

## THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE OLD RIGHT\*

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The categories of "right" and "left" have been changing so rapidly in recent years in America that it becomes difficult to recall what the labels stood for not very long ago. In the case of the left, this has become common knowledge, and we are all familiar with the contrasts between "Old Left" and "New Left", as well as with the rapid changes that the "new" Left itself has been undergoing. But in the case of the right-wing, which has rarely been an object of careful scrutiny by journalists or historians, no such categories have come into play. The "Right" is now largely identified with the Buckley-*National Review*-Goldwater-Reagan conservative movement, as well as the less reputable and more "extreme" Birch Society variant. As a result of this identification, the deep changes which have occurred in the right have been largely ignored. The purpose of this paper is to sketch a very different "right-wing", a right that we can well label the "Old Right", since it was the dominant conservative force in American politics and political thought until approximately the mid-1950s, a right that was replaced by the currently familiar movement which we might label the "New Right", albeit it is no longer very new. It is our contention that the "Old Right" was different enough in concept and program to deserve the difference in terms, and, further, that there are many striking resemblances between its outlook and that of the New Left. Here there is only space to concentrate on the foreign policy of the Old Right.

The major thrust of the Old Right, set forth consistently by its theoreticians and of course more fuzzily by its political figures, was a deep hostility and antipathy to government power.

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Big government, government intervention, social and economic, foreign and domestic, were considered to be invasions of the liberty of the individual and a grave and increasing threat to freedom in America. The Old Right favored the liberty of the individual as its central principle, and advocated a free-enterprise and free-market economy as the economic corollary and application of that principle. The menace to that liberty was its polar opposite: intervention and control by coercive government.

The Old Right applied its aversion to government to foreign policy as well as domestic. It held the increasing interventions of the American government in the affairs of other nations to be illegitimate, and even imperialist, intrusions that benefited neither the American people nor the world as a whole. It held such intervention to be destructive of peace, and as posing a potentially grave menace in fastening Big Government upon Americans at home. War was considered legitimate only for strict self-defense, and hence the foreign policy of the Old Right was American neutrality in foreign quarrels, or to use the interventionist pejorative, "isolationist".

### I

The Old Right emerged as a fully-formed ideological and political movement in the mid and late 1930s, as an opposition to the New Deal, first in its domestic and then in its foreign manifestations. As in all large-scale political movements, the Old Right was a mixture of complex strands; it was certainly not a monolith. This diversity was enhanced by its overriding definition as a movement *in opposition*, as a coalition movement coming to oppose the New Deal in all of its aspects. But despite

this necessarily negative cast, the opposition was clearly to burgeoning Big Government; and the other side of that coin of opposition was a commitment to the positive virtues of individual liberty unhampered by government coercion.

The purest, and most ideological, strand of the developed Old Right was a commitment to individualism — to individual liberty, to roughly *laissez-faire* economics, and to an anti-interventionist foreign policy. Not only was opposition to war and imperialism a heritage of such English *laissez-faire* liberals as Cobden, Bright, and the Manchester School, but the lead in opposition to America's war against Spain had been taken by such *laissez-faire* leaders as William Graham Sumner and the founder of the Anti-Imperialist League, the Boston merchant and publicist Edward Atkinson. Such *laissez-faire* individualists as Senators William E. Borah (Rep., Idaho) and James A. Reed (Dem., Mo.), and intellectuals such as Oswald Garrison Villard, editor of the *Nation*, and individualist libertarians such as Albert Jay Nock and Francis Neilson, participated strongly in the opposition to World War I. Joined by one of the leading intellectuals of the 1920s, the individualist H. L. Mencken, they also took the lead in criticizing the Versailles-imposed world that had emerged after the war.<sup>11</sup>

The newly formed Old Right of the 1930s was a coalition of radical individualists, such as Nock and Mencken, who had been considered "leftists" during the war and the 1920s, and conservative Democrats and Republicans, such as Herbert Hoover, who came to resist the developed corporate state of the New Deal despite his own previous giant strides in the same direction. The new right-wing particularly denounced the aggrandizement of the Executive, the federal bureaucracy, and the office of the President under the New Deal.

During and after World War I, "isolationism", or opposition to American wars and to the Versailles system, had often been dubbed as "left-wing". Thus, as late as the mid-1930s, to the rightist Mrs. Elizabeth Dilling pacifism and opposition to war was *per se* an unpatriotic evil; to Mrs. Dilling, such old progressives and individualists as Senators Burton K. Wheeler and William E. Borah, as well as young Robert

A. Taft, were vital parts of the pervasive Communistic "Red Network".<sup>12</sup>

And yet, in a few short years, the ranking of isolationism on the ideological spectrum underwent a sudden and dramatic shift. As the Roosevelt Administration moved rapidly towards war in the late 1930s, in Europe and the Far East, the great bulk of the liberals and the Left "flip-flopped" dramatically on behalf of war and foreign intervention. In the course of this mass conversion, gone virtually without a trace was the old insight of the Left into the evils of the Versailles treaty or the urgent need for its revision. Not only that; but to the liberals and the Left the impending war against the Axis powers became a great moral crusade, a "people's war for democracy" and "against fascism" — outrivalling in the grandiloquence of their rhetoric the Wilsonian apologia for World War I which these same liberals and radicals had vehemently repudiated for two decades. Indeed, in their new-found historiography, the liberals and left cast F.D.R. in a newly constructed Pantheon of "strong", war-making Presidents, in the line of Lincoln and Woodrow Wilson.<sup>13</sup>

For the new interventionists it was not enough to champion a new-found cause; they also felt called upon to castigate their old allies, day in and day out, as "reactionaries", "Fascists", "anti-Semites", and "followers of the Goebbels line". Joining with great enthusiasm in this campaign of vilification, at least for most of the period, was the Communist Party and its allies. Before and during World War II, the Communists were delighted to plunge into their newfound role as American superpatriots, proclaiming that "Communism is twentieth-century Americanism."

The pressure upon those liberals and progressives who continued to oppose the coming war was bitter and intense. Many personal tragedies resulted. Thus, Dr. Harry Elmer Barnes, the leading militant of World War I revisionism, was unceremoniously relieved of his popular column in the *New York World-Telegram* as the result of severe pressure by pro-interventionist advertisers.<sup>14</sup> Typical of the treatment accorded to those liberals who held fast to their principles was the purgation

from the ranks of liberal journalism of John T. Flynn and Oswald Garrison Villard. In his regular column in the *Nation*, Villard had continued to oppose Roosevelt's "abominable militarism" and his drive to war. For his pains Villard was forced out of the magazine which he had long served as a distinguished editor. In his "Valedictory", in the issue of June 22, 1940, Villard declared that "my retirement has been precipitated . . . by the editors' abandonment of the *Nation's* steadfast opposition to all preparations for war, to universal military service, to a great navy, and to *all* war, for this in my judgment has been the chief glory of its great and honorable past." The reply of the *Nation's* editor, Freda Kirchwey, was characteristic: such writings as Villard's, she wrote, were frightening, and constitute "a danger more present than Fascism", for his policy was "exactly the policy for America that the Nazi propaganda in this country supports".<sup>15</sup>

John T. Flynn, in his turn, was ejected from his popular and long-running column, "Other People's Money", in November, 1940; the column had appeared continuously in *The New Republic* since May, 1933. Once again, the now pro-war editors could not tolerate Flynn's continuing attacks on war preparations and on the artificial economic boom induced by armaments spending.

Neither did the old-time libertarian leaders fare much better. When the libertarian and isolationist Paul Palmer lost his editorship of the *American Mercury* in 1939, H. L. Mencken and Albert Jay Nock lost their monthly opportunity to lambast the New Deal. His national outlet gone, Mencken retired from politics and into autobiography and his study of the American language. Apart from a few essays in the *Atlantic Monthly*, Nock could only find an outlet in the isolationist *Scribner's Commentator*, which folded after Pearl Harbor and left Nock with no further opportunity to be heard.

But Albert Nock had managed to get in a few blows before the changing of the guard at the *Mercury*. Nock had warned that the emerging war in Europe was the old story of competing imperialisms, with the Liberals available, as before, to provide an ideological cover with Wilsonian rhetoric. Nock commented scornfully

that "make the world safe for U.S. investments, privileges, and markets" far better expressed the real intent of the coming American intervention than the old Wilsonian "make the world safe for democracy". "After the sorry sight which American Liberals made of themselves twenty years ago", Nock acidly declared, they are ready once again "to save us from the horrors of war and militarism [by] plunging us into war and militarism." Decrying the growing hysteria about the foreign Enemy, Nock pinpointed the true danger to liberty at home: "no alien State policy will ever disturb us unless our Government puts us in the way of it. We are in no danger whatever from any government except our own, and the danger from that is very great; therefore our own Government is the one to be watched and kept on a short leash."<sup>16</sup>

The opponents of war were not only being shut out from liberal journals, but from much of the mass media as well. For as the Roosevelt Administration moved inexorably toward war, much of the Eastern Establishment that had opposed the New Deal eagerly made its peace with the administration, and moved into positions of power. The new reconciliation was symbolized by the return to a high government post of prominent Wall Street lawyer Dean Acheson, who had departed his post of Undersecretary of the Treasury in the early 1930s in high dudgeon at Roosevelt's experimental monetary schemes; and of Acheson's mentor Henry Lewis Stimson as Secretary of War.

Although Eastern business was solidly in the Roosevelt camp as part of the war coalition, the pro-interventionist forces were yet successful in pinning the "extreme Right-wing" label on all the isolationists. There were two major reasons for this success. One was the successful capture of liberal journals by the pro-war forces, who continued to denounce the isolationists as "reactionaries" and tools of the Nazis. The accusers were led by columnist and radio commentator Walter Winchell, then at the beginning of his long-time career as calumniator of all dissenters to American war crusades. Publicist Dorothy Thompson accused the isolationist America First Committee of being "Vichy Fascists", and Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes publicly pinned the label of

"Nazi fellow travellers" on isolationist leaders General Robert E. Wood and Charles A. Lindbergh, and even on his old friend Oswald Garrison Villard. And *Time* and *Life*, whose publisher Henry Luce was an ardent champion not only of American entry into the war but also of the "American Century" that he envisioned as emerging from the war, went so far as to claim that Lindbergh's and Senator Burton K. Wheeler's salutes to the American flag were mimics of the fascist salute.<sup>171</sup> And in a best-selling book, *Under Cover* (1943), lauded by the *New York Times*, John Roy Carlson, a secret agent of the pro-war Friends of Democracy, lumped isolationists, anti-Semites, and actual pro-Nazis together, in a potpourri of guilt by association, as constituting the "Nazi underworld of America". So virulent was this campaign that, near the end of the war, John T. Flynn was moved to write an anguished pamphlet in protest, *The Smear Terror*, which, however, could only find its way as a privately printed and therefore virtually unknown pamphlet.

Another reason that the interventionists could successfully dub isolationists as right-wingers is that much of Mid-Western business, not tied to investments in Europe and Asia, were free to reflect the isolationist sentiments of their region. In the business world, the interventionist-isolationist struggle was largely an Eastern vs Mid-Western split. Thus, the America First Committee, the leading anti-war organization, was founded by young R. Douglas Stuart, scion of the Chicago Quaker Oats fortune, and some of the leading supporters of America First were General Robert E. Wood, head of Sears, Roebuck of Chicago, and Colonel Robert R. McCormick, of the great McCormick fortune, and publisher of the *Chicago Tribune*. And the isolationist leader in the Senate, Robert A. Taft, came from the most prominent family in Cincinnati. The Eastern journalists were able to use this split in the business world to spread the image of their opposition as narrow, provincial, small-minded, and reactionary Mid-Westerners, not attuned as they themselves were to the great, cosmopolitan world of Europe and Asia.

Taft was particularly exercised at being dismissed by the Establishment-left-liberal

alliance as an ultra-conservative and representative of big business. On the eve of Pearl Harbor, young Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., ever ready to pin the "business" label on all opposition to liberalism, attacked the Republican party in the *Nation* as reflecting a business community dragging its heels on entry into the war. In a rebuttal that appeared the day before Pearl Harbor, Senator Taft sharply corrected Schlesinger's view of the locus of "conservatism" within the Republican party:

The most conservative members of the party — the Wall Street bankers, the society group, nine-tenths of the plutocratic newspapers, and most of the party's financial contributors — are the ones who favor intervention in Europe . . . . The war party is made up of the business community of the cities, the newspaper and magazine writers, the radio and movie commentators, the Communists, and the university intelligentsia.<sup>181</sup>

Driven out of the media and journals of opinion by their erstwhile allies, condemned as reactionaries and Neanderthals, the left and liberal opponents of war found themselves forced into a new alliance with individualists and with *laissez-faire* Republicans from the middle west. Damned everywhere as "ultra-rightists", many of the old liberals and leftists found themselves moving "rightward" ideologically as well; in many ways, this move "rightward" was a self-fulfilling prophecy by the pro-war left. It was under this pressure that the final forging of the "Old Right" was completed. And the vanguard role of the Communist Party in vilifying these anti-war progressives understandably turned many of them not only into classical liberals but into almost fanatical anti-Communists as well. This is what happened to John T. Flynn, what happened to some extent to Charles A. Beard, and what happened to such former sympathizers of the Soviet Union as John Chamberlain, Freda Utley, and William Henry Chamberlin. To a large extent, it was their uncomfortable isolationist position on the war that started such leading Trotskyists as Max Schachtman and James Burnham down the road to the later global anti-Communist crusade.

John Dos Passos, a lifelong radical and individualist pushed from "extreme left" to "extreme right" by the march of the New Deal, expressed his bitterness about the war in his

postwar novel, *The Grand Design*:

At home we organized bloodbanks and civilian defense and imitated the rest of the world by setting up concentration camps (only we called them relocation centers) and stuffing into them

American citizens of Japanese ancestry . . . without benefit of habeas corpus . . .

The President of the United States talked the sincere democrat and so did the members of Congress. In the Administration there were devout believers in civil liberty. "Now we're busy fighting a war; we'll deploy all four freedoms later on," they said . . .

War is a time of Caesars . . .

And the American people were supposed to say thank you for the century of the Common Man turned over for relocation behind barbed wire so help him God.

We learned. There are things we learned to do but we have not learned, in spite of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence and the great debates at Richmond and Philadelphia

how to put power over the lives of men into the hands of one man

and to make him use it wisely.<sup>191</sup>

Calumny, social obloquy, private espionage, were not the only hardships faced by the isolationist "Old Right". As soon as the United States entered World War II, the Roosevelt administration turned to the secular arm to crush any remnants of outspoken isolationist dissent. In addition to routine FBI harassment, such isolationists as Laura Ingalls, Ralph Townsend, and George Sylvester Viereck were indicted and convicted for being Japanese or German agents. William Dudley Pelley, along with other isolationists, was tried and convicted in Indianapolis for "sedition" under the Espionage Act of 1917. The Smith Act of 1940 was used, first to convict 18 Minneapolis Trotskyists of conspiracy to advocate overthrow of the government (to the great glee, it might be noted, of the Communist Party) and then to move, in the mass sedition trial of 1944, against an ill-assorted collection of 26 right-wing isolationist pamphleteers on the charge of conspiring to cause insubordination in the armed forces. The prosecution of those who were universally described in the press as the "indicted seditionists", was pursued with great zeal by the Communist Party, by the pro-war liberals and the Old Left generally, and by the Establishment media. To their chagrin, the trial fizzled as a result of the spirited legal defense led by a leading isolationist defendant, Lawrence Dennis, generally labelled by the liberals as the "leading American intellectual fascist". In their

neglected and detailed account of the trial, Dennis and Maximilian St. George, an attorney for another of the defendants, saw the irony in the fact that "many of the defendants, being fanatical anti-communists", had openly supported the Smith Act under which they were indicted. "The moral", St. George and Dennis added, "is one of the major points of this book: laws intended to get one crowd may well be used by them to get the authors and backers of the law. This is just another good argument for civil liberties and freedom of speech."<sup>191</sup>

All in all, the Old Right was understandably gloomy as it contemplated American entry into World War II. It foresaw that the war would transform America into a permanent Leviathan State, into a domestic totalitarian collectivism suppressing civil liberties at home and imposing an unending global imperialism abroad, pursuing the phantom of what Charles A. Beard called "perpetual war for perpetual peace". None of the Old Right saw this vision of the coming America more perceptively than John T. Flynn in his brilliant work, *As We Go Marching*, written in the midst of the war he had tried so much to forestall.<sup>191</sup>

After surveying the polity and the economy of fascism and national socialism, Flynn bluntly saw the New Deal, culminating in its wartime embodiment, as the American version of fascism, the "good fascism" in sardonic contrast to the "bad fascism" we had supposedly gone to war to eradicate. Flynn charged that the New Deal had finally established the corporate state that big business had been yearning for since the turn of the twentieth century. "The general idea", Flynn wrote, "was first to reorder the society by making it a planned and coerced economy instead of a free one, in which business would be brought together into great guilds or an immense corporative structure, combining the elements of self-rule and government supervision with a national economic policing system to enforce these decrees . . . This, after all, is not so very far from what business had been talking about . . ."<sup>192</sup>

The New Deal had first attempted to create such a society in the NRA and AAA, mighty engines of "regimentation" hailed by labor and

business alike.<sup>113</sup> Now the advent of World War II had reestablished this collectivist program — “an economy supported by great streams of debt and an economy under complete control, with nearly all the planning agencies functioning with almost totalitarian power under a vast bureaucracy.”<sup>114</sup> After the war, Flynn prophesied, the New Deal would attempt to expand this system permanently into international affairs. He predicted that the great emphasis of vast governmental spending after the war would be military, since this is one form of government spending to which conservatives would never object, and which workers would welcome for its creation of jobs. “Thus militarism is the one great glamorous public-works project upon which a variety of elements in the community can be brought into agreement.”<sup>115</sup> The post-war policy, Flynn predicted, would be “internationalist” in the sense of being imperialist. Imperialism, which “is, of course, international . . . in the sense that war is international”, will follow from the policy of militarism: “we will do what other countries have done; we will keep alive the fears of our people of the aggressive ambitions of other countries and we will ourselves embark upon imperialistic enterprises of our own.”<sup>116</sup> Imperialism will ensure the existence of perpetual “enemies”: “We have managed to acquire bases all over the world . . . There is no part of the world where trouble can break out where . . . we cannot claim that 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.”<sup>117</sup>

A planned economy; militarism; imperialism; for Flynn what all this added up to was something very close to fascism. For Flynn warned:

The test of fascism is not one's rage against the Italian and German war lords. The test is — how many of the essential principles of fascism do you accept . . . ? When you can put your finger on the men or the groups that urge for America the debt-supported state, the autarchical corporative state, the state bent on socialization of investment and the bureaucratic government of industry and society, the establishment of the institution of militarism as the great glamorous

public-works project under which it proposes to regulate and rule the world . . . then you will know you have located the authentic fascist . . .<sup>118</sup>

## II

There is no space here to detail the resurgence of individualist thought that began during World War II, and flowered in the decade after the war, or the contributions of Frank Chodorov, the leading disciple of Nock; Isabel Paterson, formerly book reviewer of the *New York Herald-Tribune*; the economist Ludwig von Mises; F. A. Hayek, author of the best selling *Road to Serfdom*; or the Foundation for Economic Education. Here we can only focus on the leading part that the resurgent Old Right played in opposition to the development of the Cold War, immediately after the war and during the Korean conflict.

In recent years, revisionist historians have reassessed the views of the major Old Right political leader, Robert A. Taft, and have even concluded that — e.g. on such matters as foreign aid — Senator Taft was a more consistent anti-imperialist and opponent of the burgeoning Cold War than Henry A. Wallace.<sup>119</sup> The problem with the exclusive focus on Senator Taft, however, is that it ignores the other Republican politicians of the “extreme Right” who were far more consistent than Taft in their anti-interventionist policies. In the Senate there was the No. 2 Republican Kenneth Wherry of Nebraska; and in particular there was the right-wing bloc in the House, led by such Old Right stalwarts as Howard H. Buffett of Omaha, who was to be Senator Taft's mid-western campaign manager in 1952, Clare Hoffman of Michigan, H. R. Gross of Iowa, Ralph W. Gwinn of New York, George Bender of Ohio, later Taft's floor manager at the 1952 convention and his successor in the Senate, and Frederick C. Smith of Ohio. This “extreme Right” also included Colonel McCormick's *Chicago Tribune*.

Thus, denouncing the Truman Doctrine on the floor of Congress, Howard Buffett first warned of the disastrous consequences of the looming Cold War at home:

All over the world we would soon be answering alarms like an international fireman, maintaining garrisons,

and pouring out our resources ...

In the meantime, what will have happened at home? Economy plans will have generally gone up in smoke, ...

Attempts at economy would again be smeared as reactionary efforts to save dollars at the cost of the lives of American boys. Patriots who try to bring about economy would be branded as Stalin lovers.

The misery of the people, from continued militarism and inflation, would soon become unbearable. And their regimentation and coercion, so lately thrown off, could be refastened in the name of stopping communism at home.

Buffett went on to prophesy some of the specific domestic consequences of the emerging Cold War. "Truth-telling would generally disappear in radio, press, and movie"; military conscription would soon be reimposed; "the regimentation and coercion" of price control would be reimposed; and savings would be wiped out by continuing inflation. Finally, Buffett questioned the morality as well as the efficacy of the global anti-Communist crusade. Buffett declared that:

Our Christian ideals cannot be exported to other lands by dollars and guns. Persuasion and example are the methods taught by the Carpenter of Nazareth ...

We cannot practice might and force abroad and retain freedom at home. We cannot talk world cooperation and practice power politics.<sup>[20]</sup>

In that same year, 1947, Representative George Bender kept up a drumfire of criticism of the Truman Doctrine. Bender charged that the Truman Doctrine was a "reaffirmation of the nineteenth century belief in power politics." It is a resurgence of the post-World War I policy of encircling Soviet Russia by a "*cordon-sanitaire*", and a new policy of interventionism in Europe that will commit the United States ever further and more intensely to this unfortunate course. Bender also attacked Truman's corollary call for a military draft, and for engaging in "secret meetings for industrial mobilization". All this, charged Bender, was "part of the whole Truman doctrine of drawing off the resources of the United States in support of every reactionary government in the world". And while Taft himself wavered and compromised on foreign affairs, especially with regard to support of Chiang kai-Shek, Bender stood firm; warning Congress of the "intense pressure" of the China Lobby, Bender charged that the Chinese Embassy was pressuring the State Department

into "all-out support of the present Fascist Chinese government".<sup>[21]</sup>

The last great "isolationist", anti-war stand of the Old Right was its determined opposition to the Korean War. This stand was all the more remarkable in the face of the fact that virtually the entire Left, including Henry Wallace, Senator Glen Taylor, Corliss Lamont, and the leadership of the Progressive Party, abandoned their anti-war stand in the name of the liberal shibboleth of United Nations' "police action" and collective security against "aggression". Only the Old Right stood fast. In early 1950, the isolationists in the House had dealt a severe blow to our mounting intervention in Asia by defeating the Truman Administration's \$60 million aid bill for South Korea by a single vote. The historian Tang Tsou noted that "this was the first major setback in Congress for the administration in the field of foreign policy since the war."<sup>[22]</sup> It was only the determined efforts of Rep. Walter Judd (R., Minn.), veteran internationalist, former missionary in China and leader of the "China lobby" in Congress, that induced the House of Representatives to reverse its decision.

When the Korean War began, Representative Buffett was convinced, on the strength of classified testimony before the Senate by Admiral Roscoe Hillenkoeter, head of the CIA, that I. F. Stone was correct and that the United States was largely responsible for the eruption of the conflict. Senator Taft and Colonel McCormick denounced the American intervention in Korea, Taft being particularly exercised over what he held to be an unconstitutional aggrandizement of the war powers of the President. In contrast, the liberal journals, the *Nation* and the *New Republic*, previously critical of the Truman Doctrine and the Cold War, now joined up with enthusiasm. These two journals denounced Taft and McCormick for joining the Communist Party in their "defeatism" on the war. The *New Republic's* annual rating of Congressmen in 1950 hailed the Democrats for their staunchly "anti-Communist" voting record in foreign affairs (87%); while Senator Taft earned only a 53% score, and such more consistent isolationists as Senator Wherry received only a 23% mark on the *New*

*Republic's* "anti-Communist" scale. The *New Republic*, furthermore, scented a recrudescence of the bad old isolationism of the days of World War II. The magazine sourly noted that "there has historically been a working affinity between isolationists and legalists — the former attacked Roosevelt's 1941 destroyer deal as war-mongering, the latter as dictatorship. There are signs that this coalition is again tightening."<sup>123</sup>

At the opening of the new Congress in early 1951, the Old Right isolationist forces, led by Senators Wherry and Taft, launched an attack on the war by submitting a resolution prohibiting the President from sending any troops abroad without prior approval by Congress. They criticized Truman's refusal to accept a ceasefire or to agree to peace in Korea, and warned that the United States did not have enough troops for a stalemated land war on the Asian Continent.

An intriguing attack on Senator Taft's foreign policy was now levelled by the influential war-liberal, and budding national security manager, McGeorge Bundy. Bundy expressed worry that Taft's solid re-election victory indicated popular support for limiting the executive's power to lead the United States into conflict without congressional sanction. Bundy opined that the normal statesman's pursuit of peace must be discarded and replaced by the power-wielder who applies diplomacy and military might in a permanent struggle against world Communism, in the form of limited wars alternating with limited periods of peace. Bundy criticized Taft for "appeasement" in opposing both the encircling of the Soviet Union by military alliances and the intervention in Korea. He also denounced the very idea of public criticism or questioning of the decisions of executive policy-makers, since the public merely reacted *ad hoc* to specific situations and was not fully committed to the executive policy makers' conception of the long-run national purpose.<sup>124</sup>

The last famous political thrust of the isolationist Old Right came during the debate on the Korean War, in the form of two, obviously coordinated, back-to-back speeches by Herbert Hoover and Joseph P. Kennedy, in late 1950, in response to the failure of the Truman Administration to make peace in Korea on the

heels of its crushing defeat in North Korea at the hands of the Chinese. Hoover confined his opposition to the concrete strategy of the situation: insisting that any land war "against this Communist land mass" in Asia "would be a war without victory, a war without a successful terminal". Any such war "would be the graveyard of millions of American boys and would end in the exhaustion of this Gibraltar of Western Civilization".<sup>125</sup>

Joseph P. Kennedy's criticism was more far-reaching. Kennedy noted the continuity of his opposition to the Korean War with his isolationist stand in the second World War. Kennedy added that "I naturally opposed Communism but I said if portions of Europe or Asia wish to go Communistic or even have Communism thrust upon them, we cannot stop it. Instead we must make sure of our strength and be certain not to fritter it away in battles that could not be won." But the result of the Cold War, of the Truman Doctrine, and the Marshall Plan, was disaster, a failure to purchase friends and the threat of a land war in Europe and Asia. Kennedy warned that:

... half of this world will never submit to dictation by the other half ... What business is it of ours to support French colonial policy in Indo-China or to achieve Mr. Syngman Rhee's concepts of democracy in Korea? Shall we now send the marines into the mountains of Tibet to keep the Dalai Lama on his throne?

Economically, Kennedy added, we have been burdening ourselves with unnecessary debts as a consequence of the Cold War policy. If we weaken our economy "with lavish spending either on foreign nations or in foreign wars, we run the danger of precipitating another 1932 and of destroying the very system which we are trying to save".

Kennedy concluded that the only alternative for America is to scrap the Cold War foreign policy: "to get out of Korea", and out of Berlin and Europe. We could not possibly contain Russian armies if she chose to march through Europe, and, if Europe should then turn Communist, Communism "may break-of itself as a unified force ... The more people that it will have to govern, the more necessary it becomes for those who govern to justify themselves to those being governed. The more peoples that are under its yoke, the greater are

the possibilities of revolt." And here Kennedy cited Marshall Tito as pointing the way for the eventual breakup of the Communist world: thus, "Mao in China is not likely to take his orders from Stalin . . ."

Kennedy realized that "this policy will, of course, be criticized as appeasement. [But] . . . is it appeasement to withdraw from unwise commitments . . . If it is wise in our interest not to make commitments that endanger our security, and this is appeasement, then I am for appeasement." "The suggestions I make," Kennedy concluded, would "conserve American lives for American ends, not waste them in the freezing hills of Korea or on the battlescarred plains of Western Germany."<sup>126]</sup>

The liberal response to this Hoover-Kennedy campaign, backed by Senator Taft, was instructive. The *Nation* charged that "the line they are laying down for their country should set the bells ringing in the Kremlin as nothing has since the triumph of Stalingrad. Actually the line taken by *Pravda* is that the former President did not carry isolationism far enough." And the *New Republic* summarized the isolationist position as holding that the "Korean War was the creation not of Stalin, but of Truman, just as Roosevelt, not Hitler, caused the Second World War". The *New Republic* was particularly indignant over the fact that the isolationists "condemned U.S. participation in Korea as unconstitutional and provided that the only funds available for overseas troops shipment should be funds necessary to facilitate the extrication of U.S. forces now in Korea". The *New Republic* saw the willingness of the right-wing to accept Soviet offers of a negotiated peace as akin to appeasement of Hitler. It warned that "Stalin, after raising the ante, as he did with Hitler, and sweeping over Asia, would move on until the Stalinist caucus in the *Tribune* tower would bring out in triumph the first Communist edition of the Chicago *Tribune*".<sup>[27]</sup>

One of the people who undoubtedly helped form the "Stalinist caucus" at Colonel McCormick's *Chicago Tribune* was George Morgenstern, chief editorial writer, and author of the first revisionist book on Pearl Harbor.<sup>[28]</sup> During the Korean conflict, Morgenstern

published an article in the right-wing Washington weekly *Human Events*, which detailed the imperialist record of the United States from the Spanish-American war to Korea. Morgenstern noted that the "exalted nonsense" by which McKinley had justified the war against Spain was "familiar to anyone who later attended the evangelical rationalizations of Wilson for intervening in the European war, of Roosevelt promising the millenium . . . of Eisenhower treasuring the 'crusade in Europe' that somehow went sour, or of Truman, Stevenson, Paul Douglas, or the *New York Times* preaching the holy war in Korea."<sup>129]</sup>

One of the most trenchant and forceful attacks on American foreign policy to emerge from the Korean War was levelled by the veteran conservative journalist, Garet Garrett. Garet began his pamphlet, *The Rise of Empire* (1952), by declaring: "We have crossed the boundary that lies between Republic and Empire." Explicitly linking his thesis with his pamphlet of the 1930s, *The Revolution Was*, which had denounced the advent of executive and statist tyranny within the republican form under the New Deal, Garrett once more saw a "revolution within the form" of the old constitutional republic. Garrett called Truman's intervention in Korea without a declaration of war, a "usurpation" of Congressional power. He was particularly exercised at the State Department's response to a query by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the power of the President to send troops into action abroad. The State Department had responded that "use of the congressional power to declare war . . . has fallen into abeyance because wars are no longer declared in advance". Garrett commented that, "Caesar might have said it to the Roman Senate", and warned that the statement "stands as a forecast of executive intentions, a manifestation of the executive mind, a mortal challenge to the parliamentary principle."<sup>130]</sup>

Garrett then adumbrated the criteria, the hallmarks for the existence of Empire. The first is the dominance of the executive power. The second, the subordination of domestic to foreign policy; the third, the "ascendancy of the military mind"; the fourth, a "system of satellite nations", and the fifth, "a complex of

vaunting and fear", a vaunting of unlimited national might combined with continuing fear, fear of the enemy, of the "barbarian", and of the unreliability of the satellite allies. Garrett found each one of the criteria applying fully to the United States.

Having discovered that the U.S. had all the hallmarks of Empire, Garrett added that the United States, like previous Empires, feels itself to be "a prisoner of history". For beyond fear lies "collective security", and the playing of the supposedly destined American role on the world stage. Garrett concluded:

It is our turn.

Our turn to do what?

Our turn to assume the responsibilities of moral leadership in the world.

Our turn to maintain a balance of power against the forces of evil everywhere — in Europe and Asia and Africa, in the Atlantic and in the Pacific, by air and by sea — 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. The Roman Empire never doubted that it was the defender of civilization. Its good intentions were peace, law and order. The Spanish Empire added salvation. The British Empire added the noble myth of the white man's burden. We have added freedom and democracy. Yet the more that may be added to it the more it is the same language still. A language of power.<sup>[31]</sup>

The last great political gasp of the isolationist Old Right came in the struggle for the "Bricker Amendment" to the U.S. Constitution. The Amendment was designed to prevent international treaties or executive agreements from becoming the supreme law of the land or overriding previous internal law or provisions of the Constitution. The Bricker Amendment was backed by conservative groups from the National Economic Council and the Committee for Constitutional Government to the Chamber of Commerce and the American Farm Bureau Federation, and by such writers as Frank Chodorov, an editor of *Human Events*, Garet Garrett, and former Rep. Samuel Pettingill; it was opposed by a coalition of liberals and the new Eisenhower Administration, which sent it down to defeat in the Senate in February, 1954.<sup>[32]</sup>

The fight for the Bricker Amendment, however, was the swan song of the Old Right.

The mid-1950s saw a startling sea change in American conservatism. The death of Senator Taft dealt it a crippling blow, as had the defeat of the Taft forces at the 1952 convention. One by one, death or retirement removed the Old Right bloc from the House and Senate: Wherry, Bender, Buffett, Taber, Gwinn, Knutson, Hoffman, Frederick Smith, all disappeared from the scene. Among writers and intellectuals, the death of Colonel McCormick removed a vital isolationist force, as did the death of Garrett and the incapacitating illness of Chodorov. The right wing group, "For America", headed by Dean Clarence Manion, of the Notre Dame Law School, still called for entering "No Foreign War unless the safety of the United States is directly threatened." But this was only a hangover of passing days. A new breed was marching on the scene to take over and transform the American Right wing.

The New Right was led by William F. Buckley and *National Review*, which, from its establishment in 1955, immediately took charge of the American right-wing. Its wit, professionalism, and personal and financial resources were new on the conservative scene, and it had no real journalistic rival. With the departure of isolationists Chodorov and Felix Morley, moreover, *Human Events* now became a staunch supporter of the New Right and of the Cold War. *National Review* publisher William A. Rusher immediately proceeded to capture the nation's Young Republicans for the new conservatism, and Buckley presided over the creation of a young political-action arm, The Young Americans for Freedom, as well as the Conservative Party of New York. Moreover, the Buckley forces brought to the fore of right-wing leadership in the Republican party two internationalists: Senators Barry Goldwater, who had been an Eisenhower delegate at the 1952 convention, and William F. Knowland, who had been a follower of Earl Warren in California and who had voted against the Bricker Amendment. *National Review* also brought to the intellectual leadership of the right-wing a new coalition of traditionalist Catholics and of ex-Communists and ex-radicals whose major concern was the destruction of the god that had failed them, the Soviet Union and world

Communism. This change of focus from isolationism to global anti-Communism had been aided, in its early years, by the advent of Senator Joseph McCarthy, with whom Buckley had been allied. Before he launched his crusade, incidentally, McCarthy had not been considered a right-winger, but rather a middle-of-the-roader on domestic questions and an internationalist in foreign affairs.

By 1960, and the advent of the Goldwater movement, the swift transformation of the American Right had been completed; the right-wing was now what we are familiar with today. For the remnant of libertarians and isolationists remaining, it was once again time to look elsewhere for allies.

### NOTES

- Atkinson had written and mailed anti-war pamphlets to American troops engaged in conquering the Philippines, urging them to mutiny. Atkinson's pamphlets were seized by the American postal authorities. On Atkinson, see Harold Francis Williamson, *Edward Atkinson: The Biography of an American Liberal, 1827-1905* (Boston, 1934, reprinted by New York: Arno Press, 1972); for Sumner's views see the classic essay, "The Conquest of the United States by Spain," in M. Polner, ed., *William Graham Sumner: The Conquest of the United States by Spain and Other Essays* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, n.d.) pp. 139-173.  
On Nock's contributions to individualism, see Robert M. Crunden, *The Mind and Art of Albert Jay Nock* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1964), and Michael Wreszin, *The Superfluous Anarchist: Albert Jay Nock* (Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press, 1971).  
On Mencken as a libertarian, see Murray N. Rothbard, "H.L. Mencken: the Joyous Libertarian," *New Individualist Review* (Summer, 1962), pp. 15-27. On Villard, see Michael Wreszin, *Oswald Garrison Villard: Pacifist at War* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1965).  
On the importance in the 1920s and '30s of the "Conservative Libertarianism of Henry L. Mencken and Albert Jay Nock," see Ronald Lora, *Conservative Minds in America* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1971), pp. 84-106.
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- For the record of the liberal "flipflop", see James J. Martin, *American Liberalism and World Politics* (2 vols., New York: Devin Adair, 1964).
- Clyde R. Miller, "Harry Elmer Barnes' Experience in Journalism," in A. Goddard, ed., *Harry Elmer Barnes: Learned Crusader* (Colorado Springs, Col.: Ralph Myles, 1968), pp. 702-04.
- Martin, *American Liberalism and World Politics*, pp. 1155-1156; Wreszin, *Oswald Garrison Villard*, pp. 259-263.
- Albert Jay Nock, "The Amazing Liberal Mind," *American Mercury* (August, 1938), pp. 467-472.
- See Wayne S. Cole, *America First* (Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1953), pp. 107-110.
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- John Dos Passos, *The Grand Design* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1949), pp. 416-418.
- Maximilian St. George and Lawrence Dennis, *A Trial on Trial* (National Civil Rights Committee, 1946), p. 83.
- John T. Flynn, *As We Go Marching* (New York: Doubleday-Doran., 1944).
- Ibid.*, pp. 193-194.
- Ibid.*, p. 198.
- Ibid.*, p. 201.
- Ibid.*, p. 207.
- Ibid.*, pp. 212-213.
- Ibid.*, pp. 225-226.
- Ibid.*, p. 252.
- Thus, see Henry W. Berger, "A Conservative Critique of Containment: Senator Taft on the Early Cold War Program," in D. Horowitz, ed., *Containment and Revolution* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), pp. 125-139; Berger, "Senator Robert A. Taft Dissents from Military Escalation," in T. Paterson, ed., *Cold War Critics* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), pp. 167-204; and Ronald Radosh and Leonard P. Liggio, "Henry A. Wallace and the Open Door," in *ibid.*, pp. 76-113.
- Congressional Record*, 80th Cong., Part II (1947), pp. 2216-2217.
- Congressional Record*, 80th Cong. (1947), pp. 46-47, and 6562-6563. Also see Leonard P. Liggio, "Why the Futile Crusade?," *Left and Right* (Spring, 1965), pp. 43-44, reprinted in *Left and Right: Selected Essays, 1954-65* (New York: Arno Press, 1972).
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- George Morgenstern, *Pearl Harbor: Story of a Secret War* (New York: Devin Adair, 1947).
- George Morgenstern, "The Past Marches On," *Human Events* (April 22, 1953). *Human Events* had been founded in 1944 by three leading pre-Pearl Harbor isolationists: Frank Hanighen, co-author of the best-known anti-militarist muckraking book of the 1930s, *Merchants of Death* [H. C. Engelbrecht and F. C. Hanighen, *Merchants of Death*] New York: Dodd, Mead, 1934]; Felix Morley, distinguished writer and

former president of Haverford College; and Chicago businessman Henry Regnery.

30. Gareth Garrett, *The People's Pottage* (Caldwell, Id.: Caxton Printers, 1953), pp. 124-125.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 158-159, and 129-174.
32. See Frank E. Holman, *Story of the "Bricker" Amendment (The First Phase)* (New York: Committee for Constitutional Government, 1954).