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〈Article〉

## The Meaning of Political Radicalism in Cold War America

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Although radicalism has been an enduring phenomenon in politics, the experience of totalitarianism and World War Two has radically transformed its meaning. In the pre-war edition of *The Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences* Horace M. Kallen described three major components of radicalism. The first one is “a conspicuously stressed attitude or frame of mind toward one particular institution of society or toward the social order as a whole.” The second component is “a distinct philosophy and program of social change looking toward systematic destruction of what is hated... the condemned establishment or society.” And the third component is “democratic and humanitarian terms” in which “radicalism tends to define its aim and methods.”<sup>1</sup>

By the 1960s, the connotation of radicalism has greatly changed. Egon Bittner in the *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* (1964) modified Kallen's definition by enumerating several other well-recognized features of radicalism. However, in Bittner's definition, Kallen's third component was missing. Instead, Bittner stressed “a charismatic fellowship” into which radicals are organized. But what particularly distinguishes Bittner's argument from Kallen's is an emphasis on the psychology, symbolism, style, manner, and personality of radicals. He characterizes radicalism not by its rationality but by its lack of reasonableness. Although radicalism “is characteristically rational or at least rationalized, it is clearly and implacably inconsistent with reasonableness... [I]t lacks that bargaining side of intelligence that characterizes the conduct and thinking of ‘reasonable’ persons.” Thus, following Martin Lipset, he locates the origins

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<sup>1</sup> *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, 1934 ed., s. v. “Radicalism,” by Horace M. Kallen.

and permanent focus of radicalism's appeal "in the socially displaced strata of society."<sup>2</sup>

Thus radicalism is now defined as an unreasonable antielitist movement. And in so far as a lack of "reasonableness" is an essential characteristics of radicalism, it is not necessarily a phenomenon associated solely with political left. Indeed, Bittner refers extensively to the Radical Right, which Kallen does not mention.

This shift of stress in the definition of radicalism obviously reflected the experiences of Western liberalism as it confronted totalitarianism, either right or left, during World War Two and the subsequent Cold War. The newer definition resulted in part from the development of depth psychology, and in part from the lengthy post-war scholarly controversy over the nature of totalitarianism and authoritarian personality.

In this sense both the newer and the older definition of radicalism were time-bound. Perhaps the most prominent common denominator of radicalism lay in its relation with the existing order. When any individuals, groups, or movements alienate themselves from dominant social mores or norms and threaten the stability of the existing social order, they might be designated as radical. As such they testify the flexibility of the existing social order and signify its fundamentals.

During the Cold War the United States witnessed intermittent eruptions of radicalism from both the left and the right. These radicalisms challenged the consensus established by the so-called Cold War Liberalism. By around the early 1950s, Cold War Liberalism had provided the nation with (1) a way of securing military and diplomatic security against the threat posed by the Soviets, (2) a way of securing stable economic prosperity, and (3) a way of administering the political system so as to distribute values and resources in an orderly and just fashion among people.

The Progressive party of 1948 was the first organized radical attempt to challenge the nascent national consensus based on Cold War Liberalism. However, this party was also the last attempt made by the remaining popular front liberals of the New Deal regime to survive in the new world.

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<sup>2</sup> *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, 1968 ed., "Radicalism," by Egon Bittner. Also see Bittner, "Radicalism and the Organization of Radical Movements," *American Sociological Review* 28 (1963): 928-40.

At the end of World War Two, American politics comprised largely three forces: liberals led by Truman, the anti-New Deal right led by Robert Taft, and left New Dealers led by Henry A. Wallace. With the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt, antagonism between the liberals and the left in the New Deal coalition surfaced, and Wallace became a symbolic leader of the left. Conforming to Kallen's classic definition of radicals, he was a man with "a sense of mission, a conviction that he must be the leader in the struggle for peace, democracy, and justice for the common man." And despite the deteriorating relations between the United States and the Soviets, he stuck to the war-time ideal of realizing "One World, prosperous and free, within our time."<sup>3</sup>

Thus the main thrust of Wallace's presidential candidacy on the third party ticket in the election of 1948 was his deep suspicion of Truman's confrontational diplomacy. Wallace criticized the Truman Doctrine, for the president betrayed the New Deal tradition by advocating support of "corrupt and backward looking regimes."<sup>4</sup> Wallace's attitude toward the Marshall Plan was rather ambiguous, for the plan in its original form was not totally unlike his own world-reconstruction plan for realizing the harmonious prosperous world. What put him in a difficult position was the Soviets' withdrawal from the Marshall Plan. Without the Soviets' participation, Wallace feared, the Marshall Plan would intensify the Cold War and endanger the peace. Thus before the election he was forced to articulate his opposition to the plan and present an alternative to the American people.

But ominously, a sharp rift was beginning to form among his potential supporters. While the Communists strongly condemned the plan after the Soviets' withdrawal, organized labor, particularly some anti-communist leaders of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, welcomed the plan as a key to the promotion of international trade and full employment. While the confused Progressive Citizens of America remained ambiguous and silent about the plan, the anti-communist Americans for Democratic Action supported it as a measure for the reconstruction of an independent free

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<sup>3</sup> Alonzo L. Hamby, *Beyond the New Deal: Harry S. Truman and American Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), p. 195.

<sup>4</sup> Norman D. Markowitz, *The Rise and Fall of the People's Century: Henry A. Wallace and American Liberalism, 1941-1948* (New York: The Free Press, 1973), p. 236.

Europe.<sup>5</sup> All these contestants judged the plan in the light of their own organizational interests. Wallace's leadership, relying on simple and idealistic premises, found it almost impossible to join these contenders together in one solid political camp.

The second issue salient to Wallacite radicalism was that of domestic communism. Here, too, Wallace sought to reinvigorate the spirit of the popular front, a spirit which he believed was an important legacy of the New Deal liberalism. But his opposition to anti-communism derived from an ethical interpretation of the constitutional right to express opinions rather than from cool-headed calculation of the political situation. He argued :

I am not afraid of Communism. If I fail to cry out that I am anti-Communist, it is not because I am friendly to Communism but because at this time of growing intolerance I refuse to join even the outer circle of men who stir the steaming caldron of hatred and fear.<sup>6</sup>

As a general admonition against intolerance, this comment showed an exemplary ethical stance toward heresy. But as a political statement, it was too naively self-righteous. Having gone through periods of severe strife regarding the legitimacy of communists and their fellow travellers, most labor and liberals were deaf to Wallace's idealistic entreaty.

The Progressive party's attitude toward both international and domestic communism was thus not in step with the times. The anachronism of the Wallacites provoked the hatred of intellectuals experienced in radical politics. James Wechsler ridiculed the party as "the latest in the long line of fellow-traveling enterprises to recruit a new generation of well-intentioned citizens from the plains of Hollywood and the grime of Park Avenue."<sup>7</sup> Alfred Kazin also recorded young Village poets and philosophers' contempt of *The New Republic*, of which Wallace assumed the editorship after his resignation from the Truman administration. "They despised it," Kazin writes, "with all righteous fury that we were likely to feel for a magazine that seemed to think of the Soviet-American alliance as a progressive war, a people's war, a lovable war. Stalin was now everyone's 'Uncle Joe.' He was

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 244-55.

<sup>6</sup> Cited in *ibid.*, p. 258.

<sup>7</sup> Cited in Richard H. Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age : American Intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s* (New York : Harper & Row, 1985), p. 110.

not ours."<sup>8</sup> In essence, however, the backwardness of the Wallace movement reinforced its radical image. But such an image was to usher in its premature demise.

Wallace himself was most responsible for the naiveté of the movement. Highly plausible account of Wallace as a political personality was given by Theodore H. White, who once admired him as a hero.

But in politics Wallace was a bitter man; eccentric, ambitious, self-righteous; an inspired mystic as his friends saw him, a "bubble-head" as his enemies called him, a guru type as later generations might have described him. He was the first of the evangelical Presidency-seekers White was to meet, in a line that later ran through George Romney and George McGovern to Jimmy Carter. Of all these, however, Wallace was the most devout seeker for the Truth and Peace of God.<sup>9</sup>

Thus Wallace and his party failed not only to appreciate the depth and prevalence of anti-communism of the times, but also remained blind to the great transformation occurring in the political economy. The Progressive party was seeking to remobilize the liberal-labor coalition according to the popular front scheme through conciliatory foreign policy and radical economic policy. Wallace and his followers presumed the existence of a large number of people who were dissatisfied with the Truman administration's domestic and foreign policies. Wallace envisioned the uprising of "workers, Negroes, and independent liberals" to reform the political system from the below. Envisaging a great political realignment, Frank Kingdon, another Progressive leader, called for "a people's party, a 'second party' to save the country from the bipartisan alliance of the Truman administration and the Eightieth Congress."<sup>10</sup>

The Wallacites had entertained these expectations because of a wave of massive labor strikes during the early post-war years. However, by 1947 with the end of the post-war recession, American political economy had regained stability and prosperity. Truman's veto of the Taft-Hartley bill and his promise to repeal it placated labor's animosity to the administration. Labor was now at ease with the Democratic party. Consequently, by the time of the formation of the Progressive party, there was little reason for labor to

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<sup>8</sup> Alfred Kazin, *New York Jew* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), p. 35.

<sup>9</sup> Theodore H. White, *In Search of History: A Personal Adventure* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), p. 256.

<sup>10</sup> Markowitz, *The Rise and Fall of the People's Century*, pp. 255, 259.

embark on a bold attempt to form a new political machinery which sought to transform the existing system radically. From the outset, therefore, the Progressive party lacked a core constituency. The Progressive notion of a people who were generally dissatisfied with the emerging welfare state did not in fact exist.

Some essays collected in *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order*<sup>11</sup> assess the origins and nature of the American welfare state. They agree, if in different terminology, that by 1947 American political economy had discarded radical and regulatory "social Keynesianism" and selected the more conservative, fiscal-oriented "commercial Keynesianism." In a sense, the collapse of the Wallace movement, which had sought more regulation and more social welfare for the sake of the working class, had brought about the collapse of a vision of social democratic America.

With or without the Wallace movement, however, the consensus on Cold War Liberalism had coalesced in the years 1947-1948. In those crucial years, the intensity of the Cold War was brought to a new height by the Truman Doctrine. The Marshall Plan won strong bipartisan support of the public not only as a world New Deal, a measure for strengthening the economy of war-devastated allies in Western Europe, but also as a key to domestic prosperity and full-employment. Domestic anti-communism was reinforced as Truman ordered the loyalty investigations of all federal employees. The House Un-American Activities Committee vied with the federal government and held sensational hearings on Hollywood communists and eventually indicted ten Hollywood figures for the contempt of the Congress. Twelve communists were indicted for the violation of the Smith Act, and the inquisition of communism was prevalent in many universities and localities all over the country.<sup>12</sup> Congress passed the Taft-Hartley Act,

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<sup>11</sup> Steve Fraser, "The Labor Question," Alan Brinkley, "The New Deal and the Idea of the State," and Nelson Lichtenstein, "From Corporatism to Collective Bargaining: Organized Labor and the Eclipse of Social Democracy in the Postwar Era," in *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980*, eds. Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

<sup>12</sup> Although works on the communist inquisition in localities and universities are legion, David Cauter, *The Great Fear: The Anti-Communist Purge under Truman and Eisenhower* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1978) and Ellen W. Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities* (New York: Oxford University, 1986) are particularly informative.

which took the edge off the militancy of labor unions. The Taylor Act prohibited public employee strikes.

All these forces led to "the collapse of the labor movement as a potentially social democratic force and the evaporation of the theoretical and academic bases for left-wing policy-making within American politics."<sup>13</sup> Consequently, after the victory in the election of 1948, Truman confidently declared the launch of the Fair Deal, which brought together a Keynesian policy for government financing of industrial expansion, interest group politics, and a foreign policy based on anti-communist containment.

Thus by 1950 Truman had won "the struggle for the anti-communist label," to borrow David Green's phrase. This success was due in part to the popular front liberals' alienation from the Democratic party as well as the Republicans' failure to combine their conservatism with anti-communism. In any case Cold War Liberalism was secured in "the vital center," and the Truman administration was "actively playing in the 'middle' against 'both ends'."<sup>14</sup>

In 1950, however, this fortified regime met another serious challenge, this time not from the left but from the right. This challenge bore the name "McCarthyism," and it was dependent solely on the communist issue. But with the strong anti-communist stance of the Truman administration, the prevalent anti-communist feeling of the nation, and the absence of any real internal communist threat, McCarthy's late coming charge against communism seemed superfluous. Nonetheless, McCarthyism proved a formidable challenge to the Cold War consensus.

The cornerstone of McCarthyism was "the illusion of omnipotence," in the phrase of Robert Griffith.<sup>15</sup> Because of the victory in the war and the subsequent quick recovery of the national economy, the American people tended to believe in the invincibility of America. So long as America was secure from the Soviet threat and the national economy was prospering, the American people had no reason to doubt their omnipotence.

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<sup>13</sup> Ira Katznelson, "A Lost Opportunity?" in *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order*, p. 192.

<sup>14</sup> David Green, *Shaping Political Consciousness: The Language of Politics in America from McKinley to Reagan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 188.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Griffith, *The Politics of Fear: Joseph R. McCarthy and the Senate*, 2nd ed. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), pp. 142-151.

However, this was also an age of anxiety, an age over which loomed the threat of thermonuclear war. American dominance of the world seemed somewhat insecure against this backdrop. Although most incidents in Eastern Europe and Asia were in fact beyond the control of the American power, they still annoyed American, who held to the illusion of American omnipotence. Moreover, general prosperity did not keep ordinary citizens from grumbling about domestic politics. Labor strikes, the high cost of living, poor housing, and corrupt relations between organized crime and politicians, contributed to the discontent of the people. Complaints against the federal government for its inefficiency and ineffectiveness never ceased. Thus serious contradictions arose between the illusion of American omnipotence and the reality of international politics, between the promise of American life and the reality of daily life.

The people who resented these inexplicable contradictions found a timely explanation in McCarthy's criticism of the federal government. As a result of the repeated congressional and local inquisitions of domestic communism, fervent anti-communism was rampant in American society by the time of the famous Wheeling speech. Utilizing widespread anti-communist sentiment, McCarthy could attack the Democratic administration for allowing the communists to infiltrate its officialdom. Although the prime target of his criticism was the State Department for its apparent failure to stem the Soviets' aggression, his rhetoric connoted something more. It suggested the existence of conspiracy in the federal government itself. Despite its absurdity, McCarthyism still posed a formidable challenge to Truman because it planted the seeds of distrust in the mind of the ordinary citizens.

Quite obviously, McCarthy's personal motive was mere publicity-seeking. Nonetheless, many Republican politicians had their own selfish reasons to support, or at least overlook, McCarthy's folly. The bipartisanship which had worked so well in the initial stages of the Cold War was not mobilized against McCarthy. Furthermore, the stalemate in the Korean War benefitted McCarthy. Thus communism, together with corruption and Korea, became a dominant issue of the federal elections of 1950 and 1952. Considering this dynamism of partisanship, it was not surprising that McCarthyism quickly lost its momentum after the election of a Republican president.

Hence, seen in the context of party politics or electoral politics, there was nothing new about McCarthyism. Truman guarded against it because of the strong support McCarthy could evoke from right-wing Republicans. These conservatives in fact desired large-scale changes for the welfare state that was emerging. But their alternative, if not entirely unlike the conservative agenda of the late 1970s, was seen at that time as nothing more than a residue of the 1920s laissez-faire political economy. Its program for distributing national wealth and tangible resources was a far cry from a radical option that could restructure the post-war political economy. Moreover, despite the support of the Taftian conservatives, McCarthyism itself lacked any scheme concerning the American political economy. In this sense it was a purely negative force.

Nonetheless, some contemporary liberal intellectuals found McCarthyism to be a radical phenomenon, and not mere negativism. Yet McCarthyism lacked such components as "a distinct philosophy and program of social change" and "democratic and humanitarian terms," and could thus not qualify as an example of the kind of radicalism defined by Horace M. Kallen. McCarthyism, however, fits well the definition by Egon Bittner. As we have seen, Bittner laid more stress on style, rhetoric, and personality, than on a philosophy or program. Even though McCarthy had no radical philosophy or program, his style, rhetoric, and personality were apparently inconsistent with reasonableness. To repeat, in Bittner's view, the lack of reasonableness is one of the most conspicuous symptoms of modern radicalism. Here lies the key to the interpretation of McCarthyism's status as a radical political force.

*The New American Right* published in 1955 was the first scholarly book on McCarthyism,<sup>16</sup> and the originator of this interpretation. The contributors to this book were so impressed with McCarthyism's novelty as a political phenomenon that they asserted that it could not be fully analyzed by conventional analytical categories, such as "the role of the electoral structure, of democratic tradition, and of interest groups, sectional or class."<sup>17</sup> According to these scholars, such categories dealt mainly with

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<sup>16</sup> Daniel Bell, ed., *The New American Right* (New York: Criterion, 1955). See also its enlarged edition, *idem, The Radical Right* (New York: Anchor Books, 1963).

<sup>17</sup> Daniel Bell, "Interpretations of American Politics," in *ibid.*, p. 48.

tangible interests. As Richard Hofstadter put it: "The older conception of politics was that it deals with the question: Who gets what, when, how? Politics was taken as an arena in which people define their interests as rationally as possible and behave in a way calculated to realize them as fully as possible."<sup>18</sup>

To the contributors of *The New American Right*, the most striking thing about McCarthyism was that it revealed a relatively unknown phase of American politics. McCarthyism helped to turn the focus of political studies from the rationalistic side to the emotional and symbolic side of political life, and to stress status anxiety over economic interests. Indeed, McCarthy's anti-communism was apparently less concerned with tangible interests than with intangible anxiety, resentment, and a moralistic attitude.

To liberal critics who put a high premium upon stability, rationality, and practicality in the political life, McCarthyism was objectionable. It failed to balance between means and ends, lacked any serious consideration of political feasibility, and also neglected the Bill of Rights as the fundamental criterion of political activities. To them McCarthyism was thus an absolutely illegitimate force within the established liberal political system.

Who then supported McCarthyism, this radical deviation from the American liberal polity? If McCarthyism offered no constructive scheme regarding tangible issues, the writers of *The New American Right* inferred, its supporters could not be identified with any particular class or interest group. Instead they identified the supporters of McCarthy as the people who were vaguely discontent with the fluctuation of their status in the existing political order and failed to articulate their dissatisfaction in the form of issues that could be discussed in the legitimate political arena. In other words, the origin of McCarthyism was found "in the socially displaced strata of society."

In this view McCarthyism was not totally unlike the mass movement which characterized the initial stage of European pre-war totalitarianism. Looking back at the American past, then, these writers of *The New American Right* found that the similar mass movement was not entirely lacking here either. The agrarian movement of the late nineteenth century was taken up

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<sup>18</sup> *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p. viii.

as a typical example. These writers contended that Populism was also predicated upon the status discontent of declining farming people. Furthermore, it also utilized nativist and anti-elitist popular sentiment and employed demagogic persuasion.

Many political historians investigated the relation between the electoral base of McCarthyism and Populism both from the approving or disapproving point of view. But many such historians persuasively argued that this interesting analogy between Populism and McCarthyism was utterly inaccurate. Although this type of study was not necessarily relevant to the argument of the writers of *The New American Right*, the electoral lineage between the two movements was largely denied. The students of Populism led by Lawrence Goodwyn shattered the backward looking image of Populism. Goodwyn's powerful work argued that nineteenth century Populism, unlike McCarthyism, was full of constructive programs and schemes which aimed at a fundamental transformation of the emerging industrial society into a "Cooperative Commonwealth." Despite its occasional sliding into negativism and despite its eventual failure, Populism was basically a constructive mass movement. It fit better into Kallen's classic definition of radicalism than Bittner's.

The attempt to associate McCarthyism with Populism thus proved unsuccessful. This failure itself, however, signified something concerning the meaning of radicalism in Cold War America. In his criticism of *The New American Right*, Michael Paul Rogin exposed contemporary liberals' anti-radicalist bias. Rogin argued as follows. The writers of the book staked so much on the modern industrial society as well as on the post-war liberal polity that they repudiated any political movement which might disturb orderly industrial development. Because the polity was run basically through the cooperation between the government officials and the leaders of interest groups, any suspicion or criticism of those elites contained the seeds of disturbance.

The writers of *The New American Right* thus located the essence of McCarthyism not in its actual anti-communism but in its way of presenting the issue. They accused the McCarthyites of adopting the way of those against liberal democracy to purge their opposition. Ill-founded charges against notabilities, character assassination without regard to the due process, bombastic rhetoric of confrontation against hidden enemies were

thus characterized as the most salient features of McCarthyism.

In the interpretation found in *The New American Right* liberal writers warned particularly against a social movement of an amorphous mass of people who believed their interests not to be duly represented in existing interest group politics. Here the interest group was considered the best means of organizing a dangerous mass into the order of industrial society. Only through the affiliation with groups could one understand one's real interest in industrial society, pacify one's vague resentment or anxiety, and act reasonably in politics. Once groups became predominant actors in industrial society, accommodation and compromise would be the keynotes of politics and people would seek gradual improvement of their lives through instrumentalism and incrementalism. Only groups could thus keep the complexity of modern industrial society from leading to anomie.<sup>19</sup>

Liberal intellectuals, or pluralists, in Rogin's phrase, thought McCarthyites as radicals, because they were animated by resentment and indignation that had "no effective and institutionalized channels of expression" and also by a "generalized fear of the dominant currents and institutions of modern society." As such, McCarthyism lacked a sense of reasonableness and constituted "a menace to the body politic."<sup>20</sup>

Thus the reproach against McCarthy contained a powerful apologetic for the Cold War consensus from the point of view of the modern pluralist. At the same time, however, this apologetic drew much of its persuasive power from the reality of American society in the 1950s. As pointed out in relation to the collapse of the Wallace movement, the concept of an unorganized mass had already lost its actuality. McCarthy could therefore not mobilize any movement based on mass support. The wide publicity he gained in his heyday showed only how fast anti-communism had taken hold of the American mind, and how effectively the mass media was utilized by a demagogic politician. Despite the warning of liberal intellectuals, therefore, McCarthyism should not be considered radical but only as pseudo-radical.

Whether left or right, real or pseudo, the radicalism of the early years of the Cold War did not alter the body politic. Rather they resulted in the

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<sup>19</sup> Michael P. Rogin, *The Intellectuals and McCarthy: The Radical Specter* (Cambridge, Mass.: The M. I. T. Press, 1967), chap. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*, p. 85.

further fortification of Cold War Liberalism. Cleansed of McCarthyism as well as of the stalemated war in Asia, the Eisenhower administration retained the consensus inherited from the Democrats. Through the politics of consensus (the American version of "Butskellism," so to speak) the federally financed welfare was expanded piecemeal. People looked fairly complacent with the American way of life. As the political sociologist Irving Louis Horowitz pointed out, American industrial capitalism in the 1950s was thus able "to provide a measure of affluence for a large portion of the citizenry, to integrate the overwhelming portions into the going political system, and provide multiple channels for expressing resentment, hostility, and special interests."<sup>21</sup>

Nonetheless, the American people were still not able to feel secure in face of international communism. It is true that the latter half of the 1950s witnessed the demise of McCarthy, the virtual extinction of the Communist party, and a decline in the intensity of the Cold War after the death of Stalin. Also, congressional hearings on the red menace became less and less frequent; court decisions became more and more critical of red-hunting. Apparently the international as well as domestic Cold War was beginning to thaw. But these signs by no means demonstrated that the anti-communist sentiment of the nation had abated. The federal executive and legislative branches continued to take various anti-subversive measures. With the acquiescence of the public, particularly the Federal Board of Investigation under the directorship of J. Edgar Hoover energetically undertook anti-subversive activities.<sup>22</sup> Occasionally, such international incidents as the launching of the Sputnik by the Soviets and the success of the Cuban revolution heightened people's vigilance against the menace of communism. By 1960 anti-communism had stopped to be a noisy partisan issue, but it had been securely incorporated into the consensus over Cold War Liberalism.

No doubt the late 1950s were the bleakest years for radicals. This was not only because of governmental repression but also because of the

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<sup>21</sup> "American Radicalism and the Revolt Against Reason," in *Ideology and Utopia in the United States, 1956-1976* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 181.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Justin Goldstein, *Political Repression in Modern America: From 1870 to the Present* (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman, 1978), pp. 399-412.

success of American politics and economics. The prosperity resulting from these successes was shared by the great majority of people. In order to gain their share of the pie most people tended to conform to dominant social norms and mores. As Norman Mailer wrote, the late fifties were "the years of conformity and depression."

One could hardly maintain the courage to be individual, to speak with one's own voice, for the years in which one could complacently accept oneself as part of an elite by being a radical were forever gone. . . . A stench of fear has come out of every pore of American life, and we suffer from a collective failure of nerve. The only courage, with rare exceptions, that we have been witness to, has been the isolated courage of isolated people.<sup>23</sup>

In hindsight, however, this isolation of radicals did not last long. Although the famous inauguration address by President Kennedy perhaps marked the culmination of Cold War Liberalism, within five years the seemingly indestructible liberal consensus was shattered ; the sixties then became the decade of radicalism.

What instigated the revolt against the consensus was of course the civil rights movement. Throughout the 1950, despite significant progress for racial integration during and after World War Two, the black population as a whole remained segregated in the South or isolated in the ghettos of northern cities.

In the sense that blacks lived on the fringes of, if not outside, the society, they were "invisible" to most of those who were safely embraced within the liberal consensus. Politicians on their own part averted the race issue. They had no reason for helping invisible men and women become visible in the existing system ; they simply did not want to sacrifice the support of their white constituency for a noble cause. Higher ranking politicians with international concerns would also ignore the issue because it would indicate to the world that the allegedly benevolent American democracy was racked with shameful inequity.<sup>24</sup> By the early 1960s, the liberal intellectual community had not yet been mobilized for the cause of

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<sup>23</sup> Norman Mailer, "The White Negro : Superficial Reflections on the Hipster," in *Theories of American Literature*, Donald, M. Kartinganer and Malcolm A. Griffith, eds. (New York : Macmillan, 1972), p. 275.

<sup>24</sup> Gary W. Reichard, "Democrats, Civil Rights, and Electoral Strategies in the 1950," *Congress and the Presidency*, 13 (Spring 1986) : 59-81.

racial integration.<sup>25</sup>

It was in the midst of this difficult situation that Martin Luther King, Jr. and other southern black leaders started the civil rights movement. From the outset, one of the most salient features of the movement was its orientation toward legislative programs and judicial decisions geared to ending legal segregation in the Deep South. Here, the civil rights movement represented nothing but the black demand to participate as a full member in mainstream politics and economy. And by 1965, the movement largely accomplished its purpose by pushing through the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and also by drawing various anti-poverty programs out of the Democratic administration.

These irreversible achievements, however, were by no means the sole significance of the civil rights movement in American political history. Equally astonishing was the movement's impact on the conventional modes of politics. Joined by the black masses, who had been most alienated from conventional parliamentary politics, the civil rights movement utilized various political tactics that were unknown or forgotten by the white citizenry. Among such tactics were mass meetings, demonstrations, marches, sit-ins, boycotts. The keynote of these tactics was directness. King urged his people, who had been robbed of legitimate means of appeal in the arena of interest group politics, to protest directly against the evils of segregation. He succeeded in mobilizing the segregated masses by propagating his conviction that only direct, non-violent action by determined individuals could change the situation. It was this feature that allowed the civil rights movement to become a radical challenge to the pluralist democracy.<sup>26</sup>

The civil rights movement thus provided other "invisible" people in

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<sup>25</sup> The FBI's anti-communist surveillance partly accounts for the cautiousness of liberal intellectuals. As Stephen J. Whitfield points out, the FBI was particularly concerned about white intellectuals who were sympathetic to blacks. One of the agency's premises for its activities was that because "Communism was loathsome... anything loathsome was Communism." Thus enlisting oneself for the cause of racial integration involved the risk of being regarded as disloyal. Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), pp. 21-22.

<sup>26</sup> Richard H. King, "Citizenship and Self-Respect: The Experience of Politics in the Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of American Studies*, 22 (1988): 7-24.

American democracy with a formula for political revitalization. Other racial and ethnic minorities, the poor, women, and the young, also had “no effective and institutionalized channels of expression,” and were in that sense invisible.<sup>27</sup> By the end of the 1960s, all these groups, following the lead of blacks, were beginning to express vocally their own “problem that had no name.”

The young on campuses were particularly swift in responding to the civil rights movement. If status politics as defined by the writers of *The American New Right* is a useful category for analyzing political movements, few activities fit this category better than the student movement of the 1960s. Largely children of the prosperous middle-class families, the students of the late 50s found little dissatisfaction with their material lives. For some of them, however, this secured status was itself a source of frustration. Irving Howe vividly accounted for the problem those students faced.

The society we live in fails to elicit the idealism of the more rebellious and generous young. Even among those who play the game and accept the social masks necessary for gaining success, there is a widespread disenchantment. Certainly there is very little ardor, very little of the joy that comes from a conviction that the values of a society are good, and that it is therefore good to live by them. The intelligent young know that if they keep out of trouble, accept academic drudgery, and preserve a respectable “image,” they can hope for successful careers, even if not personal gratification. But the price they must pay for this choice is a considerable quantity of inner adaptation to the prevalent norms: there is a limit to the social duplicity that anyone can sustain.<sup>28</sup>

It is worth remembering that the 1960s began with President Kennedy's idealistic entreaty to the young to participate in the nation's destiny. Responding to his appeal, many young people enlisted themselves in the Peace Corps or in activities for reorganizing community life. Certainly, Kennedy's inauguration address represented the confidence of the governing

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<sup>27</sup> On the invisibility of these people, see Stephen J. Whitfield, “The 1950s: The Era of No Hard Feelings,” in *American Vistas: 1877 to the Present*, 3rd ed., Leonard Dinnerstein and Kenneth T. Jackson, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 352-53.

<sup>28</sup> Irving Howe, “New Styles in ‘Leftism,’” in *Steady Work: Essays in the Politics of Democratic Radicalism, 1953-1966* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), pp. 42-43.

establishment that it could mobilize the idealism of the young for the perfection of the liberal polity. Nonetheless, as Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin point out, its effect on the young proved paradoxical. Their inflamed idealism was soon thwarted by the reality of the repression of the civil rights movement and Kennedy's military adventures in Cuba and Vietnam.<sup>29</sup>

Many young people found the liberal society to be in fact illiberal. Here they found no way to liberate either the underprivileged or themselves. Frustrated idealism and deep moral indignation turned the eyes of a number of the students to radical politics.

Radical pacifism attracted more and more young intellectuals. Many of the disillusioned students took buses to the Deep South to join the black movement. Such radical organizations as the Students for a Democratic Society, the Student Non-Violent Coordination Committee, and the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE) grew rapidly.<sup>30</sup> The politicization of the apathetic youth was occurring outside the consensus over Cold War Liberalism.

At the outset, one could find two strains of the radical movements by the young students. Most typically, the Port Huron Statement of 1962, the founding statement of the SDS, suggested on the one hand reformist strategies of coalition based on a popular front scheme, and, on the other, strategies for building autonomous bases of power. While remnants of the

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<sup>29</sup> Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, "The Failure and Success of the New Radicalism," in *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order*, pp. 220-21. As to the impact of the Kennedy Presidency on the American Mind, see also Morris Dickstein, *Gates of Eden: American Culture in the Sixties* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 118-22.

<sup>30</sup> According to Peter Clecak, these organizations were not large even during their heyday. The membership of the SDS, for example, was estimated at 250 in 1960 and between 30,000 and 100,000 in 1968. As Clecak pointed out, however, membership is not very significant in assessing the impact of such decentralized organizations. In fact, "the Movement was far larger than the organizations." Peter Clecak, "The Movement of the 1960s and Its Cultural and Political Legacy," in *The Development of an American Culture*, 2nd ed., Stanley Coben and Lorman Ratner, eds. (New York: St Martin's Press, 1983), p. 265 n. 7; Maurice Isserman, *If I Had a Hammer. . . : The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), p. 202.

Old Left expected the new organization to pursue the former strategies for reaching some sort of democratic socialism in the distant future, exuberant young leaders advocated the latter. But the leadership of the organization evidently lay in the young, who sought to launch a new radical politics.<sup>31</sup>

"The early SDS statement adopted at Port Huron still strikes me as a fresh exposition of an American democratic radicalism," wrote Irving Howe two decades later.

For some of the SDS people the ideal polity seemed to be a community without or beyond rules, an anarchy of pals, in which anyone dropping in at a meeting could speak as long as they wished, whether upon the topic of the moment or not; then out of this chaos of good feeling, concord would emerge.<sup>32</sup>

Possessed by the deep sense of alienation in the larger society, the young radicals sought to build "a movement based on what was left to them: personal morality, ethics, and sincerity."<sup>33</sup> Consequently, in the mobilization of men, the new radicalism ascribed far more importance to the role of individual "will" and "determination" than to that of organization. With the further radicalization of the movement, this tendency reached to the point of the salutation of violence, riots, and even guerrilla warfare.<sup>34</sup> For many participants in the new radical movement, a decision on how to live individually within this society was more important than how to change it collectively. The new radicalism, therefore, required "a personal decision." It also required "authenticity, a challenge to the self, or... an 'existential' decision."<sup>35</sup>

The radicalism of the 1960s was thus more therapeutic than political. In the later phase of the movement, young radicals became more antagonistic to conventional liberal politics. Liberalism, the orthodoxy of the American body politic, became their prime enemy. For them, it was unabashedly elitist and conservative, and also represented "a spirit of judiciousness and prudence," which restricted their free will and action.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 202-19; Clecak, "The Movement of the 1960s," p. 277.

<sup>32</sup> Irving Howe, *A Margin of Hope: An Intellectual Autobiography* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982), p. 293.

<sup>33</sup> Isserman, *If I Had a Hammer...*, p.214.

<sup>34</sup> Horowitz, "American Radicalism," pp. 183-84.

<sup>35</sup> Howe, "New Styles in 'Leftism'," pp. 43-44.

<sup>36</sup> Horowitz, "American Radicalism," p. 189.

The young radical equally abhorred the systematic revolutionary theory of Marxism, because it also would reduce an individual into a cog in the revolutionary machinery. For him the real revolution would end only once the individual spirit was totally liberated. He inevitably became a utopian pursuing a permanent revolution.<sup>37</sup>

The radicalism of the 1960s was at odds with more than just the conventional liberal politics or the revolutionary politics of the orthodox Marxist. In fact, it looked upon any organization with distrust. As a consequence, particularly after 1965, young radicals were "to be more and more movement and less and less organization."<sup>38</sup> Howe lamented the degeneration of the new radicals' objectives from dissent to resistance. To him, an anarchistic tendency would produce chaos, "a chaos favoring manipulation by tight sects and grandiose charismatic leaders; the SDS theory of organization did not take enough account of people as they actually are and are likely to remain."<sup>39</sup>

Politics is necessary, however, only when people exist in the form of a class or a group. The new radicalism replaced the concept of people by that of mass. As Horowitz perceptibly points out, the concept of mass was particularly important for radicals who sought to save society as well as themselves. The concept enabled radicals to project the total salvation of society through "mass" revolt. Only by referring to the mass could the individualistic radical, whose major concern lay in the salvation of his own soul, assume a radical glow.<sup>40</sup>

But again, this concept of mass lacked substance in Cold War America. With little support of "people as they actually are," the radicals receded further from reformist politics and confined their scope to isolated communes or liberated zones, particularly university campuses.

The radical movement began to be polarized into two extremes during this phase: sectarian political radicalism, on the one hand, and cultural radicalism, on the other. In different ways, both represented the isolation of young radicals and their total rejection of the dominant value system of

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 182-84.

<sup>38</sup> In the words of Steve Max cited in Isserman and Kazin, "The Failure and Success of the New Radicalism," p. 221.

<sup>39</sup> *A Margin of Hope*, p. 293.

<sup>40</sup> Horowitz, "American Radicalism," p. 185.

American bourgeois society. The Weathermen, an extremist sect of the SDS, provided a typical example of such extreme politics. The organization expressed condemnation for the entire white population as the privileged class responsible for the oppression of blacks and third world people. To the Weathermen, all legitimate means available in the existing system were useless in overturning the white men's hegemony. Thus the Weathermen advocated violent militaristic action as the sole means of liberating the oppressed.<sup>41</sup>

Cultural radicalism, on the other hand, found a means of liberation from the restraining middle-class in an extremely individualistic way of life. Totally rejecting not only dominant cultural values but also any political vision of changing them, cultural radicals indulged in drugs, gay sex, meditation, or occultism — anything which could give individuals a sense of authenticity and fulfillment.<sup>42</sup> For many radicals, the escape from bourgeois individualism of the liberal society ended when they met hedonistic counterculture. The counterculture had started at the isolated communities or university campuses, but it soon spread beyond such boundaries to infiltrate the larger society. By the 1970s, as Daniel Bell deplored, hedonism became the visible, if not dominant, mark of American culture.<sup>43</sup>

Despite the polarization of the movement, the new radicalism did not die away quickly or cease to influence the larger society. This was partly because of the continuation and radicalization of the black movement even after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Although these measures had drastically changed inter-racial relations in the South, they hardly mitigated the economic and social plight of urban blacks. A series of race riots exploded in cities all over the country after 1965. The movement calling for black power and black consciousness emerged publicly in 1966.<sup>44</sup> For the radicals, either black or white, this

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<sup>41</sup> Clecak, "The Movement of the 1960s," p. 280; Isserman, *If I Had a Hammer* . . . , pp. 167-69.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279.

<sup>43</sup> Daniel Bell, "The Revolt against Modernity," *The Public Interest*, no. 81 (Fall 1985), p. 48.

<sup>44</sup> Stephen Steinberg, *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America* (New York: Atheneum, 1981), pp. 214-18; King, "Citizenship and Self-

situation symbolized the mendacity of liberal society. The race issue now became highly moralistic and agonizing to many Americans. By advocating solidarity with blacks, and accusing the white citizenry of immorality, the new radicalism retained its impact on the liberal mind.

A more important factor in saving the new radicalism from complete attrition was the Vietnam War. After 1965, the war began to affect the lives of a vast number of the young and their families. Thus it was never an issue monopolized by radicals. Many liberal intellectuals distanced themselves from the federal government because of the war. Newspapers grew more and more critical of the governing establishment for the escalation of the war. Anti-war sentiment aroused far deeper and wider suspicion of the government than any post-war radical movements had done.<sup>45</sup>

But the young were of course the most concerned. Anti-war demonstration became a standard feature of campus life after 1965. For radical students, liberal America had always been imperialistic, unjust, and even cruel. But nothing had provided Americans with more convincing proof for their argument than the quagmire in that remote Asian country.

It was fundamentally the Vietnam war and the black power movement that helped the new radicalism remain viable after 1965. At the same time, these two factors made radicalism more and more holistic and less and less reformistic. The post-war liberal pluralist polity by no means assumed race and war as normal factors in politics. The unexpected rise of these issues signified the limits of ordinary interest group politics.<sup>46</sup> What isolated new radicals attempted to do after 1965 was little more than exposé — by utilizing voices uttered outside the conventional political arena. Their very nature, however, prohibited them from providing any constructive scheme for reshaping existing liberal democracy so that it could solve these questions.

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Respect," p. 21.

<sup>45</sup> Charles Debenedetti, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990), pp. 103-38.

<sup>46</sup> These issues also signified the limits of post-war political science. According to W. Russell Neuman, like McCarthyism or Watergate, civil rights and Vietnam "involved complexities and subtleties not easily captured by survey items." They were political symbols of emotional weight, but they were not in themselves issues. *The Paradox of Mass Politics: Knowledge and Opinion in the American Electorate* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 179.

Nonetheless, together with the black movement, the new radicalism transformed American politics. By rejecting reformist coalition politics and pursuing isolated communitarian movement, by emphasizing participatory democracy over electropolitics, and by valuing personal authenticity, orientation, passion, and moralism over achievement, material accomplishment, reasonableness, and political prudence, this new radicalism brought a new set of values into American politics.

As a result, many separate movements resulting from various hidden impulses surfaced in the political arena. Many single issue groups sprouted from separate movements "along the lines of class, occupation, race, age, status, sex, and ethnicity."<sup>47</sup> Consequently, by the 1970s, the American political world had changed to a great extent. While the power of traditional interest groups weakened, new single issue groups flourished. Their moralistic self-assertiveness replaced the older political norms such as practicalism and incrementalism. The basis of the consensus over Cold War Liberalism became thus in disarray.

This sketch of the drastic changes in American politics in the 1960s might still be incomplete without a reference to what occurred in the political right. In the liberal polity of the post-war years, right wing Republicans had consistently remained the most ineffectual political force. They had advocated the most hawkish Cold War diplomacy and a reactionary laissez faire economy. Because of this unorthodox policy stance they were as alienated from the consensus over Cold War Liberalism as the equally ineffectual leftists.

Therefore, it is not surprising that until 1964 the Republican party had not selected presidential candidates from its right wing. But the candidacy of Barry Goldwater, who was supported by the so-called Radical Right, indicated a degree of change in American politics. In fact, he won his candidacy thanks mainly to the support of delegates from the South and the West. Several states in the former Solid South even voted for Goldwater in the November election. The main reason for this result was white southerners' distrust of the Democratic government's civil rights policy. The race issue thus already benefitted the right wing Republicans in 1964.

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<sup>47</sup> Clecak, "The Movement of the 1960s," pp. 278-79.

Paradoxically, the radicalization of the black movement and the stalemate in Vietnam, which made havoc of the liberal camp, benefitted the right wing Republicans. They garnered more and more drop-outs from the liberal consensus. These drop-outs resulted partly from a disgust over the movements of blacks, the young, and anti-war protesters, and also from a dissatisfaction with the federal government's failure to restore law and order. To oppose counterculture on the left, the new right busied itself with launching of various counter-counterculture organizations. Equally moralistic, if with an opposite orientation, single-issue groups began to prosper on the right as well. Thus in the late 1960s, the liberal polity found itself attacked by its cultural enemies from both sides.

But many of those who had departed from the liberal consensus did so not only because of cultural indignation. A more important reason lay in the government's economic policy. Particularly after the budget-consuming Great Society programs, many taxpayers felt the government's welfare policy to be burdensome and utterly unfair to them. This latter reason for dropping out was more ominous to the liberal polity in the long run, as it touched off the revolt against the established way of distributing national wealth. By the 1970s words like welfare state and liberalism had lost their charm for many people of the middle and working classes. The backbone of the liberal consensus began to crumble.

The confusion in the liberal and radical camps in the late 1960s thus greatly benefitted the New Right. Nonetheless, the right did not just wait for disintegration of the liberal consensus. Ironically, when the New Left radicals abandoned Marxism, the New Right began to learn from this revolutionary theory. While the left disregarded organization and bureaucracy, the right sought to build a network between its scattered movements. And while the left exhausted its energy by engaging in showy confrontations, the right collected mailing addresses of the "silent majority" for sending conservative political tracts directly to its supporters.

Most importantly, through its organizational work, the New Right found its people "as they actually are and are likely to remain." These people shared with the young radicals a sentiment against the liberal establishment in the federal government. But they hated this government not because of its repressiveness or intolerance but because of its generosity. The welfare class which flourished from "a revolution of rising entitlements" was

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anathema to these people. They were also indignant with the spread of unbelief and cultural permissiveness. By the late 1970s, the New Right largely succeeded in persuading its adherents into opposing the post-war welfare state. Conservative populism, bred by the New Right, eventually overturned the liberal consensus. Although this change fell far short of real revolution, it nonetheless marked a radical departure from the past.