threshold.” Suggesting a one-hour per decade rate of advance, Donnay’s clock would read no less than five a.m., with daylight breaking on “the scope of destruction that has already been wrought by the nuclear arms race.”<sup>39</sup>

In March 1994, the *New York Times* carried yet another appropriation of the clock, one not political but academic. Joel Slemrod, then professor of economics at the University of Michigan, in 1986 published a study linking increased public perception of imminent nuclear war with a dramatic decrease in personal savings. For this study, the Doomsday Clock represented “professionally informed opinion” standing in for extensive public opinion polls on the question of nuclear war fears. Slemrod continued studying the phenomenon through the end of the Cold War, and in December 1994 a second group of scholars confirmed his major findings—namely, a statistically significant negative correlation between personal savings and the public’s perception of “minutes to midnight.”<sup>40</sup>

Eventually, the Doomsday Clock even became fodder for farcical uses. In September 2006, a *Washington Post* sports editorial promoted the creation of a BCS (Bowl Championship Series, major college football’s ranking system) Doomsday Clock. Purportedly, it counted down the minutes to the disaster of multiple undefeated teams, with no clear way of determining a single national champion. Perhaps the clock had run out of fear. Nevertheless, the *Bulletin* and its

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<sup>39</sup> Albert Donnay, “The Doomsday Clock Is Alive and Ticking,” *New York Times*, 6 December 1995, pg. A22.

<sup>40</sup> “Cold War Spending,” *New York Times*, 6 March 1994, pg. SM13; Joel Slemrod, “Saving and the Fear of Nuclear War,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 30, no. 3 (September 1986): 403-19; Bruce Russett, et al, “Did Americans’ Expectations of Nuclear War Reduce Their Savings?” *International Studies Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (December 1994): 587-603.



editors never apologized for the sense of foreboding accompanying the symbolic (now, iconic) clock. Editor-in-chief Mike Moore in late 1995 defended the creation and continued use of the clock as an instrument necessary to awaken the masses to the seriousness of the issues Rabinowitch and others voiced: “[M]ake no mistake about it; the founders of the *Bulletin* were in the missionary business.” Long before the politicians believed, Moore wrote, the scientists knew Soviet possession of the bomb was all but inevitable. No nation could possibly maintain a monopoly on knowledge, certainly not such so highly sought after as atomic technology. Furthermore, because they created it the scientists understood better than any the destructive capacity of the bomb. Nothing, including “preparedness,” could “save” a nation from nuclear attack; one could only hope to “survive” it. Moore acknowledges the apparent “madness” of a group of scientists committing themselves to world peace and atomic disarmament. As Eugene Rabinowitch once said, the clock’s express purpose was “to preserve our civilization by scaring men into rationality.” Still, since the inception of the *Bulletin* and the creation of the clock, the world had not seen nuclear war. In a way, Moore suggests, perhaps “they succeeded.”<sup>41</sup>

Even so, it seems the *Bulletin* itself struggled with how to orient the clock to a world without anticommunism or Cold War Manichaeism. In late 1995, it announced the formation of a panel to discuss moving the clock once more; for the first time in its history, the *Bulletin* sought outside counsel as to how many minutes the world had left. The previous year the *Bulletin*’s editorial board reached an impasse during discussions about moving the clock—at all, or, how much and in which direction. On December 7, the panel made its various recommendations; on the 8th, the clock advanced to fourteen minutes to midnight. Some recommended the clock had

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<sup>41</sup> “BCS Doomsday Clock,” *Washington Post*, 2 September 2006, pg. E09; Mike Moore, “A fine madness,” *Bulletin* 51, no. 6 (November/December 1995): 2. Rabinowitch quoted in Henry Allen, “Tick, tick, tick” *Washington Post*, 9 December 1995, pg. C01.

outlived its usefulness: “What the hell, make the doomsday clock into jewelry, it’s the ‘90s.” The humor might be excused; after all, the *Bulletin* hosts greeted their guests with free candy (and, perhaps, a free pun): “Atomic Fireballs.” More sober suggestions called for additional dials, representing the varying degrees of midnight around an increasingly complex world. Some saw optimism and a reason for yet further rolling back of the clock’s minute hand, while others, perhaps like Donnay, believed it needed to advance beyond midnight. Advice received through the *Bulletin*’s internet site, taken as an average, urged a move to fifteen minutes to midnight, a time surprisingly close to that eventually chosen by the board. While, as from the first days of the clock, a lack of international cooperation propelled the clock forward in part, the board again cited new-era concerns like terrorism and continued nuclear proliferation in spite of the long-standing N.P.T..<sup>42</sup>

Nevertheless, the clock became, gradually but inexorably, more an icon of America’s anticommunist age than a symbol with any proprietary meaning. While the *Bulletin* claimed the clock always existed for the public to interpret in its own way, a close reading of the historical *Bulletin* text suggests the opposite; the intent behind the creation and publication of a Doomsday Clock was the public consumption—not public interpretation—of a unique conflation of anticommunism and anti-atomic policy, packaged in the attention-grabbing rhetoric of terror. Truly, it is only once the clock became more of a pop culture icon than a *Bulletin* device does one clearly see this separation. Just as the *Bulletin* editors used the clock to mold anticommunist policy in their innovative ways, so too did the public increasingly deploy the clock as an indiscriminate object of Cold War hysteria. But the *Bulletin* remained innovative, unafraid of

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<sup>42</sup> “Tick, tick, tick,” C01; Nancy J. Myers, “What time is it, *really?*,” *Bulletin* 51, no. 5 (September/October 1995):8-9; Mike Moore, “Behind the Clock Move,” *Bulletin* 52, no. 2 (March/April 1996): 17-23; Adam Clymer, “December 3-9,” *New York Times*, 10 December 1995, pg. E2.

new, “radical” directions. As some critics began assailing the inaccuracy of the clock—after all, as even Moore pointed out, “midnight” never came—the *Bulletin* reformed it as symbolic of new terrors on the one hand, and on the other they celebrated it for its pop culture status. Certainly neither the *Bulletin* nor its readers were unaware that for all the clock’s dire predictions, the world survived the Cold War intact. In early 1996, then, the *Bulletin* published a deeply critical appraisal of the Doomsday Clock. Written by William M. Arkin, it lashes out against the clock for the very things that made it a pop culture icon. Rather than performing the general role of scientists—assessed by Arkin as calming the public by informing them—the *Bulletin* and its clock performed “more like unnerved amateurs, lurching from accidents to loose nukes to proliferation, the enormity of their issue petrifying them into a permanent state of terror.” Noting that “nuclear midnight means something different than it did previously,” Arkin concluded with a rebuke, equal parts scathing and mocking, of the *Bulletin*’s long-standing use of the rhetoric of fear:

Crying wolf—in the name of public alert—not only fails to provide comfort and guidance, it creates a self-fulfilling reality....The ticking contributes to a sense of doom, one that naturally conveys the message that the problems are so massive they are unsolvable, that nuclear weapons are intransigent and immutable. Congratulations, clock keepers. Your sage counsel that things are getting worse solidifies the nuclear stranglehold. What else could time be, however, when every nuclear tremor is turned into an earthquake?<sup>43</sup>

Again, the *Bulletin* never denied that the apocalypse never occurred. Perhaps they would say, of course it did not; after all, the clock never actually reached midnight. Instead of apologizing for the clock’s symbolism, the *Bulletin* celebrated its pop acculturation. In late 1995 Moore penned a lengthy feature on the clock’s history and adaptation into the status of a cultural icon; a decade later the clock remained wildly popular, with the *Bulletin* sponsoring a historical art contest based on a choice among the seminal years of the clock’s motion. Along these same

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<sup>43</sup> William M. Arkin, “The clock strikes out,” *Bulletin* 52, no. 2 (March/April 1996): 64.

lines, the *Bulletin* remained fiercely protective of the commercial image itself, filing a complaint against the *American Prospect*'s appropriation of the clock for its own cover (oddly appraising the world closer to midnight than did the *Bulletin*) in a mid-2002 issue. Rumors in the popular press suggested a lawsuit might follow, despite the *Prospect*'s online apology, but it is unclear whether this actually occurred. Histories of the clock reappeared in 2002, 2005, and again in 2007, the latter of which especially highlighted the pop culture status of the icon—including its use in lyrics by the rock bands Iron Maiden and the Smashing Pumpkins. Additionally, references to the clock appear in lyrics from such a diverse collection as The Who, Ozzie Osbourne, and Sting, as well as in various works of fiction in print and broadcast format. The *Bulletin* capitalized on the resurgent popularity of this Cold War icon by publishing “Clock Facts” in a small insert box in each issue’s Letters column, from late 2005 through at least late 2006.<sup>44</sup>

Neither oblivious to nor overly dependent upon public opinion of the clock’s status, the *Bulletin* marched on. In 1998, the editors removed five minutes’ cushion as two more nations joined the nuclear club and, hearkening back to Rabinowitch, for the continued failure of the nations of the world to organize in international cooperation, ultimately for the pursuit of total nuclear disarmament. The jump was nearly unprecedented; in 1968 it also leapt forward five minutes, then, as in 1998, with the inauguration of multiple new nuclear powers. As they marked the clock at nine minutes to midnight, Mike Moore reluctantly admitted to a reporter, “Public interest [in the nuclear question raised by the clock] has faded close to zero.” Interestingly, at the

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<sup>44</sup> Mike Moore, “Midnight Never Came,” *Bulletin* 51, no. 6 (November/December 1995): 16-27; “Tick...tick...ticked off,” *Bulletin* 58, no. 5 (September/October 2002): 8; “‘More Than Minutes,’ a new *Bulletin* contest!” *Bulletin* 60, no. 5 (September/October 2004): 5; “More Than Minutes,” *Bulletin* 60, no. 5 (September/October 2004): 36-7; “The History of the Bulletin Clock,” *Bulletin* 58, no. 2 (March/April 2002): 36; “Time flies,” *Bulletin* 40, no. 1 (November/December 2005): 40-1; “The Clock,” *Bulletin* 61-62 (September 2005 – December 2006); “The people’s Clock,” *Bulletin* 63, no. 1 (January/February 2007): 20-1.

moment when many might have turned once again to the clock to legitimize their fears—the terrorist attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001—the clock, as during the Cuban Missile Crisis, remained still. The atomic scientists long maintained that the clock responded only to trends, and reported their desire to observe the world’s reaction to the unprecedented attacks before adjusting the Doomsday Clock. Even when the clock moved, in late February 2002 to its original setting of seven minutes to midnight, the official rationale did not mention terrorism first, but the “absurd” numbers of nuclear weapons built by the United States and the U.S.S.R. during their Cold War rivalry. The only link to terrorism came in the *Bulletin*’s concern over endemic poverty in the so-called third world; this condition, they posited, bred desperation and, they implied, terrorism. Just as the United States could not win the Cold War through massive retaliation, as Rabinowitch consistently argued, the new keepers of the clock argued that safety from terrorism depended upon an international commitment to raising the world’s standard of living. George A. Lopez, then chairman of the Atomic Scientists, declared, “Success depends on eradicating the conditions that feed such terror.”<sup>45</sup>

In 2002 the terror seemed human; by 2007, the *Bulletin* determined the more serious terror was humankind. In their new year’s edition, the keepers of the clock announced the continued creep toward doom—now just five minutes away, and now primarily due to the effects of man-made climate change. Identifying the world as “at the brink of a second nuclear age,” the *Bulletin*’s attention turned moreover toward other human-engineered threats to the continued survival of civilization. In rhetoric every bit as doomsaying as any during the height of the Cold

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<sup>45</sup> “Nine minutes to midnight,” *Bulletin* 54, no. 4 (July/August 1998): 4; Chip Crews, “Back to Ground Zero,” *Washington Post*, 5 June 1998, pg. F01; Robert E. Pierre, “Group Cites Rising Nuclear Policy Fears in Resetting ‘Doomsday Clock,’” *Washington Post*, 28 February 2002, pg. A09; “It’s seven minutes to midnight,” *Bulletin* 58, no. 2 (March/April 2002): 4-7;

War, the clock warned that without radical innovations in environmental policy, humankind might well run out of time.<sup>46</sup>

Perhaps a careful observer of the clock's institutional history should expect nothing less from a group living up to Eugene Rabinowitch's challenge to innovate, radically if need be, to globalize, and, soberly, to forewarn. Still, the warning changed with the times. Just as Rabinowitch and his colleagues sought first to bend the traditional rhetoric of anticommunism in legitimation of their unique anti-atomic conception of national—indeed, universal—security, so too did the public eventually turn the meaning of the clock in their own way. Seldom recalled as the watchword of nuclear proliferation, urging complete disarmament and international cooperation, the clock typically brings visions of nuclear apocalypse more literal than intellectual. For most, the important fact was that the clock never tolled midnight. What the *Bulletin* intended, however, was something different.

Perhaps the key turning point came during the 1960s, a seminal era for virtually any study of contemporary U.S. culture. While conclusively documenting the effect of the nation's closest brush with actual doomsday—the October 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis—on the pop acculturation of the Doomsday Clock involves means beyond the scope of this study, one may reasonably assert that the era, the 1960s, generally exhibited two trends critically related to the clock: the expansion of the legitimacy of non-traditionalism as well as of the public consumption of popular culture. While the *Bulletin* found increasing access for and acceptance of their once “radical” policies and approach, as measured by the coverage devoted to the clock by the popular press, the clock and its foreboding iconography disseminated rapidly through the American

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<sup>46</sup> “It is 5 minutes to midnight,” *Bulletin* 63, no. 1 (January/February 2007): 66-71; Elizabeth Williamson, “Two Minutes Closer to Doomsday,” *Washington Post*, 18 January 2007, pg. A12.

consumer public. The lingering question facing the keepers of the clock became: would they control the clock's message, or would the image define itself—and them?

Ultimately, the press focused their attention on the *Bulletin* rarely unless the clock moved—and the clock's keepers took note. It has recorded 18 different moves in its six-decades of existence; of these, four occurred during the 1960s, and twelve, or two-thirds, in the years since. Considering the rapid growth of the Cold War up to and through the 1960s, it seems illogical to suggest that the clock simply responded to an increased pace of significant trends from 1970 onward. Furthermore, while policy analyses always accompanied the resetting of the clock, elements of Rabinowitch's unique anti-atomic anticommunism appeared in the *Bulletin* regardless of its cover art. It seems far more likely that the *Bulletin* used the clock as the packaging for domestic public consumption of certain policy preferences or particular reactions to world events. Into the 1980s, and especially in the last two decades, the *Bulletin* has used the clock as a means for accessing the public in this way. The apparent results are a gradual reduction of the clock as a symbol with meaning proprietary to the *Bulletin*'s message, and its concomitantly increasing status as an independent artifact of American anticommunist pop culture. By the time the *Bulletin* used the clock to forewarn of any “midnight” other than that of nuclear holocaust, the public, as Moore noted, lost interest. When the editors wrapped it in the legitimizing rhetoric of American anticommunism and Cold War constructs, the clock induced fear and, Rabinowitch always hoped, discussion toward new policy alternatives in the pursuit of a lasting, non-nuclear peace.

Still, the clock ticks on, marking time in its unique, periodical way, even as scientists discover new means by which humankind might destroy itself. And, still, the Doomsday Clock

warns that without progress, midnight is but a few short clicks away. What the *Bulletin* wanted all along, it seems, was terror without the bang.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### BEYOND ANTICOMMUNISM?: SOME CONCLUSIONS

As the election season wore into its seventh official month (although for him the campaign was over a year-and-a-half old), the candidate dismissed his opponent as the “most extreme” member of Congress, “more to the left than the announced socialist in the United States Senate.” When reporters pressed the candidate for a clarification—“Do you think he is a socialist?”—he subtly damned by implication: “I don’t know. All I know is his voting record, and that’s what people usually judge their elected representatives by.” This claim came not in 1948, during the rise of anticommunist politics in the United States, but over half a century later, in 2008. Decades earlier, Republican presidential nominee John McCain’s tacit labeling of his Democratic opponent, Barack Obama, as a socialist might have been called red-baiting. In the twenty-first century, it merely demonstrates the lingering draw of once-powerful anticommunist rhetoric. Although the preceding twenty years have witnessed the death of the Soviet Union and Communism’s worldwide receding, politicians may yet delegitimize their partisan foes by invoking the rhetorical linkage of extremism and un-Americanism.<sup>1</sup>

Despite this example, anticommunism was the defining construct of twentieth-century American social and partisan politics, and not that of the twenty-first century United States. It allowed the public a mutually intelligible discourse for determining one’s Americanness or un-Americanism, one’s national authenticity or illegitimacy. Yet, the close of the Cold War did not end the socio-political process of legitimation; merely, it continues into a new era made more complex by the absence of a simplified Manichaeism defining the boundaries of Americanism.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Dave Helling and Scott Canon, “McCain renews call for gas tax holiday at Union Station campaign stop,” *Kansas City Star*, 17 July 2008, accessed on 9 August 2008 at <http://www.kansascity.com/news/politics/story/710218.html>.

In the last decade, some signs suggest that the rhetoric of the war on communism evolved into that of the war on terror. Both Manichean oppositions, these constructs inherently define national legitimacy against an “other.” Some texts from the immediate aftermath of the unprecedented terrorist attacks on the U.S. of September 11, 2001, demonstrate a clear evolution toward this interpretation.

On that new day of infamy, President George W. Bush explained that Americans faced an assault on “our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom.” In reasserting the nation’s strength and unity in the face of these attacks, President Bush argued “they cannot touch the foundation of America,” nor “dent the steel of American resolve.” Against the “evil” of the terrorists, “the very worst of human nature,” emerged a portrait of authentic Americans. Four days later the president announced the inauguration of a “different kind of conflict against a different kind of enemy.” The war on terror eclipsed the sort of geopolitical constructs that defined the Cold War, but like that former conflict elicited a fundamental opposition between Americanism and un-Americanism. Legitimate Americans exhibited a “spirit of sacrifice and patriotism and defiance” as the United States moved against this new enemy.<sup>2</sup>

President Bush further defined both the conflict and, implicitly, the new Manichean opposition in an address to a joint session of Congress on September 20. If love of that traditionally American notion of freedom defined authentic Americans, the terrorists represented the opposite: “enemies of freedom” who attacked “freedom itself.” The president noted the radical and extremist form of Islam practiced by the terrorists, but importantly identified it as one

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<sup>2</sup> The President of the United States, “Statement by the President in His Address to the Nation, 8:30 P.M. EDT; September 11, 2001,” *The Avalon Project*, accessed on 9 August 2008 at [http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/Avalon/sept\\_11/](http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/Avalon/sept_11/); The President of the United States, “Radio Address of the President to the Nation; September 15, 2001,” *The Avalon Project*, accessed on 9 August 2008 at [http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/Avalon/sept\\_11/](http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/Avalon/sept_11/).

wholly rejected by countless legitimate Americans—themselves Muslims. Furthermore, terrorists opposed virtually every authentic facet of Americanness:

Americans are asking, why do they hate us? They hate what we see right here in this chamber—a democratically elected government....They hate our freedoms—our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other....These terrorists kill not merely to end lives, but to disrupt and end a way of life. With every atrocity, they hope that America grows fearful, retreating from the world and forsaking our friends. They stand against us, because we stand in their way.

Notably, this rhetoric of twenty-first century authenticity perhaps legitimized more than just Americanness: “This is the world’s fight. This is civilization’s fight....We ask all every nation to join us.” President Bush expressed this new Manichaeism most famously, and most directly, in a press conference on November 6, stating simply, “You are either with us or you are against us in the fight against terror.”<sup>3</sup>

So it had been with the war against communism, especially in the sense of defining Americans from un-Americans. It is far too early for historians to demonstrate convincingly any consequences of this perceived evolution of anticommunist rhetoric; after all, half-a-century ago few historians could have imagined the dimensions of a post-Cold War world, let alone one very nearly post-communist. Although embargoes against Cuba and tensions with China remain, the United States no longer battles an expansionist, ideologically-driven Communism. Events even forced a reassessment of the chief concerns of the once-iconic Doomsday Clock. Once the arbiter of atomic, Cold War-driven fears, the clock now considers environmental degradation and, yes, terrorism as new threats to humanity.

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<sup>3</sup> The President of the United States, “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People (As Delivered Before Congress) 9:00 P.M. EDT; September 20, 2001,” *The Avalon Project*, accessed on 9 August 2008 at [http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/Avalon/sept\\_11/](http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/Avalon/sept_11/); The President of the United States, “President Says Coalition Partners ‘Must Perform’ 11:44 A.M. EST; November 6, 2001,” *The Avalon Project*, accessed on 9 August 2008 at [http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/Avalon/sept\\_11/](http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/Avalon/sept_11/).

But the history of the clock, as documented in chapter seven, also demonstrates that anticommunism meant many things to many people. To Eugene Rabinowitch and the “keepers of the clock,” anticommunism seemingly served cross-purposes. On the one hand, Soviet Communism destabilized a world made infinitely more dangerous by the atomic bomb. Rabinowitch exhibited an undeniable, if rhetorical, opposition to this Communism throughout many issues of the *Bulletin* he edited. His Doomsday Clock crept closer toward apocalyptic midnight primarily when the Soviet Union initiated new threats toward the United States. More significantly, Rabinowitch recognized that the atomic bomb made conventional war between nuclear superpowers a suicidal prospect. Thus, he promoted a sort of evolved anticommunist Americanism, wherein he opposed the Soviet Union yet moreover opposed any action by either superpower that threatened atomic holocaust. The Doomsday Clock eventually stood for an anticommunism that hoped for an innovative U.S.-led internationalism and the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons from the earth. So long as Americans feared the Soviet bomb, it seemed, they paid attention to the motion of the iconic clock. But because midnight never came, the clock never inspired Rabinowitch’s hoped-for redefinition of Americanness for the atomic age.

Somewhat to the contrary, Charles Goodell, the subject of chapter six, encountered a definition of authenticity he believed had abandoned the traditional conception of Republicanism. A loyal partisan through the Democratic administrations of Kennedy and Johnson, Goodell advanced steadily through the ranks of the GOP and eventually served as one of the chief policy advisors in the House of Representatives. Upon moving to the Senate in 1968, Goodell began a vocal and, to many Republicans, radical opposition to the ostensibly anticommunist war in Vietnam. While Goodell remained a true conservative Republican in

virtually all his policy preferences, as indicated by his public statements throughout his political career, his failure to incorporate unwavering support for the war in Vietnam set him at odds with his political party. Goodell never sought a fundamental redefinition of Republicanism, instead believing that his opposition to the war resulted from a strict adherence to the traditional values of his partisanship: responsibility, liberty, and responsiveness.

Goodell's ouster was directed by the President of the United States, Richard M. Nixon, who two and a half decades earlier defeated another politician by use of the anticommunist issue. Chapter three discovers that Jerry Voorhis failed in his bid for a sixth congressional term when Nixon painted their race red. Most ironically, his district's voters identified a political neophyte as more authentically anticommunist than the former member of the Dies Un-American Activities Committee. Voorhis had in fact opposed the committee's inception and, by 1943, determined he could not support its continued abrogation of civil liberties and public restrictions on the definition of legitimate anticommunism. Countering Dies's conservatism, Voorhis proposed a reconciliation of progressive liberalism to anticommunism, arguing that the former political philosophy best solved the social concerns enticing Americans to the latter movement. But neither his fellow liberals nor many in the American public embraced his innovation, and, like Rabinowitch and Goodell, failed in his bid to alter the fundamental terms of Americanism.

As explored in chapter five, President Lyndon Johnson offered liberals the first substantive hopes of this in combining his muscular anticommunism with dedication to domestic reform. In inaugurating his War on Poverty, Johnson rhetorically described it as akin to a war on communism; like Voorhis, Johnson described the allure of communism as fundamentally un-American social ills like endemic poverty (as well as racial injustice). The Great Society loomed as a liberal utopia, and Johnson portrayed it as the first significant rededication of that political

ideology since Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. But just as the New Deal faced attacks by way of the anticommunist issue, so too Johnson's War on Poverty failed this test of Americanness. Facing a rebellion of conservative southern Democrats, Johnson sacrificed the program's ideological core—Adam Yarmolinsky—to maintain an illusory consensus. Notably, red-baiting in the form of anticommunists of a generation earlier successfully wounded the Great Society from its beginnings. Soon, U.S. commitment to the anticommunist war in Vietnam that Goodell eventually opposed finished what the Carolina Democrats began. In each of these examples, political conservatives—regardless of partisan labels—successfully deployed anticommunism against their opponents and to their advantage.

Yet, social conservatives deployed anticommunism with efficiency and authenticity equal to that of political conservatives. Witness chapter four, and the social discussion of the suicide of James Forrestal. Contemporary observers identified an anticommunist imperative in identifying Forrestal as a legitimate hero and in downplaying—perhaps equally for cultural reasons as geopolitical ones—the true nature of his death. Although three distinct hero narratives emerged from a wide range of opinion, ranging from the scholarly to the conspiratorially-minded, all discussions of Forrestal deemed him an authentic anticommunist hero.

The path to legitimate Americanness involved many more steps for new immigrants, as seen in chapter two. When Congress renegotiated the terms of naturalization, civic organizations further delimited the terms of legitimation by insisting that Americanization involved more than just citizenship. Unintentionally, their efforts sparked a national discussion of authenticity that ultimately triggered a federally-directed crackdown on perceived “un-Americanness.” These early experiments in rhetorically defining Americanism and un-Americanism increasingly narrowed the focus of these terms to a national, Manichean opposition to communism in all its

various forms. This set the course—which led inexorably to Cold War and McCarthyism—for a uniquely American experience with anticommunism. Over the years it destroyed the careers of countless politicians and public servants, including Jerry Voorhis, Adam Yarmolinsky and Charles Goodell; perhaps it even cost James Forrestal his life. It generated and eventually made an iconic symbol out of fear, and engaged virtually all Americans in a national discussion on the parameters of social and political legitimacy.

Yet, these examples also demonstrate that the most consistently authentic uses of anticommunism remained fundamentally conservative (resistant to innovation or radical change) and Manichean (mutually exclusive) in the definition of legitimacy and, subsequently, the identification of un-Americans. Nonetheless, this project does not close the historical record on the topic. Just as it is not an exploration of Cold War foreign policy or an addition to the well-chronicled history of McCarthyism, it is not a comprehensive reinterpretation of Cold War politics and culture. Rather, it fundamentally reevaluates one of the American anticommunist era's most historically significant dimensions: the rhetorical battle for legitimacy and authenticity. The chapters of this project capture important and instructive vignettes, which together demonstrate the promise of renewed inquiry into the dominant era of contemporary American history, especially through innovative analytical tools and historical paradigms.

In the meantime, Americans' search for social and political legitimacy continues into a new century. This process did not end with the unraveling of the convenient Manichaeism that for the better part of the previous century effectively defined Americans from un-Americans. It will also outlive any new constructs of national opposition. Yet, by continually searching for clues to the development and consequences of the last era's competition for definitional legitimacy, historians may help better navigate the next.

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## VITA

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### Education

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## ABSTRACT

### “UN-AMERICANS” AND “ANTI-COMMUNISTS”: THE RHETORICAL BATTLE TO DEFINE TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICA

by Matthew A. McNiece, Ph.D., 2008  
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Manichaeism imbues both the history and the historiography of domestic American anticommunism. Within the latter, two major schools dominate. One identifies anticommunism as little more than an anti-intellectual anti-liberalism directed by conservatives against various social and political dissenters. The other rejects this view as dangerous revisionism that obscures the very real threat posed to the United States by the agents of (especially Soviet) communism. This study proposes a new understanding of domestic American anticommunism as a rhetorical battle to define the parameters of legitimacy and authenticity within the twentieth-century United States. In this view, neither of the main branches of the historiography fully guides the historian. Instead, tools from the field of rhetoric studies aid more traditional historical inquiry in illuminating the multivariate ways in which social and political forces deployed the construct of anticommunism as a tool for legitimation or delegitimation. Various chapters explore the interactions of political

liberalism and conservatism with mainstream definitions of anticommunism, as well as the social construction of a national identity or a hero mythology within a peculiarly American anticommunist environment. Ultimately, domestic American anticommunism may be seen as a fundamentally conservative force for defining authenticity, and in a Manichean way, illegitimacy. For the better part of a century, anticommunism helped delineate “us” from “them” in U.S. social and partisan politics.