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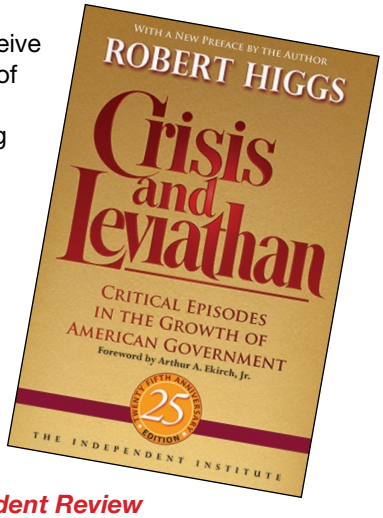

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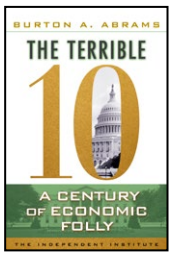
❑ 

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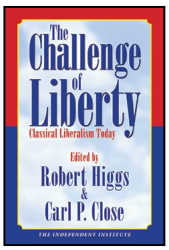
❑ 

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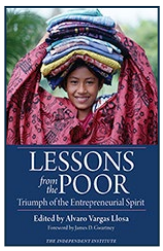
❑ 

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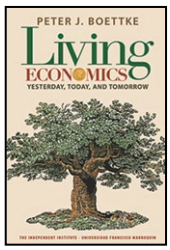
❑ 

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New Deal Nemesis
The "Old Right" Jeffersonians

SHELDON RICHMAN

> "Th[e] central question is not clarified, it is obscured, by our common political categories of left, right, and center."
>
> —CARL OGLESBY, Containment and Change

Modern ignorance about the Old Right was made stark by reactions to H. L. Mencken's diary, published in 1989. The diary received extraordinary attention, and reviewers puzzled over Mencken's opposition to the beloved Franklin Roosevelt, to the New Deal, and to U.S. entry into World War II.[1] Robert Ward's review (1989) was typical. Unable to fathom "Mencken's strange blindness regarding World War II" and his "near pathological hatred of...Roosevelt, whom he regarded as a mountebank," Ward wrote as though no one else in Mencken's America shared those views. He went on to say: "Mencken seemed actually to think that Roosevelt simply conned the United States into entering the war in order to make himself a hero.... Of course, this is shocking and untrue...." (3).

Even Charles A. Fecher, the editor of the diary and a Mencken scholar, could not believe what he read.

> His feelings about World War II are incredible in a man of his intelligence, knowledge, and perception.... The whole obscene show is simply "Roosevelt's war." ...And the war was far from being the only thing for which he blamed him. His hatred of Roosevelt

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1. Nearly everyone, including Ronald Reagan and Newt Gingrich, feels obliged to pay tribute to Roosevelt.

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> was, indeed, maniacal—there is no other word to use.... It is hard to ascribe this hatred to ideology. [I]t may well be that he sensed Roosevelt was ushering in a new era of social history...and Mencken, deeply conservative, resentful of change, looking back upon the "happy days" of a bygone time, wanted no part of the world that the New Deal promised to bring in.[2]

Thus Mencken's opposition to Roosevelt was dismissed—by a man who knew the writer's thought intimately—as the blind fear of change. In this introduction and in most of the commentary on the diary, Mencken was uniformly treated as a lone, idiosyncratic bigot, whose hatred of FDR and the war, if it was to be explained at all, could be the product only of racism and anti-Semitism. One would never glean from these reviewers' astonishment that something approaching a principled national political movement coalesced in opposition to Mencken's twin bugaboos, the New Deal and U.S. participation in the war, and to the man responsible for them, Franklin Roosevelt.[3]

But in fact, H. L. Mencken was not alone, however much he may have felt so. He was joined by a group of people from a variety of occupations—but primarily from politics and journalism—and political backgrounds. They, of course, didn't think of themselves as the "Old Right." That term would not have meaning until a "New Right" arose in the 1950s. Nevertheless, beginning roughly in the mid-1930s, a distinctly identifiable political coalition began to form, consisting of politicians and publicists alarmed by the growth of bureaucratic power in the hands of the national government's executive branch. A distinctive feature of the coalition was its willingness to apply this concern to foreign as well as domestic policy. This rising opposition foresaw danger for the Republic in both realms, and counseled a return to first principles: the U.S. Constitution, separation of powers, checks and balances, decentralization, limited popular rule, individual autonomy; in a word, republicanism. Thus the issue ultimately raised by the umbrella group now known as the Old Right was whether America would remain a land of limited government and individual freedom and initiative, or whether traditional American ideals would be subordinated to a government of unlimited executive power guided by collectivism at home and imperialism abroad—in short, republic versus empire.

The Old Right began as a group of people with disparate backgrounds but awakened by a common threat: Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his

2. Mencken 1989, xvi–xviii. Fecher's own book on Mencken is Mencken: A Study of His Thought (1978).

3. This is not all Fecher got wrong. He wrote that the anti-Semitic rabble-rouser Gerald L. K. Smith founded the America First Committee. Smith was not even a member, much less the founder. The league actually shunned Smith and other known anti-Semites. Fecher is confused: in 1943 Smith founded the America First Party; by then the America First Committee was defunct and had no direct connection with the party. See Cole 1971, 134, 188.

unprecedented accretion of executive power.[4] That the movement was placed on the right or called "conservative" has to be regarded a quirk of political semantics.[5] In a superficial sense it qualified as right-wing because it seemed to be defending the status quo from the state-sponsored egalitarian change of the New Deal. But in a deeper sense, the New Deal actually was a defense of the corporativist status quo threatened by the Great Depression. Thus the Old Right was not truly right-wing, and since that is so, it should not be bothersome that some palpable left-wingers, such as Norman Thomas and Robert La Follette, Jr., seemed at home in the Old Right.[6]

The Old Right includes several identifiable strands: "progressive" isolationists (such as Senator William Borah and John T. Flynn), Republican "conservative" isolationists (such as Robert Taft), libertarian and individualist iconoclasts regarded as leftist radicals in the 1920s (Mencken and Albert Jay Nock), conservative Democrats (such as Senator Bennett Champ Clark), World War I revisionists with a social democratic background (such as Harry Elmer Barnes), social democratic opponents of Roosevelt's foreign policy (such as Charles Beard), a trio of individualist women writers (Ayn Rand, Rose Wilder Lane, and Isabel Paterson), a group of free-market liberal economists and journalists (such as Frank Chodorov, Garet Garrett, Leonard Read, F. A. Harper, and no doubt others), and some individual members who defy classification.[7] The categories overlap, but they indicate the diversity.

Some Old Rightists opposed FDR from the start; others inclined toward him, and even supported him, during the election against Herbert Hoover in 1932 and during the first years of the New Deal. They had different rationales for their opposition to the domestic and foreign policies of the 1930s: some were nationalists and unilateralists, others pacifists and classical liberal internationalists in the Richard Cobden tradition.[8] But sooner or later they united in opposition to the actions and the tone of Roosevelt and his Brains Trust. As time went on, the group seemed to draw closer together temperamentally and even philosophically, perhaps in response to the government and the media's overwhelming opposition to it.

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4. The latest study of the Old Right is Justin Raimondo's Reclaiming the American Right: The Lost Legacy of the Conservative Movement (1993).

5. As Jerome L. Himmelstein (1990) points out, the nineteenth-century conservatives were those who resisted "the major features of modern Western society—industrial capitalism, political democracy, and an individualist culture—in the name of an agrarian, aristocratic, communal social order. Liberal referred generally to support for those same changes" (26).

6. On America's corporativist history and the New Deal as a defense of corporativism, see Kolko (1963), Bernstein (1968, 263–288), Radosh (1972, 146–87), Rothbard (1972a), and Hughes (1977). See also Ekirch ([1955] 1967), Higgs (1987), and Vedder and Gallaway (1993).

7. The late Roy A. Childs, Jr., suggested the categories.

8. On the various motivations in foreign policy, see Carpenter (1980, 4–5).

The dissimilitude of the strands making up this political braid illustrates that the term Old Right does not denote a precise political architectonic. Most of its members were not of a philosophical bent; rather, they were journalists and office-holders, reacting to events. They were serious thinkers, but for the most part not systematizers. Unsurprisingly, they had disagreements on particulars, especially those pertaining to affirmative ideas. But they knew what they didn't like.

Old Rightism was a frame of mind, a spirit rather than a rigorous philosophy. Its anima was an intransigent individualism in the face of a torrent of collectivism at home and outright dictatorship abroad. Even after the Republican Party establishment accommodated itself to the New Deal in the 1950s, the Old Right pressed the fight. In its particulars, this group held a deep respect for the founding ideals of the United States, namely, the principles of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and a few other documents, such as Washington's Farewell Address. If the Old Rightists had a single hero it would have been Thomas Jefferson. They may not have agreed exactly on what he believed, but they would have endorsed Mencken's view that "Jefferson would have killed himself if he could have seen ahead to Roosevelt II" (1956b, 78).

Their common bogey was power. Concentrated power nullified the autonomous individual; unchecked bureaucracy was an octopus run amuck, its multiplying tentacles strangling what had made America vital. Most would have applauded Henry David Thoreau's observation made in "Civil Disobedience": "Yet this government never of itself furthered any enterprise, but by the alacrity with which it got out of the way" (Bedau 1969, 27), and for most, their aversion to power was especially pronounced in foreign affairs—so much so that this is emblematic of the Old Right.[9] Here all their principles intersected with a vengeance, resulting in a white-hot contempt for secret diplomacy, intrigue, foreign entanglements, imperialism, and their sine qua non, the independent, discretionary presidency—what has been called the Executive State.[10] To the Old Rightists, these practices were unconstitutional intrusions on the prerogatives of the people and of the people's representatives—intrusions worth fighting even when the Old Rightists themselves happened to agree with a particular objective. They also understood that private diplomacy was likely to lead to war, that great

9. See Rothbard 1978. Rothbard aptly emphasizes the Old Right's connection to the English Manchester Schoolers Richard Cobden and John Bright and the leading American disciple of Herbert Spencer: William Graham Sumner (86). He also points out that confusion over the terms Left and Right came from the flip–flop of so many liberals and leftists on the war question in the late 1930s and the recrimination against liberals who stayed the noninterventionist course, such as Harry Elmer Barnes, John T. Flynn, and Oswald Garrison Villard (86–88). This change is painstakingly chronicled in Martin 1964. For a discussion of the regional rivalry between midwestern and eastern business interests, see Rothbard 1978, 88.

10. Compare this attitude with the occasional conservative posturing about the "imperial" Congress's "micromanaging" foreign policy at the expense of presidential prerogative.

scourge of a free society. War, they believed, always resulted in all manner of government control: of the economy, of personal liberty, of the press—the things that must be left unmolested if the dignity and freedom of the individual are to be preserved. This was not high-flown theory for them, but the lessons of the past, most recently World War I, the great leap toward collectivism in America (Rothbard 1989).

Their opposition to war stemmed also from what it would likely do to the rest of the world.[11] Herbert Hoover and Robert A. Taft, during their food-relief efforts in Europe after World War I, understood that Bolshevism came to Russia only after the United States prevailed on the Provisional Government to stay in the war, despite the Russian people's abhorrence of that course. They concluded, according to the historian Leonard P. Liggio (1973), that "Bolshevism was the natural result of the dislocation of war, and they shared the fear that intrigues of the European Allies would sustain that dislocation and permit a wider appeal for Bolshevism" (4). Later they observed that the hardship imposed at Versailles had led to Nazi electoral victories.[12] Viewing the war, the vindictiveness of its participants, and the resulting famine, Hoover said, "Famine is the mother of anarchy," which in turn could only encourage the rise of Bolshevism (Patterson 1972, 76). He set up his famed Hoover Institution for the Study of War, Revolution and Peace precisely to study the connection between war and the rise of totalitarianism. Taft, Hoover, and others recalled this lesson as World War II approached, and when the war was over they felt grimly vindicated as the United States immediately embarked on the Cold War (Editorial 1981, 6; see also Doenecke 1982, 203).

In trying to define the Old Right, one historian emphasizes the negative:

> The Old Right, which constituted the American Right-wing from approximately the mid-1930's to the mid-1950's, was, if nothing else, an Opposition movement. Hostility to the Establishment was its hallmark, its very life-blood. In fact, when, in the 1950's, the monthly newsletter Right attempted to convey to its readers news of the Right-wing, it was of course forced to define the movement it would be writing about—and it found that it could only define the Right-wing in negative terms: in its total opposition to what it conceived to be the ruling trends of American life. In brief, the Old Right was born and had its being as the opposition movement to

11. Thus it is wrong to say that the Old Right cared only about what intervention would do to America, as the conservative syndicated columnist Patrick Buchanan has said on television talk shows.

12. See "Editorial" in Literature of Liberty 1981, 4. See in the same issue, Justus D. Doenecke's article "The Anti-interventionist Tradition: Leadership and Perceptions," 7–67. Also of interest by Doenecke are his article "American Isolationism" (1982) and his book Not to the Swift: The Old Isolationists in the Cold War Era (1979).

> the New Deal, and to everything, foreign and domestic, that the New Deal encompassed: at first, to burgeoning New Deal statism at home, and then, later in the '30's, to the drive for American global intervention abroad. Since the essence of the Old Right was a reaction against runaway Big Government at home and overseas, this meant that the Old Right was necessarily, even if not always consistently, libertarian rather than statist, "radical" rather than traditional conservative apologist for the existing order. (Rothbard n.d., 2–3)

As the Old Right passed from the scene in the mid-1950s (for reasons to be discussed later), it was supplanted by a New Right, a group of intellectuals associated with William F. Buckley, Jr., and National Review magazine (founded in 1955). This raises a question: Is one justified in speaking of an old and new right? And if there is a New Right, is it an essentially different movement or a new evolutionary stage of the old? Paul Gottfried and Thomas Fleming, in The Conservative Movement (1988), treat the right as essentially one continuous movement, and thus fail to recognize it as an amalgam of many conservative and libertarian elements.[13] They use the term old right only when they come to "the emergence of two new conservative forces": the neoconservatives and the "populist and religious New Right" (Gottfried and Fleming 1988, 59). An implication of their position is that the "Buckley Right" is merely the "Taft Right" after a postwar evolution.

One can get this impression because of Buckley's own ties to the Old Right.[14] But this cannot be satisfactory. To insist on this account is to ignore a virtual fire wall between the Taft right and the Buckley right. Many in the Old Right—including Taft, Nock, and Chodorov—rejected the label conservative, regarding it as a left-wing smear word (see Rothbard 1968a, 50; Crunden 1964, 174; and Liggio 1973). Taft's official biographer reports that "Mr. Republican" was uninterested in Russell Kirk's book The Conservative Mind. "Taft lacked many of the characteristics often assigned to the 'conservatives' with whom he was conveniently lumped" (Patterson 1972, 330). Although Patterson writes that Taft ultimately "was conservative in the practical sense ordinarily applied to mid twentieth-century American politicians," that is, Taft favored limited government, he ends by calling Taft's philosophy "libertarian" (332–33). On the eve of U.S. entry into World War II, Taft indicated who the real conservatives were: "The most conservative members of the party—the Wall Street bankers, the

13. See also William Rusher's article "Who Ended the Cold War?" which appeared in the Washington Times, 15 December 1989. George H. Nash (1976) disagrees to an extent (123–30), though the title of his work, The Conservative Intellectual Movement Since 1945, implies there was essentially one continuous movement. For a similar view, see Himmelstein 1990, 28ff.

14. In earlier days, Buckley was a member of the America First Committee and a disciple of Nock and Chodorov.

society group, nine-tenths of the plutocratic newspapers, and most of the party's financial contributors—are the ones who favor intervention in Europe."[15]

The Old Right was temperamentally different from the group associated with Buckley, many of whom were former Trotskyists and advocates of some variant of coercive communitarianism. What was new about this New Right? Clearly, it was the Cold War temperament and the shift in emphasis from individualism to government promotion of virtue. This can be summed up handily as the transmogrification of "Our Enemy, The State" (to use Albert Jay Nock's title) into "Statecraft as Soulcraft" (to use George Will's).

> Where once the Right was fervently devoted to the freedoms propounded in the Bill of Rights, it now believes that civil liberties are the work of Russian agents. Where once it stood for the strict separation of Church and State, it now speaks of the obligation of the community to preserve a Christian America through a variety of Blue Laws and other schemes for integrating government and religion. Where once the Right was, above all, dedicated to peace and opposed to foreign entanglements, it now is concerned with preparing for war and giving all-out aid to any dictator, Socialist or otherwise, who proclaims his unbending "anti-Communism." Where once the Right wanted America to exert its moral effect upon the world by being a beacon-light of freedom, it now wants to turn America into an armed camp to crush Communism wherever it appears. (Hamowy 1961, 4–5)

The New Rightists' own words demonstrate the discontinuity between old and new. In a 1952 article, Buckley called for "extensive and productive tax laws...to support a vigorous anti-communist foreign policy." Because of the "thus far invincible aggressiveness of the Soviet Union," he stated, "we have to accept Big Government for the duration—for neither an offensive nor a defensive war can be waged...except through the instrument of a totalitarian bureaucracy within our shores."[16] He also wrote, "Where reconciliation of an individual's and the government's interests cannot be achieved, the interests of the government shall be given exclusive consideration" (quoted in Rothbard 1964, 230). One of his collaborators, James Burnham, lamented that Americans seemed reluctant "to accept the responsibilities of empire" and showed no "willingness to kill people, now and then, without collapsing into a paroxysm of guilt" (Burnham 1971, 749).

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15. Taft was commenting in the Nation (13 December 1941) on an article by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., that had appeared in the magazine a week earlier, in which the historian claimed that American business favored appeasing Hitler. See J. Martin 1964, 1278.

16. Buckley 1952. Observe the difference between this and William Henry Chamberlin's version: "In any conflict between the individual and the state...my sympathies are always instinctively with the individual" (1940, 299). After World War II, Chamberlin apparently came around to Buckley's position.

Compare such statements to this 1957 statement written by Old Rightist Felix Morley, a founding editor of Human Events:

> We are trying to make a federal republic do an imperial job....To make our policies conform to our institutions is to revert to isolationism. It would mean the termination of our alliances; withdrawal of all troops to our own shores; reduction of military expenditure to a truly defensive level; complete indifference to political developments abroad, regardless of whether these help or hinder the advance of Communism. (26)

Or this from Frank Chodorov:

> If we will, we can still save ourselves from the cost of empire building. We have only to square off against this propaganda, and to supplement rationality with a determination that, come what may, we will not lend ourselves, as individuals, to this new outrage against human dignity....We will resist, by counterpropaganda, every attempt to lead us to madness. Above all, when the time comes, we will refuse to fight, choosing the self-respect of the prison camp to the ignominy of the battlefield. ([1947] 1980, 344)

There is no gainsaying that the Buckley right was indeed a New Right.[17]

The disagreement between Old and New Right over the Cold War is more than a clash of empirical assessments of a Soviet threat. It runs deeper. The remnant of the Old Right that remained to fight against the Cold War was radically antiwar and antimilitarist in the conviction, as we shall see, that waging the Cold War would bring to America precisely that which the Cold Warriors claimed to oppose. Where some Old Rightists occasionally sounded like Cold Warriors, the cause was their exasperation with the New Deal and Fair Deal "liberals," whom they had reason to despise. When the Old Right isolationists spoke out against entry into World War II, arguing that participation would, among other things, aid the spread of Soviet communism, they were smeared as "Vichy Fascists," "Nazi fellow travellers," and anti-Semites; harassed by government agents; and in some cases even prosecuted for sedition (Rothbard 1978, 87–89; see also Doenecke 1982, 212, and Steele, 1979). Later, to their horror, they witnessed Stalin's forces rolling to the Elbe and cringed at Roosevelt's obeisance toward "Uncle Joe" and the inevitable codification of Soviet gains at Yalta and Potsdam. They also witnessed the communist exploitation of the upheaval the war caused in China. All of this produced an understandable attitude of "we told you so"

17. For an expression of concern that the New Right's social policies were collectivist, see Frank Meyer (1955), in which Meyer, the "fusionist," accuses Russell Kirk of being "at the best equivocal" (559) on the relationship of the individual and society. He also argues that conservatism "carried with it, however, no built-in defense against the acceptance, grudging though it may be, of institutions which reason and prudence would otherwise reject, if only those institutions are sufficiently firmly established" (559).

toward the liberals. They missed few opportunities to throw the postwar communist gains in the liberals' faces.

To be sure, a few Old Rightists slipped into unabashed boosterism for America's Third Crusade (Nash 1976, 126–27). Rothbard (1968b), in studying the issue, employs the useful distinction between broad and narrow revisionism. He writes:

> The narrow Revisionists, who form, unfortunately, the large majority, have reasoned somewhat as follows: The chief lesson of World War I is the injustice heaped upon Germany—first, in launching the war against her, and then in coercing a confession of sole guilt in the brutal and disastrous Treaty of Versailles. The same focus on an injured Germany then blends into the analysis of World War II, caused essentially by continually repeated obstructions by the Allies of any peaceful revision of a Versaillesdiktat which they themselves admitted to be gravely unjust to Germany.
>
> What lesson, then, does the narrow Revisionist draw for the postwar period? Since his concentration is narrowly upon the wrongs suffered by Germany, his conclusion then follows that these wrongs must be put right as quickly as possible; which, in the current context, becomes a compulsory unification of West and East (or for the Revisionist, Middle) Germany, on Western terms, and a return of the lands beyond the Oder-Neisse from Poland. In short, the narrow Revisionist ends, ironically, by yearning for the very sort of unilateral diktat and blind revanche which he so properly deplored when Germany suffered from their evils. Finally, in his current preoccupation with World War II and the German problem, the narrow Revisionist carries over the old anti-Comintern spirit, or what is now called "hard anti-Communism," into an entirely different era....The narrow Revisionist...has gotten himself enmeshed in a veritable tangle of contradictions. Beginning in dedication to peace, he has become a virtual advocate of total war (against the Soviet Union). (1968b, 316)

To the broad Revisionist, Rothbard continues,

> peaceful revision and peaceful negotiation are not ideas solely applicable to Germany [but] are applicable to all times and places, and therefore to the postwar world as well....To the broad Revisionist the great lesson of the two World Wars is precisely to avoid as a very plague any further Great Crusade, and to maintain—if we value the lives and liberties of the American people—a steadfast policy of peaceful coexistence and abstinence from foreign meddling....[I]t is a conclusion in almost diametric opposition to the views of his old narrow-Revisionist colleague. (1968b, 318–19)

Inconsistencies by particular Old Rightists can be found, but they do not invalidate the distinction between old and new. A few Old Right figures, for example, at times inclined toward some aggressive anticommunist or anti-Soviet policies. But they did so with a sense of skepticism and misgiving, a position different from adopting wholeheartedly the New Right's Cold War temperament. This temperament denotes not merely an abhorrence of the doctrines of Marx and Lenin or distress for the victims of Soviet tyranny or concern about communists in the government, all of which the Old Right shared; it also means support for a commitment and readiness by the U.S. government to contain, wear down, and in many cases roll back Soviet forces. Its salient feature is its jihad character, the sense that it is the glorious destiny of the United States, leader of the Free World, to destroy Godless Communism.

Although the New Right was built predominantly by figures not associated with the Old Right, some Old Rightists broke ranks after World War II. The historian William Henry Chamberlin, who changed from communist sympathizer to right-wing war foe in 1940 to advocate of anti-Soviet activism and red-baiter of Old Rightists in 1945, and John Chamberlain, critic, editor, and economics writer, who followed a similar trajectory, both adopted the Buckley group's foreign policy.[18] Similarly, Senator Arthur Vandenberg, an opponent of U.S. participation in World War II, pirouetted into an establishment booster of the Cold War and bipartisan foreign policy.

Only by recognizing the distinctiveness of the Old Right, especially in its analysis of foreign policy, can one acquire an accurate picture of American political history and the rise of an overtly libertarian movement in the late twentieth century.

Professionally, the Old Right consisted of members of Congress, other politicians, writers, and businessmen. Many were veterans of the fight against Prohibition and in some cases members of the anti-Roosevelt American Liberty League.[19] What ultimately united these individuals was the determination to resist the swallowing up of American ideals, institutions, and traditions by the monster of collectivism, which in different forms they saw settled or settling in Moscow, Rome, and Berlin and threatening to settle in Washington. Key Old Right figures will be discussed in two groups: politicians and publicists.

18. See William Henry Chamberlin's America's Second Crusade (1950) for his views on the disaster of World War II. In 1940 he called himself an advocate of "mild anarchism," or "anarchy plus a police constable": "a state strong enough to maintain internal order, but not strong enough to carry on wars...and perform the other deviltries to which a strong state is prone" (1940, 300). See also John Chamberlain's A Life with the Printed Word (1982).

19. For a revisionist and critical look at the League, see my article "A Matter of Degree, Not Principle: The Founding of the American Liberty League" (1982).

The Politicians

Beginning in the mid-1930s a group of U.S. Senators and Representatives coalesced in opposition to the policies of Franklin Roosevelt. It was a diverse group, including some who were uneasy with Roosevelt from the start, even if they had voted with him, and some who, despairing over the Great Depression, at first had hopes that the New Deal would work. Those to be discussed were critical of Roosevelt in both foreign and domestic policy. Congressmen who opposed him in one realm only do not seem to qualify as Old Rightists. Several conservative Democrats, for example, including Senators Carter Glass of Virginia, Thomas P. Gore of Oklahoma, and Harry Byrd of Virginia, despised Roosevelt's domestic policies from the start, but supported his pro-war measures (see Patterson 1967, 19–31, 337). In contrast, the progressive Republican Senator Robert La Follette, Jr., of Wisconsin opposed the war measures while pushing for domestic policies even more interventionist than Roosevelt's.

The congressional foes of the domestic and foreign New Deal included a small number of conservative, or "Cleveland," Democrats, such as Bennett Champ Clark of Missouri, Patrick McCarran of Nevada, and David I. Walsh of Massachusetts (Patterson 1967, 337). The western and midwestern progressive-isolationist Republicans made up another group of congressional opponents of the New Deal, foreign and domestic. Some of them were politicians who won their first political medals in the 1920s and saw themselves as in the tradition of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson.[20] This bloc included William Borah of Idaho, Hiram Johnson of California, Gerald Nye of North Dakota, Henrik Shipstead of Minnesota, and several others. It is useful to consider with this group their ideological brother Senator Burton K. Wheeler of Montana, although he was a Democrat. These men began as sympathetic to the New Deal. The depression and what they regarded as Hoover's half-hearted response to it distressed the Republican progressives, and in the 1932 election they either supported Roosevelt (Hiram Johnson, for example) or were neutral (William Borah and Gerald Nye) because they could not bring themselves to bless Hoover (Feinman 1981, 20). (Roosevelt ran a campaign of contradictions, promising both to cut federal spending by 25 percent and to increase aid to the unemployed, that is, to reduce and increase federal power [Leuchtenburg 1963, 10–11].) In the famous first hundred days the progressive bloc was part of the "tractable Congress" (Patterson's term) that gave Roosevelt what he wanted. But the bloc was not firmly in his pocket. Its growing dislike of the New Deal "represented an older hostility to centralized power, be it corporate or governmental" (Patterson 1967, 116). The aversion to power sprang from its fundamental individualism (Graham 1967, 176).

20. Otis Graham counts sixty old progressives who opposed the New Deal. See his An Encore for Reform: The Old Progressives and the New Deal (1967); the list of names is on pages 192–93.

The earliest fight with Roosevelt that has the markings of the inchoate Old Right's participation was, aptly, in foreign affairs, when the isolationists in 1935 defeated Roosevelt's proposal to have the United States join the World Court (Leuchtenburg 1963, 216–17). Other early conflicts with Roosevelt had to do with neutrality, as auguries of war arose in Europe. Here the essential constitutional issue emerged starkly. Throughout the neutrality fights of 1935, 1936, and 1937, the point of battle was executive discretion, with the isolationists trying to deprive Roosevelt of room to maneuver and the president trying to maximize his flexibility.

The event that arguably catalyzed the emergence of a full-fledged Old Right was Roosevelt's attempt to pack the Supreme Court. During the early New Deal, the U.S. Supreme Court was the one bulwark that kept Roosevelt from carrying out all his plans. In 1935 and 1936, respectively, the pillars of the New Deal—the National Industrial Recovery Act and the Agricultural Adjustment Act—dropped like trees giving way to the logger's blade.[21] It was a shocking blow to FDR and the zealous New Dealers. The progressives had been uneasy with these programs from the beginning. Although they tended to support Roosevelt's relief measures, they disliked the direction of the NIRA and AAA. In the fall of 1934, Borah wrote to a constituent:

> I feel very strongly that the situation in this country is critical in more ways than one. It is critical economically and governmentally.... If I am not mistaken, the trend in some aspects is absolutely at war with the fundamental principles of American institutions, and will ultimately undermine many of the rights of the citizen. (Feinman 1981, 78)

Borah, Nye, Wheeler, and others distrusted programs such as the NIRA that handed extraordinary power to businessmen. They despised the government-enforced codes and price-fixing and the suspension of the antitrust laws. They equally abhorred the AAA's crop destruction and other controls. Some observers thought it odd that those veteran progressives objected to Roosevelt's first measures, but their objections to the programs were entirely consistent with their stated philosophy. As progressives, they distrusted the concentration of power, which is what they saw in the early New Deal.

> Their first and most frequent complaint was that the New Deal was unforgivably coercive, and far from entering upon that role with hesitation, apologies, and promises of early retrenchment, it gave all signs of a permanent Federal paternalism. Without question it was NRA that most embodied this trend toward statism (with AAA corroborating evidence), but even after the death of NRA these

21. The court also struck down the Guffey Coal Conservation Act as unconstitutional and nullified New York State's minimum wage law.

> progressives perceived signs enough that the New Deal could be summed up as a drive toward a permanent collectivism. (Graham 1967, 66–67)

They had been sympathetic to government activism earlier in the century, but things had changed.

> The writings of the progressives are strewn with worried references to Mussolini and Hitler and Stalin, to the emergence of malignant totalitarian regimes. The progressive American, never entirely at home with the state because he was an American before he was a progressive, saw in Europe's conversion to totalitarianism a case of history teaching by negative example that those who proposed to grant further power to government in the cause of social reform were headed in the wrong direction. Reformers, apparently, had overestimated the amiability of government—that was the lesson of 1917 in Europe, and of 1922, and of 1933. (Graham 1967, 48)

If they had doubts about Roosevelt's direction before the Supreme Court acted, those doubts were reinforced with steel rods by his official response to the decisions. On February 5, 1937, Roosevelt asked Congress to restructure the court so that whenever a justice who had held his position for ten years or more waited longer than six months to retire after his seventieth birthday, the president could name an additional justice to the bench. Roosevelt justified this bill (not a constitutional amendment) on grounds that the court was overworked and inefficient because of the advanced age of many of the justices. Six of the nine members were over seventy, so under the proposed plan Roosevelt could name six additional justices.

The rationalization was transparent, as Roosevelt's adversaries hastened to point out, and the opposition quickly congealed (Leuchtenburg 1963, 233). The leader of the Senate opposition was the Democrat Burton K. Wheeler. He wrote to the socialist Norman Thomas, "It is an easy step from the control of a subservient Congress and the control of the Supreme Court to a modern democracy of a Hitler or a Mussolini" (Ekirch [1955] 1969, 199). And a future Republican senator who was yet to have his season also denounced the plan. "If the present attempt succeeds," said Robert A. Taft of Ohio, "it will practically mean an end of the Constitution and of judicial independence" (Cole 1983, 217). On July 22, 1937, the proposal was interred permanently in the Senate Judiciary Committee. Its demise elicited a "Glory be to God!" from Senator Johnson.[22]

Thwarted on the domestic front, Roosevelt turned to foreign affairs. On October 5, 1937, he went to Chicago to dedicate the Outer Link Bridge, which was funded by the Public Works Administration. With the Sino-

22. Cole 1983, 219. Roosevelt had no more luck with his attempt to get authority to reorganize the executive branch. His initial proposal passed the Senate in modified form, but was buried in a House committee (221).

Japanese war raging, he used the occasion to speak on foreign policy. He called for peace-loving states to cooperate against the war makers, using the analogy of the need to quarantine the contagiously ill (Cole 1983, 244–45).

Most of the isolationists in the Senate were livid; some threatened impeachment (Leuchtenburg 1963, 226). Borah predicted that if Japanese goods were boycotted, the United States would be "fooling with dynamite" (Cole 1983, 246). Shortly after Roosevelt's speech, Borah wrote:

> But this running around over the world trying to placate every situation and adjust every controversy is not the business of a democracy. A democracy must live at home or have no life. Totalitarian states which have absolute control over their subjects and may send them into any way that personal discretion or ambition suggests may engage in combat against aggressors, and so forth, but democracies cannot do so.[23]

Johnson syllogized, "The levying of sanctions means their enforcement and their enforcement means the Navy's activity. At once then you have war." He remarked that "the President with his delusions of grandeur sees himself the savior of mankind," and he went on to charge that Roosevelt was trying to take the public mind's off domestic woes (Cole 1983, 246–47). The fear that Roosevelt wished to intervene against Japan made the anti-interventionists suspicious of the naval appropriations bill that was before Congress.

The isolationists were so distrustful of Roosevelt that Johnson didn't want the Senate to adjourn for fear that the president would get involved in war. "We must be on guard…," Johnson said on the Senate floor, "every minute of the day and every minute of the night in the days to come, to see that we shall not participate in a war which is none of our concern" (Feinman 1981, 180).

When Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, the isolationists resisted against all odds Roosevelt's attempt to change the neutrality laws. Borah and Johnson were unalterably against ending the arms embargo. In his last speech before his death in January 1940, Borah marshaled his legendary oratorical skills to indict the "war hounds of Europe" and to condemn the war as "nothing more than another chapter in the bloody volume of European power politics." In a moving scene, the Senate gallery burst into applause and fellow Senators congratulated him (Feinman 1981, 184).

Lend-Lease also attracted dispute: the fiery Johnson referred to it as "the New Deal's triple 'A' foreign policy" and alleged that it would "plough under every fourth American boy."[24] The prospects of an alliance with the

23. Feinman 1981, 170. Yet Borah was not totally against the president regarding the speech. See Maddox 1969, 232–33.

24. Cole 1983, 415. Roosevelt said his remark was "the rottenest thing that has ever been said in public life in my generation."

Soviet Union upset Clark: "Once we have crawled into bed with 'Bloody Joe' no restraints are possible on the spread of Communist propaganda in this country" (America First Bulletin 1941, 1).

Senator Robert Taft, elected in 1938, zeroed in on Roosevelt's apparent disregard of democracy:

> One day the President sends American troops to Iceland in the war zone. The next day he refuses to submit to Congress the question whether troops should be sent to foreign lands. That is not democracy. The occupation of Iceland indicates a deliberate policy to involve the United States in war without Congressional action.... If the occupation of Iceland is defense, then any act the President cares to order is defense. (Stout 1942, 176)

Taft also feared that U.S. involvement in the war would lead to American imperialism. The war advocates, he said, "seem to contemplate an Anglo-American alliance perpetually ruling the world.... Such imperialism is wholly foreign to our ideas of democracy and freedom" (Patterson 1972, 245).

But the moving oratory could not stop the Roosevelt juggernaut. Congress proceeded to enact what the president wanted: neutrality revision, conscription, loans to Britain, extension of the draft, two lend-lease bills, and other laws to facilitate American involvement in the war.

Still the isolationists did not give up. The Old Right members of Congress carried their activities beyond the Capitol. Some of them, for instance, got involved in the America First Committee, which was formed in the fall of 1940 after the destroyers-for-bases deal.[25] Senators who were either members of or advisers to the committee included Nye, Wheeler, Johnson, Shipstead, and Arthur Capper of Kansas (Feinman 1981, 190).

With the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the U.S. declaration of war, the fighting in Congress was essentially over. But within the Republican Party, the battle between isolationists and internationalists was just beginning. At a National Republican Committee meeting in April 1942, Taft opposed a resolution by Wendell Willkie that Taft thought sounded like a repudiation of the Republican congressional isolationists. He presciently feared they were "heading for a direct fight for control of the Party machinery" and that "it would be fatal to the future of the Party if Willkie, [Henry] Luce and Dorothy Thompson, together with the wealthy crowd in the east, succeed in their aim." He said Willkie was wrong to think that the Republican path to victory lay in "being more warlike than Roosevelt" (Cole 1983, 519).

At this point we must broaden the political inquiry to look beyond Congress. The two figures to be briefly discussed are Herbert Hoover and Charles A. Lindbergh, Jr.

25. For the America First story and a collection of its documents, see Doenecke 1990.

Hoover, as Joan Hoff Wilson has dubbed him, is the "Forgotten Progressive," neither an advocate of laissez faire nor a conservative in the New Right sense.[26] Despite inconsistencies after World War II, especially regarding Asia, he was a committed noninterventionist. His overriding conviction was that war leads to economic upheaval, which, in turn, leads to revolution and the self-styled savior who promises to right everything if he is given all power. The resulting totalitarian doctrines and social experiments doom the otherwise natural and peaceful evolution toward individual liberty. His view had a great influence on several Old Right publicists. In 1922 he wrote about the aftermath of the Great War:

> We have witnessed in the last eight years the spread of revolution over one-third of the world. The causes of these explosions lie at far greater depths than the failure of governments in war. The war itself in its last stages was a conflict of social philosophies—but beyond this the causes of social explosion lay in the great inequalities and injustices of centuries flogged beyond endurance by the conflict and freed from restraint by the destruction of war. (1)

Hoover came to oppose intervention because, as he had told Woodrow Wilson,

> we should probably be involved in years of police duty, and our first act would probably, in the nature of things, make us a party to establishing the reactionary classes in their economic domination over the other classes. This is against our fundamental national spirit and I doubt whether our soldiers under these circumstances could resist infection with Bolshevik ideas. (Wilson 1975, 54–55)

He disliked Roosevelt's "quarantine" speech and approved the Munich settlement (Wilson 1975, 239). Although he later supported aid to England short of American troops, he opposed active U.S. participation in the war (against either Russia or Germany) and suspected that Roosevelt was intent on entry. He referred to FDR's "fireside chats" as "fire-provoking chats" (247). He also feared that the president's pressure on Japan was strengthening the regime there and that it would lead to war. When Germany attacked the Soviet Union, Hoover expected Hitler to defeat Stalin and make peace with England (247–48). When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor Hoover did not dissent in public, but privately he looked forward to an investigation. He wrote in several letters on December 8, 1941, "You and I

26. See Hoover's own book The Challenge to Liberty [1934] (1971). See also the important revisionist work on Hoover as architect of the first New Deal by Rothbard: "Herbert Clark Hoover: A Reconsideration" (1966) and "Herbert Hoover and the Myth of Laissez Faire" (1972b, 111–45).

know that this continuous putting pins in rattlesnakes finally got this country bitten."[27]

During the early stages of the Cold War, Hoover refused to appear before the House Un-American Activities Committee and to become chairman of President Truman's commission "to report on the question of infiltration of Communists in Government." According to Joan Hoff Wilson (1975), "Hoover's anticommunism was so nonmilitaristic that he was later called 'a tool of the Kremlin' by Cold Warriors during the Truman and Eisenhower administrations of the early 1950s" (237).

He generally opposed coercion both at home and abroad in the fight against communism. In a 1941 radio broadcast, he said "we cannot slay an idea or an ideology with machine guns. Ideas live until they have proved themselves right or wrong" (Wilson 1975, 238). He was critical of the Korean War, presuming that the "Reds just want to bleed us to death with these small-scale wars," though he had approved the Truman Doctrine and its aid to Greece and Turkey (Wilson 1975, 265). In the end he expressed a position that compromised: in place of the containment doctrine, strong air and naval protection of the Western Hemisphere and "watchful waiting before we take on any commitments." He predicted that the "evils of communism...will bring their own disintegration"—one of the Old Right's several correct predictions.[28]

Lindbergh was an American hero, a dashing aviator, an America First national-committee member and its most popular spokesman, and someone with as much charisma as Franklin Roosevelt (see Cole [1953] 1971, 1974). His work in rallying public opposition to entry into World War II was instrumental in keeping the pressure on the president and Congress for as long as it lasted. Smeared as a fascist and anti-Semite, he and his wife, Anne Morrow Lindbergh, persevered energetically only to see their efforts blown apart along with the ships at Pearl Harbor.

In his "A Letter to Americans" (1941) Lindbergh blamed the war on England and France's refusal "to take part in a European readjustment while there was still time to make it peacefully" (63–81). "Adjustments that should have been made in peace and moderation," he wrote, "were finally brought by war and resulted in immoderation" (Schoonmaker and Reid 1941, 63–64). Having failed to remove the seeds of future hostilities, England and France then became complacent and allowed Germany to surpass them in strength. By the time they were willing to fight, they were inferior militarily.

27. Wilson 1975, 248. For a statement by Hoover on entering the war, see "The Immediate Relation of the United States to this War" (1941, 3–12). See also Doenecke 1987.

28. Wilson 1975, 265–66. Hoover was joined in his opposition to the Korean War by Joseph P. Kennedy, former ambassador to Great Britain. An opponent of U.S. participation in World War II, Kennedy also wanted to keep America out of the Cold War. In late 1950 he called for U.S. withdrawal from Korea and West Germany. "What business is it of ours," he asked, "to support the French colonial policy in Indo-China or to achieve Mr. Syngman Rhee's concepts of democracy in Korea?" (Vital Speeches 1951, 170–73).

The United States found itself in a similar situation. While the German-Russian alliance was still in force, Lindbergh wrote:

> We, in America, are being led to war by a group of interventionists, and foreign interests, against the will of a majority of our people. Every poll of public opinion has shown that from 80 to 95 per cent of Americans are opposed to entering this war. Both the Republican and Democratic parties were forced to incorporate antiwar planks in their platforms. Both presidential candidates were compelled to take a stand against our intervention. Yet, today, although no one has made an attempt to attack us, we already have one foot in the war. (Schoonmaker and Reid 1941, 69)

He forcefully rejected, as "entirely out of the question," the argument that Germany could invade the United States by air (78).

Lindbergh closed the letter with a call to the American people to write their senators, representatives, and local newspapers:

> We should not be conscripting our youth for a foreign war they do not wish to fight.... If our American ideals are to survive, it will not be through the narcotic of foreign war, but through a reawakening of the spirit that brought this nation into existence.[29]

With U.S. entry into the war a fait accompli, Taft took center stage for the Old Right. He did so more because of his station and prestige than because of the purity of his stand; for though many of his colleagues were more consistent in battling U.S. globalism after World War II, Taft's eminence made him the rallying point for the Opposition and for its hopes of capturing the White House.

Despite his policy lapses, Taft earned his place as the leader of the Opposition because of his core belief in limited government and individual liberty and his skepticism that America's proper role in the world was that of policeman or proconsul. He had no illusions about an American mission to bring democracy to the world at the point of a bayonet or in the radioactive plume of a mushroom cloud. For him foreign policy had but one objective: the security of the lives and property of the American people. As he prepared his bid for the Republican presidential nomination, he wrote in his 1951 book, A Foreign Policy for Americans:

> There are a good many Americans who talk about an American century in which America will dominate the world. They rightly point out that the United States is so powerful today that we

29. Schoonmaker and Reid 1941, 79, 81. Lindbergh was later accused of anti-Semitism when he named the Jews as one of three groups, along with the British and the Roosevelt administration, pushing for entry into the war. However, many people who knew Lindbergh, including a former president of B'nai B'rith, said Lindbergh was not an anti-Semite (Cole 1974, 171ff.)

> should assume a moral leadership in the world to solve all the troubles of mankind. I agree that we need that moral leadership not only abroad but also at home. We can take the moral leadership in trying to improve the international organization for peace....
>
> If we confine our activities to the field of moral leadership we shall be successful if our philosophy is sound and appeals to the people of the world. The trouble with those who advocate this policy is that they really do not confine themselves to moral leadership. They are inspired with the same kind of New Deal planned-control ideas abroad as recent Administrations have desired to endorse at home. In their hearts they want to force on these foreign peoples through the use of American money and even, perhaps, American arms the policies which moral leadership is able to advance only through the sound strength of its principles and the force of its persuasion. I do not think this moral leadership ideal justifies our engaging in any preventive war, or going to the defense of one country against another, or getting ourselves into a vulnerable fiscal and economic position at home which may invite war. I do not believe any policy which has behind it the threat of military force is justified as part of the basic foreign policy of the United States except to defend the liberty of our own people. (17–18)

Perhaps Taft's greatest contribution was his attempt to force a public debate on postwar foreign policy. In the sliver of time between the close of the world war and the opening of the Cold War, the policymakers had put together a bipartisan coalition in support of American globalism. The dash toward bipartisan foreign policy might have squelched all debate had it not been for Taft's public dissent. He would have endorsed the remark of Felix Morley, a founding editor of Human Events: "Politics can stop at the water's edge only when policies stop at the water's edge. Policies no longer stop there" (1948, 4).

Early on, Taft expressed skepticism at President Truman's foreign policy and its official rationale. In 1947, when Truman promulgated his Truman Doctrine and asked for military aid to Greece and Turkey, Taft struck at the president's "policy to divide the world into zones of political influence, Communist and non-Communist" (quoted in Liggio [1965] 1978, 24). He feared that Truman had imperial aims and that the Russians would be provoked into war "just as we might go to war if Russia tried to force a communist government on Cuba" (quoted in Stromberg 1971a, 11; see also Berger 1967, 129). But Taft finally voted for the aid, after concluding that war would not ensue, because Truman had virtually made a commitment and "to repudiate it now would destroy his prestige in the negotiations with the Russian Government" (Berger 1967, 130). Taft's vote demonstrates

Randolph Bourne's point that so-called democratic checks on executive war-making power are largely chimerical.[30]

In the same year, when Secretary of State Gen. George Marshall proposed the vast foreign-aid program for Europe, Taft was "absolutely opposed," arguing it would furnish anti-imperialist arguments for the communists. But, again, he ultimately voted with the administration, after unsuccessfully trying to amend the law, because of America's tradition of charity and because he believed the program would assist in the ideological battle against communism. However, he thought the premise of the program was that the Russians did not plan on war (Berger 1967, 132).

He did not regard the Soviet occupation of eastern Europe, accomplished during the rolling back of an invading force, a portent of aggression. The conflict with the Soviet Union, he said, was ideological, not military, and he maintained he had "not believed that Russia intends or desires conquest by force of arms of additional territory" (Liggio [1965] 1978, 29). When the administration tried to exploit the Czech coup in March 1948 for its own purposes, Taft responded:

> I do not quite understand the statements made yesterday by Secretary Marshall and President Truman. They do not imply that they believe that we do face a war question; and then they seem to use the concern which is aroused to urge the passage of this particular program [the Marshall Plan]. I do not believe that the two are connected.... I believe that the tone of the President's statement that his confidence in ultimate world peace has been shaken is unfortunate. Certainly it is no argument for the passage of the current bill.... But let me say that I myself know of no particular indication of Russian intentions to undertake military aggression beyond the sphere of influence which was originally assigned to the Russians. The situation in Czechoslovakia is indeed a tragic one; but the Russian influence has been predominant in Czechoslovakia since the end of the war. The Communists are merely consolidating their position in Czechoslovakia; but there has been no military aggression, since the end of the war. (Liggio [1965] 1978, 30–31, quoting Cong. Rec., 80th Cong., 2d sess., 2643–44)

The shiniest, fattest rhinestone in Truman's Cold War costume jewelry was the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which he proposed after the

30. See Randolph S. Bourne 1964, 83. Bourne writes: "The formality by which Parliaments and Congresses declare war is the merest technicality. Before such a declaration can take place, the country will have been brought to the very brink of war by the foreign policy of the Executive. A long series of steps on the downward path, each one more fatally committing the unsuspecting country to a warlike course of action will have been taken without either the people or its representatives being consulted or expressing its feeling. When the declaration of war is finally demanded by the Executive, the Parliament or Congress could not refuse it without reversing the course of history, without repudiating what has been representing itself in the eyes of the other States as the symbol and interpreter of the nation's will and animus."

Czech coup and the Berlin blockade. Taft led the opposition. "I cannot vote for a treaty which, in my opinion, will do far more to bring about a third world war than it will ever to maintain the peace of the world," he said (quoted in Liggio [1965] 1978, 33). Taft particularly objected to the obligation of the United States to arm western Europe, which he found provocative, and to the U.S. commitment to go to war if any of the members is attacked—even if the attack is justified or launched by another member. In other words, Taft did not like putting the United States, as he described it, "at the mercy of the foreign policies of 11 other nations" (Stromberg 1971a, 14). He also thought the treaty violated the purpose of the United Nations by dividing the world into "two armed camps" (16).

Taft's alternative was not "isolationism," but rather the extension of the Monroe Doctrine to western Europe. In other words, if the Soviet Union attacks western Europe, "it will be at war with us" (Stromberg 1971a, 14).

Taft's policy did not carry the day, and he voted against the North Atlantic Treaty. This vote stands out because in his ambivalence, either genuine or politically motivated, Taft cast other votes that contradicted the spirit of the Old Right. Despite his opposition to universal military training, for example, he voted for conscription three times, in 1948, 1950, and 1951. (He had opposed it in 1940 and 1941.)[31]

When Truman sent troops to Korea, Taft initially confined his objections to the constitutional: "If the president can intervene in Korea without congressional approval, he can go to war in Malaya or Indonesia or Iran or South America" (Stromberg 1971a, 18). Otherwise he supported vigorous prosecution of the war. He criticized the Truman administration for inviting the attack by announcing that Korea was not important to U.S. defense strategy. He said further that the difficult position the United States found itself in after Communist China entered the war resulted from the administration's decision to give Nationalist China on Formosa "one hundred per cent support." Departing from Hoover and Joseph P. Kennedy, however, he opposed withdrawal from Korea (Taft 1951, 107–9), and he supported air strikes on Manchuria and South China even at the risk of bringing Russia into the war (Berger 1967, 135).

Yet these actions do not fully convey Taft's position. He told reporters in 1951 that had he been president, he would not have sent troops to Korea. He also said he would "fall back to a defensible position in Japan and Formosa" (Patterson 1972, 485). Later he seemed willing to make a truce on the basis of the thirty-eighth parallel (489, 601). This position, along with that of Hoover and Kennedy, provoked the New Republic to denounce the Old Right as "the Stalinist caucus" (Liggio [1965] 1978, 39).

Despite Taft's tergiversation, he was seen as the best bet to challenge the Republican eastern establishment for the presidential nomination in

31. Patterson 1972, 393. As a young man, in 1917, he had supported universal military training (70).

1952. Among other distinctions, he opposed Truman's seizure of the steel mills in April 1952 as an unconstitutional exercise of power. The establishment, uncomfortable with the man from Ohio who wished to cut foreign aid and have Europe pay more for its own defense, was able to win the nomination for political newcomer Dwight Eisenhower. Among the delegates voting against Taft were Richard Nixon and Barry Goldwater.

In his May 1953 final statement on foreign policy, Taft reiterated his strongest noninterventionist points, focusing especially on Indochina (Liggio [1965] 1978, 44). Taft died in July 1953, but his supporters in Eisenhower's cabinet apparently persuaded the president to resist calls for sending American soldiers, naval forces, and bombers to aid the French colonialists (45).

Other Old Right congressional figures possessed the resolve Taft at times seemed to lack. For example, George Bender of Ohio, a representative and later Taft's successor in the Senate, denounced the Truman doctrine as imperialistic:

> I believe that the White House program is a reaffirmation of the nineteenth century belief in power politics. It is a refinement of the policy first adopted after the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 designed to encircle Russia and establish a "Cordon Sanitaire" around the Soviet Union. It is a program which points to a new policy of interventionism in Europe as a corollary to our Monroe Doctrine in South America. (Liggio [1965] 1978, 24–25, quoting Cong. Rec., 80th Cong., 2d sess., 2831–32)

Perhaps the firmest of all congressional Old Rightists was Howard Buffett, representative from Nebraska (1947–53) and father of investment guru Warren Buffett, chairman of Berkshire Hathaway, Inc. Howard Buffett was Taft's midwest campaign manager in 1952 and a self-conscious member of the fledgling libertarian movement.[32] What he opposed most of all was imperialism and its chief requirement, conscription. In 1944, in a speech against U.S. government funding of an Arabian oil pipeline, Buffett blasted the project as a "gigantic long-distance venture into imperialism." He added, "to defend this far-away imperialistic economic venture a volunteer army large enough could not be raised" (Stromberg 1971b, 2).

Buffett was among the earliest of Cold War opponents and as a result was red-baited by a colleague. In battling the Truman Doctrine, he prophesied that "all over the world we would soon be answering alarms like an international fireman, maintaining garrisons, and pouring out our resources." He continued: "Even if it were desirable, America is not strong

32. Buffett wrote articles for Human Events, the Freeman, and New Individualist Review on subjects ranging from conscription to inflation, and according to Murray N. Rothbard was influenced by F. A. Harper, founder of the Institute for Humane Studies (IHS). Buffett was a founding board member of IHS.

enough to police the world by military force. If that attempt is made, the blessings of liberty will be replaced by coercion and tyranny at home" (Stromberg 1971b, 5).

In 1948 he fought the selective-service bill, stating that "This measure would declare to the world that Hitler was right—that the threat of communism externally justified militarism and regimentation at home." He condemned the draft as embodying the "totalitarian concept that the state owns the individual" (Stromberg 1971b, 7). And when the Korean War came along, Buffett refused to be stampeded into support, as so many on the Left and Right were. Murray Rothbard (1968a) reported:

> Howard Buffett was convinced that the United States was largely responsible for the eruption of conflict in Korea; for the rest of his life he tried unsuccessfully to get the Senate Armed Services Committee to declassify the testimony of CIA head Admiral Hillenkoeter, which Buffett told me established American responsibility for the Korean outbreak. (49)

As the mid-1950s approached, the Old Right contingent in Congress dwindled as members died or retired. The last stand concerned the Bricker Amendment, which would have nullified any treaty provision that conflicted with standing law or with a provision of the Constitution. The liberals and the Eisenhower administration opposed it. In February 1954 it died, a metaphor for the Old Right itself.

The Publicists

If the Old Right can be said to have had godfathers, they are H. L. Mencken and Albert Jay Nock. Mencken was born in 1880, Nock in 1870. Both were writers and editors; both were resolute individualists who saw the state as an imposition; both were branded left-wing radicals in the twenties and right-wing conservatives in the thirties. In truth, both were classical liberals, or libertarians. They were longtime good friends who agreed on virtually everything. When it was suggested in 1944 that they engage in correspondence about current issues in order to construct a book, Mencken turned down the project. "The truth is," he wrote in his diary, "that Nock and I are so close in our main ideas that it would be impossible to get up much interest in the correspondence between us. There would be no conflict whatsoever, but only an incessant ratification and acquiescence" (1989, 295). Mencken's taste in books of correspondence was indicated some time earlier, in 1910, when he and Robert Rives La Monte published a debate on socialism. In it Mencken expressed his abhorrence for any system that would interfere with the creative "superior" individual (see Mencken and La Monte 1910).

Throughout his long career as a newspaper man, literary critic, magazine editor, book author, social commentator, scholar, and philologist, the

life-long Baltimorean always ranked individual liberty at the top of his values. A man as widely read and discussed as Mencken was in the 1920s could hardly have failed to influence many people.[33]

Mencken, the self-styled "extreme libertarian," consistently set himself against those whom he saw as the enemies of liberty: William Jennings Bryan, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and A. Mitchell Palmer, to name a few. With unparalleled gusto, he battled Prohibition, censorship, and other manifestations of Puritanism.[34]

Mencken publicly fulminated against World War II until he suspended his relationship with the Sunpapers of Baltimore in 1941. He wrote that the British were merely trying to squelch a rival power on the continent. "It is a rational reason," he wrote, "but it is as devoid of moral content as a theorem in algebra or a college yell" (quoted in Jonas 1966, 228). This article was reprinted in the 1941 book Keeping US Out of War (edited by Porter Sargent). In 1939 he noted, "Wars are not made by common folk, scratching for livings in the heat of the day; but by demagogues infesting palaces" (quoted in Helfrich 1948, 4). Later, in his diary, he wrote, "War, in this country wipes out all the rules of fair play, even those prevailing among wild animals. Even the dissenters from the prevailing balderdash seek to escape the penalties of dissent by whooping up the official doctrine" (1989, 357).

Mencken of course also hated the domestic New Deal and everything else touched by "Roosevelt II," as he called FDR: "There is, in fact, only one intelligible idea in the whole More Abundant Life rumble-bumble, and that idea is the idea that whatever A earns really belongs to B. A is any honest and industrious man or woman; B is any drone or jackass" (Mencken 1956, 306). When Roosevelt devalued the dollar, Mencken displayed his impeccable libertarian instinct by crying, "robbery!" and threatened to go into court (Forgue [1961] 1981, xviii).

Albert Jay Nock, like Mencken, was a "tory anarchist," that is, an anti-egalitarian individualist advocate of minimal government. Influenced by Thomas Jefferson, Henry George, Herbert Spencer, and Franz Oppenheimer,[35] Nock combined a knowledge of history and sociology to construct a worldview antithetical to the ruling notions of his day. For Nock, as for Oppenheimer, there was an irreconcilable contest between social power, the network of consensual relations and transactions, and state power, the web

33. One person he influenced was Henry Hazlitt, who succeeded Mencken as editor of the American Mercury.

34. See Rothbard 1962. As the historian Ralph Raico has pointed out, Mencken inexplicably never credited Bryan for resigning as secretary of state after President Wilson took the nation into World War I.

35. See his Jefferson [1926] (New York: Hill and Wang, 1960) and his introduction to Spencer's [1892] The Man versus the State (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, 1969); see also Oppenheimer, The State, John Gitterman, trans. [1914] (New York: Free Life Editions, 1975).

of coercive impositions; when one gains, the other loses. In the twenties, when he edited the Freeman and published often in Mencken's American Mercury, he railed against plutocracy, tariffs, and conformity. As a regular Mercury columnist and book author in the 1930s, he attacked the same philosophy, though the targets had a new facade: egalitarian New Dealism.

What he disliked most about the state was that it impoverished the soul. In 1934 he wrote:

> The worst of this ever growing cancer of Statism is its moral effect. The country is rich enough to stand its frightful economic wastage for a long time yet, and still prosper, but it is already so poverty-stricken in its moral resources that the present drain will quickly run them out. I was talking tonight with an old acquaintance in the textile business who said his business had been in the red for eight years, but he had kept it going because he felt responsible for his people and did not like to turn them adrift. "I don't feel that way now," he said. "If the government proposes to tell me how I shall run my business, it can jolly well take the responsibility." That is the frame of mind that Statism inevitably breeds, and a nation that is in that frame of mind is simply no nation at all, as the experience of Rome in the second century shows. (Nock 1948, 11–12)

Although the Democrats won his immediate ire, the clear-eyed Nock had no illusions about the Republicans. He wrote in his journal in 1934:

> Silly talk about whether the New Deal is here to stay. Of course it is here to stay; the only real competition of political parties will be for the privilege and emoluments of administering it. Probably there will be superficial changes, but none essential; none, that is, which will at all redistribute actual power between the State and society. One may safely bet on that. (Nock 1948, 75)

In both eras, whether the punditi regarded him a radical or a conservative, he opposed war and American participation in it. He would not be stampeded into supporting the state as protector against the barbarians: "This matter of national defense would take on an entirely different aspect if people could be brought to understand that the only government they need to defend themselves against is their own government, and that the only way to defend themselves against it is by constant distrust and vigilance."[36] The recalcitrant fraction of society Nock sought to address—the "Remnant"—was to be found among the Old Right publicists about to be discussed.

36. Quoted in a letter to the editor from Ralph Raico (1954). Nock's definitive statement on politics was his 1935 book Our Enemy, The State (1977). That edition contains a highly important introduction on Nock by Walter Grinder. See also Nock's The State of the Union: Essays on Social Criticism (1991).

The Old Right publicists tended to cluster around a handful of publications. Their concerns included limited, constitutional government, individual liberty, the free market (in most cases), the bloated executive (including secret diplomacy), imperialism, colonialism, militarism, war, and in some cases McCarthyism. Before the crusade to get the United States into World War II, some Old Rightists were routinely published in such liberal journals as the Nation and the New Republic. Later they were barred from them. For example, the old classical liberal Oswald Garrison Villard, former editor and owner of the Nation, was forced out as a columnist because of his insistence on strict neutrality.[37] The liberal press also kept out Harry Elmer Barnes.

With venerable journals unavailable, the Old Rightists had little choice but to start new ones. In the 1930s, 1940s, and early 1950s such publications as the Freeman (published by the Henry George School, of which Frank Chodorov was director, and not to be confused with Albert Jay Nock's old 1920s magazine), analysis, Human Events, Faith and Freedom, and another magazine called the Freeman[38] were home to these writers. Among established publications, Colonel Robert McCormick's Chicago Tribune was still a bastion of anti-New Deal and isolationist thinking (see Edwards 1971). In these pages, the holdout opponents of foreign intervention, including the Cold War, made their case, even as the public and some former allies deserted them.

Concern with executive power colored much of what they wrote. In the first "sample" issue of Human Events in November 1943, Felix Morley criticized Secretary of State Cordell Hull for stating that the Declaration of Austria, an agreement among the Soviet Union, England, and the Roosevelt administration, had been "proclaimed in the name of 'the government of the United States.'" Morley reminded his readers that although the executives of the Soviet Union and England had virtually unlimited foreign-policy powers, the president of the United States did not. "As a former member of the Senate," wrote Morley, "which body must advise and consent by a two-thirds majority, in the ratification of any treaty, Secretary Hull might well have avoided this slip."[39]

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37. Villard was an early advocate of laissez faire and an opponent of U.S. participation in World War I. Disillusioned with capitalism, he turned toward progressivism in 1919 and later embraced the New Deal and its welfare-state measures. Eventually he became alarmed with the resulting obese executive branch (he disliked the court-packing plan) and its potential for militarism, warning even that fascism loomed. See Wreszin 1965, 208ff. See also Radosh [1975] 1978, 67ff.

38. This Freeman was started in 1950 by Henry Hazlitt, John Chamberlain, and Suzanne LaFollette. In 1954 it was bought by Leonard E. Read, who in 1946 had set up the Foundation for Economic Education to promote the "freedom philosophy." When Read bought the magazine, Chodorov became the editor. Before this, Chodorov had edited his own broadsheet, analysis, which he merged with Human Events, when he became contributing editor.

39. Hanighen and Morley 1945, 3. Morley, with Frank C. Hanighen and William Henry Chamberlin, were the editors of Human Events. Morley was a Pulitzer Prize–winning editorial

From the first issue in March 1944, Morley and his colleagues set off an alarm against burgeoning government and permanent military alliances. "True liberalism," they wrote in their statement of policy, "will survive neither subordination to a despotic bureaucracy at home, nor entanglement in any Balance of Power system directed from abroad by those over whom American public opinion has no control" (Hanighen and Morley 1944, x).

During the war they expressed fear that the United States had no plan for the aftermath and that the lofty words of the Atlantic Charter were mere ink ready to be washed away by a sea of big-power politics to the advantage of Stalin and Churchill. Morley and other Human Events authors (including the Socialist Party presidential candidate Norman Thomas) communicated their severe reservations about saturation bombing of Germany and Japan as well as about the United Nations with its big-power veto. They protested the dropping of atom bombs on Japan, the victor's justice of the Nuremberg Trials, and the general dehumanization of the German people. They repeatedly lamented the hypocritical disregard of self-determination as reflected in the Yalta agreement.[40]

Morley, in particular, seemed eager to demonstrate how the war was vindicating the earlier isolationists.

> Communism will develop throughout Europe, almost automatically, as an interminable war steadily undermines the economic stability without which representative government collapses and democracy becomes merely an empty word.... Should the net result of our second major crusade in Europe be the communization of that Continent, many Americans will begin to ask whether such outcome is really worth the price we are paying for its accomplishment. (Morley 1944, 156–57)

Morley seemed to be speaking for most Old Rightists.

For years to follow, Morley pounded the rostrum on behalf of limited government. He refused to accept a compromise between the principles of a republic and those of a superpower. In 1957 he wrote,

> World leadership requires centralization of power in the capital of the nation that seeks dominance. It requires an aristocracy—an elite—that can be completely indifferent to the gusts of public opinion. It requires a socialized economy, a docile labor force, and a system of education that focuses on the training of the gifted.... We must either change our Constitution—openly and honestly—to conform with the imperial policies we seek to follow. Or we must modify those policies to conform to the Constitution as it now

writer for the Washington Post in the 1930s and former president of Haverford College. See Morley (1949, 1951, 1959), and his memoir, For the Record (1979).

40. For an Old Right indictment of the Nuremberg Trials as an exercise in ex post facto law, see Taft 1964, 310–22.

> stands. The Federal system was not designed to promote world leadership by the United States. (31, 32)

The general subject of America's passage from republic to empire occupied much of the Old Rightists' time. Garet Garrett, the newspaper and magazine writer who since the thirties had warned of the New Deal's distortion of American institutions, in 1952 wrote an eloquent pamphlet on the fateful change. "We have crossed the boundary," he declared, "that lies between Republic and Empire." Roosevelt had brought the welfare state to America, but even he dared not enter a war without asking Congress for a declaration. "Nine years later a much weaker President did."[41]

With great rigor Garrett identified the requisites of empire: executive domination, subordination of domestic policy to foreign policy, "ascendancy of the military mind," a system of satellite nations, and a "complex of vaunting and fear." America had now fulfilled them all, along with a final one: the call of historical necessity.

> It is not only our security we are thinking of—our security in a frame of collective security. Beyond that lies a greater thought.
>
> It is our turn.
>
> Our turn to do what?
>
> Our turn to assume the responsibilities of moral leadership of the world.
>
> Our turn to maintain the balance of power against the forces of evil everywhere...evil in this case being the Russian barbarian.
>
> Our turn to keep the peace of the world.
>
> Our turn to save civilization.
>
> Our turn to serve mankind.
>
> But this is the language of Empire. (Garrett [1953] 1964b,158–59)

Empire was also a preoccupation of Frank Chodorov, a pivotal figure in the Old Right.[42] Greatly influenced by Henry George and Albert Jay Nock, Chodorov was the ideal-type Old Rightist; that is, he was the consummate antistatist. He was heard to say more than once that the ideal government would be small enough to fit in his apartment kitchen. In 1947 Chodorov anticipated Garrett in his article "A Byzantine Empire of the West?," published as the Truman Doctrine was being debated (Chodorov 1980,

41. Garrett [1953] 1964b, 117, 122. For the details of Garrett's life, see Ryant 1989.

42. For a biographical sketch, see Charles H. Hamilton's "Introduction" to Chodorov's Fugitive Essays: Selected Writings of Frank Chodorov (1980). Among Chodorov's other writings, see One is a Crowd: Reflections of an Individualist (1952) and Out of Step: The Autobiography of an Individualist (1962).

337–49). To the claim that the Russians had to be stopped from rolling over the rest of Europe, Chodorov replied,

> Suppose Russia imposes on the peoples of Europe the slavery conditions prevailing within her borders. Without arguing the point that these conditions have so reduced her own economy that the robbery of subject peoples has become a policy of necessity, we must admit as a matter of experience that slaves are poor producers, and we can predict the collapse of communism in Europe from lack of production. There is the added fact that, unlike the Russians, Western Europe did experience a measure of freedom, the memory of which will engender subversive activity, further slowing up the productive machinery. In short, the slave economy will bring about primitive conditions..., and the vulture state will die from lack of sustenance. It is poor prospect for the next generation of Europeans, to be sure, but is it any worse than another war? Something might survive a spell of communism, while the result of another war, no matter which side wins, will be annihilation. (Chodorov 1980, 346)

Chodorov also warned, on several occasions, that the negative effects of the Roosevelt-Truman foreign policy would not be confined to Europe. "If war comes—and when did imperialism not bring it?—the worst of what we call communism will come with it" (Chodorov 1980, 348).

John T. Flynn, the muckraking investigative journalist, began sounding such warnings before the end of World War II. Flynn, a former progressive and columnist at the New Republic, became an early critic of the corporativism of the New Deal (see Flynn 1933). Later he was chairman of the New York chapter of the America First Committee and highly influential on its policies (see Cole [1953] 1971, passim; Stenehjem 1976). At the height of the war, in 1944, he published As We Go Marching, in which he traced the rise of fascism in Germany and Italy and described disturbing similarities in the United States. He summed up the similarities in two words: corporativism and militarism. He saw the latter as the driving force of the former. How, he asked, could the federal government expand its power over the economy, and (in its view) avoid depression, without exciting the opposition of the conservative constituencies and the state and local authorities fearful of central encroachment?

> These two stubborn forces...will always force a government like ours to find a project for spending which meets these two conditions: It must be a strictly federal project and it must be one upon which the conservative and taxpaying elements will be willing to see money spent. The one great federal project which meets these requirements is the army and navy for national defense. And this, of course, is quite inadequate unless it is carried on upon a scale which gives it all the characteristics of militarism.... Thus milita-

> rism is the only great glamorous public-works project upon which a variety of elements in the community can be brought into agreement. (Flynn [1944] 1973, 207, emphasis added)

He saw the signs in the planning for universal military training, in the nascent alliance system, and in the inchoate imperialism.

> To sum it up...the germs of a vigorous imperialism are here among us—I mean the moral germs.... We have managed to run up a little history of imperial adventure upon a small scale of which we may well be ashamed.... We have managed to accumulate a pretty sizable empire of our own already—far-spreading territories detached from our continental borders.... We have now managed to acquire bases all over the world.... There is no part of the world where trouble can break out where we do not have bases of some sort in which, if we wish to use the pretension, we cannot claim our interests are menaced. Thus menaced, there must remain when the war is over a continuing argument in the hands of the imperialists for a vast naval establishment and a huge army ready to attack anywhere or to resist an attack from all the enemies we shall be obliged to have. Because always the most powerful argument for a huge army maintained for economic reasons is that we have enemies. We must have enemies. They will become an economic necessity for us.[43]

Flynn would not be stampeded by the Cold War into compromising his views. A free America, he declared, could wait out the communists; there will be no war unless the United States starts it. In 1950 radio commentaries he counseled, "the course of wisdom for the American people would be to sit tight and put their faith in the immutable laws of human nature." Thus the United States should "make an end of the cold war."[44]

The "need for an enemy" was a theme picked up by Morley later in books and articles. The economic planners, Morley wrote, were convinced that without massive government spending, the economy would collapse into its prewar state.

> Although economic and political considerations now make it difficult for the Administration to curtail defense spending, it is equally impossible for anyone in authority to admit the fact. No official can openly suggest that the Kremlin may conceivably be sincere in seeking a relaxation of the now completely fantastic armaments

43. Flynn [1944] 1973, 223–25. Flynn was one of the first to foresee America's colonial war in Vietnam. See Radosh [1975] 1978, 253ff., and Doenecke 1979, 238ff.

44. Quoted in Radosh [1975] 1978, 251. Flynn was as unrelenting in his criticism of Franklin Roosevelt as anyone. See Flynn's Country Squire in the White House (1940) and The Roosevelt Myth (1948).

> race. One might as well expect the Secretary of the Treasury to say publicly that during an inflationary period Savings Bonds are a bad buy. And because it is in practice impossible for our officials to tell the whole truth they are gradually forced into overt deception. In spite of the cost-of-living indices the steadily depreciating "E" Bonds are advertised as "the safest investment in the world." In spite of the logical and good reasoning often found in Russian overtures it is consistently maintained that because communists are congenital liars, no conciliation of any kind is possible. (Morley 1959, 174–75)

Other Old Rightists also warned that the militaristic policies beginning with Roosevelt had permanently changed America for the worse (e.g., Beard 1948, esp. 573–98; Barnes 1980a, 1953).

Old Right thinkers did not confine their analysis to militarism's and socialism's poisoning of man's material circumstances. Harm to the spirit loomed just as large. In poignant essays Leonard Read and F. A. Harper emphasized people's deep need for freedom from coercion and the withering effects of political power. A former Cornell University economics professor who eventually founded the Institute for Humane Studies, Harper discussed such issues in his 1951 essay "In Search of Peace":

> Charges of pacifism are likely to be hurled at anyone who in these troubled times raises any question about the race into war. If pacifism means embracing the objective of peace, I am willing to accept the charge. If it means opposing all aggression against others, I am willing to accept that charge also. It is now urgent in the interest of liberty that many persons become "peace-mongers." (Harper 1979a)

Harper proceeded to reject the stock rationalizations for state-sponsored collective security and the militarism it invariably brings. Then, confronting head-on the bedrock case for the Cold War as propounded by "conservatives," he wrote:

> Relinquish liberty for the purposes of defense in an emergency? Why? It would seem that in an emergency, of all times, one needs his greatest strength. So if liberty is strength and slavery is weakness, liberty is a necessity rather than a luxury, and we can ill afford to be without it—least of all during an emergency. (Harper 1979a, 2:386)

Read matched Harper's poignancy in Conscience on the Battlefield, a pamphlet published during the Korean War in 1951. In an exchange between a soldier dying of a war wound and the soldier's conscience, Read set forth a theory of personal responsibility that did not permit the excuse "I was only following the state's orders" (Read 1951, 8–9). Read's essay was not a mere lofty flight of philosophy, but a tough-minded analysis of foreign

policy and world events. The soldier's "conscience" points out that the soldier would not have chosen to defend the South Koreans against the North Koreans.

> And for good reason. In many instances, you recognize your incompetence to assign causation even to your own acts. It is, therefore, next to impossible for you to determine the just from the unjust in cases that are remote to your experience, between peoples whose habits and thoughts and ways of life are foreign to you.... You are as unaware of the forces at work in this Asiatic affair as you are of the causes of the quarrel between two headhunters. Am I wrong? If so, why have you been shooting Koreans and Chinese when the Russians are supposed to be the ones you fear? Are you expecting the North Koreans or the Chinese to invade the American shores? (Read 1951, 12–13)

In Chodorov, Read, and Harper we find representatives of the pure "libertarian," or laissez-faire, branch of the Old Right. This branch proclaimed a philosophy of private property, free trade, and free emigration—in short, pure capitalism.[45] Its members attacked wage and price controls, rent control, farm-price supports and crop controls, government education, inflation, and other interference with peaceful commerce.[46]

Meanwhile, three women writers—Ayn Rand, Isabel Paterson, and Rose Wilder Lane—extolled capitalism on a more spiritual level. Rand, whose novella Anthem was first published in the United States by Read, went on to construct an entire philosophy of reason and individualism whose political component justified natural rights, including property rights. The spirit of individualism that infused this group can be seen in Paterson's 1943 book, The God of the Machine. "The application of science to production," Paterson, a journalist, wrote, "requires assured possession of private property, free labor, and time enough to return benefits for the effort and capital expended....[A] man can think and work effectively only for himself" (Paterson 1943, 17).

Lane, a newspaper woman, novelist, and one-time communist, published her "Credo" in the Saturday Evening Post in 1936.[47] She described a trip to the Soviet Union and her crisis of faith as a communist. "I came out of the Soviet Union no longer a communist, because I believed in personal

45. They were inspired by F. A. Hayek's vastly popular 1944 book The Road to Serfdom, which argued that government economic planning leads to totalitarianism. The works of Ludwig von Mises were also critical in shaping their views on economics.

46. On several occasions Chodorov called for tuition tax-credits for parents who send children to private schools. He also trenchantly attacked government debt, headlining the July 1948 issue of analysis "Don't Buy Bonds."

47. "Credo" was reproduced as Give Me Liberty (1977). Lane was the daughter of Laura Ingalls Wilder of Little House on the Prairie fame. See also her The Discovery of Freedom: Man's Struggle Against Authority ([1934] 1984).

freedom," she wrote. Freedom, the "anarchy of individualism," was responsible for the creation of great wealth and an unprecedented standard of living for more people than ever before. But this was in jeopardy from the "planned" economy. She protested: "Free thought, free speech, free action, and freehold property are the source of the modern world. It cannot exist without them. Its existence depends upon abolishing these reactionary state controls and destroying the socialist State" (Lane 1977).

The laissez-faire wing pushed its philosophy into areas where most "conservatives" preferred not to see it applied, for example, free trade and free migration. V. Orval Watts, writing in Chodorov's Freeman in 1955, called for legalization of trade with the Soviet Union. Rejecting both trade embargoes and government-subsidized trade, Watts, an author and educator associated with the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE), argued that free trade in goods would have an inevitable by-product, the export of American ideas:

> An American, for example, cannot walk down a Moscow street without conveying to passersby certain truths about the outside world—through the quality of his shoes, the cut of his clothes, his unafraid bearing and peaceable manner. Everywhere he goes, and in every contact, he does or says things which teach the meaning of freedom and expose the lies on which the Soviet rulers depend for inculcating fear and hatred of capitalism and of the peoples practicing it.[48]

Similarly, two other writers associated with Leonard Read, Oscar W. Cooley and Paul Poirot, called for a policy of free immigration. They regarded the freedom to come to America as merely an application of the founding ideals of the republic. Their pamphlet answered the stock objections to open immigration. For example, to the objection that newcomers might not assimilate, they responded,

> The assimilation of a foreign-born person is accomplished when the immigrant willingly comes to America, paying his own way not only to get here but also after he arrives, and peacefully submitting to the laws and customs of his newly adopted country. (1951, 14–15)

To the charge that the "wrong kind" of people will come, they said,

48. Watts 1955, 295. The connection between peace and free trade has recurred throughout the Freeman's long life and up to the present. See Bettina Bien Greaves's article on foreign policy and free trade in the Freeman, September 1979, and Frank Chodorov's "The Humanity of Trade," in July 1956, in which he wrote, "Perhaps the removal of trade restrictions throughout the world would do more for the cause of universal peace than can any political union of peoples separated by trade barriers." Both articles are reprinted in Joan Kennedy Taylor, ed. (1986).

> The danger that "a poorer class" might come from Asia or Africa or Southern and Eastern Europe and contaminate our society, undoubtedly seems real to any person who thinks of himself as a member of a superior class or race. Such a person, like any good disciple of Marx, is assuming the existence of classes and is convinced that he is qualified to judge others and to sort them into these classes. (1951, 16)

They concluded:

> Our present policy toward immigrants is consistent with the rest of the controls over persons which inevitably go with national socialism. But the controlled human relationships within the "welfare state" are not consistent with freedom.[49]

Such positions shed light on how the Old Right used the word isolationist.

The issue of Joseph McCarthy seems to have presented a dilemma for some Old Rightists. They hated communism, yet they saw the threat—to economic and civil liberties—of an anticommunist crusade directed abroad or at home. For some Old Rightists, the McCarthy phenomenon had irresistible features: directed against some of the darlings of the liberals, the people who had pushed the United States into a wartime alliance with the Soviet Union and who used "McCarthyite" tactics against the isolationists, it was also a movement not under the control of the despised eastern establishment. But McCarthyism presented risks, including the glossing over of similarities between communism and any form of statism. In 1949 Flynn wrote,

> I insist that if every Communist in America were rounded up and liquidated, the great menace to our form of social organization would be still among us. I do not mean to underestimate the danger from the Communists.... But they are not as dangerous to us as another wholly indigenous movement. The leaders of this movement now actually seek to outdo us in berating the Communists with whom they were marching together but two or three years ago. They are more dangerous because they are more numerous and more respectable and they are not tainted with the odium of treachery. (9)

The dangerous group he had in mind consisted of the British-style Fabians who sought to gradually fasten complete government control of the economy on the American people. Although Flynn supported McCarthy's efforts for a while, his reservations made him an atypical McCarthyite (Radosh [1975] 1978, 267ff.).

49. Cooley and Poirot 1951, 33. Another FEE pamphlet worth noting is Dean Russell's The Conscription Idea (1953), which attacked the draft as "the abolition of liberty."

Felix Morley harbored another kind of objection to McCarthyism. His devotion to the rule of law made the McCarthy hearings troubling to him. Writing in Barron's in 1954, he recalled the origins and importance of the Fifth Amendment and how it had become a point of contention between McCarthy and his targets.

> This ancient Anglo-Saxon safeguard against confessions exacted by torture has ironically become the chief defense of people who would probably indorse "brain washing" if they were themselves in power. But to fight Communism with Communism, as Norman Thomas points out...is "losing to our enemy by imitating him."[50]

"Properly understood," Morley (1954) wrote, "the issue of McCarthyism is thus seen to be one of legislative encroachment on the judicial function, which students of American history will recognize as a problem that plagued this country long before Karl Marx was born or thought of" (9).

Chodorov made perhaps the most fundamental case against McCarthyism. He couldn't understand how it was determined who questioned whom in the "heresy trial."

> What is it that perturbs the inquisitors? They do not ask the suspects: Do you believe in Power? Do you adhere to the idea that the individual exists only for the glory of the state? Ought not the TVA be extended to cover the whole country, so that by merely pulling a switch the State can control all production? Are you against taxes, or would you raise them until they absorbed the entire output of the country? Are you opposed to the principle of conscription? Do you favor more "social gains" under the aegis of the bureaucracy? Or would you advocate the dismantling of the public trough at which these bureaucrats feed? In short, do you deny Power?
>
> Such questions might prove embarrassing to the investigators. The answers might bring out the similarity between their ideas and purposes and those of the suspected heretics. They too worship Power. Under the circumstances they limit themselves to one question: Are you or were you a member of the Communist Party? And this turns out to mean, have you aligned yourself with the Moscow branch of the church? (Chodorov 1962, 282; originally in analysis [September 1948])

Chodorov (1950) suggested a way to rid the government of reds: "Just abolish the jobs." He repeated this proposal in Human Events in his article

50. Morley 1954, 9. Morley was also unenthusiastic about the Alger Hiss case. See Morley 1979, 430.

"McCarthy's Mistake": "The only thing to do, if you want to rid the bureaucracy of Communists, is to abolish the bureaucracy." He urged Senator McCarthy to turn his attentions to government appropriations.[51]

In the midst of this radical analysis, the other "right wing" was gearing up for a fight. Signs of tension between the old and new had appeared in Human Events, in which William Henry Chamberlin endorsed NATO and McCarthy and admonished the "isolationists":

> Whichever camp Americans may have belonged to before Pearl Harbor, present conditions dictate the following conclusions: The world has become too small for a big country like the United States to hide in. In the face of the undisguised Communist ambition to conquer the world by force, subversion, or a mixture of the two, there is no peace in appeasement, no safety in retreat, no security in cowardice. (Chamberlin 1958)

Chamberlin would become quite loose with such accusations. Reviewing the Old Rightist Louis Bromfield's 1954 antimilitarist book, A New Pattern for a Tired World, Chamberlin wrote that the author "finds himself in the company of Kremlin apologists." Later he red-baited Murray N. Rothbard and the businessman Ernest T. Weir for antimilitarist articles in Old Right journal Faith and Freedom. Writing in the virulently pro-Cold War, social democratic magazine New Leader, Chamberlin branded Rothbard and Weir "appeasers" and said that Rothbard laid "down a blueprint for American policy tailor-made to the specifications of the Kremlin" (quoted in Rothbard n.d., 139).

As early as 1949 Morley was headed for a break with his Human Events partner Frank Hanighen. According to Morley, Hanighen wanted to boost circulation by exploiting distrust of the Russians. Morley feared that would encourage militarization. The climax came with the triumph of the communists in China. "So, in the over-simplified jargon of the times, I became Isolationist, while Frank Hanighen moved to Interventionism" (1979, 436). In 1950, when Morley failed to buy out Hanighen and the other Human Events stockholder, the publisher Henry Regnery, and to take control of the newspaper, they bought him out.

> In retrospect I see this episode as symptomatic of that which has come to divide the conservative movement in the United States. Frank and Henry, in their separate ways, moved on to associate with the far Right in the Republican Party. My position remained essentially "Libertarian," though it is with great reluctance that I yield the old terminology of "liberal" to the socialists.... The vest-

51. Chodorov 1952a, 1. This should dispose of the claim, found in Gottfried and Fleming (1988, 6), that Chodorov was an enthusiastic McCarthyite.

> ment of power in HEW is demonstrably bad, but its concentration in the Pentagon and CIA is worse because the authority is often concealed and covertly exercised. (Morley 1979, 437)

The coming break was also previewed in 1954, when William F. Buckley, Jr., wrote "A Dilemma of Conservatives" in the Freeman. A one-time disciple of Nock and Chodorov, Buckley, using the terminology "containment conservatives" to describe the Old Right and "liberation conservatives" to describe the New, acknowledged the deep disagreement regarding the Soviet Union. He also acknowledged that the liberation conservatives' program would involve policies contrary to American tradition: "For to beat the Soviet Union we must, to an extent, imitate the Soviet Union." But, he argued, the liberationists maintain "there is in the long run less danger involved in mobilizing with the view to achieving a certain objective as fast as feasible than in adapting ourselves to a perpetual state of mobilization of the kind we would need to have if we were to aim at an uneasy modus vivendi." He finished the discussion with a prediction that the differences "ultimately...will separate us." Buckley did not specify who was advocating a "perpetual state of mobilization," but this was the very condition that the Old Right opponents of the Cold War were warning against. Presumably the only way to achieve "as fast as feasible" the objective of ending Soviet communism was to launch a war against Russia.[52]

The separation became more overt in the next issue of the Freeman. In his editorial "The Return of 1940?" Chodorov said the current debate over whether to postpone the struggle for freedom until the Russians are defeated reminded him of the debate in 1940 over whether the struggle should be postponed until Hitler was defeated (his answer was no). As an aid in the current debate, he wished to catalogue the results of the intervention of the 1940s to see if the isolationists had been right. The war, he wrote, brought a huge debt, high taxes, conscription, a growing bureaucracy, and a loss of personal independence. The isolationists had predicted these outcomes because they knew that "during war the State acquires power at the expense of freedom, and that because of its insatiable lust for power the State is incapable of giving up any of it." Chodorov predicted that another big war would bring the end of "our inalienable rights." "This is admitted by those who fear the Soviets at least as much as they love freedom, but, as did the 'interventionists' in 1940, they stress the immediate rather than the ultimate danger, and are willing to gamble with freedom. I am not" (1954a, 81).

In the November 1954 issue the debate broke open with an exchange between Chodorov and William S. Schlamm, an Austrian former communist, one-time columnist for the New Leader, and adviser to Henry Luce.[53] In

52. Buckley 1954b. This was the second issue under Chodorov's editorial hand. In Chodorov's first issue, Buckley called for individualist education for discharged soldiers, who have been turned into collectivists by the military. See Buckley 1954a, 20–21.

53. Schlamm would later be a founder of National Review.

"But It Is Not 1940," Schlamm characterized Chodorov's position as "unmitigated frivolousness" and asserted that the communists were in deadly earnest about conquering the world (preferably without war), that they were not receptive to reason, and that an unarmed America would be at their mercy. While isolationism may have been a reasonable position in 1940, it was not in 1954.

The same issue carried Chodorov's reply, "The War to Communize America," in which he began by noting that the advocates of war with Russia acknowledge that conscription is needed, as it was necessary in World Wars I and II and in Korea.

> That raises a pertinent question: if Americans did not want these wars should they have been compelled to fight them? Perhaps the people were wrong in their lack of enthusiasm for these wars, but their right to be wrong cannot be questioned in what we call a democratic system. Those who presume to compel people to be "right," against their will, are taking unto themselves a mandate for which there is no warrant other than their own conceit. Did God select them to do the coercing? (1954, 172)

Chodorov said he couldn't escape seeing a pattern regarding the preparation for war. He looked at the pattern this way: The people are frightened into thinking that the enemy will invade and conquer. Yet after previous wars it was learned that the enemy contemplated no such action. Are things really different this time? "But I am not frightened," he continued, "because I am not convinced of the world-conquering potential of the Moscow gang, or of their ability to invade my country. If I were, or rather, if the youth of my country were, we could dispense with the 'selective service' buncombe" (1954b, 172).

The war advocate thinks he wins his case, Chodorov wrote, by asking whether one would prefer to give one's freedom up to an American or a Russian dictator. In reality, there is no choice. "The suggestion that the American dictatorship would be 'temporary' makes this whole argument suspect, for no dictatorship has ever set a limit on its term of office." He added as an aside that a foreign invader would be easier to overthrow than a homegrown ruler, and he maintained that to reduce the danger of war, the United States should withdraw its troops from Europe and Asia and "abandon...global military commitments." If Russia then moved into western Europe, it would mean one of two things: either the Europeans wanted communism, in which the United States would have no right to interfere, or they were unwilling victims, in which case they would resist. The very attempt to conquer Europe would weaken the Soviet Union and hasten its collapse without the United States having to fight a war. And while the Russians were overextending themselves, America would be strengthening itself by husbanding its defenses and resources. "Of course, it would be hard on the Europeans if they fell into Soviet hands," Chodorov continued, "but

not any worse than if we precipitated a war in which their homes became the battlefield.... The important thing for America now is not to let the fearmongers (or the imperialists) frighten us into a war which, no matter what the military outcome, is certain to communize our country" (1954b, 173–74). In response to those who warned Americans must fear the Russians, Chodorov declared, "I am more afraid of those who, like their forebears, would compel us against our will to fight the Russians. They have the dictator complex" (172).

Thus the debate was framed. In a letter to the Freeman, Buckley, who would soon start his own magazine, gave the decision to Schlamm. "I believe that we may indeed be facing both war and slavery," he wrote. "But we will have a fighting chance in a future war against the State, and I do not see that we will have a fighting chance to save ourselves from Soviet tyranny if we pursue Eisenhower's foreign policy—or Chodorov's. For that reason, I side with Willi Schlamm and number myself, dejectedly, among those who favor a carefully planned showdown, and who are prepared to go to war to frustrate the communist designs" (1955, 244). But Ralph Raico, future editor of the classical liberal New Individualist Review, had already issued a counterstatement: "William S. Schlamm made out the best case possible for war. After Frank Chodorov had finished his rebuttal, there wasn't much left on the opposition side."[54]

This debate was virtually replayed several months later, when Schlamm and Murray N. Rothbard, writing under the pen name "Aubrey Herbert," engaged in two exchanges in Faith and Freedom about whether the United States should go to war over Formosa.

By 1955, most of the Old Right stalwarts were gone. Taft died in 1953, McCormick in 1954. The Old Right publicists were getting old, and only a few younger ones had come along to take their place. In 1955, a key change occurred that doomed the Old Right and set back the movement for individual liberty for many years. Leonard Read and Frank Chodorov experienced various personal differences, and in order to force Chodorov out, Read decided to devote the Freeman to more abstract concerns, such as self-development, and to avoid ideological conflict; this move was a retreat from Chodorov's real-world analysis. When Chodorov left the Freeman, Buckley and his colleagues, former Trotskyists and Catholic theocrats, started National Review; the New Right now had a magazine under its own control.[55] The loss of the Freeman was disastrous for the Old Right, and the

54. Raico 1954, 202. This clash of letters between Buckley and Raico presaged debates in New Individualist Review seven years later.

55. Buckley had tried to buy the Freeman in 1955, but he was turned down (John B. Judis, William F. Buckley, Jr.: Patron Saint of the Conservatives [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988], 114). Chodorov was listed as a contributor of National Review because of his longtime friendship (he was the only Old Rightist on the masthead), but he apparently had no influence at the magazine and did not work in the office. Among the former Trotskyists and communists were Willmoore Kendall, Whittaker Chambers, James Burnham, William Schlamm, Max Eastman, Morrie Ryskind, Freda Utley, Ralph de Toledano, and Eugene Lyons.

group's inability to survive the shift demonstrates the already frail condition of the movement (see Rothbard n.d., 144).

With neither the Freeman nor National Review open to the Old Right's dissection of the world, the remnant had virtually no place to go. This predicament was demonstrated in 1956 when Flynn submitted a manuscript to National Review carrying forth his theme, developed in As We Go Marching, that militarism was a "job-making boondoggle," a "racket—the oldest in history," and an excuse for the government to tax and borrow (Flynn n.d.). Buckley rejected the article on grounds that its thesis "is difficult to defend in the absence of any discussion whatever of the objective threat of the Soviet Union." "As you know," Buckley continued, "my own opinion, and that of the other anti-socialists on National Review, is that the Communists pose an immediate threat to the freedom of every one of us."[56] The intrepid old Flynn, having gone from darling to outcast of the New Republic, had now traversed the same route at National Review. Of course he could not have published the article in the Freeman either after Chodorov's departure.

Without a magazine, it was difficult for the aging Old Right to attract new blood. Meanwhile, the New Right ascended thanks to the polish and surface sophistication of Buckley, his slick magazine, and, in 1960, the Young Americans for Freedom. The cause for nonintervention and limited government looked bleak.

Chodorov, who had worked so hard for the movement, never lived to see it blossom. He had a debilitating stroke in 1961 and died in 1966. Without him at the helm, his beloved Intercollegiate Society of Individualists (ISI) was renamed the Intercollegiate Studies Institute because the conservatives, reacting to the rhetoric of Students for Democratic Society in the early sixties, found the word individualism too left-wing and upsetting to businessmen.[57] Chodorov had seen the omens earlier and could not hide his exasperation. In a letter to National Review he wrote, "As for me, I will punch anyone who calls me a conservative in the nose. I am a radical" (Chodorov 1956).

Still, there were signs that his work would someday succeed. In 1961 a group of libertarian students at the University of Chicago started the quarterly New Individualist Review (NIR), under the auspices of ISI, with Ralph Raico as editor in chief. For the next seven years it published the top and emerging scholarly advocates of individual liberty: Ludwig von Mises,

56. Buckley 1956. Buckley had asked Flynn to review A Republican Looks at His Party, by Arthur Larson, an adviser to Eisenhower. Flynn used the assignment to attack the militarism of the administration's policy toward the Soviets, a policy the National Review group thought was weak. See Judis 1988, 136.

57. Chodorov had begun ISI in 1952 as a way of keeping individualism alive for college students. He made Buckley its first president. See Rothbard n.d., 145.

F. A. Hayek,[58] Milton Friedman (the last two were editorial advisers to NIR), Murray N. Rothbard, Henry Hazlitt, Yale Brozen, Israel M. Kirzner, George Stigler, and others. It also published revisionist history by Harry Elmer Barnes. Traditionalist conservatives were not excluded, however; Russell Kirk contributed to the third issue. Indeed, the editors continued the Chodorovian tradition of exploring the rift between the libertarians and conservatives: Buckley and Ronald Hamowy, a later editor in chief, squared off in the November 1961 issue, and Raico went up against M. Stanton Evans on the relationship between classical liberalism and religion in the Winter 1966 issue.[59] (National Review had never practiced this tradition.)

Besides NIR, a network of classical liberal organizations with greater staying power was quietly forming. Led by Read's Foundation for Economic Education, founded in 1946, it was joined by the William Volker Fund;[60] its successor, the Institute for Humane Studies;[61] Robert LeFevre's Freedom School;[62] Liberty Fund; and other organizations. This fledgling and underfunded network nourished young scholars, supported the work of older ones, and planted the seeds of the classical liberal, or libertarian, movement that would begin to flourish in the mid-1970s.

58. Almost as though his intentions were to inspire the NIR students, in 1960 Hayek had written "Why I am Not a Conservative" as a postscript to his treatise, The Constitution of Liberty (1960). Hayek wrote that "There is a danger in the confused condition which brings the defenders of liberty and the true conservatives together in common opposition to developments which threaten their different ideals equally" (397). For Hayek the "decisive objection" to conservatism was "that by its very nature it cannot offer an alternative to the direction in which we are moving. It may succeed by its resistance to current tendencies in slowing down undesirable developments, but, since it does not indicate another direction, it cannot prevent their continuance" (398). He criticized conservatives for being "inclined to use the powers of government to prevent change or to limit its rate to whatever appeals to the more timid mind. In looking forward, they lack the faith in the spontaneous forces of adjustment which makes the liberal accept changes without apprehension" (400). In sum, Hayek could not accept the "characteristic complacency of the conservative toward the action of established authority and his prime concern that this authority be not weakened rather than that its power be kept within bounds" (401). The NIR took this outlook to heart.

59. According to Ralph Raico, NIR at its height had a circulation of 1,500–2,000. The journal folded when the student-editors graduated and no replacements stepped in.

60. The Volker Fund, under Herbert Cornuelle, sponsored highly important conferences and meetings in the 1950s that featured such intellectuals as F. A. Hayek, Milton Friedman, James Buchanan, Bruno Leoni, George Stigler, and William Appleman Williams. Cornuelle also helped establish Faith and Freedom, an important late Old Right journal.

61. This institute was founded by F. A. Harper in 1961 in Menlo Park, California.

62. This organization was founded in 1956 by the former newspaperman.

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