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# Alone Together:
# American Intellectuals in the American-Soviet Friendship Movement

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

by

David Byron Wagner

June 2016

Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Brian D. Lloyd, Chairperson
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Dr. Kiril Tomoff

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The Dissertation of David Byron Wagner is approved:

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Committee Chairperson

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*For Precious,*

*You are missed.*

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Alone Together:
American Intellectuals in the American-Soviet Friendship Movement

by

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Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in History
University of California, Riverside, June 2016
Brian D. Lloyd, Chairperson

American intellectuals who participated in American-Soviet friendship groups between the 1920s and 1980s are often classified as "fellow travelers" in the literature of the American Left. Scholars have deemed the American-Soviet friendship organizations – most prominently the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship (NCASF) – "Communist-fronts," a phrase used to designate groups that pretended to be loyal to American institutions but in fact served Soviet purposes. In the tradition of Denning's work on the Popular Front and Isserman's on the American Communist Party, this dissertation complicates our understanding of the American-Soviet friendship movement and its leaders. By examining the influences and careers of four leaders of the movement – Corliss Lamont, Richard Morford, Rockwell Kent, and Harry Steinmetz – this dissertation proves that the intellectuals and reformers drawn to the American-Soviet friendship movement pursued ideas and ideals that were current at the time – pacifism, pragmatism, techno-utopianism, humanism, progressive education, artistic realism – but did so in a manner that gave the cause of American-Soviet friendship a unique flavor that distinguished it from the Popular Front and Communist Party. The friendship movement

supplied an environment in which to explore alternative visions of social progress and human justice, and it was ultimately the leadership's commitment to these alternative visions – rather than loyalty to the Soviet Union or communism in general – that shaped the careers of those who proposed to lead that movement.

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# Introduction

In February 2014, the Soviet Union annexed the Crimean Peninsula from its neighbor, Ukraine. Russian president Vladimir Putin claimed this was a necessary action due to American meddling in Ukrainian politics designed to remove Ukraine from the Russian sphere of influence.[1] An affront to what was perceived by the West to be an advantageous and stable international order, Russia's actions inspired fiery rhetoric across the ocean from the United States. U.S. President Barack Obama called for economic sanctions against Russia, seemingly signaling the renewal of a one-hundred-year-old conflict between Russians and Americans.[2]

It is beginning to seem that the period of friendly relations between the United States and Russia in the 1990s and early 2000s was an aberration. Normalcy for these two countries has in the last century, instead, meant antagonism. The Ukrainian crisis is part of that history. One of Putin's motivations has been to restore Russian dominance of Eastern Europe, which leaders in the U.S. and the rest of the West were more than happy to see collapse with the Soviet Union in 1991. Americans and Russian citizens have no doubt made the connection to the original Cold War as well, as they have again adopted the attitudes of that era. A 2014 poll showed that 72% of Americans possessed a negative

[1] Joshua Tucker, "What Is Motivating Putin?," *The Washington Post*, March 18, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/03/18/what-is-motivating-putin/.
[2] Peter Baker, "Obama Signals Support for New U.S. Sanctions to Pressure Russian Economy," *The New York Times*, December 16, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/17/world/europe/obama-signing-russia-ukraine-sanctions-bill.html.

view of Russia.[3] Russian attitudes toward America are little better. Russian prime minister Dmitri Medvedev asserted, "One could go as far as to say we have slid back into a new Cold War."[4]

As the United States and Russia drift into their familiar position as rivals, it is worth thinking about how we got here and what could have been. The original Cold War which birthed this pattern, we must remember, was not inevitable. The United States and Soviet Union could have been friends rather than enemies. The benefits of friendship after World War II have been incalculable, whether in an economic, cultural, or ideological sense. Both the United States and Soviet Union were, after all, the dominant military, economic, and cultural entities in their respective hemispheres. They had an unprecedented opportunity to make a break with a Western European heritage that had nearly destroyed the world in World War II. Each nation was often perceived (rightly or wrongly) as an outsider from the old international order, separate from the thoroughly discredited European imperial system which dominated international relations, markets, and culture in the 19th century. The sheer degree of power divided between the United States and Soviet Union, much of it acquired at Western Europe's expense, could have meant real possibilities for an alternative system dedicated to peace and mutual prosperity.

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[3] 1615 L. Street et al., "Russia's Global Image Negative amid Crisis in Ukraine," *Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project*, July 9, 2014, http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/07/09/russias-global-image-negative-amid-crisis-in-ukraine/.

[4] Ray Sanchez, Nic Robertson, Don Melvin, "'A New Cold War': Russia's Medvedev Bemoans Relations with West," *CNN.com*, February 15, 2016, http://www.cnn.com/2016/02/13/europe/russia-medvedev-new-cold-war/.

Without the American-Soviet rupture during the Cold War -- generally accepted to encompass much of, if not the entire, 1946-1991 period -- we would be looking at a very different world today. It took decades for Europe and Asia to recover after World War II: American-Soviet friendship, rather than hostility, could have made this a speedier process. The end of the colonial empires was a painful and bloody nightmare for everyone involved: American-Soviet cooperation could have eased considerably the transition from colonial to post-colonial order. Of the disasters which afflicted the twentieth century and continue to afflict the 21st, how many were the result of a chain of events that began with basic American-Soviet antagonism? The penalty to humanity for the failure of Americans and Soviets to find common ground is the sum not just of the actions the nations took directly against one another but also of the actions taken indirectly to check the other's ambitions. The result is a horrifying calculation indeed; an accumulation of genocides ignored or encouraged, indigenous democracies crushed, terrorist movements groomed and supplied.[5]

In American public culture, America and the Soviet Union were usually contrasted in the Cold War, with the former standing for individualism, liberty, and democracy, and the latter for collectivism, tyranny, and communism. Yet, the two peoples, Soviet and American, were in many ways more similar than different. Both peoples collectively possessed enormous territory and resources. While each was

[5] In addition to the Vietnam War and Korean War, nearly every civil war during the second half of the twentieth century was connected to the Cold War rivalry between the Soviet Union and United States. Both nations also propped up numerous oppressive regimes around the world in the interest of keeping the opposing ideology from establishing a foothold, including Saddam Hussein's Iraq (by the United States) and Muammar Gaddafi's Libya (by the Soviet Union). Accordingly, most international crises of the 21st century can be traced to Cold War policies.

dominated by a single ethnicity, they also possessed a degree of ethnic diversity the Western European nations had never experienced. Even the timelines were similar: The United States became an independent and unified entity in 1783, whereas the Russian Empire was first unified in 1721. Both peoples spent the nineteenth century centralizing their institutions and expanding their borders, fighting both sectarian dissent and foreign powers alike as they encroached upon vast, seemingly inexhaustible frontiers.[6] As historian Kate Brown has noted, both cultures had a similar aesthetic and cultural heritage, conflating newness with progress and eagerly tearing down the old native cultures of their borderlands in order to build their civilization upon an artificially blank slate.[7]

Yet, in the twentieth century these nations ignored their similarities, engaging in a string of tumultuous panics and crises.[8] Animosity became overt with the Russian Revolution in 1917, due to an incompatibility in the aims of their governments. Russian workers led by Vladimir Lenin's communist vanguard dismantled tsarist despotism in favor of a dictatorship of the proletariat in the midst of World War I, when the tsarist regime was allied with the United States. There were rumors in America that Lenin

[6] These similarities are just the beginning. A growing historiography has addressed similarities in policy and governance between the Soviet Union and United States as well. See David L Hoffmann, *Cultivating the Masses Modern State Practices and Soviet Socialism, 1914-1939* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2011); Paul R Josephson, *Industrialized Nature: Brute Force Technology and the Transformation of the Natural World* (Washington DC: Island Press/Shearwater Books, 2002); Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge & the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

[7] Kate Brown, "Gridded Lives: Why Kazakhstan and Montana Are Nearly the Same Place," *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 1 (2001): 17–48, doi:10.2307/2652223.

[8] David Fogelsong suggests American interest in reforming Russia goes back still further, at least to the 1880s. He shows a cultural and political effort on the part of Americans to remake Russia in America's image. David S Foglesong, *The American Mission and the "Evil Empire": The Crusade for a "Free Russia" since 1881* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

represented a pro-German plot and his eagerness to disengage Russia from the war seemed to confirm this. The revolution brought the U.S. and the infant Soviet state into an undeclared state of war. President Woodrow Wilson sent American troops to Siberia in hopes that they could help facilitate the reconstitution of a Russian government less radical than the one controlled by Lenin's Bolsheviks. [9]

When armed intervention failed to produce favorable results, the American government chose instead to pretend that the Soviet Union did not exist at all. Americans were discouraged by their government from cooperating with the new Soviet regime which, through its practice of socialist economics and advocacy of violent revolution, was a clear threat to the international capitalist status quo. The Soviet government hardly helped matters, as it encouraged subversive American political movements, repudiated tsarist war debts, and assumed leadership of a burgeoning world revolution against capitalism. As a result, for most of the 1920s trade between these two giant nations was miniscule and cultural contacts infrequent. The United States failed to so much as recognize the Soviet Union as a nation until 1933.[10] When relations were finally formalized, the governments still kept their distance, a wariness fueled on the Soviet side

[9] Numerous monographs address the curious American intervention into the Russian Civil War. See Carl J. Richard, *When the United States Invaded Russia: Woodrow Wilson's Siberian Disaster* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2013); David S. Foglesong, *America's Secret War against Bolshevism: U.S. Intervention in the Russian Civil War, 1917-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Carol Kingsland Willcox Melton, *Between War and Peace: Woodrow Wilson and the American Expeditionary Force in Siberia, 1918-1921* (Mercer University Press, 2001).

[10] American relations with the Soviet Union prior to recognition are discussed on a variety of levels in a variety of places. See Peter G. Filene, *American Views of Soviet Russia, 1917-1933* (Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey Press, 1968); David C. Engerman, *Modernization from the Other Shore: American Intellectuals and the Romance of Russian Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003); Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to Soviet Union, 1921-1941* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

by fears of American espionage and cultural and economic corruption, and on the American side by frequent and disquieting rumors of the Soviet government's harsh treatment of its people. Mutual suspicions were deepened by disagreements over how to confront the challenge of fascism as represented by Germany and Italy, so that by the late 1930s each nation viewed the other as a cynical opportunist on the world stage.

During World War II, there was a thaw in relations, as Americans and Soviets temporarily set aside their animosity in order to destroy Hitler's Germany -- an existential threat to both democracy and communism. The force and finality with which the Soviet Union and United States dismantled one of the most powerful military states of all time is a testament to the potential possessed by these nations when operating in tandem. Yet, the American-Soviet alliance collapsed in spectacular fashion within a year of the war's conclusion. America's understandable desire to take advantage of its supreme postwar position to create a world in which another world war could never happen again clashed with an equally understandable, given their history, Soviet obsession with security.[11]

[11] There are three schools in the historiography of the Cold War. The orthodox view is that the United States reacted to Soviet aggression. See Herbert Feis, *From Trust to Terror; the Onset of the Cold War, 1945-1950.* (New York: Norton, 1970); Lloyd C. Gardner, Arthur M. Schlesinger, and Hans J. Morgenthau, *The Origins of the Cold War* (Waltham, Mass.: Ginn-Blaisdell, 1970); Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Crisis of Confidence; Ideas, Power, and Violence in America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969). The revisionist view is that both the United States and Soviet Union share the blame for the Cold War. See William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (New York: Delta Book, 1962); Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1966.* (New York: Wiley, 1967); Joyce Kolko and Gabriel Kolko, *The Limits of Power: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1945-1954* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972). Postrevisionists think that both preceding schools have value. See John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972); George C. Herring, *Aid to Russia, 1941-1946; Strategy, Diplomacy, the Origins of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973). Contrary to the assertions of conservative commentators in the Culture Wars of the 1990s, no serious historians posit that the Soviet Union was a blameless victim of the United States.

The American and Soviet governments maintained a stalemate for two full generations, in a so-called Cold War that defined the postwar era. The Cold War not only stifled cultural connections and intellectual innovation but also frequently erupted into "proxy wars" between the two nation's client states and allies. These conflicts, which often involved the overt or covert participation of the superpowers themselves, resulted in millions of casualties over a fifty-year period. Sometimes, as in the case of the Cuban missile crisis which almost resulted in a nuclear exchange between the United States and Soviet Union, it was very nearly much worse. The United States and Soviet Union had the nuclear hardware to destroy the world hundreds of times over. Both attempted to cow the other with bellicose threats of annihilation that, from the perspective of prior generations, approached insanity. Millions of Americans and Russians lived their childhoods in terror of nuclear-driven national extermination. Few generations have had to cope with such persistent and likely possibilities of apocalypse.

While the American government, the media, and many nationalist institutions pushed the two nations apart, it has largely been forgotten that thousands of Americans before and during the Cold War fought against a cultural and political anti-Soviet tide in order to try to bring them back together. These were Americans with many different motivations and interests but they were united by a determination to counter the trend of animosity. Some of their efforts were dedicated to promoting peace directly, others to more indirect means of friendship such as educating Americans about Soviet civilization. Still more aimed to introduce Soviet ideas into the American context in hopes of changing the attitudes, culture, and policy of their fellow citizens. The American-Soviet

friends, as I will be calling them, worked both through large-scale institutional lobbying and grassroots efforts. They were a small but persistent minority, largely arising on the left of the political spectrum and in the midst of the culturally diverse metropolises of New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. They formed a movement beginning in the 1920s, generally referred to as the American-Soviet friendship movement. This movement enjoyed varying levels of support and influence over the next sixty years, peaking during the American-Soviet alliance of World War II. Most members of this movement were intellectuals, often from academia or the arts, and were from middle class backgrounds. While the American-Soviet friends were tolerated during the wartime alliance, they were controversial before and after it, enjoying notoriety far in excess of their small numbers and the innocuous stated goals of their various outlets.

In the historiography of the American left, scholars have presented the American-Soviet friends through a single lens. People who gravitated to the Soviet Union are classified as so-called "fellow travelers," or more pejoratively, "useful idiots" (both labels thought to carry more sting for their derivation from statements by Leon Trotsky and Vladimir Lenin, respectively). They were people who admired and advanced the Soviet project and hated the status quo in America, without having either the guts or, for whatever reason, commitment to become members of the American Communist Party. The American-Soviet friends are always portrayed as occupying the ludicrous extreme fringe of the Popular Front strategy -- that 1930s collaboration ordered by Moscow in which American communists were instructed to work with liberals and progressives in the United States in order to counter the influence and threat of Nazi Germany. The

American-Soviet friends have been painted as one time liberals in that coalition who became so ensnared in the romance of the Soviet Revolution, and so hateful of their own country, that in the 1930s they came to worship the Soviet Union as a leftist utopia of equal rights, social justice, and universally enjoyed abundance superior to a United States discredited by the Great Depression.[12]

Scholars have deemed the American-Soviet friendship organizations -- most prominently the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship (NCASF) -- "communist fronts," a phrase used to designate groups that pretended to be loyal to American institutions but were in fact secretly set up by communists and served communist, not American, purposes. Their leaders were said to be a motley collection of well-known American liberals who lacked the courage to admit their communist convictions or kept them a secret in order for their groups to have more credibility in the United States. In either case, they were working against the interests of the United States for the benefit, and sometimes under the direction, of a foreign power. Many scholars imply or state outright that the American-Soviet friendship organizations represent a stain

[12] The idea that the American-Soviet friends, as I've distinguished them, were synonymous with "fellow travelers" and were, as such, a subset of the Popular Front is ubiquitous in the literature. Guenter Levy argues that American-Soviet friends were almost-Communists who aimed to subvert the Popular Front from within. Frank Warren treats them as a kind of extreme fringe of the Popular Front, in contrast to the anti-Communist liberals and progressives -- the former of which loathed the Soviets, the latter of which often sympathized with the Soviets but were still, in Warren's reckoning, independent. Michael Denning thinks of the fellow travelers as an integral part of the Popular Front. Frank A. Warren, *Liberals and Communism: The "Red Decade" Revisited* (Columbia University Press, 1993); Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London ; Brooklyn: Verso, 2010); Guenter Lewy, *The Cause That Failed Communism in American Political Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

on the reputation of the Popular Front and the American left that no amount of scrubbing can erase.[13]

The narrative of American-Soviet friendship organizations as the standard bearers of American anti-Americanism has been supported by popular culture. In the action movie "Red Dawn" (1984), wherein the Soviets invade America, a Colorado "Soviet-American Friendship Center" is considered a just target for American freedom fighters. It is duly blown up by a suicide bomber. The film presents this act as noble. The Soviets invade Reagan's America again in a 1987 ABC miniseries "Amerika." In that show, American-Soviet friends are a loathsome lot indeed, betraying their country to an enemy power without a second thought. They have received similar depictions since. In the hit FX television show "The Americans," the American-Soviet friendship organization is a hotbed of pro-Soviet espionage, a home away from home for the show's Soviet spy protagonists. Meanwhile, in the political sphere, the American-Soviet friends have

[13] Even as both the Popular Front and American Communist Party have received deservedly more nuanced portraits since the 1990s, the idea that American-Soviet friendship organizations were Soviet fan clubs for Communist-sympathizers has seemed so obvious that few scholars have tackled the subject in any depth. Scholars who have discussed the groups at all have treated the organizations as Communist fronts, and have focused only upon the motive their members had for turning against their home country. In *The Fellow Travelers: A Postscript to the Enlightenment* (1973), David Caute makes the most nuanced (and first) argument, stating that the friendship groups and their leaders were drawn to the Soviet Union because it was an exponent of a quest for never-ending social and economic progress that the fellow-travelers could support without needing to compromise their own privileged existence. In *A Better World (*1982), William O'Neill situated the friendship groups and their leaders sets them as villains against the heroic and prescient anti-Communist liberals who ultimately became the left half of the bipartisan anticommunist consensus which controlled the United States during the Cold War. For O'Neill, the friendship groups were the vanguard of the idealistic excesses always present on the radical left, which must be overcome to prevent the collapse of liberalism as an effect counterweight to reactionary conservative.[13] Paul Hollander, meanwhile, in his *Political Pilgrims* (1981) agrees with Caute that the Soviet Union itself was almost beside the point, but claims their motivation was anti-Americanism: a kind of rejection of "American" values so severe as to cause "durable alienation" among middle class intellectuals who were then "irresistibly drawn to repressive totalitarian systems and movements," whose "morally debilitating flaws and misdeeds" could not be perceived despite the fact that they existed in plain sight.

proven a useful weapon in the hands of right-wing ideologues. Conservative pundits, in their array of books on supposed liberal naivety, intellectual shallowness, and authoritarianism, believe their existence to be conclusive evidence of the moral bankruptcy of anyone to the left of Dwight Eisenhower. Scratch a dissenting American, they suggest, and you will find a turncoat in training – whether Henry Wallace, Franklin D. Roosevelt, or Barack Obama.[14]

Whether found in historical scholarship or popular culture, the narrative that makes traitors of those who advocated American-Soviet friendship forecloses the possibility that these advocates might be interesting and significant in their own right. It is this possibility that I explore in this study. As I looked into the actual history and character of American-Soviet friends, I found that their ideas and ambitions bore only a passing resemblance to the picture presented in fellow-traveler literature. The discrepancy shows up most clearly in a comparison of timelines. If, as scholars have suggested, the friendship movement and its leaders were nothing more than particularly servile participants in the Popular Front, we should expect these figures to fit comfortably into the standard trajectories constructed by scholars to mark the high and low points of Popular Front activism. American-Soviet friends should have been getting involved in the movement in concurrence with the beginning of the Popular Front strategy in 1934, or at the latest with the beginning of the anti-fascist alliance triggered by the Spanish Civil

[14] Books that use "fellow-travelers" to crucify modern liberalism might as well be considered a genre today. Examples include: Ann H. Coulter, *Treason: Liberal Treachery from the Cold War to the War on Terrorism* (Crown Forum, 2003); Jonah Goldberg, *Liberal Fascism: The Secret History of the American Left, from Mussolini to the Politics of Meaning* (New York: Doubleday, 2007); Paul Kengor, *Dupes: How America's Adversaries Have Manipulated Progressives for a Century* (Open Road Media, 2014).

War in 1936. Similarly, they should have been departing from the movement at predictable times coinciding with the events scholars have placed at the center of the pro-Soviet narrative. If American-Soviet friends were just the Popular Front, *only more so,* the same moral crises that affected Popular Front activists should be affecting them at the same time. The Dewey Commission's dismissal of the Moscow Trials (1937-1938), for instance, or the Nazi-Soviet Pact (1939): these should be moments of reckoning as well for the American-Soviet friends. If the American-Soviet friendship movement is part of the same tradition as the Popular Front, in other words, it is not too much to expect that its prominent members would, at the least, find the same events meaningful.

Yet, when we look at the leaders of the NCASF, they followed a schedule and an agenda that places them on a different trajectory. Its most important leaders responded to a different set of signals than those that the scholars of fellow traveling have insisted are the only relevant guideposts for understanding this cast of characters. To be sure, there are similarities. Many of the dates that were truly earth-shattering for the Popular Front, such as the Moscow Trials of 1937 and the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939, had an impact on leaders of the American-Soviet friendship movement. At the same time, it is worth noting that many friends of the Soviet Union had not yet become involved in the movement at this time. Indeed, the American-Soviet friendship organizations only got *started* as a significant rallying point for non-communists during World War II. The most important events for these people and their organizations – the onset of McCarthyism in 1947, the attempted construction of a new left-liberal coalition in the early 50s, the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, the Lacy-Zarubin cultural agreement of 1958, and the Soviet

invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 – occurred long after the Popular Front had dissolved. The intellectuals in the friendship movement had their own unique timetable and their own unique constituency. Neither can be understood if we maintain our allegiance to the 1930s-centric fellow-traveler narrative.

What I seek to accomplish in this work is a reappraisal of the American-Soviet friendship movement and its leaders on their own terms. In this dissertation, I argue that the American-Soviet friendship movement, from the 1930s into the 1970s, represented a particular development among American intellectuals. To view these people exclusively as Popular Front "fellow travelers" is to miss the most interesting parts of the movement and, as a result, to misrepresent its significance for historians of the period. The intellectuals and reformers drawn to American-Soviet friendship articulated a diverse array of ideas in distinctive and intriguing combinations. I hope to capture something of the distinctiveness of these ideas and of the movement in which they circulated by examination of the NCASF itself and then four of its most prominent leaders: Corliss Lamont, Richard Morford, Rockwell Kent, and Harry Steinmetz. These figures pursued ideas and ideals that were current at the time – pacifism, pragmatism, techno-utopianism, humanism, progressive education, artistic realism – but did so in a manner that gave the cause of American-Soviet friendship its own unique flavor amid the myriad expressions of pro-Soviet sympathy. The friendship movement supplied a welcoming environment in which to explore alternative visions of social progress and human justice, but it was ultimately commitment to these alternative visions – rather than loyalty to the Soviet

Union or communism generally – that shaped the careers of those who proposed to lead that movement.

This dissertation is separated into two parts. The first is a two-chapter organizational history of the NCASF, the most important organization in the American-Soviet friendship movement and the one which all other American-Soviet friendship groups ultimately circled. In Chapter One, I discuss the early history of the communist-dominated groups that presaged the NCASF, the NCASF's founding in 1943 and initial success during World War II, and the coalition that came together in the friendship groups: Communist Party members, Christian socialists, and independent socialists.

Chapter Two finds its topic in the previously unexplored postwar history of the NCASF. This period was defined by three crises which each nearly destroyed the organization: the wave of anti-Soviet hysteria which reached its peak in 1947; the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956; and the twin outrages of the Arab-Israeli War in 1967 and Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. These crises and the NCASF response are a useful lens not only into the NCASF's resiliency and flexibility but also into the evolving relationship of the three informal groups that comprised the organization (the communists, Christian socialists, and independent socialists). I argue that the success of the organization was dependent upon a balance of the three groups and show that the NCASF fell into irrelevance only when this balance was broken and the communists were able to secure dominance in a 1977 reorganization.

The second part of the dissertation consists of examinations of four leaders of the American-Soviet friendship movement. In these chapters, I integrate the thinking of these

four figures with the intellectual history of the period. Chapter Three concerns Corliss Lamont, a professor, writer, and humanist philosopher. Lamont became interested in the Soviet Union because of his attachment to HG Wells' ideas about world government and techno-utopianism, which merged easily with elements of John Dewey's pragmatism. In light of the New Economic Policy and Stalin's Five Year Plan, Lamont believed that the Soviet Union was a crucial development because of its willingness to experiment, and to learn from the experimentation, for the sake of future human happiness. He thought that Soviet planning was laying the groundwork for a techno-utopia that could eventually lead to universal human happiness and prosperity in the future. To Lamont, who distrusted supernaturalism and the notion of inevitable progress, the precarious prospect of a state that could learn from the mistakes of the past justified the toleration of any number of Soviet growing pains in the 1930s and early 1940s. He was a believer in the legitimacy of the Moscow Trials in 1937, was undisturbed by the Nazi-Soviet Pact, and, indeed, founded the NCASF in 1943.

Richard Morford is the subject of Chapter Four. The most obscure figure in this dissertation, Morford was a Presbyterian minister who grew up in rural Michigan before moving to New York to finish his training as a progressive clergyman. He served as the NCASF's executive director and leading light for thirty-five years and, more than anyone else, dictated its activities and character during the Cold War. Morford was a Christian socialist, who believed in peace and social justice and preached to his congregations on the virtues of redistribution as economic policy. He took no part in the American-Soviet friendship movement during the 1930s or even World War II, instead focusing his work

on church causes that aimed to make religion a part of parishioners daily lives. Ultimately, Morford came to the NCASF in 1946, after the Cold War was already dominating foreign policy. Morford's agenda did not include the furthering of Soviet interests – indeed, he had little interest in the Soviet Union as a cause in itself. Rather, he was skeptical of the American military-industrial complex's position that war between the United States and Soviet Union was inevitable. He sought to build a new movement through the NCASF that could ensure world peace.

Chapter Five is about Rockwell Kent, a realist painter and one of the most successful American artists of the 1920s. Kent, a generation older than the other individuals discussed here, possessed an ideology which mixed 19th century socialism and transcendentalist-inspired antimodernism. He revered the traditions of the rural United States and the individualist "spirit of America" he thought was embodied in the Declaration of Independence. Kent thought that in the 20th century, artists were the standard bearers of this spirit and that they should be given a prominent place in American life and culture. He believed that the United States was on the wrong path in the 1920s and 1930s in both the political and artistic domains, because he viewed monopolistic capitalism, heartless industrialism, and artistic modernism to be European transgressions against the spiritual virtues of the American nation. Kent did not take part in the American-Soviet friendship movement until the foundation of the NCASF, when he became convinced that the ideology and policies of the Soviet Union were more reflective of the ideas he espoused than was the Cold War United States. He did not make a serious impact on the movement until 1958, when he became chairman of the NCASF

at the moment that the Lacy-Zarubin Pact was opening up opportunities for cross-cultural exchange.

Finally, Chapter Six introduces Harry Steinmetz into our story. Steinmetz was a California psychology professor with a grave distrust of ideology, which he believed was an opponent of rationality and social progress. He became enamored of a gradualist view of socialism, wherein capitalism could be reformed into a more equitable arrangement through elections and reforms. Steinmetz spent the 1930s and 40s in the conservative city of San Diego, attempting to change the system from within, both in labor unions and politics. However, this milieu had little tolerance for even his mild ideas about socialism. He was red-baited in the press and eventually, in the early 1950s, fired for his refusal to sign a loyalty oath that reclassified teachers as government operatives. It was only after his capacity to reform the United States had been exhausted that he turned to the NCASF, in the mid-1950s, because he perceived it as the only dissenting organization in which he could participate. He led the Los Angeles affiliate of the NCASF on two occasions and even succeeded in creating a San Diego affiliate for American-Soviet friendship in the early 1970s.

It is my hope that the discussions of the organizations and individuals in this dissertation promote a more nuanced impression of the American-Soviet friendship movement than has been provided by scholars in the past. The narrative that constructs American-Soviet friendship organizations as dupes and traitors is not only largely incorrect but also misguided, missing the main drama in the story: how a group of ideologically-diverse individuals came together in a movement that somehow managed to

serve their varied ambitions to a degree that no other cause in the United States did at this particular moment in time. Their ideas and work within the friendship movement reveal a broad array of dissenting opinions, loosely held together by a determination to find alternatives to the Cold War consensus. Rather than succumb to the inevitability of conflict between America and Russia, the friendship movement maintained that friendship was not only possible but desirable, as it provided a rational foundation for the preservation and betterment of humanity.

## Chapter 1: The Origins and Structure of American-Soviet Friendship in the United States

The United States and the Russian Empire had never been friends, but one could call their relationship a benevolent acquaintanceship without overreaching. True, the Russian Empire was an autocratic and inefficient, if slowly modernizing, institution in contrast to the relatively progressive United States of the turn of the 20th century. Moreover, most Americans saw Russians as backward, superstitious others, and associated their nation with anti-Semitism, famine, and radical unrest.[15] But from a foreign relations perspective, the two countries had been on the same side far more often than they had not. Russia in practice favored the United States during the American Revolution, gave moral support to the North in the American Civil War, sold Alaska to the United States for pennies an acre, and the two countries cooperated to defeat the Boxer Rebellion in China in 1900. Russian immigrants poured into the United States in the second half of the 19th century, trade between the nations was bustling, and the most prestigious authors of each enjoyed acclaim by the other's intelligentsia. Despite the Russian Empire's abysmal human rights record, an organization calling for an improvement in American-Russian relations in those days would have been uncontroversial and even agreeable to Americans.[16]

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[15] American popular opinion of Imperial Russia has been studied in a number of dissertations, including Taylor Stults, "Imperial Russia through American Eyes, 1894-1904: A Study in Public Opinion", (University of Missouri, 1985); Jack Guildroy, "American Opinion of Russia, 1906-1917," (University of Rochester, 1940).

[16] The study of pre-Soviet relations between the United States and Russia is not a popular field, but has produced some invaluable work. Examples include: Albert A. Woldman, *Lincoln and the Russians.* (Cleveland: World Pub. Co., 1952); N. N. Bolkhovitinov, *Russia and the American Revolution*

The Russian Revolution in 1917 threw American-Russian (now American-Soviet) relations into turmoil. Initially, American distaste for the atrocities of the tsars, particularly against the pogroms of Russian Jews, prompted optimism toward the new Soviet government. Historian Peter G Filene writes, "Newspaper editorials and national spokesmen had interpreted the event [i.e., the Russian Revolution] not only as a victory for democracy, but as an enormous benefit to the Allied war effort."[17] But popular opinion, as well as foreign policy, shifted against the Soviets with remarkable speed. The United States put the new Soviet Union under blockade in 1917, funded the opposition Whites in the Russian Civil War of 1917-1922, and even sent troops to Siberia to guard Allied military stores.[18]

There are numerous reasons for the American opposition to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Part of the reasoning of Woodrow Wilson and his administration was that, by dropping out of the First World War, the USSR had produced major headaches for the Allies in their ongoing war against the Central Powers. Many Americans perceived the withdrawal from the war as a betrayal of the Allied cause and some even accused the Bolsheviks of being "German agents."[19] The confiscation of American property by the Soviet Union and its refusal to pay back the loans the United States had given the tsar's government was another factor. Racism, too, cannot be

(Tallahassee: Diplomatic Press, 1976); William Appleman Williams, *American-Russian Relations, 1781-1947* (New York: Rinehart, 1952); Norman E. Saul, *Distant Friends: The United States and Russia, 1763-1867* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1991).

[17] Filene, *American Views of Soviet Russia, 1917-1933*, 13.

[18] Carol Kingsland Willcox Melton, *Between War and Peace: Woodrow Wilson and the American Expeditionary Force in Siberia, 1918-1921* (Mercer University Press, 2001).

[19] Filene, *American Views of Soviet Russia, 1917-1933*, 21.

ignored. Filene writes that Americans viewed "the Slavic population," as "ignorant, superstitious, fickle, and anarchic," and therefore incapable of "freedom and democracy."[20] Soviet values and programs, too, such as official atheism, "inevitably formed a pervasive theme in American diatribes on Soviet Russia," and led to consistent claims that the Soviets were "enemies of civilization."[21] Certainly the crucial reason, however, for American opposition to the Bolsheviks was that the Soviet Union positioned itself as the vanguard of a proclaimed international revolution against the propertied classes: one that would have "challenged the foundation of American civilization."[22]

The new Soviet leadership had indeed courted American workers in hope of urging an American Communist revolution. In his August 1918, "Letter to American Workers," Lenin invited the American proletariat to join the bourgeoning international movement against capitalism and imperialism. Though the United States had begun in 1776 with a "great, really liberating, really revolutionary" war against oppression, Lenin claimed it had become "one of the foremost countries in regard to the depth of the abyss which lies between the handful of arrogant multimillionaires who wallow in filth and luxury, and the millions of working people who constantly live on the verge of pauperism."[23] American workers, Lenin wrote, would not accept this situation forever,

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[20] Ibid., 24.
[21] Ibid., 67.
[22] Filene, 103. MJ Heale also explains that strands of anticommunism was present in the United States in the second half of the 19th century, but so, too, was sympathy for the Communists' revolutionary agenda in their homelands. See chapter 1 of M. J. Heale, *American Anti-Communism: Combating the Enemy Within, 1830-1970* (JHU Press, 1990). Historians reject the once-popular idea that so-called "American values" contained an innate rejection of socialism and communism as a bit of revisionism by scholars in and immediately before the Cold War. Bryan Strong, "Historians and American Socialism, 1900-1920," *Science and Society* 34, no. 4 (Winter 1970): 387–97.
[23] V.I. Lenin, "Letter to American Workers," in *Lenin's Collected Works*, trans. Jim Riordan, vol. 28 (Progress Publishers, 1965), 62–75.

and would join the Soviet Union in a "civil war against the bourgeoisie."[24] In March of 1919, the Third Communist International (the Comintern) was founded in Moscow as an international coordinating body for an expected worldwide revolution. It was "dedicated to armed overthrow of capitalist private property and its replacement by a system of collective ownership and production."[25] The Bolsheviks believed that the Russian Revolution and the wider international struggle were inseparable and that their ultimate triumph was inevitable. Marxist theory "provided scientific prognosis of the collapse of capitalism," and the rise of communist movements in Europe immediately following World War I appeared to lend Marx credence.[26] Russia, the supposed "weakest link" in the capitalist chain, had fallen to the communists, and Germany and Hungary seemed vulnerable to revolutions as well.

The American indigenous radical movement was reaching its own zenith in 1919, as well. The leading exponents of that movement, the Socialist Party and International Workers of the World (IWW -- the so-called Wobblies), had already been advocating the same pro-peace, anti-bourgeois message espoused by the Bolsheviks in the Revolution for years. But whereas the American radicals' platform had never found much traction among their fellow-citizens (socialist leader Eugene V. Debs drew 900,000 votes in the 1912 election – the prewar height of popularity for the socialists), the Russian Revolution offered a successful model. The Bolsheviks "gave the domestic [American] movement a

[24] Ibid.
[25] Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, *The Comintern: A History of International Communism from Lenin to Stalin* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), xix.
[26] Ibid., 1.

deeper reason for existing."[27] Both the Socialists and IWW were soon full of Bolshevik sympathizers. As the American Socialist Party became supplanted by the new, more aggressive and Bolshevik-inspired Communist Party of America (CPUSA) and the Communist Labor Party of America, to some the possibility for a mass proletarian movement seemed very real.[28]

While Americans had tolerated the Socialists and IWW, the addition of a foreign boogeyman made the situation more ominous and threatening. In a post-World War I United States desperate for normalcy, "each social and industrial disturbance was received as prima-facie evidence of the successful spread of radicalism."[29] Many Americans felt that the Seattle General Strike of 1919, when sixty-five thousand workers struck for a week in the Northwest's greatest city, was the beginning of a Russian-sponsored revolution.[30] The American press supported this assumption. It was, according to the *Chicago Tribune*, "only a middling step from Petrograd to Seattle."[31] In reality, while the strikers were rallied by reports of the Russian Revolution, they were more driven to strike by their meagre pay. Nevertheless, by the strike's conclusion, many mainstream Americans were convinced an attempt at revolution was imminent. Even a US Attorney General was claiming in public that American strikers were being stirred up

[27] Robert K Murray, *Red Scare; a Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920.* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), 37.
[28] Theodore Draper, *The Roots of American Communism*, Communism in American Life (New York: Viking Press, 1957), 17–19.
[29] Murray, *Red Scare; a Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920*, 16.
[30] Jeremy Brecher, *Strike!* (PM Press, 2014), 111. Seattle's mayor, Ole Hanson, argued, "The so-called sympathetic Seattle strike was an attempted revolution.... The intent, openly and covertly announced, was for the overthrow of the industrial system; here first, then everywhere..." The strikers' own literature does in fact express a desire to overthrow "the employing class," though there is no explicit connection made between the General Strike and this eventuality.
[31] Murray, *Red Scare; a Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920*, 65.

by "Red agents of the Soviet government." It was made illegal in more than half of the country to display a Soviet flag.[32]

Yet by the early 1920s, it had become clear that the Russian Revolution was not the vanguard for an immediate international movement. Communist revolutions in Germany and Hungary had failed, and the Soviet Union – which the Bolsheviks had imagined to be but one piece of a vast communist puzzle – was forced to stand alone as the world's only communist state. The Comintern, "overwhelmingly a Russian invention" in the first place, and the entire international communist movement was "increasingly dependent on the resources, both material and moral" of the Soviet Union.[33] The confidence in the inevitability of international communism and accompanying emphasis on class-war ideology was replaced by dogged utilitarianism: a willingness on the part of Lenin and other leaders to shape the Soviet regime as needed in order to survive. Lenin, aware of the abject poverty of the young Soviet Union in both goods and trained personnel, began a personal campaign to appeal to the United States and its people in the hope that a closer relationship could prompt stronger economic ties or even recognition.[34] At the very least, Lenin wanted to make sure that nothing like the intervention of 1919-1920 happened again.[35] There were numerous Americans dedicated to the same goals. Their commitment to bringing the two most dynamic nations on earth together would

[32] Heale, *American Anti-Communism*, 87.
[33] McDermott and Agnew, *The Comintern*, 39.
[34] The best source for Lenin's approach to the United States is his own writings on the subject. Vladimir Il′ich Lenin, *Lenin on the United States* (New York: International Publishers, 1970).
[35] David W. McFadden, *Alternative Paths Soviets and Americans, 1917-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

span decades. The obstacles were immense and would only become more substantial as the century progressed.

This chapter addresses the history and nature of the American-Soviet friendship movement – the collection of efforts to improve relations between the United States and Soviet Union – from the 1920s to the end of the Second World War. Part One discusses how, from an outlet of Soviet foreign policy in the Society for Technical Assistance to Soviet Russia (STASR), the movement shifted by the mid-1920s into a broad, non-political, charity-based organization that would allow Americans to ease the plight of the Soviet people in the aftermath of a half-decade of civil war without directly aiding the Soviet government. The most successful organization, the Friends of Soviet Russia (FSR), proved initially popular with Americans but lost all mainstream support when it attempted to expand from an aid-based organization to one advocating Soviet recognition by the United States government in the late 1920s. While the FSR cultivated a diehard core of Communists and Soviet sympathizing academics (referred to here as Sovietophiles), any hint of heavy-handed proselytizing for the Soviet Union or its way of life, as was the standard in the FSR's publication *Soviet Russia Today,* was met with indifference or hostility, even by American liberals. Further, the integrity of the organization was compromised by its championing of the Soviet and CPUSA perspective in such divisive and devastating events as the Moscow Trials in 1937 and the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact in 1939.

With the founding of the NCASF in World War II, the American-Soviet friends found a winning combination: a broad, mass organization that ignored politics, focused

on disseminating information, and promoted a "different but equal" view of the United States and Soviet Union. Part Two engages the nature of this organization, which led, and indeed constituted, the American-Soviet friendship movement during World War II and the Cold War. For several years, the NCASF was staggeringly successful, in part because it filled a niche for a varied constituency. This constituency consisted of three distinct groups: the communists, Christian socialists, and independent socialists. The blending and clashing of these groups gave the organization a unique character and made it a home for many of the more interesting outliers on the American political spectrum. These people did not fit in anywhere else and saw the promotion of American and Soviet friendship the most important cause of the day.

## Part I: The History of the American-Soviet Friendship Movement Before the Cold War, 1917-1946

### Interwar Organizations

Several organizations were founded in the United States during the 1920s and 30s dedicated to studying, emulating, or simply preserving the Soviet Union. To many sympathetic Americans, the last of these motives appeared the most pressing, considering the degree of international hostility directed at the new Soviet state. As a group, they established programs that would be influential to the NCASF and wider American-Soviet movement for decades. None of the pre-NCASF groups, however, broke through beyond American radicals and into wider society. The predecessor organizations show that while

there was interest in the United States in the Soviet Union, efforts to facilitate that interest were ill-served by an ideologically-narrow base and partisan tone.

Founded in 1919, the STASR was the first organization in the United States premised upon American and Soviet reconciliation. The STASR was founded by Ludwig CAK Martens, the head of the Russian Soviet Government Bureau: an agency intended to lobby for diplomatic relations with a hostile American government. Martens had a direct line to Soviet Chairman Vladimir Lenin, though he appears to have worked at his own direction. Martens arrived in the United States in 1916 and quickly established himself in New York socialist circles. He edited the newspaper *Novyi Mir* with Leon Trotsky for several years and used his contacts from his former career as an engineer to build a network of sympathetic American businessmen. During these years before the United States recognized the Soviet Union, Martens was, in a sense, the first Soviet ambassador to the United States.[36]

In these early days of the Bolshevik regime, the most pressing need for the new government was trained personnel that could facilitate the transformation of the Soviet Union into an industrial state. Beginning in 1919, Martens reached out to his contacts in both the business and political realms, seeking Americans with technical skills who would be willing to immigrate to the Soviet Union and help preserve the Bolshevik Revolution. Such were the offers of support in response that Martens launched a conference for technical aid to the Soviet Union in September of 1919. Participants of the

[36] Ludwig Martens, "Old Bolshevik Society," Fond 124, op. 1, file 1210, RGASPI; David W. McFadden, *Alternative Paths Soviets and Americans, 1917-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Theodore Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia*, Communism in American Life (New York: Viking Press, 1960).

conference created the STASR the next month. Martens also tried to convince Russian immigrants to return to the Soviet Union with technical equipment that the USSR lacked. While we do not know how many people took Martens up on this offer, he claimed that his work procured about $750,000 in goods for the Soviet Union. This would have represented a sizable chunk of Soviet machinery imports if the numbers had been tracked officially. In light of its success, the agenda of the STASR expanded, with the aim to obtain enough support in the American business community to urge the US government to allow a resumption of American and Soviet trade.[37]

The American State Department deported Martens in 1921, on charges of subversion and Bolshevik propaganda. Martens had illegally negotiated hundreds of deals with American businesses on behalf of a Soviet government that had no status in the United States. After his departure, STASR declined. The Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA), founded in 1919, took over STASR shortly after Martens' deportation on Soviet orders (probably the first act revealing the Party to be an auxiliary to the USSR). The CPUSA attempted to transform the organization into a tool of Party policy. CPUSA chairman Charles Ruthenberg wanted the STASR to aid in infiltrating and subverting American trade unions, as part of the Party attempt to ingratiate itself into the labor movement. There was some initial success at the cost of long-term resentment from the organizations it infiltrated. By February of 1923, Ruthenberg took personal control of STASR to correct Soviet-perceived deficiencies, the largest of which was overzealous

[37] "Statement of Ludwig C.A.K. Martens on the Activities of the Soviet Mission: Moscow -- Feb. 24, 1921"; McFadden, *Alternative Paths Soviets and Americans, 1917-1920*; For more on the Soviet recruitment of foreign technical specialists, see Bailes, *Technology and Society under Lenin and Stalin*; Charbonneau, "Non-Communist Hands Bourgeois Specialists in Soviet Russia, 1917-1927."

promotion of immigration of American engineers to the Soviet Union. This immigration had resulted in far too many unqualified foreign engineers in the USSR with too little equipment and too much time on their hands. The Soviet Union soon all but scuttled the STASR and switched to a strategy reliant on encouraging goodwill and donations of goods from Americans rather than of people.[38]

As an explicit recruitment effort for the Soviet Union, the STASR was, as Theodore Draper writes, "less a party front than an official auxiliary of a party organization."[39] It had certain elements in common with friendship organizations (avowed non-partisanship and dedication to improving American-Soviet relations from the bottom up), but was based on attracting support from immigrant businessmen. This was an effort to appeal to a small segment of a small demographic. Several months after the foundation of the STASR, a coalition of American trade unionists and socialists created an organization that bridged the STASR and future organizations like the NCASF. This organization was the American Labor Alliance for Trade Relations with Russia (ALA). It aimed for a larger audience than the STASR and was oriented toward American needs and perspectives rather than Russian ones.

Historian Maurice Isserman described Soviet fronts as "nominally independent groups, organized around single-issue or special-interest concerns, in which the

[38] Ruthenberg, "Statement to the Members of the Society for Technical Aid to Soviet Russia [circa Feb. 1923]"; "Letter to Ludwig Katterfield in Moscow from Jay Lovestone in New York, March 7, 1922". There is less work on the First Red Scare than one might think. Schmidt, *Red Scare* is the most complete general survey. Barson and Heller, *Red Scared!* is wide in scope, though not particularly scholarly. Kornweibel, *Seeing Red*; Nielsen, *Un-American Womanhood* are good examinations of the effects on specific demographics. Pfannestiel, *Rethinking the Red Scare* is a revisionist effort.
[39] Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia*, 175.

communists exercised effective organizational control."[40] If one believes such a definition reasonable, then the American Labor Alliance for Trade Relations was the first Soviet front in the United States. It sought to advance Soviet interests without explicitly privileging those interests over those of the United States. Organized with the ostensible purpose of ending the blockade of the Soviet Union, the ALA advocated direct lobbying of the American government for better relations with the Soviet Union as well as the use of Soviet examples to prompt progress in American society.[41]

The ALA was the brainchild of Alexander Trachtenberg, a Jewish Russian immigrant and socialist who came to the United States in 1905 to escape pogroms in his homeland. Trachtenberg, dubbed "Trachty" by friends and often referred to as such publicly, stayed in the American Socialist Party after the left-wing split to form the Communist Party in 1919 (he judged the Socialist Party to be a more suitable American ally for the Comintern and the Soviet Union). After several years, with relations between the Comintern and American Socialist Party still icy, Trachtenberg opted to form a right-wing communist party with other socialist dissidents called the Workers Party of America. His aim was to create a less radical, more palatable (for Americans) alternative to the CPUSA that could still be seen as a suitable partner by the Comintern. The ALA was Trachtenberg's venture at forming an independent, non-partisan, yet *political* organization that could work as an intermediary between the Workers Party and mainstream America. He used the ALA to urge for a united front between the United

[40] Maurice Isserman, *Which Side Were You on?: The American Communist Party during the Second World War*, (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 1982), 20.
[41] "The American Labor Alliance for Trade Relations with Russia" Fond 515, op. 1, d. 36, Comintern Archive.

States and Soviet Union, but did not require advocates to accept Soviet ideology. He set the standard for all friendship organizations in the next two decades.[42]

Like the STASR, the ALA had significant ties to the Russian immigrant community. But the biggest constituency, and that which made the American Federation of Labor (AFL) an influential group in 1920 and 1921, was labor. The initial conference which established the organization consisted of 512 trade union delegates, including important labor figures such as Edward I. Hannah (Central Federated Union of New York), James H. Maurer (Pennsylvania State Federation of Labor), Timothy Healy (Stationary and Eccentric Firemen's Union), Sidney Hillman (Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America), and James D. Cannon (Western Federation of Miners). Even in the midst of the First Red Scare, then, the appeal was considerable. When Martens was deported, a protest rally in Madison Square Garden brought in an audience of ten-thousand workers and attracted Senator Joseph I. France to the podium.[43] The foundational issue around which members agitated was a revocation of the blockade of Russia. An ALA resolution read: "…we demand that the State Department take immediate steps to remove all obstacles to trade with Russia, to establish communication by post, cable, and wireless, to restore the right to travel between the United States and Soviet Russia, and to permit the transfer of funds from Russia to be used in the purchase of American goods…"[44]

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[42] David A. Lincove, "Radical Publishing to 'Reach the Million Masses': Alexander L. Trachtenberg and International Publishers, 1906-1966," *Left History* 10, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2004): 87; Alexander Trachtenberg and Alexander Trachtenberg, *The American Socialists and the War.* (New York: Garland Pub., 1973).
[43] "The American Labor Alliance for Trade Relations with Russia."
[44] Ibid.

The CPUSA disbanded the ALA at the end of 1921. The ALA had acquired too many broad functions and had become unwieldy. The Soviets required a specialized organization that could address the tasks of education and famine relief, which they now deemed most pressing. FSR was founded in 1921 to address famine relief but was expanded into a less-labor focused version of the ALA after that organization's demise. As of 1921, there was reason for the communists to be optimistic that a constituency for a new, broadly-targeted, American-Soviet friendship organization existed. The Soviet Union had instituted the New Economic Policy (NEP) beginning in 1921, which marked a temporary end to collective agriculture and the nationalization of certain industries. It had also allowed the reinstitution of select private businesses. Rather than a retreat from communism (as it was interpreted during Cold War-era Soviet historiography), the NEP was – to steal a phrase from Oliver P. Smith – an advance in a different direction altogether. It was an attempt by Soviet leaders to figure out how to proceed in the face of difficulties in executing their program, "to come to terms with complex social and cultural residues of prerevolutionary Russia, implicitly at odds with ongoing goals of building a socialist or communist order."[45]

Americans of all political stripes viewed the NEP favorably. Liberals who were put off by the violence of the Russian Revolution thought the NEP showed the Soviets valued the well-being of their citizens more than the tenets of Marxism. "Moscow is booming," wrote Lincoln Steffens in 1923, "Russia is beginning to live bravely and

[45] Sheila Fitzpatrick, Alexander Rabinowitch, and Richard Stites, *Russia in the Era of NEP: Explorations in Soviet Society and Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 3.

smile."[46] Many on the Left also began to see this more palatable Soviet Union as "an ideological refuge" because its "free medical care…paid vacations…improved factory conditions" seemed the sole remnant of the progressive political culture that had swept the United States before World War I.[47] Conservatives, meanwhile --particularly business leaders – reasoned the NEP was an indication that communism was on its way out. "Most American business leaders," writes Filene, "were willing to overlook the continuance of Soviet rule and to resume economic interchange."[48] A humanitarian effort, spearheaded by Herbert Hoover, was initiated, with the aim of enabling "the Americans to undertake the leadership in the reconstruction of Russia…"[49] The American missionary impulse resurfaced, "bringing bread in one hand and a political creed in the other."[50] FSR, then, was an attempt by the CPUSA to provide an outlet for these diverse Americans in a time of tremendous Soviet need.

The program of FSR was similar to that of STASR – relief of a war-torn Soviet Union – but the former was both more inclusive in constituency and limited in scope than the latter organization. Blaming the Russian famine of 1921 at least in part upon the American blockade, FSR claimed it was America's responsibility to provide relief for the Soviet Union until it could reach self-sufficiency. FSR committed to alleviating the Russian famine through donations of clothing, medicines, tools, and other equipment from Americans. It was immediately successful. Within a few months of FSR's

[46] Filene, *American Views of Soviet Russia, 1917-1933,* 139.
[47] Ibid., 141.
[48] Ibid., 119.
[49] Ibid., 78.
[50] Ibid., 82.

foundation, the organization raised $250,000. Over the rest of the decade, FSR harvested as much as two million dollars in kind and in goods from their constituency. Such enormous funds (roughly $26 million dollars in 2014 terms) allowed for a substantial outreach apparatus. There were one-hundred forty branches of FSR around the country by February of 1922. By the end of that year, FSR had adopted an extensive program far outstripping any previous Soviet aid organization in the United States.[51]

Several features of FSR were new to American-Soviet friendship organizations and would be emulated by the NCASF in the future. FSR was the first organization to inform Americans about the domestic progress of the Soviet Union. It did so through its organ *Soviet Russia,* which had evolved from the official publication of Martens' Russian Soviet Government Bureau into something resembling a news magazine on Soviet affairs. It was not the broad-based, mildly partisan organ that probably would have been best suited for attracting Americans in the 1920s. It was more *Pravda* than *Nation,* or even *Daily Worker.* But *Soviet Russia* filled a vacuum by carrying coverage of Soviet arts and human-interest stories, in addition to the reprints of Soviet Communist Party speeches and polemical Party editorials. FSR also had a youth program, based around groups called the Famine Scouts.[52] Among other activities, the Scouts raised money by selling Russian toys to other children and Russophile adults, and attended educational and recreational meetings.

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[51] Friends of Soviet Russia, "A Summary of Its Work," *Soviet Russia* 6, no. 1 (January 1922): 21; Friends of Soviet Russia, "Program of the Friends of Soviet Russia," *Soviet Russia* 7, no. 11 (December 1922): 287; "National Office Notes," *Soviet Russia* 6, no. 2 (February 1922); Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia*.

[52] Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia*, 176, calls them "the Famine Scout Cubs," but FSR literature does not seem to refer to them as anything but "the Famine Scouts."

FSR had an ambitious agenda that transcended the famine of 1921, including advocacy for the recognition of the Soviet Union by the United States. However, it suffered a swift decline as the famine was resolved and receded from American consciousness. Part of the decline was due to a campaign by the *New York Call*, a socialist paper, for more transparency in the FSR's dispersal and collection of relief funds. More damaging was the inability of the FSR to reorient itself in the light of changing circumstances. Having attracted thousands of Americans to the humanitarian cause of Russian famine relief, FSR attempted a bait and switch, directing its literature toward recognition of the Soviet Union and of the legitimacy of the proletariat revolution there in the late 1920s. These causes turned out to have very little interest to most Americans.[53]

While FSR managed to secure significant funds from mainstream Americans, its constituency remained narrow. The leadership was entirely comprised of communists, and members were a mix of communists and socialists. This was unique in itself. The degree of animosity between the communists and the socialists was already extreme after the Comintern had engineered the splintering of the Socialist Party of America. The sponsor list was, therefore, as diverse as a radical leftist organization could get, with Trotskyist Max Eastman listed beside technocrat Charles P. Steinmetz and hardline labor-oriented communist William Z. Foster. But there was little effort made to appeal to non-communists. Though the humanitarian narrative was emphasized, FSR literature

[53] Soviet recognition was not a popular cause in the United States during the 1920. There is a vast historiography on this and other matters of American opinion toward the Soviet Union. The classics are Filene, *American Views of Soviet Russia, 1917-1933;* Anschel, *American Appraisals of Soviet Russia, 1917-1977*; Strakhovsky, *American Opinion about Russia, 1917-192*0.

addressed its readers as "comrades," and employed a histrionic tone. Literature extolled the virtues of the working class and the wickedness of capitalists. FSR was, not surprisingly, a long way from functioning as a mainstream organization in the United States.

Noting such limitations, the CPUSA relaunched FSR as the Friends of the Soviet Union (FSU) in 1929: a bit of rebranding that was meant to consolidate the international organizations of Soviet friendship while making them more relevant in American life. The Russian famine of 1921 was long gone as a catalyst for aid. Though other famines ravaged the USSR during the lifespan of FSU, most communists were no longer bringing them up. The existence of famine in the USSR both served as a counter-narrative to the Soviet Union's image as a progressive state and suggested flaws in the Soviet execution of a planned economy. The Great Depression, however, presented the opportunity for a new catalyst for American-Soviet friendship. With the Great Depression, confidence in all things laissez-faire had gone out of fashion in the face of an international capitalist crisis. After 1929, even stout defenders of capitalism were willing to admit that there might be something to learn from the Soviet "experiment."[54]

FSU found little traction in American society, however, during the Great Depression. When the United States recognized the Soviet Union in 1932 it seemed a breakthrough had been accomplished. But interest dissipated quickly. The local affiliates, which at one point had exceeded two hundred for FSR, had shrunk to seventy after

[54] Regarding the interest of American capitalists in the Soviet Union, the most useful books are Siegelbaum, *Cars for Comrades the Life of the Soviet Automobile*; Engerman, *Modernization from the Other Shore*.

recognition. Even in the years of liberal and communist support known as the Popular Front era (1934-1939), few Americans wanted to advocate for American-Soviet friendship.[55] The most likely reason for this was the confused program, which left even members of FSR unsure as to the status and nature of the organization to which they belonged. Was it an unofficial branch of the CPUSA? A culture club? A non-political advocacy group? The membership did not seem to know. Cyril Lambkin, chairman of FSU in 1932, expressed frustration with the inability of some members to keep their allegiances straight: "Several branches established headquarters jointly with the Communist Party. In the election campaigns the branches held communist rallies, distributed its campaign literature, and in general participated in all its activities. This was done despite the fact that the FSU was organized as a non-party, non-sectarian organization," Lambkin wrote.[56] The national office, the members of which had received training in how to run organizations, blamed the local councils for inept bungling of events, such as the holding of meetings in communist headquarters and politically vetting prospective members.[57]

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[55] The Popular Front has had as much written about it as anything else involving the American Communist Party. Fraser M. Ottanelli, *The Communist Party of the United States: From the Depression to World War II* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991); Frank A. Warren, *Liberals and Communism: The "Red Decade" Revisited* (Columbia University Press, 1993) portray the alliance between Communists and Liberals as basically benign. Mark Naison's essay in Michael E. Brown, ed., *New Studies in the Politics and Culture of U.S. Communism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1993) is more critical, highlighting Browder's continual subordination to Stalin. Irving. Howe, *Socialism and America* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985); Diana Trilling, *We Must March My Darlings: A Critical Decade* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977) argue that the alliance was a mistake for the Left, with varying degrees of intensity.

[56] Cyril Lambkin, "The Aims and Tasks of the FSU" 1: 5 (June 1932).

[57] "Our Immediate Tasks," *Soviet Russia Today* 3: 1 (March 1934).

However, the tone of FSU's literature, both in pamphlet form and in articles in *Soviet Russia Today* (the successor to *Soviet Russia),* was no better. The literature reflected the smug, self-righteous moralizing of the Soviet Union's own publications. It read like propaganda and usually was. "I would not say," wrote one *Soviet Russia Today* correspondent, "that individuality is suppressed in Russia today to the extent that it is suppressed in America": an absurd statement that few people with even a slight awareness of the Soviet project would assert, no matter their political orientation.[58] Making light of the supposedly exaggerated reports of famines sweeping Ukraine at the time, another correspondent satirically wrote that Russians were "Condemned to Three Meals a Day": "three times a day, men, women, ay, even tender children are driven into dining rooms, without asking whether they want food or not."[59] In another example regarding the Ukrainian famine, which a correspondent referred to as "the starving Ukrainians myth," the author dismissed claims that anything untoward was happening in the Soviet Union:

> Millions of Ukrainians (as high as 10 million at a clip) are insistently reported as having succumbed to the 'inhuman policy' of the Soviets. Considering that the entire population of Soviet Ukraine numbers about 40 millions, one need not be a mathematical genius to arrive at the conclusion that this unhappy country has been reduced to the state of one vast cemetery. As there is no abatement in the appeals for help to the "starving Ukrainians" and the appalling totals reveal an astonishing tendency to grow beyond the actual limits of the Ukrainian population, one is unavoidably driven to surmise that numbers of dead Ukrainians are being resurrected by the Soviet Government only to be put to death again.[60]

[58] Marjorie E. Smith and Alcan Hirsch, "What Do You Want to Know About the USSR?," *Soviet Russia Today,* 3: 4 (June 1934).
[59] "Condemned to Three Meals a Day," 1: 5 (June 1932).
[60] Leon Rutman, "Two Ukraines" 3: 2 (April 1934).

Such a passage reads less droll than intended given the 3.3 million Ukrainians now estimated to have died during this supposedly fictional famine.[61] The appearance to the non-converted was that FSU were proselytizing acolytes of an international cult, willing to say that black was white in the name of their greater good.

While FSU was never as complex of an operation as was the NCASF, the model of the latter organization existed in the former. Both were organizations directed toward informing Americans about the Soviet Union and lobbying the American government toward the easing of tensions between the two countries. FSU had little impact in advocacy (there is no sign that the 1932 American recognition of the Soviet Union was due to FSU's efforts), but the organization had reach beyond its number of members, particularly when its organ, *Soviet Russia Today*, became the most comprehensive source of Soviet news in the United States after 1932. *Soviet Russia Today* had at least 20,000 subscribers throughout the 1930s, who hailed from 511 cities in the United States.[62] Many of the key figures of the 1940s and beyond in the NCASF passed through FSU throughout the 1930s.

One veteran of FSU that later became an important member of the NCASF was Jessica Smith. Smith, a key leader in the NCASF and the CPUSA's most durable representative within it, was the editor of *Soviet Russia Today* from 1936, and a secretary of FSU. The daughter of a landscape painter and educated in the American Friends Seminary and Swarthmore College, her early life was full of diverse influences. She

[61] Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).
[62] "Towards a Mass Circulation of Soviet Russia Today," *Soviet Russia Today*, 3: 1 (March 1934).

became a socialist after learning of Eugene Debs' anti-war platform in 1916 and brought a radical edge to a variety of more moderate causes, including the suffragette movement. After meeting American pro-Soviet advocates John Reed and Albert Rhys Williams in 1918, Smith directed her attention to the Soviet Union. She took part in famine relief in the Soviet Union in 1922 under the auspices of the American Friends Service Committee, where she met her husband, alleged Soviet spy Harold Ware.[63] The couple returned to the Soviet Union in 1926 and participated in the experiments in the Caucasus in creating collective farms using American equipment and direction.[64] Their work in the Soviet Union was praised by both Lenin and Stalin. Upon Smith's return to the United States, her now extensive contacts in the Soviet Union and the CPUSA allowed her to edit the *Soviet Union Review* newsletter at the Soviet Information Bureau, working alongside future Soviet Ambassador Maxim Litvinov. With Ware's death in an automobile accident in 1935 and Smith's subsequent remarriage to CPUSA attorney John Abt, she withdrew from overt association with the Soviet Union and elected to work on *Soviet Russia Today,* as a full time advocate for American-Soviet friendship. She was, by all accounts, an immutable rock for the cause.[65]

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[63] John J. Abt and Michael Myerson, *Advocate and Activist: Memoirs of an American Communist Lawyer* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 54; "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," NCASF Rally Transcript, November 26, 1962; Box 7; Folder 38; Klehr, Haynes, and Firsov, *The Secret World of American Communism*, 96.

[64]Smith never reported on her experience on the collective farm in detail, but Sean McMeekin's work in the Soviet archives has uncovered allegations from an American Communists that it was a disaster. See John J. Abt and Michael Myerson, *Advocate and Activist: Memoirs of an American Communist Lawyer* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 161. Klehr, Haynes, and Firsov, *The Secret World of American Communism*; Sean McMeekin, *The Red Millionaire a Political Biography of Willi Münzenberg, Moscow's Secret Propaganda Tsar in the West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003..

[65] Abt and Myerson, *Advocate and Activist*.

## Cultural Organizations

Meanwhile, several organizations arose around the United States representative of a different paradigm. Instead of bringing Americans and Soviets together through charity, the American-Russian Institute of New York and Alexander Trachtenberg's International Publishers aimed to connect Americans and Soviets through education about the Soviet Union. They reflected a tendency toward cultural relations that proved far more persuasive and enduring than the humanitarian angle. As Parks writes, "cultural friendship was older than political amity for these two countries." While the Great Red Scare had been a "serious break" in political relations, Americans and Russians had never really stopped engaging on a cultural level.[66] "Cultural contacts during the pre-Stalin period were full and free," and "scores of American delegations and thousands of American tourists" traveled in the USSR.[67] Using cultural contacts acquired, in many cases, through famine relief in the early 1920s, many Americans returned to the United States with an agenda for bringing Americans and Soviets into one cultural orbit.

Established in 1926 as the Society for Cultural Relations with the Soviet Union, the American-Russian Institute (ARI) in New York began its life as a CPUSA-sponsored research library in midtown Manhattan. The library, which always remained the center of the organization's activities, employed a Russian-speaking expert on Soviet affairs, who assembled an impressive collection of English and Russian language books on the Soviet

[66] J. D Parks, *Culture, Conflict, and Coexistence: American-Soviet Cultural Relations, 1917-1958* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1983), 10.
[67] Ibid., 26.

Union and Russia.[68] ARI had many illustrious members, including Jane Addams, Arthur Garfield Hays, and most prominently, social scientist John Dewey (a chairman of the organization). ARI sought "to bring together those who are interested in Russian life and culture; to promote cultural intercourse between the two countries, and especially the interchange of students, doctors, scholars, artists, scientists, and teachers; to collect and diffuse information in both countries on developments in science, education, philosophy, art, literature, and social and economic life."[69] By 1929, there were more than one-thousand members in the organization. These members were invited to see "noted Soviet visitors" at sponsored dinners, attend lectures from American experts on the Soviet Union, and engage in correspondence with Soviet citizens.[70]

The ARI also published a journal, *The American Quarterly of the Soviet Union.* A mix of footnote-heavy works of scholarship and blatant propaganda, the *Quarterly* evoked the tone and appearance of an academic journal, thus appealing to an audience that the Soviets and CPUSA had largely failed to reach in the 1920s. Unlike *Soviet Russia Today*, the *Quarterly* approached the Soviet Union as an object of study, not as an ally. Parks writes, "From the beginning the Society exhibited a remarkably high degree of professionalism, maintained a low profile and avoided controversy whenever possible."[71] As John Dewey became disenchanted with the Soviet Union after the Moscow Trials in 1937, however, he tried to mold the institute into a more critical analyst of all matters

[68] Ibid., 23.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.

Soviet. The clientele lacked interest, and a pre-Browderism Communist Party circled wagons. The opportunity was lost.[72]

A few blocks away, a now CPUSA-affiliated Alexander Trachtenberg opened International Publishers in 1924. Trachtenberg was now in charge of the entirety of the CPUSA's cultural apparatus in the United States. International Publishers was designed for the publication and distribution of communist literature. It was "a means to educate Americans in Marxist-Leninist teachings and bring them under the influence" for the CPUSA.[73] Trachtenberg offered "a broad array of publications" which appealed "not only to the worker class but also to progressives among general and scholarly leaders," and reflected an aesthetic consistent with the Party yet run independent of it.[74] International Publishers was not unique in its publication of such material – Vanguard Press and Charles H. Kerr also published socialist literature – but it was the only American publisher attempting to generate "a tide of public support for the Soviet Union that included pressing for American recognition of the new government."[75] In the next decade, International Publishers "developed into a more systematic source of radical literature and propaganda consistent with Lenin's concept of combining ideas and action to influence the masses."

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[72] "The American Russian Institute," *Unz Historical Research Competition*, accessed December 12, 2014, http://www.unzcontest.org/2012/10/02/the-american-russian-institute/; "Richard Morford Papers; TAM.361," History of the NCASF, by Richard Morford, Draft, 1967; Box 9, Folder 47.
[73] David A. Lincove, "Radical Publishing to 'Reach the Million Masses': Alexander L. Trachtenberg and International Publishers, 1906-1966," 94. International Publishers was bankrolled almost in total by A. A. Heller of the CPUSA, who paid the fantastic debts of International Publishers throughout its existence.
[74] David A. Lincove, "Radical Publishing to 'Reach the Million Masses': Alexander L. Trachtenberg and International Publishers, 1906-1966," 95.
[75] Ibid., 91.

While International Publishers eventually published an enormous variety of books, the company's initial raison d'etre was the publication of annotated books by socialist theoreticians. Most of these books could not be found elsewhere in the United States. The company also created and published inexpensive pamphlets aimed at groups the CPUSA determined to be prospective sympathizers of the Party, such as non-unionized labor.[76] Alan Wald writes, "By 1934, International Publishers had issued an imposing list of skillful translations of many classics by Marx and Engels, as well as works by Lenin and Stalin, and many books by U.S. radicals."[77] Trachtenberg soon expanded his operation to include reference books on the Soviet Union. All of these books "put Soviet society in a positive light, particularly regarding such issues as the Soviet Union's peaceful nature, economic development, the success of agricultural collectivization in the Five Year Plan… and increasing satisfaction among the masses of workers in the quality of their lives."[78]

In the mid-1930s, International Publishers tried to appeal to more liberal Americans as well as radicals. This campaign involved the publication of volumes by sympathetic American authors like Scott Nearing, John Reed, and Bill Haywood. The company also produced biographies about "key revolutionaries" in the Bolshevik Revolution, in the hope that "readers might be inspired to join the communist effort after reading sympathetic and inspirational works" about them.[79] By the late 1930s,

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[76] Ibid., 98.
[77] Alan M Wald, *Exiles from a Future Time: The Forging of the Mid-Twentieth-Century Literary Left* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).
[78] David A. Lincove, "Radical Publishing to 'Reach the Million Masses': Alexander L. Trachtenberg and International Publishers, 1906-1966," 102.
[79] Ibid., 108.

Trachtenberg was bridging these two tactics, producing books of speeches and writings on historical American heroes who could be spun to represent the values of equality and economic liberty, like Thomas Paine, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglas, and Thomas Jefferson.[80] "All of these works," David A. Lincove writes, "were expected to illustrate the revolutionary nature of key American leaders and enhance bonds of unity between communists and the American mainstream population."[81] It is not possible to determine the extent of the company's success with these projects, but Trachtenberg and the CPUSA considered International Publishers important enough to sustain it through the decades. International Publishers, like the ARI, served as a popularizer of academic texts and Soviet propaganda alike, mixed until one could not tell the difference. The two organizations lay the groundwork for an educational approach toward American-Soviet friendship that would be essential for the survival of the NCASF in the years of postwar government persecution.[82]

## Prewar Marginalization of the Friendship Movement

Despite the decline of interest in FSU, it was considered by most American liberals to be a fairly respectable organization, if not one they were interested in joining. This was because the Soviet Union itself, far more than communism as an ideology, had become respectable by the mid-1930s. The Great Depression and the Soviet Five Year

[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Committee to Defend Alexander Trachtenberg., *Books on Trial: The Case of Alexander Trachtenberg, Director, International Publishers.* (New York: Committee to Defend Alexander Trachtenberg, 1952); "Richard Morford Papers; TAM.361," History of the NCASF, by Richard Morford, Draft, 1967; Box 9; Folder 47.

Plan seemed to present a dichotomy: on the former side, waste and failure; on the latter, efficiency and success. Stalin's ambitious program to bring industry to the Soviet Union on a massive scale made him appear to be a leader who got things done.[83] While there were many different opinions among American liberals about the Soviet Union, a significant portion were drawn to that nation for its willingness to fight against the rising threat of Hitler's Germany. In August of 1935, the communists, who had previously attacked American liberals for being indecisive and overly attached to capitalism, responded to the Communist International's calls for cooperation with liberals in a Popular Front against fascism. This, combined with the drafting of a new, seemingly democratic Soviet constitution in 1936, led to a marked increase in sympathy for the Soviet Union, CPUSA, and organizations like the FSU.[84]

The Moscow Trials began the process of shaking up this relatively placid landscape. Between August 1936 and the middle of 1938, a parade of Old Bolshevik heroes was subject to trial for their alleged role in plots to assassinate Stalin. They were also accused of working with fascists to overthrow the Soviet system. The mastermind of these plots was said to be Leon Trotsky, the exiled Bolshevik leader who had done more than any person alive to create the Soviet state in the first place. An independent American commission led by John Dewey determined that the evidence against the Old Bolsheviks was false, and the trials were nothing more than frame-ups. The committee made a persuasive case, in large part because its accusations of fraud and corruption were

[83] Warren, *Liberals and Communism*, 9–10.
[84] Ibid., 105.

correct. When the defendants were found guilty and were, for the most part, executed, American liberals were given pause.[85]Open rhetorical warfare broke out on the American left, with radical anticommunists declaring Stalin and Hitler equals in tyranny, and FSU, *Soviet Russia Today*, the communists, and independent Sovietophiles applauding the efficient and noble Soviet judicial system.[86]

Opinions were hardened on both sides. More scrutiny of Soviet actions was deemed necessary by all but the most fanatical Sovietophiles. Unfortunately for the prospects of American-Soviet friendship, FSU was controlled by such people. There were many reasons for FSU's perspective: a failure to comprehend a broken and unfair legal system; traditional liberal antipathy for Trotsky and his "theoretical dogma;" a perceived need to maintain unity with the USSR; and a belief that civil liberties were less important than economic liberty among them.[87] But by coming down so strongly in favor of Stalin and the Soviet Union based on faith, the FSU and its members made themselves appear to be less in favor of American-Soviet friendship than Soviet dominance.

Though the Soviet reputation as a progressive state had taken a severe beating from the Moscow Trials, there was no dramatic shift in public opinion in the United States. It was the sort of development that only had impact on those who had already made up their minds. Communists and liberal Sovietophiles remained as attached to the Soviet Union as ever, conservatives and radical anticommunists continued to oppose it, and most liberals remained in sympathy with it.[88] American-Soviet friendship, indeed,

[85] Ibid., 163.
[86] Ibid., 164, 179.
[87] Ibid., 186–89.
[88] Ibid., 185.

seemed more promising in 1938 than ten years before. The United States and Soviet Union now had relations, and Americans of all stripes were fascinated by the apparent success of the Soviet five-year plans. Moreover, the long-sought anti-fascist alliance was coming to fruition. While communism was still profoundly unpopular in the United States (when asked to choose between Hitlerian Germany and Stalinian communism *as a future US government* in a poll, 59% of Americans chose Hitler), the vast majority of Americans had determined that Hitler was a greater threat to Stalin.[89] There were dissenters, of course. The liberal journalist Eugene Lyons, who introduced the idea that fascism and communism were two sides of the same totalitarian coin in his book *Assignment in Utopia*, wanted to avoid cooperation with the Soviet Union for any reason.[90] This was similar to the viewpoint of commentators on the Right like Westbrook Pegler, who thought that communism and fascism were literally the same thing.[91] For most Americans, however, the prevailing perception was that the Soviet Union "had a bad form of government and a wicked leader… but who had also brought economic development to this backward nation… and had done well in attempting to unite the forces that opposed Hitler."[92]

The Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939 obliterated this perspective. Stalin, seeking security by recovering Russia's pre-1917 borders after the West abandoned Eastern Europe in 1938, and Hitler, seeking to avoid a two-front war, agreed on a non-aggression pact in

[89] Ralph B Levering, *American Opinion and the Russian Alliance, 1939-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1976), 16.
[90] Ibid., 18.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid., 22.

August of 1939.[93] The CPUSA had been warning Americans about the evil of fascism in stark terms for the better part of a decade but abruptly changed course to support the agreement. Despite communist claims that they were saving Poland, almost no Americans mistook the Soviet opportunism, nor the CPUSA's uncritical acceptance of it, for humanitarianism. Liberals, most of whom had spent the last several years working with the CPUSA as part of a united, progressive, Popular Front, were forced to reappraise the international and ideological situation. If communism and fascism were a false dichotomy, the real conflict was between democratic states and everyone else. Americans promptly hardened their attitude toward the Soviet Union and most participated in the conflating of the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany that the former had made so easy.[94]

The (Popular) front did not hold. Whereas American liberalism had previously been split into several factions in regard to the Soviet Union (in sympathy; in critical sympathy; and in opposition), the middle faction – including the two most important

[93] Debates about Stalin's reasoning for signing the Pact are sometimes contentious, most recently in the 1990s. There are a variety of interpretations. Weinberg claims that Stalin hoped that the Pact would be the incentive Hitler needed to attack the West, and hence would create a favorable climate for Russian expansion: Gerhard L. Weinberg, "The Nazi-Soviet Pacts: A Half-Century Later," *Foreign Affairs* 68, no. 4 (October 1, 1989): 175–89. Read and Fisher argue the most prevalent theory -- that Stalin was playing for time to build up his forces for an inevitable German attack: Anthony Read and David Fisher, *The Deadly Embrace: Hitler, Stalin, and the Nazi-Soviet Pact, 1939-1941* (New York: Norton, 1988). For the perspective of Russian historians, who have frequently shifted en masse on their opinion of the Pact, see: Teddy J. Uldricks, "War, Politics and Memory: Russian Historians Reevaluate the Origins of World War II," *History and Memory* 21, no. 2 (October 1, 2009): 60–82. Roberts asserts that Stalin was indecisive and lacked a certain plan, and merely aimed to wait and see how things developed. Notably, he contends that the secret protocols of the Pact did not mandate a Soviet invasion of Poland, which he says was an ad-hoc affair rather than a planned one. See: Geoffrey Roberts, "The Soviet Decision for a Pact with Nazi Germany," *Soviet Studies* 44, no. 1 (January 1, 1992): 57–78. The Suvorov "ice-breaker" thesis claims that Stalin sought to pave the way for his own aggressive war on Europe with the Pact. It has been thoroughly discredited, at length by David Glantz. Viktor Suvorov, *Ice-breaker: who started the Second World War?* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1990); David M Glantz, *Stumbling Colossus: The Red Army on the Eve of World War* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1998).

[94] Levering, *American Opinion and the Russian Alliance, 1939-1945*, 22.

organs of American left-liberalism, *the Nation* and *New Republic* – now promptly switched sides and adopted an anticommunist stance.[95] The communists, along with the few non-communist leftists who remained enamored of the Soviet Union, responded by supporting the Pact and condemning themselves into public irrelevance. *Soviet Russia Today* in particular lost even the slightest veneer of objectivity, declaring the agreement "a pact for peace," and trumpeting the Soviet "liberation" of Poland.[96] The FSU, split down the middle between its communist leadership and largely left-liberal base, ruled discretion the better part of valor and disbanded themselves. For the moment, it was obvious that there was no possibility that Americans in mainstream political currents would classify themselves as "Soviet friends." [97]

The Soviet war on Finland in November 1939, a blatant territory-grab by Stalin which required and indeed inspired some serious intellectual gymnastics to justify, further confirmed to most Americans that support of the Soviet Union was less an opinion than a character flaw. Ninety-nine percent of Americans favored the Finns in this war, which made the Winter War, if anything, even less popular in the United States than was Hitler's invasion of Poland.[98] Americans perceived Finland to be a responsible (it was the only European country to make prompt repayment of its World War I loans to the United States), stable democracy overwhelmed by a predatory and godless Soviet monstrosity. Condemnation of the Soviet Union in the press for its attack was almost

[95] Warren, *Liberals and Communism*, 201.
[96] Ibid., 199.
[97] "Richard Morford Papers; TAM.361," Untitled Philadelphia Speech, 1983; Box 11; Folder 26.
[98] Levering, *American Opinion and the Russian Alliance, 1939-1945*, 34.

universal.[99] Conservatives argued for a cleaning of house in the Roosevelt administration, with the goal being the elimination of any trace of Sovietophiles.[100] A Gallup poll in December of 1939 found that there was significant support among Americans for an American military alliance *with Germany* for the purpose of opposing the Soviet Union.[101] In this environment, the cheering in *Soviet Russia Today* for the Soviet victory over "a dagger" aimed at Russia was downright suicidal from a public relations perspective.[102] With FSU gone, the hardened communists could turn to the CPUSA and its American Peace Mobilization, both of which readily accommodated the Soviet Union's "pragmatic" shifts of policy. Liberals, Christian socialists, and other non-communists who had been drawn to the Soviet Union and retained their faith through the crises, however, had a few years in the wilderness.

A small core of independent liberals and socialists, consisting of former FSU chairman and blue-blood socialist Corliss Lamont, Episcopal reverend and later euthanasia-advocate Joseph F. Fletcher, Roosevelt administration economist George Marshall, Popular Front stalwart Thomas L. Harris, children's author and leader of the League of Women's Shoppers Sophia Ames, and socialist and future head of the American Labor Party Clifford T. McAvoy, coalesced into a new organization called the American Council on Soviet Relations (ACSR). This organization was founded in 1938, but was low-key during the Nazi-Soviet Pact and Finland fiascos. In fact, there is little indication of ACSR activity at all until Germany declared war on the Soviet Union in

[99] Ibid., 32.
[100] Ibid., 33.
[101] Ibid., 34.
[102] Warren, *Liberals and Communism*, 199.

June of 1941. The Soviet Union became slightly more palatable to Americans in the year and a half since the end of the Winter War, if only due to the contrast with Hitler's crusade for European conquest. A speech by Winston Churchill on the occasion of the German invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, was instrumental in this, as the British prime minister argued that, in the presence of Germany's aggression and savagery, "The past, with its crimes, its follies and its tragedies, flashes away."[103] Polls in the second half of 1941 show that Americans preferred the Soviet Union to Germany in overwhelming numbers, based on the perceived need to destroy fascism and save Britain.[104] Yet Americans thought no better of the intentions and nature of the Soviet Union itself than they had a year before. Lobbying and outreach by ACSR on behalf of an entente with Russia proved premature, and the organization could not find an audience despite a merger with the small CPUSA-sponsored successor to the FSU, the American Committee on Friendship with the Soviet Union. Interest by the media in both of these organizations was almost nil, and American-Soviet friendship would remain unappreciated until the American entry into World War 2. [105]

## World War II, Respectability, and the NCASF

Everything changed with the American-Soviet alliance of World War II. Americans could not and would not agree on the nature of the Soviet regime or on the

[103] Levering, *American Opinion and the Russian Alliance, 1939-1945*, 39–41.
[104] Ibid., 47, 50.
[105] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Letter from American Council on Soviet Relations to Sponsors, January 13, 1943; Box 1; Folder 3; "Friends of Soviet Meet: Theodore Dreiser Is Honor Guest at Luncheon of Council Here," *New York Times*, March 2, 1941.

efficacy of its economic system, but there was consensus that the Russian victories at Moscow and Stalingrad were inspiring stuff. Americans, with the full collusion of their government, decided that – given the proper context and effort – Josef Stalin was really a conservative, reasonable man trying to save his country from the terrors of Leninist/Trotskyist ideology and violence. The Soviets, fighting for their lives against one of the most powerful war machines of the 20th century, did nothing to discourage this view through their charismatic ambassador, Maxim Litvinov. Supporting the Soviet Union became not only permissible again in the United States but popular. For American Sovietophiles, the stage seemed set to urge rapprochement with the Soviet Union for decades to come. As the previous two decades made clear, however, ideology was going to have to step outside for the duration.[106]

### *Russian War Relief*

The first sign that times had changed was the formation and success of Russian War Relief (RWR). The official origin story of RWR was that a small group of business and professional men, religious and charity leaders founded the organization in July of 1941 as the Provisional Committee for Medical Aid, which transitioned into RWR in September that year. On the Left, it was an open secret that RWR was the result of the advocacy of Popular Front-oriented communists Jessica Smith and Edward K. Barsky. The intent of the organization was the collection of money for humanitarian aid of Russian troops and civilians, as well as the education of the American public about the

[106] Isserman, *Which Side Were You On?*, 129.

Russian people and their war effort. RWR was a combination of the earlier famine relief movement with the education drives of the ARI. This education effort, however, was to be directed not at academics or Sovietophiles but the general American public.[107]

RWR introduced itself to the public on Oct 27, 1941, at a large rally at Madison Square Garden in New York. By then, entry into the war had become a foregone conclusion and Americans were becoming appreciative of the Soviet contribution against the Nazis. Former Ambassador to the Soviet Union Joseph E. Davies chaired the event, which attracted tens of thousands of attendees. Subsequent events in Boston and New York attracted tens of thousands more in solidarity with the Soviet Union. In Boston on December 15, a week after the entry of the United States into World War II, applause drowned out a telegram from Litvinov, while the ambassador's wife marveled at a turn of events in which "people who have never agreed on one thing before are now agreed on this, that we must get rid of Hitler." For the first time, Americans were flocking to events to hear the Soviet perspective as explained by American experts and Soviet guests. Soviet army leaders, like Major General Alexander Reppin and Colonel Paul Berezin of the Soviet military mission in the United States, were suddenly in demand.[108]

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[107] Edward C. Carter, "Russian War Relief," *Slavonic and East European Review*, American Series, 3: 2 (August 1944): 61–74; Abt and Myerson, *Advocate and Activist*; Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 1: 231.

[108] "Russian Benefit Oct. 27: J.E. Davies to Speak at War Relief Event in Garden," *New York Times*, October 19, 1941; "Boston War Rally Cheers Soviet Aid: 10,000 Applaud Mme. Litvinoffs Statement That Conflicts Are Joined Into One;" "Fight to End, Says Davies: Russians Will Make No Peace Alone and With Act With Allies, He Asserts," *New York Times*, December 15, 1941; "Gen. Reppin Gives Assurance to U.S.: All Our Enemies Now Also Are Enemies of Soviet, Head of Military Mission Says;" "Queried on Joint Action: Timing Is Up to Moscow, He Declares at the Opening of $1,000,000 Relief Drive," *New York Times*, December 18, 1941.

In this receptive environment, RWR acquired extraordinary reach. With a simple program based on admiration for Soviet sacrifices and the need to establish goodwill between the two nations, RWR secured 290 local affiliates by the end of 1942. In some larger cities, the affiliates were near omnipresent, with sixty neighborhood committees subordinated to the city affiliate in New York. There were 125 national, salaried employees of RWR in 1944, and an estimated tens of thousands of volunteers who worked for the organization regularly. The infrastructure was dense and sophisticated. There were trade union, industrial, women's, and nationality divisions, each tasked with specific outreach.

The money rolled in. Initial rallies raised $25,000 apiece, with $358,000 raised in a single month. When presented with such a non-political and popular program, corporations gave readily: US Steel contributed $75,000 in 1942, Bethlehem Steel gave $25,000, and a wide-assortment of other companies sent in checks for thousands more. When RWR raised a startling $750,000 dollars from one Madison Square Garden rally in June of 1942, it was evident that something remarkable was happening. In 1943, RWR was shipping a million dollars in goods to the Soviet Union every month. With help in organizing from everyone from the CPUSA to the Southern Baptists, favorable media coverage, a rapturous and forgiving American public, and explicit approval from the US government, Sovietophiles had never had it so good (and, for that matter, scarcely would again).[109]

[109] Edward C. Carter, "Russian War Relief"; "Russian War Relief to Get $114,000 Aid: Donations Made at Conference of 683 Jewish Groups," *New York Times*, February 23, 1942,; "$75,000 to Russia Gift of U.S. Steel," *New York Times*, May 2, 1942,; "Rally Raises $75O,OOO: Russian War Relief Benefits -- Luncheon Brings $6,500," *New York Times*, June 24, 1942,; "$500,000 is Donated to Russian

FSU had struggled for broad support and national figures capable of conferring legitimacy. In the fortuitous climate of the war years, these former luxuries came easily for RWR. The founding core and initial sponsor list of RWR was a glittering array of establishment figures the likes of which the FSU had never seen: medical historian Henry E. Sigerist; Arctic-explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson; famed Presbyterian theologian Henry Sloane Coffin. Professors were on the sponsors list in the dozens.[110] Politicians, some of whom, like Davies, had been admirers of the Soviet Union for years before the American political culture allowed them to say so, soon joined the cause as well. New York Mayor La Guardia, sitting Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, and Senator Claude Pepper spoke at conferences and expressed unreserved support for the Soviet Union during its struggle. Pepper went so far as to retroactively excuse, with some reserve, the Nazi-Soviet Pact, through an argument based on the prescient nature of Soviet realpolitik.[111] No less a celebrity than Eleanor Roosevelt was photographed donating a dress to RWR in 1942. Inspired by her generosity (it was a dress she claimed she "had worn hardly at all"), Americans donated 750,000 pounds of clothing to the Soviet Union within the year.[112]

Many important personalities in the NCASF got their start in American-Soviet friendship in RWR. Among them was William Howard Melish, the young assistant rector

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Relief: $75,000 by U.S. Steel Tops the List of Contributors," *New York Times*, June 28, 1942,; "Million a Month in Aid is Shipped to Soviet: Russian War Relief Hopes to Continue Rate Through 1943," *New York Times*, April 27, 1943.

[110] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," Sponsor List for Russian War Relief, November 11, 1941; Russian War Relief.

[111] NY Times, Feb 14 1942

[112] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," sec. Russian War Relief; "The First Lady Donates to Russian War Relief," *New York Times*, February 27, 1943; "More Aid To Russia is Urged by Pepper: Senator Asks Larger Role for Soviets in Councils Planning War Strategy;" "Stalin's Course Praised: Failure by Democracies to Give Support Cited as Reason for 1939 Deal," *New York Times*, February 14, 1942.

at Brooklyn's Holy Trinity Episcopal Church. A Christian socialist of the Norman Thomas school – all pacifism and racial equality – Melish was inspired to focus on the Soviet Union by conversations with friends Harold Laski, Bernard Shaw, and Beatrice Webb during a year in England. He moonlighted from working at his church to organize the Brooklyn and Manhattan chapters of RWR, and went on to chair the NCASF between 1947 and 1951.[113]

### *The Congress of American-Soviet Friendship*

With the United States and the Soviet Union allies in a world war, and RWR bringing in millions of dollars on a pro-Soviet platform, many advocates of American-Soviet friendship thought it was time for a similarly broad organization that would lobby for the cause even after the war was over. It was much easier to find other nationally known figures interested in promoting American-Soviet friendship in 1942 than in 1939. The founding circle included veteran Sovietophiles Melish and Lamont, but was for the most part made up of Popular Front liberals and distinguished academics: the former group including New York talent agent William Morris (the creator of the William Morris Agency), the latter neurologist Harry Grundfest and sociologist Henry Pratt Fairchild. Another decisive addition was CPUSA member Alice Barrows, who worked with Jessica Smith to provide the administrative and organizational muscle for their venture. The initial name of this group was the Congress of American-Soviet Friendship.

[113] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," n. Box 7; Folder 46; ibid., Box 2; Folder 16.

Within a year, it would change to the National Council for American-Soviet Friendship, a title and organization that survived for just shy of fifty years.[114]

A more favorable domestic climate allowed the Congress to secure a spectacular group of sponsors. Over 300 people endorsed the Congress publicly, rocks of the American establishment all. In particular, the number of politicians willing to associate themselves with American-Soviet friendship had, in the course of a year, exploded. Joseph E. Davies, so effective as a sponsor of RWR, became honorary chairman. The FDR administration was well represented, with Secretary of State Cordell Hull, Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr., and Secretary of Commerce Jesse Jones all offering their support. But the sponsors list had something for everyone: entertainers (Charlie Chaplin, Paul Robeson), scientists (Grundfest, Albert Einstein), clergy of all denominations (Bishop Arthur W. Moulton, Reverend Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.), labor leaders (Sidney Hillman, William Green, Philip Murray), artists (Rockwell Kent, Max Weber, Jo Davidson), and businessmen (Edsel Ford, F.W. Lovejoy of Eastman Kodak, Owen D. Young of General Electric).[115]

The culmination of the early efforts of Lamont and the rest of the leadership was the Congress of American-Soviet Friendship, held in November of 1942. It was a historic undertaking. Rather than a single event, the Congress was a two-day extravaganza. It consisted of an opening luncheon, seven educational panel sessions, and a climactic rally at Madison Square Garden (which was subtitled, "Salute to Our Russian Ally!"). The

[114] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 1: 156.
[115] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Box 1; Folder 6; "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," sec. Congress of American–Soviet Friendship.

agenda, according to Lamont – who chaired the Congress as well as the organization that birthed it – was "to give voice to the deep, country-wide gratitude of the American people for the superb heroism and skill with which the Soviet people have fought our common Nazi enemy." The Congress wanted "to channel and focus this feeling… so that closer American-Soviet cooperation and understanding will result for the winning of the war against Hitler and the Axis." The long-term aim was "to see American-Soviet friendship established on a firm and lasting basis, so that the cooperation between our two great countries will go on after the war is over."[116] The Congress entertained 264 delegates from American organizations, 356 delegates from trade unions, 20,000+ attendees at the Madison Garden Rally, and included messages of introduction and support from President Roosevelt and five-star general and later president Dwight D. Eisenhower.[117]

At the luncheon, honorary chairman Davies called the Congress "a unifying event," which "sprang out of the hearts of the American people in admiration of the courage, bravery, and ideals of the men who died and the men who are still living on the battlefields of Russia." He expressed hope that "the Soviet people will learn that we are determined to march with them beneath the banners of victory toward the sunlight of humanity, of kindness, of tolerance, and decency." There was a lot of this solidarity rhetoric, and it goes some length to explaining the Congress' popularity. A cynical observer would not be entirely out of line to attribute much of the expressed sympathy of

[116] Congress of American-Soviet Friendship, *Salute to Our Russian Ally; Report of the Congress of American-Soviet Friendship, New York City, November 7 & 8, 1942.* (New York: Congress of American-Soviet friendship, 1943), 11–13.
[117] Congress of American-Soviet Friendship, *Salute to Our Russian Ally; Report of the Congress of American-Soviet Friendship, New York City, November 7 & 8, 1942.*

the speakers to the belief that the enemy of one's enemy is one's friend, rather than to a genuine blooming of affection for the Soviet people. Indeed, the stout Soviet resistance at Stalingrad occurring simultaneously with the Congress was surely not coincidental to the 20,000+ attendees at Madison Square Garden on November 8. But one must also consider how we should account for the other sentiments expressed at the Congress by speakers all along the ideological spectrum, including the claims for improved relations in the long-term.

Davies, for one, drew parallels between the United States' history as a frontier nation and the experiences of the Soviet people in the present day, as pioneers of a new social and economic system. He claimed that the ancestors of Americans had struggled and died so that conditions could be better for their children, just as the Soviets struggled and died for the same in the present. He also referred to those who saw the alliance between the United States and Soviet Union as an act of mere necessity as "knaves and fools." Davies said these "malicious elements" were representatives of the enemy, and they would not get away with it. The shoe, when on the other foot, fit quite well.[118]

Regrets for past American policy were also common. Senator Claude Pepper characterized the 1930s governmental apathy toward the Soviet Union as part of a pattern, lamenting the failure of the United States to come to the aid of all geographically distant peoples during that period, such as the Jews against the Germans and the Ethiopians against the Italians. Pepper castigated an isolationist Senate, which he claimed had spent the day France fell debating "whether we should pay a tax of $3.00 a gallon on

[118] Ibid., 9–10.

straight or blended whiskey." That attitude, he implied, was gone. Americans could now recognize that, shorn of their prejudice, the difference between the United States and Soviet Union was not one of desired ends, but of means.[119] Professor Francis E. McMahon, a "confessed Catholic," insisted that the Russians were our fated allies, and he contrasted the nihilism of the Germans with the character of the "Russian soul."[120] Harvard Professor Ralph Barton Perry argued that Russian and American friendship was not merely of utility but also of virtue (to use the Aristotelian conceit), because the core tenets of Soviet governmental philosophy – which Perry claimed to include "respect for the dignity of man," "hatred of war," "faith in the beneficence of truth," among many others – were congruent with those of the United States.[121]

Lamont also emphasized similarities. In a disclaimer already essential in 1942, Lamont assured delegates that the Congress was not attempting to paint the Soviet Union as a utopia. But "friendship does not demand perfection on either side," he said. Instead of dwelling on, or even addressing, specific controversies, Lamont emphasized the similarities between Americans and Russians. He characterized both peoples as "democratic… warm, friendly, big hearted" and both countries as "melting pots of many different races and nationalities." Both aimed for a society in which "all individuals and groups will enjoy an abundant life."[122]

[119] Ibid., 22–24.
[120] Ibid., 20–22.
[121] Ibid., 13–16.
[122] Ibid., 11–12.

The panels on November 7th and 8th were wide reaching in topic. Each panel consisted of important figures in labor, culture, science, politics, as well as Soviet representatives. The panels were educational. An attendee at "The Role of Women and Child Care in Wartime," for instance, would hear about equal rights for women in the Soviet Union, how this relates to the relative lack of women in the front lines, the Soviet working day, the poor conditions for mothers prior to the Revolution, and the explosion in the number of female professionals following the first Five Year Plan. If the panels lacked the kind of skepticism toward Soviet narratives that was called for after information about conditions in the Soviet Union began to leak out into the wider world in the 1930s, anyone who attended one of these panels still would have come away with many facts they could have encountered in few other places in 1942. The worst one could say about these informational sessions is that they lacked full context.[123]

At the same time, however, it would be problematic to argue that the panels, and the educational efforts of the NCASF in the future, were not selective. Almost without exception, the speakers gave an outstanding impression of socialism in practice in the Soviet Union. The NCASF acknowledged shortcomings in the Soviet Union, but denied them to be indicative of systemic or chronic flaws. It was common to assert that Soviet ideals, as embodied in their 1936 constitution, for instance, had already become reality. At the "Role of Women and Child Care in Wartime" panel, Dr. Fannina Halle claimed,

[123] Ibid.; Caute discusses the popularity of Soviet cultural and social matters among Western observers, characterizing the fascination as "asking pre-Socialist questions, examining those aspects of communist policy most closely joined to the ideals of the bourgeois Enlightenment." See David Caute, *The Fellow-Travellers; a Postscript to the Enlightenment.* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), 60.

"There are no longer divisions in the Soviet Union between former oppressed nationalities, between races and faiths, and between the so-called men's and women's jobs."[124] Ukrainians might have had something to say about this.[125] In a wartime alliance, blatant bias such as this was probably not of great concern. The American government inundated Americans with propaganda during World War II and the American people probably did not expect a whole lot else.

The last part of the Congress was the Madison Square Garden rally on the evening of November 8. This event sold out weeks in advance and thousands who were unable to secure tickets stood in the rain listening along via loudspeakers. Radio carried the rally to hundreds of thousands of people around the world.[126] The highlight was the address by Vice President Henry A. Wallace, already the hope of progressives nationwide. Wallace praised the Soviet Union for its "striking example of courage and willingness to sacrifice:" something Wallace credited Americans with as well. Most of his speech was an explanation of the similarities between the United States and Soviet Union. Both had

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[124] Congress of American-Soviet Friendship, *Salute to Our Russian Ally; Report of the Congress of American-Soviet Friendship, New York City, November 7 & 8, 1942.*, 51.

[125] Soviet discrimination against religion has been well-documented by monographs. See Benjamin Pinkus and Jonathan. Frankel, *The Soviet Government and the Jews, 1948-1967: A Documented Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); William Korey, *The Soviet Cage; Anti-Semitism in Russia.* (New York: Viking Press, 1973); Geoffrey A. Hosking, *Church, Nation and State in Russia and Ukraine* (Basingstoke: Macmillan in association with the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, 1991); Alfred D. Low, *Soviet Jewry and Soviet Policy* (New York: East European Monographs; Distributed by Columbia University Press, 1990). While Soviet nationalities policy, especially during the Lenin and Stalin periods, has received strong treatment from scholars, there is only one monograph specifically about Communist racism: Ian. Law, *Red Racisms: Racism in Communist and Post-Communist Contexts* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

[126] Wallace biographies abound. For our purposes, the most useful are Richard J. Walton, *Henry Wallace, Harry Truman, and the Cold War* (New York: Viking, 1976); Edward L. Schapsmeier and Frederick H. Schapsmeier, *Prophet in Politics: Henry A. Wallace and the War Years, 1940-1965* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1971); Norman D. Markowitz, *The Rise and Fall of the People's Century: Henry A. Wallace and American Liberalism, 1941-1948* (New York: Free Press, 1973).

rich resources, both had "bitter experiences" with isolationism that must not occur again, and both countries were advocates of "a new democracy, the democracy of the common man that includes not only the Bill of Rights, but also economic democracy, ethnic democracy, educational democracy, and democracy in the treatment of the sexes." The old form of democracy based on individualism alone, represented by Britain and France, had not been able to guarantee the peace. Perhaps, Wallace asserted, the new democracies of the Soviet Union and United States could, with a hybrid ideology that was "neither Communism of the old-fashioned internationalist sort, nor democracy of the old-fashioned isolationist sort."[127]

The most affecting display of unity in a night full of them might have been when Corliss Lamont took the stage with his father, Thomas W. Lamont, chairman of the executive committee of the JP Morgan company, symbols of American socialism and capitalism coming together to denounce anti-Soviet sentiment and cheer on the Russians in their struggle against fascism.[128] The rare speaker of the night who had no interest in an optimistic portrayal of the Soviet Union, Thomas Lamont, a Republican who thought of himself as "anything but a Communist," nevertheless argued that friendship with the Soviet Union was not an option, but a requirement for postwar existence. "The postwar world," he said, "must stand together to preserve civilization." The evening was capped by the reading of a resolution by the Congress paying tribute to "the unconquerable

[127] Congress of American-Soviet Friendship, *Salute to Our Russian Ally; Report of the Congress of American-Soviet Friendship, New York City, November 7 & 8, 1942.*, 115–19.
[128] The present author owes this imagery to a conversation with Corliss Lamont's widow, Beth K. Lamont, in which she described the rally as Lamont had reminisced about it to her.

Soviet people", "who to the last man are ready to lay down their lives in the cause of freedom and democracy."[129]

And here we have the recipe for an appealing message advocating American-Soviet friendship: a privileging of the Soviet people over their government, mixed with appeals to postwar security, added to the explication of cultural – even spiritual – kinship between Americans and Russians. The success of the Congress of American-Soviet Friendship leaves little doubt that this message had found a powerful current of interest by Americans in the Soviet Union. It was not communist leaders who were bringing in tens of thousands of people to Madison Square Garden, and it was not communists alone who waited in the rain to hear the speeches. Whether the new goodwill was tied to, or inspired by, the wartime alliance remained to be seen, but the experiences of the Congress and RWR left little doubt that the climate had become more receptive to American-Soviet friendship than at any point during the two nations' joint history. The lingering ACSR merged with the Congress to form the NCASF in February of 1943. With the acquisition of a midtown office at Madison Avenue and 37th Street (kitty-corner from the Morgan Library), the NCASF was open for business.[130]

The official program of the NCASF was multifaceted yet straight forward and non-partisan. The NCASF claimed four purposes upon foundation in 1943:

> 1. To promote mutual understanding, cooperation and friendship between the US and the USSR through a presentation of the facts about the Soviet Union and its people to the broad masses of the American people. 2. To promote cultural interchange between the US and the Soviet

[129] Congress of American-Soviet Friendship, *Salute to Our Russian Ally; Report of the Congress of American-Soviet Friendship, New York City, November 7 & 8, 1942.*, 100–103.
[130] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University," Box 9; Folder 1.

> Union… 3. To carry on through the widest channels a campaign against the forces which are endangering the peace by misrepresentation of the Soviet Union. 4. To build public support for an American peace policy based on American-Soviet cooperation and Big Three unity within the framework of the United Nations.[131]

This was an ambitious set of objectives to say the least. Integral to their fulfillment was a centralized hierarchical organization dependent on active local councils. The National Council was supposed to be nothing so much as a national clearing house for material, which it would distribute to the local councils. The National Council would provide printed material, including a newsletter (first *The Reporter*, later *Soviet FACTS*), pamphlets, and leaflets; recordings and radio scripts; pictorial exhibits; and slides, picture kits, and other educational kits for schools and universities, while the local councils would make sure the program reached the people.[132]

### *Postwar Promise and Setbacks*

The NCASF was a small organization with a disproportionate reach. It had six to ten full-time employees in New York throughout the war years, and operated with budgets in the range of tens of thousands of dollars. Until 1945, the NCASF was the secondary American-Soviet friendship exponent in the United States, never approaching the cash that flooded the coffers of RWR. But in 1946, RWR without explanation ceased to exist. What happened is not clear. The infrastructure and staff remained ready to advocate for their cause, but the leadership closed up shop. At least one historian of the Soviet Union has suggested that the cause of RWR's demise was Soviet dissatisfaction

[131] "Richard Morford Papers; TAM.361," Outline of the Program-- National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, Box 8; Folder 5.
[132] Ibid., Box 8; Folder 5.

with the organization.[133] It is also possible that the organization had outlived its purpose, though the suddenness of its disappearance and the apparent resulting surprise among the constituency belies that possibility.

At any rate, RWR's loss was NCASF's gain: the latter took on the staff, mailing lists, and in a few cases the local affiliates of the former. This was no small development, with no small potential. As Richard Morford, who became executive director of the NCASF in 1946, explained, "…they [RWR] had built a terrific roster of contributors across the country. We thought we had the basis of creating a mass organization – creating the kind of mass pressure that could change things in Washington." RWR had assembled a list of 20,000 Americans who had been willing to give money or time to their cause. With a base like that, the NCASF could have become the mass organization its founders had envisioned. Hannah Dorner, a campaigner for FDR who had helped to organize RWR, signed on to the NCASF as Organizational Director. Morford made optimistic plans for the imminent expansion into dozens of untapped cities, and prepared an ambitious grassroots outreach plan called "Operation Friendship."[134]

The plan fell apart inside of six months. Almost overnight, the United States had become poisoned ground for American-Soviet friendship. The Soviet absorption of Eastern Europe into its sphere of influence and refusal to leave Iran after World War II, along with the reemergence of profound anticommunist sentiment (as embodied by the House Un-American Activities Committee), combined to recast the postwar narrative

[133] See Svetlana Chervonnaya's comments, based on her reading of Soviet archives, on the disappearance of RWR in William V. Harris, *Moses Finley and Politics*, 2013, 26.
[134] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 2: 89.

from one of international unity and collective progress to one of dualist conflict on the world stage and internal repression on the domestic. The support that had seemed so easy to draw upon in 1942 had evaporated, as few people, even on the radical Left, wanted to be in the very preventable situation of associating themselves with an organization that carried "Soviet friendship" in its name. After all, the government persecuted so-called "subversive" organizations daily, and sent communists to jail on grounds of association alone.[135] In such a climate, it behooved one to consider their affiliations with care.[136]

The decline of the NCASF began at the end of 1946, and recovery was impossible until after the United States and Soviet Union signed the Lacy-Zarubin Agreement in 1958. Most of the local societies disappeared, sponsors abandoned the NCASF in droves, and the organization collectively – and many members individually – found themselves in court. Almost as if to punctuate the NCASF's declining fortunes, the Internal Revenue Service in 1948 revoked the organization's tax-exempt status, indicating that it no longer considered the NCASF to be an educational body.[137] The press, friendly during the war, had become hostile and aggressive.[138] The public, too, found it easy to direct their anger

[135] Historians have published a moderate number of works on the persecution of Communists during the Cold War. Peter L. Steinberg, *The Great "Red Menace" United States Prosecution of American Communists, 1947-1952* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1984) is a strong, readable survey, though more narrative than monograph; David Caute, *The Great Fear: The Anti-Communist Purge under Truman and Eisenhower* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1978) is similar, but considerably larger and written with a great deal more verve; while Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes* (Princeton University Press, 1999) is the most complete and scholarly.

[136] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 2: 89.

[137] "Richard Morford Papers; TAM.361," Box 8; Folder 2.

[138] Only the *New York Times* covered the NCASF with any sense of objectivity in the early stages of the Cold War. A sampling of *Los Angeles Times* headlines provides a picture of the sort of coverage provided elsewhere: "California Alert to New Red Zeal," "Red Front Groups in State Listed," "Reds Use Fair to Pass Propaganda."

at Soviet intransigence upon an organization dedicated to goodwill toward the Soviet Union. The fight for a mass constituency, therefore, was over almost as soon as it began: never again would the NCASF flirt with so large an audience as in 1946.

## Part II: The NCASF -- Structure and Constituency

### Structure

The NCASF retained the same structure for the first thirty-five years of its existence. A national chairman was the public face of the organization, and an executive secretary (later called the executive director) made the quotidian decisions. There was no membership of the NCASF and no dues – leadership intended the NCASF to be a broad organization with which anyone could feel free to associate. The membership question ultimately became controversial in the 1970s but the initial thinking, largely championed by Alice Barrows, was that membership organizations become insular and limited in scope – something the NCASF leadership very much wanted to avoid. The National Council was the central body of the NCASF and was limited to 250 persons at one time to promote flexibility. The board of directors decided the National Council's composition. The board of directors' executive committee, which – until the reorganization of 1977 – consisted of all of the officers of the organization along with several "at large" members, made the major decisions.

Reporting to the executive committee was an array of smaller committees tasked with work along specific themes. Most of the committees were gone by the early 1950s but were an important exponent of NCASF activity in the organization's early years.

There were two basic types of committees attached to the NCASF. The first of these were the education committees. These brought information about the Soviet Union and argued the benefits of closer relations between that country and the United States to the American people. The main Education Committee booked speakers for lectures, organized conferences, and compiled literature. Meanwhile, the nationalities committee, trade-union committee, and youth committee were expected to reach specific target audiences: in the examples given here, American minorities, workers, and young people, respectively.

## Local Councils

In theory, the New York central office was only a coordinating body, meant to organize and harmonize the work of local councils located throughout the country. These local councils were supposed to do the real outreach work of the American-Soviet friendship movement, finding constituents, organizing events, and distributing literature. In practice, most of, and sometimes all of, the local councils ranged from non-existent to unreliable. Often, the New York coordinating body was the only part of the NCASF doing any effective work at all. As a result, the reach of the NCASF varied: sometimes encompassing the larger metropolitan areas in the United States, but often grasping no further than Manhattan.[139]

The discussions that led to the founding of the NCASF envisioned the creation of dozens of local councils, spreading the reach of American-Soviet friendship to most

[139] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Box 1; Folder 4; ibid., n. Box 5; Folder 29.

corners of the country. In 1945, the NCASF claimed to have established thirty-two local councils. The actual number of operating councils was closer to a dozen. Lacking a broad sponsorship or membership base was one reason why local councils tended to collapse. While Sovietophiles could make a decent showing in larger cities in the United States, there were not enough of them to maintain an outreach organization in most smaller towns. Local societies could not survive any one of the numerous body blows that hit the NCASF after World War II. A single important defection resulting from, for instance, the invasion of Hungary or Czechoslovakia, or the Soviet anti-Semitism campaign, could be fatal. Even the strongest local societies (such as Chicago and Los Angeles) often disappeared for a year or five as they consolidated their membership in the aftermath of crisis.[140]

Another common problem for local councils was American-Soviet friendship's perpetual lack of payoff. Working toward amity between two countries, particularly between two locked in an emerging Cold War, was a long process. It was a struggle for one convert at a time. Progress on such a cause was difficult to identify, and thus local societies often concentrated on projects for which they *could* see tangible results, such as events and fundraising. When limited resources made those kinds of projects hard to initiate, even dedicated members of local societies could get discouraged. Much like in the FSU, it was common for advocates to become confused about how exactly all of the activities of the NCASF fit together.[141]

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[140] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Box 1; Folder 64; ibid., Box 5; Folder 21.

[141] This did not improve over time. In 1980, new NCASF field organizer Henry Teutsch, a veteran of the Detroit society, admitted even he did not understand the organization's broad goals. "I have been arguing

Those societies that thrived were located in larger cities with sizable immigrant communities and a history of progressivism. Most of the long-lived societies were therefore on the coasts, with another cluster in the Rust Belt: particularly in Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland, and Minneapolis. For the NCASF, vast swaths of the United States proved inhospitable for societies in the best of times, and hostile in the worst. Florida was the only Southern state to see an even periodic NCASF presence. Support in the Appalachian states was virtually chimerical. The Great Plains was terra incognita. The number of local societies wavered year to year. During the postwar nadir, the NCASF could count on only Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago for support

Most of the long-lived local councils took on their own unique character, as each adapted to the circumstances of its own community. Sovietophiles founded the first local society, the American-Russian Institute of San Francisco (ARI SF), in 1932, predating the NCASF. It was for many years independent of the NCASF, only falling into the New York organization's orbit in the 1950s. Led by Holland Roberts, an English professor at Stanford and former head of the California Labor School, ARI SF was a research institute with an educated following. The Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR in Los Angeles (formerly another American-Russian Institute), meanwhile, was based in Russian Jewish culture, and refused to issue political statements. The Seattle society was the only local society with consistent communist leadership, in Frank Batterson and Gus Rystad. Their core constituency was labor. Ukrainian immigrants dominated the Detroit

for several months that we do not have a program," he wrote. "All of the literature puts the activities first and, in most cases, hasn't stated our goals." He went on to claim that the NCASF was just shifting from one thing to the next "with no apparent reason." See "Richard Morford Papers; TAM.361," Draft of a National Program, June, 6, 7, 8, 1980; Box 10; Folder 33.

society, high school teachers the Portland society, and black activists the Washington DC society. The commitment and efficacy of the societies varied. The Chicago society had broad influence in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and ARI SF was consistently popular into the 1970s. Other societies, like Harry Steinmetz's San Diego society and William Otterness' Minneapolis society, seemed to persevere on little but their founder's will.[142]

## Relationships with External Bodies

### *The Communist Party*

Leadership set up the NCASF in 1943 in a similar manner to most communist fronts. The idea, as Maurice Isserman describes in *Which Side Were You On?,* was to form organizations represented to the public by a recognizable, but usually absent, national chairman. An executive secretary chosen by the CPUSA did the real work.[143] While the NCASF's setup and on-paper distribution of duties reflected the front strategy, it never operated in the envisioned manner. Executive Secretary Alice Barrows was effective and characteristically hard-working, but left the movement in July 1943.[144] Corliss Lamont, on the other hand, was no absentee chairman, but rather a veteran of American-Soviet friendship organizations of some ten years. He was a man of strong opinions and great energy. As such, the roles in the organization became confused early on, with Lamont running much of the organization's daily affairs. In 1946, Barrows' successor Edwin Smith, too, left the movement. Rather than wait for a new director from the CPUSA, Lamont, along with sponsors and socialist Christian clergymen Harry F.

[142] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 1: 378.
[143] Isserman, *Which Side Were You On?*
[144] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Box 1; Folder 25.

Ward, William Howard Melish, and William Spofford hired another Christian socialist, Richard Morford, for the job. With no connections to the CPUSA and in a political climate that left him no particular reason to seek closer ties, Morford took the NCASF on its own path.[145]

In a 1984 interview, Richard Morford claimed that CPUSA involvement after the NCASF's foundation was limited. "They [the CPUSA] intended to control it," he said. "…They intended to exert a very strong influence… They wanted to build an organization in this country that would be understanding and would support the Soviet Union." The NCASF was not, however, subject to explicit control by the communists, either during the directorship of Barrows or Edwin S. Smith. Instead, the communists "waited it out" because "there was no intention of shaping an organization that was Left."[146] The Popular Front had convinced the CPUSA that it was essential to prevent Americans from seeing communist influence at work in the front organizations.[147] In practice, this meant that, during the war years, communist influence was negligible or benign. Organizational minutes do not suggest any attention to or recognition of a broader struggle than that professed by the NCASF's program.

Morford said that the man who acted as the intermediary between the CPUSA and NCASF from its foundation through to the postwar years, and "was supposed to be the one to take charge of the National Council," was none other than Alexander Trachtenberg. There are no records of Trachtenberg's involvement in the NCASF

[145] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 1: 161.
[146] Ibid., 1–159.
[147] Warren, *Liberals and Communism*.

records. He was not at board meetings and had no official title in the organization, so he would have had to have been a behind-the-scenes presence, perhaps only accessible to the executive director. In 1947, Morford and Trachtenberg had a dispute, the exact nature of which Morford could no longer recall in an interview in 1984. Whatever sparked the argument, the result was crucial for the future of the NCASF. Morford's described it as follows:

> …My dear older friend Trachtenberg – who maintained a direct link to the council from the party… told me what should be done. I disagreed with the course of action. I did not intend to carry it out. I got together with Melish, and, as i remember, both of us went to Trachty to tell him the national council – and dick [meaning, Morford] – would not stand for this interference. This was my first out-and-out encounter. I said i would listen always – i would not take directions from the party.[148]

Given historical context, it is probable that the issue related to the communist support of the Progressive Party for the 1948 elections, and a desire by Trachtenberg for the NCASF to express support of that party in its literature – something that, according to Morford's understanding of the NCASF's program, the NCASF could not do. Morford's declaration of independence probably saved the NCASF in its court cases in the 1950s, when the US government had to rely on shaky testimony from professional informants to assert ties between the NCASF and CPUSA. Had more overt connections existed, the government might well have shut the NCASF down. At the same time, the independent nature of the NCASF paved the road for future debates and division.

While there were communists on the board for the NCASF's entire history, both the comments of Morford and the minutes from executive committee meetings suggest

[148] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 1: 169.

that they were more along the lines of respected advisors than leaders. In the first several decades, the key communist board members were Jessica Smith of *Soviet Russia Today*, which rechristened itself *New World Review* in 1951 to reflect a greater emphasis on other socialist nations in addition to the Soviet Union, and Ted Bayer.[149] Smith was on the Board of the NCASF from 1943, but the board only gave her a title – vice-chairman – in 1969.[150] Her biggest contribution to the NCASF was the support she gave the organization via *New World Review*. Smith's magazine always provided positive press for the NCASF and the two organizations shared equipment and a research library after they moved into the same building in 1964. [151] Overtly, her participation in the Council was limited to speeches at events, most of which echoed the communist line and consisted of *Pravda*-esque recitations of impressive Soviet statistics. She also did administrative work within the Committee of Women.[152]

Jessica Smith's real significance to the organization lay in the influence of her positions with other board members. The minutes of the executive committee show that Smith was an unexpectedly conservative presence. She counseled a moderate course, recommending less expenditure, fewer inflammatory statements, and less emphasis on attracting elements of the Left to the NCASF constituency. At the same time, Smith was adamant that the NCASF not criticize the Soviet Union, even when, as we will see in the case of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, doing so might well have been the

[149] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," n. Box 1; Folder 36.
[150] Ibid., n. Box 1; Folder 49.
[151] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," National Council of American-Soviet Friendship.
[152] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Box 5; Folder 18.

wiser organizational course. Morford asserts that he and William Howard Melish were often on the other side of Smith in Council debates. Meanwhile, she had frequent allies in Rockwell Kent, Mary van Kleeck, and John Kingsbury. After Czechoslovakia, however, a disillusioned Smith gave ground, and she appears to have evolved into an occasional critic of the Soviet Union by the 1970s.[153]

Ted Bayer was more hands on than Smith. Bayer, another veteran of *Soviet Russia Today,*[154] was also on the NCASF board from the beginning of the organization.[155] He had a prodigious network of wealthy contacts in New York, and the NCASF leadership prized him for his ability to part those contacts from their wealth.[156] In 1946, the board made Bayer administrative secretary of the NCASF in recognition of that prowess and he accordingly became involved in both fundraising and responding to correspondence from the constituency.[157] He began editing the NCASF's short-lived chief organ, *The Reporter,* in 1949 and organized its content to parallel the communist perspective.[158] Like Jessica Smith, Bayer worked to keep anti-Soviet positions out of NCASF statements, if not out of the board. They differed, however, in Bayer's willingness to employ undisguised pro-Soviet propaganda in NCASF materials. Melish mitigated that bias, taking great pains to edit the most overt partisanship out of Bayer's

[153] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 2: 190.
[154] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Box 7; Folder 27.
[155] In his interview, Morford incorrectly claims that Bayer was off the board after assuming the administrative secretary position. The records show his consistent attendance, at least so much as his health allowed. "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Box 7; Folder 27.
[156] Ibid., Box 2; Folder 19.
[157] Ibid., Box 1; Folder 30.
[158] Ibid., Box 1; Folder 67.

writing before he presented it to the NCASF constituency.[159] Bayer's participation declined by the mid-50s because of his worsening cancer, which led to his death in 1959. Jessica Smith's advanced age caused her own activity in the NCASF to wane by the 1970s.

While the NCASF was intended to function as an independent organization without political direction, Gus Hall, chairman of the CPUSA during most of the Cold War, evidently never gave up on the idea that the NCASF could once again be used as a front organization. In the fall of 1961, he decided to try to place Arnold Johnson, a reliable communist, as executive director of the NCASF. Hall anticipated "no difficulty in effecting [sic]" this change, but apparently misjudged the situation. Johnson never so much as received a board of directors post in the NCASF. The NCASF never even discussed Johnson in the minutes of their meetings.[160]

Ten years later, Hall had become frustrated at his inability to control the NCASF. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) informant Jack Childs claims Hall asserted that "funds will have to be spent to make a change in the current setup of the NCASF."[161] Hall was angry because the NCASF was "standing still" in New York City, though he was pleased with the activities of some of the local societies. "The central establishment in New York City," he said, "is worthless." [162] Combined with his attempt to impose a

[159] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 2: 93.
[160] Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Operation SOLO File," SAC, New York, to Director, FBI, September 13, 1961. Considering that Johnson and Morford had been friends since at least the 1930s, it is also unlikely that Johnson would have participated in an attempted coup, anyway.
[161] Ibid., SAC, Chicago, to Director, FBI, November 23, 1971. Hall also suggested that an organization broader than the NCASF was needed, but it is unclear how we thought the CPUSA could play a role in correcting that in 1971.
[162] Ibid.

new director, it appears that Hall was displeased with Morford's leadership of the Council. Whether Hall took any steps beyond grandiose plotting cannot be verified.

### *The Soviet Union*

Links between the NCASF and Soviet Union were erratic and often tenuous. Until 1958, the sole point of contact was through the Soviet Union's foreign cultural agency, called the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, but more commonly known as VOKS. Founded in 1925, VOKS had two important roles: 1) to direct friendship societies in other nations; and 2) to distribute foreign cultural material to the chosen Soviet cultural elite.[163] As Parks writes, "VOKS was more interested in serving Soviet state interests by creating a friendly attitude toward Moscow and forwarding the cause of recognition than in fostering human relationships for their own sake," but was innocuous enough that the American State Department "did not deem its activities to be subversive." [164] In the 1920s and 30s, VOKS established the procedures toward pro-Soviet foreigners under which it would operate until its dissolution in 1958.

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[163] Frederick Charles Barghoorn, *The Soviet Cultural Offensive; the Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Soviet Foreign Policy.* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1960) was the first monograph on Soviet cultural policy; Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba, 1928-1978* (Lanham: University Press of America; Distributed by National Book Network, 1990) and Ludmila. Stern, *Western intellectuals and the Soviet Union, 1920-40: from Red Square to the Left Bank* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007) cover elements of the Western experience with VOKS; Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to Soviet Union, 1921-1941* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) is the best single-volume on the subject as of yet concerning the first two decades of Soviet cultural foreign policy; Kiril Tomoff, *Virtuosi Abroad: Soviet Music and Imperial Competition During the Early Cold War, 1945-1958* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015) ably discusses the changes in Soviet cultural policy during the next two decades, through the lens of touring Soviet musicians. Anne E. Gorsuch, *All This Is Your World: Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad After Stalin* (Oxford University Press, 2011) is the only book to give a scholarly treatment to Soviet tourism.

[164] Parks, *Culture, Conflict, and Coexistence*, 22.

Under these policies, VOKS brought foreigners who created a positive impression in their countries toward the Soviet Union to the Soviet Union and treated them like celebrities. Many NCASF leaders had this experience. As discussed by Michael David-Fox in his *Showcasing the Great Experiment,* the friendship society elite appreciated VOKS. After all, "it was an attractive proposition to have an institutional sponsor to navigate the difficulties of travel to the USSR."[165] More important to the NCASF, however, VOKS was the only agency with the power to schedule and send exhibits of Soviet cultural material and cultural figures to foreign countries, making it integral to the cultural exchange process.

During World War II, VOKS focused upon RWR as its chosen exponent of Soviet friendship. But once RWR disappeared, the NCASF got their full attention. This was especially evident in 1946. The NCASF received various cultural exhibits and materials, such as photos, records, scientific papers, and the occasional film, and in turn sent information on American cultural institutions and artwork from American artists to the Soviet Union that year. At the December 1946 NCASF "Get Together with Russia" Rally (a response to Secretary of State James F. Byrnes' "get tough with Russia" outline for US foreign policy), VOKS sent the Red Army Ensemble Chorus to perform.[166] Earlier that year, the NCASF displayed an exhibit of over 400 examples of Soviet graphic art obtained from VOKS at Rockefeller Center. In February, the NCASF sent an exhibition of the work of 150 American artists to VOKS, spreading awareness of American culture

[165] David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment*, 91.
[166] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Box 6; Folder 31.

to a Soviet people with little exposure to American art. At the opening, President of VOKS Vladimir Kamenev asserted that "this exhibition familiarizes us with artists whose diverse individual features testify to the multiformity of artistic life in America today... which will help our spectators get a better idea of the present day life of the American people."[167]

After World War II, the relationship between VOKS and the NCASF became uneven. This was for two reasons. First, VOKS had the backing of a superpower, while the NCASF had only the resources of several thousand dedicated people who were becoming outsiders in their own country. Second, Cold War suspicion made exchange between parties in the United States and USSR untenable. This could already be seen near the end of 1946, when the State Department asked five Ukrainian cultural leaders, invited to the United States by the NCASF, to register as foreign agents. Not considering themselves such, the Ukrainians refused and went about their trip, speaking to NCASF audiences in New York in September. A week later, the State Department told the Ukrainians that they were subject to prosecution as violators of the Registration Act. Now fearing for their freedom, the Ukrainians opted to cancel all of their further NCASF public appearances and return home. The NCASF released a statement in response, in which Melish maintained, "whatever the technicalities of the law, by no stretch of the imagination can these Ukrainians warrant such classification. They came here on a strictly cultural mission… It would be a major calamity if at this point… this act of

[167] Ibid., Box 5; Folder 7.

official discrimination should make the Soviet feel themselves unwelcome."[168] The US government did not allow the NCASF to accept Soviet entertainers in the United States from VOKS for another eleven years.[169]

The second major Soviet agency to interact with the NCASF was the Institute of Soviet-American Relations (ISAR), created in 1961 by the successor of VOKS, the Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Contacts (SSOD).[170] The ISAR was much more interested in cultivating a relationship with the NCASF than was VOKS or SSOD itself, the latter of which seemed to think of the NCASF as a part of their own infrastructure, rather than as an independent organization with parallel goals. Harold Taylor, a proponent of education reform and the president of Sarah Lawrence College until 1959 (and no friend of the NCASF), visited the House of Friendship, the SSOD headquarters, and told Rockwell Kent in 1960 another reason why cooperation had not been forthcoming:

> I visited the House of Friendship in Moscow… In conversation with Mrs. Kislova [of SSOD] and several Soviet intellectuals and officials I learned something about the Soviet program for international friendship groups. It was clear from Soviet comment that unless a more broadly representative group with different aims and sponsorship than your Council could be formed in the United States, no working relationship of the kind the Soviets wished to have could be arranged, since the Soviets considered your Council to be part of their own propaganda apparatus.[171]

Wish as they might for an imaginary coalition of mainstream Americans eager to embrace an end to the tensions of the Cold War, however, the NCASF was the only

[168] Ibid., Box 1; Folder 65.
[169] Guy E. Coriden, "The Intelligence Hand in East-West Exchange Visits."
[170] VOKS became the SSOD as part of a Soviet rearrangement of their cultural outreach apparatus in 1958. The NCASF was unaware of this rearrangement, and continued to refer to the Soviet international cultural agency as VOKS for decades.
[171] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Box 7; Folder 35.

group willing to cooperate with the Soviets in the United States. The CPUSA faced heavy persecution from the US government, and was in general fighting just to survive. The NCASF, meanwhile, was still able to bring in respectable non-communists to its ranks, if not in the numbers possible in the 1940s.

Yet, an FBI file related to Operation Solo, the operation in which double-agents Morris and Jack Childs attempted to determine the relationship between the CPUSA and Soviet Union, indicates that the Soviet Union reached out to the CPUSA about taking over the NCASF in 1961. The FBI reports that Vladimir Barkovsky, of the Soviet delegation to the United Nations, suggested to the CPUSA that the NCASF be "reactivated" in order to supply information about the Kennedy Administration. If nothing else, this shows just how out of the loop the Soviets were regarding the NCASF, as it is difficult to imagine what sort of information the NCASF could provide on that topic.[172] The NCASF, in any case, would have been a poor subversive collaborator, as the FBI had eight informants in the New York offices of the organization (including one unidentified officer), and four (including another unidentified officer) in the Chicago society.[173] The Soviets and CPUSA, at any rate, sent Mike Davidow to be their "contact man:" to serve as a conduit between the NCASF, CPUSA, and Soviet Union.[174] While Davidow indeed became an active participant in the NCASF, particularly in the West Coast societies, his usefulness as a "contact man," or of a "contact man" in general, would seem to be negligible.

[172] Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Operation SOLO File," FJ Baumgardner to AH Belmont, April 4, 1961.
[173] Ibid., FJ Baumgardner to AH Belmont, March 28, 1961.
[174] Ibid., FJ Baumgardner to WC Sullivan, June 27, 1961.

When Tamara Mamedov took the leadership position of ISAR in the 1970s, relations between ISAR and the NCASF improved markedly. The ISAR gradually got better at figuring out who the key personnel were within the NCASF and invited all of the leadership to the Soviet Union, meeting with them frequently throughout the 1970s, if not enough to satisfy the NCASF leadership. Soviet advice was still, however, less than helpful, consisting of suggestions for the NCASF to get more youth and worker support, and urging a major push in the mid-1970s to get Americans to learn Russian (ideas that had either been on the agenda for decades or, in the case of the latter, were well beyond the NCASF's capacity to promote).[175] Regardless, the ISAR were the only ally the NCASF had. The NCASF and ISAR signed cooperation agreements starting in 1976 and renewed them every two years. These agreements called for the celebration of one nation's culturally relevant dates in the other, as well as schedules for goodwill tours of each other's nations. While there remained serious hitches in the relationship between the NCASF and ISAR, such as a lack of funds on the part of both organizations and poor communication on the part of the ISAR, the opportunities for cultural contact with the Soviets were far greater by 1980 than they had been at any previous time in the history of American and Soviet relations.[176]

[175] "Richard Morford Papers; TAM.361," Box 3; Folder 10.
[176] The ISAR became the USSR/USA Society at some point in the late 1970s.There are no records in the United States specifying the date.

## Constituency

The number of people who were interested in spending significant time and effort to American-Soviet friendship was never large during the Cold War. The core of the movement, as represented by the leadership of the NCASF and the local societies, was perhaps several hundred strong. Several thousand more constituted the periphery of the movement – those who participated occasionally in campaigns and attended events. While it is difficult to arrive at an estimate of the total audience reached by the American-Soviet friendship groups, it is reasonable to offer twenty-thousand people as the maximum extent of influence at any one time.[177]

At the same time, though, there are several mitigating circumstances to keep in mind. First, this tiny organization prompted dozens of newspaper stories even after 1945, when it was no longer a mass movement. The *idea* of the NCASF, if not always the NCASF itself, clearly mattered to many Americans, even if only as an other to set themselves against. Second, advocates of American-Soviet friendship were strategically placed in two significant ways: 1) its societies extended to nearly every major city in the United States and its literature was in every major university; and 2) an unusual number of high-profile and influential cultural and social figures were advocates of American-Soviet friendship. Among them were some of the most interesting and important outliers in the American ideological spectrum.

[177] At its weakest extent in 1956, the National Council, meaning the core active participants, numbered ninety-seven, with perhaps two-hundred more "key persons" estimated in the rest of the country. New York events attracted anywhere from 1,000 to 10,000 people, depending on the venue. A minor pamphlet campaign would target 1,000 people; a moderate one 10,000; and a few reached 50,000 or more. "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Box 1; Folder 73.

There were three main elements of the NCASF constituency that formed the uneasy coalition that governed the organization between the beginning of the Cold War in 1947 and the NCASF's reorganization in 1977. Unlike the Popular Front and contrary to the aspirations of the NCASF leadership to become a mass organization, there were never many liberal supporters of the NCASF: at least outside of specific campaigns tied to the larger peace campaign. The American-Soviet friendship movement was, thus, something of an Unpopular Front, with vanguards but no masses. The core constituency – the communists, Christian socialists, and independent socialists – were the ones who got things done, and are the heart of this story.

The first group, that which formed the administrative nucleus of the organization and movement, was the communists. While the influence of the communists declined on a national level after World War II, it remained steady in the local societies, where Old Left communists continued to dominate boards into the 1970s. Some NCASF communists, like novelist Howard Fast, only dated their communism back to the Popular Front or World War II. Others, including many of the steadiest allies of the NCASF, were retired communist immigrants who had been involved with the first flush of communism in the United States and saw the NCASF as a way to continue to aid the Soviet Union. The interest of Communists in the NCASF is straightforward: people who believed in the virtues of communism and the virtues of the Soviet Union significantly overlapped. Their interest in the NCASF is no mystery.

More complicated is the second important group of the constituency, the Christian socialists. This group included crucial leaders like Richard Morford, the Presbyterian

minister who guided the NCASF during most of the period covered in the present work, as well as William Howard Melish, the Episcopal rector who chaired the NCASF in the second half of the 1940s. Christian socialists had always been essential to the organization's unique character, both within its leadership and general constituency. They tended to have a live-and-let live approach to the practice of religion (an approach they thought the Soviet Union shared), an opposition to foreign intervention, and a rejection of violence in all its forms. In particular, they emphasized the individual freedom that they believed was possible under a socialist system but not a capitalist one – namely, the freedom for people to be able to realize their potential in a system that prioritized them over profit. Without profit, the Christian socialists believed, there would be no motive for war, and they could institutionalize humanism as they thought Christ had intended.[178]

In the NCASF, the Christian socialists of the late 1940s and early 1950s often advocated a line nearly identical with that of the 1960s peace movement, arguing for an end to escalating tensions with the socialist world if for no reason other than to preserve humanity and unburden the collective conscience. But whereas the New Left was skeptical of the Soviet Union, the Christian Socialists in the NCASF were sympathetic. The Soviet Union was not perfect, they often asserted, but at least it was publicly and consistently pushing for cooperation with the United States, whereas the United States

[178] Sometimes called "social Christianity," Christian socialism is a topic that has inspired more dissertations than monographs. Of the few that exist, almost all are concerned with the movement's early history. See Ronald C. White and Charles Howard Hopkins, *The Social Gospel: Religion and Reform in Changing America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976); Gary Scott Smith, *The Search for Social Salvation: Social Christianity and America, 1880-1925* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2000); Jacob H. Dorn, *Socialism and Christianity in Early 20th Century America* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1998).

poked and needled the Soviets at every turn with exclusionary policies like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Marshall Plan. Most of the Christian Socialists in the NCASF belonged to dozens of progressive coalition groups and peace organizations and saw the NCASF as but one part of a moral movement for a better world characterized by mutual super power tolerance.

Most fascinating of all were the third group, an assortment of independent socialists. Many had once been members of the American Socialist Party, but lacked consistent institutional affiliation in politics. These people believed in some form of the communal ownership of the means of production in the United States and argued that the survival of the Soviet Union was the most important issue of the era. But they had almost nothing else in common – either with the other two groups or with one another. Three personalities examined in the later chapters of this dissertation are all in this group. Corliss Lamont was a pragmatist in the style of John Dewey, whose interest in collectivist economic policy was exceeded only by his passion for individual civil liberties. Rockwell Kent was an isolationist who called for a return to the values of the Declaration of Independence, but loved the Soviet Union for its commitment to its artists. Harry Steinmetz was a cosmopolitan psychologist who rejected the CPUSA as provincial, but looked to the Soviets after being ostracized from American politics and society. Edward Lamb and Mandel Terman were successful businessmen who saw Soviet values as a natural extension of the government-sponsored humanitarianism of the New Deal. Also prominent was Sovietologist and proto-New Left spokesman and journalist William Mandel, an ex-communist who saw cooperation with the Soviet Union as essential for the

future of the United States, yet opposed Soviet authoritarian communism nearly as vehemently as he did American capitalism. What unites these people as a group is their eccentricity -- their collective refusal to fit in voluminous categorical boxes. None of these people felt at home in the existing American political infrastructure and the American-Soviet friendship movement served as their primary social group, as well as the primary outlet for their political activities.

## Conclusion

As the Cold War dawned, the leadership of the NCASF had a difficult task ahead of them. They were pushing for American-Soviet friendship in a United States that could well be at war with the Soviet Union at any moment, among a people and government that perceived them and their organization to be agents of the Soviet government. The NCASF was aging, alienated, and working with small and dwindling resources. Yet, they survived as an organization for forty more years, often, as we will see in the next chapter, having a significant effect on the conversation about the Soviet Union in the United States.

The NCASF had the example of early organizations, some of which had operated in an environment nearly as hostile as did the NCASF. The STASR, working in the immediate aftermath of the First Red Scare, was an accepted part of the labor movement before succumbing to external circumstances. Americans, it seemed, were not so intransigent toward the Soviet Union as was their government. A few years later, FSR and FSU showed that a mass organization committed to American-Soviet friendship

could function and even thrive at times in the United States. The ARI approached American-Soviet friendship from an education angle. They built a strong base of scholars interested in the Soviet Union from an intellectual perspective. Along similar lines, International Publishers worked within a cultural paradigm in an effort to promote an understanding of, and hence sympathy for, the Soviet Union among Americans. As we will see in the next chapter, the NCASF would employ all of these tools in its attempts at outreach.

But these predecessor organizations also displayed serious flaws that would never cease being factors in the American-Soviet friendship movement. Their willingness to cooperate with communists, and even put them in leadership positions, was at the very least public relations. American-Soviet friendship did not have to be a communist project, but, prior to World War II, it usually was. While the NCASF broke ties with the CPUSA, its employment of CPUSA functionaries in leadership positions in the mid-1940s would cause them no end of grief in the court cases of the 1950s – as unreasonable as this was. More problematic was the prevalent tone in American-Soviet friendship organizations, the NCASF included. All too often, the NCASF accepted Soviet perspectives prematurely and expressed them to the American public smugly and without nuance. If the goal of American-Soviet friendship organizations was to privilege accommodation between the two nations, the failure to critically examine Soviet policy subverted it.

RWR and the NCASF, however, showed the conditions under which American-Soviet friendship could be successful. With a straightforward organizational objective, a military alliance between the Soviet Union and United States, a common and dangerous

adversary, and politics thrown out of the equation, Americans were happy to contribute to American-Soviet friendship. People of all political persuasions gave their money and attention to NCASF and RWR projects with enthusiasm. They were even willing to translate this enthusiasm into learning about the Soviet Union and its people. In a world in which the Soviet Union and United States remained allies forever, this may have been a usable formula in perpetuity. Instead, mainstream acceptance was only ephemeral, and based on a perfect storm of conditions so fortuitous that the NCASF could not expect them again.

The Cold War United States was such a hostile environment because Americans viewed the National Council through the lens of other, more powerful entities that Americans believed threatened their way of life: namely, the Soviet Union and CPUSA. As explained, the predecessor organizations, and the NCASF initially, were to a point complicit in this. However, while these entities loaned their sinister reputations, they were less than helpful in other regards. The CPUSA provided an organizational example and even infrastructure through its work with the FSR, FSU, and RWR that the NCASF employed to considerable benefit during World War II. But the CPUSA front framework, which relied on local societies doing the legwork of the organization, was not suitable for the Cold War NCASF and was more hindrance than aid. Further, the CPUSA had sought a subordinate rather than a partner, an arrangement unacceptable to the NCASF's executive director, Richard Morford. Once a useful ally, the CPUSA became a complete liability.

The Soviet Union, meanwhile, provided cultural materials at times, but never enough to provide for the grandiose dreams they had for the NCASF. The USSR was a poor collaborator, as unexplained but constant delays in communications and administrative constraints sabotaged the NCASF's ability to do its work. While relations gradually improved between the NCASF and USSR, the USSR seldom went out of its way to support the NCASF agenda. In almost every way that mattered in the Cold War, the NCASF was on its own.

## Chapter 2: Tough Love – American-Soviet Friendship in the Cold War

After World War II, the United States and Soviet Union, the two leading postwar powers, now had a history of cooperation to meet common goals. They each sponsored the establishment of the United Nations, an intergovernmental organization dedicated to resolving conflict, in October. Both nations therefore appeared dedicated to maintaining the status quo. An NCASF brochure that year asserted, "These two nations [i.e., the USA and USSR], joining their efforts for progress, can ensure a better life for all mankind through diplomatic, scientific, economic, and cultural cooperation."[179] The NCASF was not alone in this perspective. Edward Earl of Halifax, the British ambassador to the United States in 1945, marveled at how, "Distrust of the Soviet Union has been muffled. Other problems seem on the way to solution."[180] American president Harry Truman and Soviet premier Josef Stalin talked about cooperating in peace as they had in war.[181] For the NCASF, the future seemed bright.

Yet discord was fermenting behind closed doors. The Potsdam Conference in July revealed significant disparities in how the United States and Soviet Union envisioned the postwar political situation. Despite previous promises not to enforce the "Sovietization" of Eastern Europe, Stalin convinced British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and

[179] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," NCASF Brochure, 1945; Box 5, Folder 47.
[180] Gregor Dallas, *1945: The War That Never Ended* (Yale University Press, 2006), 540.
[181] Harry S. Truman, *Potsdam Conference Documents (1945) President Truman's Potsdam Diary (July 16-30, 1945)* (Frederick, Md.: University Publications of America, 1980), July 18, 1945.

Truman to allow Poland to become a Soviet puppet state.[182] In addition, the Soviet Union insisted upon, and the Western Allies reluctantly agreed to, punitive measures against Germany – a concept with which the Western Allies had never been comfortable. Suspicion was high on both sides. Empathy was not. Whereas the Americans believed postwar security was only attainable through a settlement that left as many parties satisfied as possible, the sheer scale of the victimization visited upon the Russian people in the preceding centuries by other nations led Stalin to conclude that the only postwar settlement he could trust was one over which he had control.[183]

Anxieties soon made themselves felt in the American domestic sphere as well. The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), a special congressional body tasked with uncovering subversion against the US government in the 1930s, became permanent in 1945. The definition of "un-American" was far from certain. House representative Karl Mundt even sent letters to one-hundred Americans asking their advice on what activities, exactly, *they* thought were un-American so that he could determine his already existing committee's purpose. HUAC then began an investigation of Hollywood for communists and issued subpoenas for Communist Party leaders Earl Browder and William Z. Foster to testify in front of the committee.[184] Within a few years, these

[182] According to Cold War historian John Gaddis, "The brutality and cynicism with which he [Stalin] handled these matters did more than anything else to exhaust the goodwill the Soviet war effort had accumulated in the West…"John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1997), 19.
[183] See John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972); George C. Herring, *Aid to Russia, 1941-1946; Strategy, Diplomacy, the Origins of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973).
[184] Walter. Goodman, *The Committee: The Extraordinary Career of the House Committee on Un-American Activities* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1968).

tentative probes would transform into a full-scale inquisition against leftist dissent in the United States.

The NCASF and its supporters believed the new paradigm of suspicion and hostility to be madness. As allies became enemies, the organization remained hopeful of a peaceful solution. The NCASF *Reporter on Soviet-American Relations* claimed in September of 1945 that the conflicts between the United States and Soviet Union were "synthetic." Myths of their differences would fall before "the overwhelming desire of people for peace."[185] But in fact, as the failure of the 1946 expansion effort made clear, the American-Soviet friendship movement and the fortunes of the NCASF were on the downswing. Circumstances were going to get much worse before they got better.

In this chapter, I discuss the three sets of crises in the history of the NCASF and the ways in which the organization adjusted in order to survive them. The first crisis came with the opening of the Cold War in 1947, when a sudden intolerance toward all things Soviet led the American government, media, and private institutions to direct immense pressure upon the NCASF and its members. Americans began to associate American-Soviet friendship, and a peaceful international order in general, with treason. In reaction to this threat, the NCASF leadership took the opposite approach of the similarly imperiled Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA), asserting their continued loyalty to the United States. Simultaneously, however, they increased the volume and sharpness of their criticism of their home country. This strategy

[185] "Richard Morford Papers; TAM.361," NCASF Reporter on American–Soviet-American Relations, September, 1945; Box 8, Folder 4.

was a dismal failure and nearly resulted in the collapse of the organization. One of the three groups who gave the NCASF its unique character, the independent socialists, were for the most part driven to other causes by the late 1940s. Many perceived the NCASF as inept, or out of disgust at its decidedly selective criticism, which never seemed to be pointed at the Soviets.

After the second set of crises, the 1956 Secret Speech and the Soviet invasion of Hungary that same year, the leadership determined to change its focus, directing almost all of its attention to an educational program on the Soviet Union's people and culture that aimed to counter bellicose Cold War attitudes with narratives of mutual humanity. This approach included the sponsoring of performances from Soviet cultural icons, people-to-people exchanges, as well as the distribution of literature about the Soviet Union to interested parties and academic institutions. It was successful and helped shape the attitudes of Americans away from the binary modes sponsored by the bipartisan anticommunist and anti-Soviet establishment. Among the reasons for the program's success was a prescient grasp on the very real gaps in American education and cultural coverage, and a united effort by the NCASF's Christian socialists and communists.

However, when the Soviet Union initiated the third set of crises by invading Czechoslovakia in 1968, divisions in the NCASF on such essential issues as human rights, national sovereignty, and pacifism raised the question of how much the NCASF was serving the needs of its constituency. One faction, the Christian socialists, believed that a moral imperative required them to protest Soviet behavior on the international stage. A second, the communists, believed that any criticism of the USSR was

counterproductive to the cause of American-Soviet friendship. Within ten years, the latter group initiated a revolution from below in the local societies, forcing Morford to hand them the keys to the NCASF in a 1977 national reorganization.

The subsequent failure of the NCASF after 1977, as will be touched upon in the epilogue of the dissertation, emphasizes the importance of the three factions in the organization's success. The Christian socialists were the organization's soul. Without them and their concern for social justice and morality, the NCASF would have become just another communist front (as, indeed, it did after 1977). Continuing the metaphor, the independent socialists were the brain. American socialists who had seen the destructive sectarianism of the early Communist Party, they were largely disinterested in ideology but firmly committed to a progressive view of history and a desire to improve the lot of the masses. The independent socialists were often in leadership positions and were always striving to connect the organization to broader trends and movements. They brought the NCASF into the wider world, and so long as they participated in the organization, it would always contain something of the ethos of the Popular Front. Finally, the communists – almost always the largest part of the constituency – collectively constituted the heart of the NCASF. Efficient administrators and tireless workers, the communists possessed invaluable experience in how to run organizational campaigns and get attention. Without the other two factions, however, the communist political savvy was for nothing. Without the moral compass of the Christian socialists or outreach of the independent socialists, the communists merely spun their wheels, tending to fall into complacency and irrelevance. By the time of the NCASF's 1977

reorganization, in which the communists from the local societies were placed in control of the board of directors of the national organization, this complacency was institutionalized. The thirty-year history in which the program was the result of a balance between three factions within a coalition came to an end.

## Contesting the Cold War

With the end of World War II, it was obvious that the NCASF was going to have to adjust to a new world. How would the organization justify the need for friendship between the United States and Soviet Union without the common goal of defeating Germany serving as a cohesive agent? Nobody, however, suspected the extent to which the international climate would change or how quickly. For six years, the NCASF endeavored to fight against the dawning of the Cold War by targeting American treaties and programs that were intended to either disrupt Soviet aims or parry its influence.

Richard Morford, a Christian socialist veteran of Popular Front advocacy organizations, became executive director of the NCASF – the administrator responsible for the NCASF's program – in February of 1946. He knew the difficult situation he was entering. His first project for the NCASF was an attempt to use the resources obtained from the merger with RWR to raise doubts in Americans about the efficacy of American foreign policy toward the Soviet Union. As discussed in the previous chapter, the attempt and the accompanying expansion drive stalled because of public resistance and financial difficulties. It was the NCASF's first major setback since its founding and a severe disappointment to the leadership.

The prevailing opinion in the NCASF, however, remained that hostility to the USSR was a fleeting phenomenon that would be of little long-term import. In a speech at a dinner held to honor the Red Army (a concept that would have been considered treasonous even a year later) in February of 1946, Corliss Lamont acknowledged that relations were worsening between the United States and USSR. "We know that powerful and influential groups are seeking to break up the friendship that has been established between American and Soviet Russia…," he said, admitting, "with this crazy, suicidal notion of an armed attack on our great ally… I am forced to question the essential morality and intelligence of some of my fellow-citizens." Yet, the tensions between nations were merely "cooked up by sensational journalists," he thought, and rest assured, "a real start has been made toward building peace and friendship throughout the earth."[186]

Such optimism, however, was almost entirely unique to the NCASF. The CPUSA, strong allies to the NCASF in World War II, reacted to the anti-Soviet domestic climate with a mix of apocalyptic dread – CPUSA leader William Foster told his acolytes and Madison Square Garden in 1947 that "the reactionary monopolists" were "heading the world toward a fresh debacle of economic chaos, fascism, and war…" – and hostility to the American government. [187] In contrast, the NCASF tried to argue the importance of its cause to the American people. The organization focused on the positive, asserting that a utopian future of progress and peace was possible if the United States and Soviet Union resolved their differences. The way to do this, NCASF literature argued, was for

[186] Ibid., "Excerpts of Remarks by Corliss Lamont," Feb 22, 1946; Box 8, Folder 5.
[187] Joseph R. Starobin, *American Communism in Crisis, 1943-1957* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 100.

American citizens to stop the United States from enacting confrontational polices with the Soviet Union.

This was a significant shift in policy toward the advocacy portion of the NCASF program. In the war years, there had been no political statements at all. That there was strident criticism toward the United States now was, ironically, a reflection of the decline in influence of the communists within the NCASF. The communists, as shown by the behavior of the CPUSA, were withdrawing from public commitments in 1947, not engaging in more of them. CPUSA leadership was going underground in the wake of US government prosecution and communists were, in general, keeping a low profile. Though communists remained on the board, the organization was, for the first time, under the control of the Christian socialists. Morford held the executive directorship and William Melish the chairmanship (after Lamont's departure from the post in 1946). The Christian socialists thought the NCASF had an "overwhelming responsibility" to the cause of peace.[188]

The first campaign was against the Truman Doctrine, in March through May of 1947. Ostensibly a request to Congress from the president to financially intervene in the Greek and Turkish civil wars, historians see the Truman Doctrine as a commitment to prioritize a fight against communism in foreign affairs. It was a major turning point in American policy and the beginning of the Cold War.[189] The NCASF initiative against the

[188] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," "Annual Meeting, 1947;" Box 1, Folder 65.
[189] Regarding the Truman Doctrine, the decisive piece is Gaddis, "Reconsiderations". Freeland, *The Truman Doctrine and the Origins of McCarthyism* places the Doctrine within the context of anti-Communism; Jones, *A New Kind of War* is a strong overview; Bostdorff, *Proclaiming the Truman Doctrine* is an analysis of Truman's rhetoric.

Truman Doctrine centered on a statement signed by thousands of Americans. Morford presented this petition to Congress. The petition accompanied a campaign urging the NCASF constituency to write and call their representatives, with the aim of raising congressional awareness of opposition to the Truman Doctrine before a vote in May.[190] The statement, written by William Howard Melish, argued that aid to Greece and Turkey in their civil wars symbolized "the blunt abandonment of the principle that this is 'One World'" and was "a division of the globe into two armed camps." The United States was ignoring "the possibility of the evolution of both existing systems" of communism and capitalism and instead drawing lines in the sand where they did not need to be.[191] Two-hundred church leaders signed the statement and it prompted several stories in newspapers.[192]

In conjunction, Richard Morford went to Washington and interviewed many senators in an attempt to read the state of support for the doctrine. Morford's assessment in April was pessimistic, noting that, "they [congressmen] are prepared to abide the judgment of government spokesmen rather than be guided by the opinion of the people back home who fear war and think this policy is no answer to the problems posed by the President."[193] Shortly after, a bipartisan collation agreed on an aid package to the governments of Greece and Turkey. Having failed to make a dent in the Truman Doctrine, the NCASF acceded defeat while arguing that the Truman Doctrine was "a

[190] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Box 2, Folder 35.
[191] "Richard Morford Papers; TAM.361," "Press Release," April 3, 1947; Box 8, Folder 13.
[192] For example, see: "Aid to Turkey Opposed: American-Soviet Group Backed by Additional Churchmen," *New York Times*, April 5, 1947.
[193] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Memorandum from Richard Morford to Local Societies, April 22, 1947; Box 2, Folder 35.

negative doctrine" – meaning, it was aimed at improving the United States' position in a potential war rather than advocating for peace. All of the current foreign policy crises, the NCASF claimed, could be resolved through basic negotiation, rather than conflict, with the Soviet Union.[194]

The next campaign was over the Marshall Plan. The Marshall Plan was a 1948 American offer of massive economic aid to European nations (including the Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellites) in return for economic cooperation with the United States.[195] NCASF files on the Marshall Plan campaign were misplaced or destroyed at some point in the last sixty-five years, but Morford later asserted that the NCASF had opposed the plan in a second campaign. NCASF opposition, he said, was based on the belief that the Marshall Plan aimed to control the European economy and, in effect, annex Europe into the anti-Soviet alliance.[196] This was an argument revisionist historians, particularly Walter LeFeber, also made in the 1960s and 70s. But the Marshall Plan was interpreted by most Americans in 1947 as a humanitarian measure and it enjoyed support from both major political parties. As such, the NCASF campaign had no more success than that against the Truman Doctrine.

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[194] Ibid.

[195] The Marshall Plan is not given the unadulterated praise today that it was by American commentators during the Cold War, but the consensus still leans toward the position that the Marshall Plan was both successful from the standpoints of European economic recovery and the expansion of American influence. Debates about responsibility for the *necessity* of the Marshall Plan and responsibility for it are amply covered in Michael Cox and Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, "The Tragedy of American Diplomacy? Rethinking the Marshall Plan," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 7, no. 1 (2005): 97–134.

[196] Kathy Kahn and Richard Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts" 1986; Box 3, Folder 22-23, Abbott Simon Papers; TAM 346; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.

There is more material on the third campaign against the formation of NATO in April 1949. NATO was and remains a military alliance of primarily European and American states. Depending on who one asks, it either was an attempt to draw a permanent line on Soviet territorial encroachment, or was an unnecessarily aggressive and incendiary isolation of the socialist states.[197] Jessica Smith wrote a pamphlet on NATO for *Soviet Russia Today.* Its title, "Jungle Law or Human Reason? The North Atlantic Pact and What It Means to You" goes some distance in explaining the NCASF position.[198] Perhaps out of frustration at the failure of the previous two campaigns, the NCASF pulled no punches in this one. It deemed the North Atlantic Pact "a call to the nations of Europe to get ready for war against the Soviet Union," and claimed it was "based on the same fictitious premise Hitler used to rearm Germany and to prepare the German people for war."[199] The NCASF statement also opposed NATO on constitutional grounds, arguing that the United States could not participate in an alliance that obligated war conditional on the attack of an ally, as only Congress was could declare war.[200]

The NCASF backed up the statement with another letter-writing campaign targeted at senators Morford perceived as vulnerable or undecided. In March, the NCASF circulated an open letter to the American people. It asserted that NATO "means that the United Nations will be reduced to impotence." "How would we feel," the letter asked, "if

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[197] One can acquire a suitable foundation for understanding the various perspectives on NATO through Lawrence S. Kaplan and Lyman L. Lemnitzer Center for NATO Studies., *American Historians and the Atlantic Alliance* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1991).
[198] Jessica Smith, *Jungle Law or Human Reason?: The North Atlantic Pact and What It Means to You* (New York: SRT Publications, 1949).
[199] "Richard Morford Papers; TAM.361," The Latest Threat to Peace – The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, January 26, 1949; Box 8, Folder 22.
[200] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Box 5, Folder 39.

Mexico or any one of the Latin American nations… should now sign a pact with the Soviet Union against us and allow Soviet military bases on their territory?"[201] The North Atlantic Treaty, which formally birthed NATO, was signed in March of 1949. At the NCASF annual National Council meeting on March 30, 1950, Morford admitted that the fight against NATO had always been hopeless, yet "the National Council and other organizations for peace have been compelled to carry on their labors." His appraisal, despite three hard blows in as many years, was still optimistic. "There is little support for turning the Cold War into a hot war because the good sense of the American people has comprehended the suicidal nature of modern scientific warfare," he noted. Yet the speed with which the Cold War had become institutionalized mystified him: "Hardly ever has any Government been so willingly and thoroughly supported in its policies and propaganda of platform, press, radio, screen."[202]

Statements by NCASF leaders make it seem as if they expected Americans to rally around a message for peace. Yet, this was a serious misreading of American culture in the late 1940s. While there were signs of a mini-peace revival immediately after World War II, the Soviet takeover of Czechoslovakia in 1948 had reduced the peace movement to an insignificant factor in American foreign relations with the USSR.[203] Indeed, the perspective of most Americans in the political mainstream by 1948 was reflected by the

[201] "Richard Morford Papers; TAM.361," An Open Letter to the American People by Richard Morford; Box 8, Folder 22.
[202] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Annual Report by the Director to the Members of the National Council of American–Soviet Friendship Annual Meeting, March 30, 1950; Box 1, Folder 68.
[203] Robbie Lieberman, *The Strangest Dream: Communism, Anticommunism and the U.S. Peace Movement 1945-1963* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 39–40.

title of Reinhold Niebuhr's article, "For Peace, We Must Risk War." This position became known as "nuclear pacifism." It rested on the idea that the best way to ensure peace was to prepare for war. With bipartisan support for a policy of tightrope-walking brinksmanship, Americans found other interpretations of how to end the Cold War suspect, particularly when those interpretations were critical of American motives and actions.

Such interpretations became prevalent as the 1940s drew to a close, as the communists jumped upon the peace bandwagon that the NCASF had prepared. The communist shift was primarily because, with the Wroclaw World Congress of Intellectuals in Defense of Peace in August of 1948, the Soviet Union began to present itself as a champion of peace. It pushed this narrative hard, especially from the formation of its sponsored peace organization, the World Peace Council, in 1950 and onwards. Historians believe this Soviet policy shift was based on a realization of the degree to which relations with the Americans had gone awry. It was also an attempt to win the support of European nations, who were united around the cause of peace more than any other issue.

All too often, the communist contributions and contributors to the NCASF's peace campaigns were oblivious to the degree to which American society had changed since World War II. Substantial care was now necessary to prevent accusations of treason by the public against leftists, but communist rhetoric was frequently aggressive in its condemnation of the American government and is policies. This tone-deafness was aggravating for the independent socialists in the Council, like Lamont and Philip A. Jaffe:

both of whom were trying their best to distance themselves from perceptions of anti-Americanism after the war. Lamont was arguing to the press that "it would be a great gain for all of us, Americans and Russians, to recognize frankly that our respective countries have defects as well as virtues…"[204] The communists on the board who had real connections to (not just sympathies toward) the CPUSA actually agreed with Lamont's position, thinking discretion to be a wise course. Smith, for instance, stressed in a board meeting in 1948 that "our organization is not a propaganda agency for the Soviet Union."[205] Yet, the local councils frequently chose outspoken radicals to speak at their events, which could only limit the audience willing to listen to the organization as a whole.

The breaking point for many independent socialists was the Korean War, which began in June of 1950. At a 1951 conference intended to prompt brainstorming on how to resolve the Cold War without similar armed conflicts, speaker Maud Russell claimed that the Korean War "was an occasion for openly stating and intensifying our government's total war policy in Asia." She also referred to the war as "a continuation and intensification of an attack against the Chinese people."[206] Such statements are difficult to place in a context external to total devotion to international communism, and were light years away from the feelings of most Americans.[207] In October of 1950, the New York

[204] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Corliss Lamont in a letter to the editor, unknown paper, January 17, 1949; Box 1, Folder 14.
[205] Ibid., Board of Directors minutes, September 16, 1948; Box 1, Folder 33.
[206] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," American Policy in Asia by Maud Russell, October 27, 1951; National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, Inc., 1943-1959.
[207] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University," Letter from Harry Steinmetz to AFCR Board, d.; Box 5; Folder 16.

Council sent out a newsletter which accused South Korean prime minister Syngman Rhea of running "a police state" and of provoking the North Koreans.

Statements like these not only limited the NCASF's potential audience, but narrowed that which already existed. Many of the more moderate members of the NCASF were driven away. In one example, lawyer and civil libertarian William Lancaster withdrew his sponsorship of the NCASF in 1950, asserting, "You are defending this act of aggression with arguments which have been used to support all the invasions during my life time and if carried to their logical conclusion would sustain the position of those persons in the United States in favor of 'preventive war.'"[208] For independent socialists who sought to use the NCASF as a mass organization, such positions were untenable. The hesitance to associate with these positions was a contributing factor to the exodus of independent socialists discussed in the next section.

The NCASF spent the late 1940s and early 1950s fighting against marginalization. It became abundantly clear after 1946 that the tide was turning against the American-Soviet friends in America, sponsored both by the American government and the media establishment. Morford and other leaders, however, reasoned that there was still time to shift momentum and save the alliance with the Soviet Union. The organization reacted to the phenomenal turn of the American people against the Soviet Union with three campaigns meant to subvert Truman's anti-Soviet narrative after World

[208] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," William Lancaster to Kingsbury, July 25, 1950; Box 2, Folder 19.

War II. While Americans were told by their politicians and media that the Soviet Union aimed for world domination, the NCASF implied through their selective criticism that, no, the aggressive, escalatory actions were taken by the United States.

This attempt to spin the Cold War was less than effective and indeed, it backfired against the NCASF. The organization's opposition to popular policies like the Marshall Plan and NATO made the NCASF appear to be a Soviet mouthpiece. The American-Soviet friends were becoming isolated, losing credibility with the rest of the American Left. In internally debating these positions, the NCASF revealed tensions within the organization between the communists and Christian socialists urging criticism of American policy in the Cold War, and the independent socialists desiring a more balanced approach. Their division made the organization all the easier to target by its opponents as the Cold War hit a boiling point.

## Feeling the Heat; Fleeing the Kitchen

Concurrent to the three campaigns against American foreign policy, the NCASF was faced by a not coincidental barrage of attacks from the government and media. The ferocity of these attacks was unprecedented, featuring accusations toward the NCASF of treason against their country and the targeting of individual members for public shaming. In retrospect, these attacks were some of the opening salvos in the Second Red Scare: a vicious and successful attempt by Republicans and Democrats alike to brand anyone opposed to the military standoff with the Soviet Union as anti-American Communists and Soviet agents. Leadership at the NCASF replied that the NCASF was a progressive

American organization merely advocating that the United States should seek cooperation with the Soviet Union and de-escalation of the military buildup that continued after World War II. Protestations of innocence in public and in court, however, did nothing to dissuade the campaigns against the NCASF, which, in remarkably short order, drove away most of the moderate voices in the American-Soviet friendship movement. This left the NCASF, as it entered the 1950s, with a drastically truncated core bereft of the ambition that prominent independent socialists had provided.

The first court action brought against the NCASF was that of HUAC. HUAC was a committee of the US House of Representatives, tasked with ferreting out subversive groups who might jeopardize the health of democracy in the United States. Established in the 1930s, after World War II HUAC became a permanent subcommittee, tasked with prosecuting alleged communists and communist fronts.[209] As the United States' largest proponent of the Soviet Union outside of the Communist Party, the NCASF was an early target, receiving its first summons to appear in front of HUAC in December of 1945.[210]

In its case against the NCASF, HUAC demanded that its representatives have unfettered access to the NCASF's files.[211] Not wanting supporters to be subject to public opprobrium, the NCASF resisted. Corliss Lamont called HUAC "a smear committee"

[209] The two most prominent monographs on the post-World War II HUAC investigations are William F. Buckley, *The Committee and Its Critics*; *a Calm Review of the House Committee on Un-American Activities,* (New York: Putnam, 1962), which takes a positive view of them, and Walter Goodman, *The Committee: The Extraordinary Career of the House Committee on Un-American Activities* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1968), which very much does not. One would be hard pressed to find a historian who subscribes to the Buckley position in the 21st century.
[210] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Box 4, Folder 43.
[211] David Caute, *The Great Fear: The Anti-Communist Purge under Truman and Eisenhower* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1978).

and – in a letter to HUAC chairman John S. Wood – refused the congressional request on virtue of a unanimous board decision. Lamont told Congress that the NCASF "is an educational organization in the broad sense, financed entirely by Americans" and hence outside of HUAC's purview. The NCASF was, furthermore, "not 'subversive' in any way." [212] Lamont was annoyed at the suggestion that helping Americans to understand the Soviet Union was un-American. Morford, meanwhile, publicized a statement among other organizations that asserted that the US government's "sweeping demands for books and records" was a violation of both the First and Fourth Amendments of the US constitution.[213]

NCASF leaders hoped that they could at least defeat the government in the court of public opinion, but public interest in the case evaporated as soon as the committee decided not to press their case against the famous Lamont. Surprisingly, HUAC accepted Lamont's argument that, as chairman of the NCASF, he was not custodian of the organization's records and could not provide them even if he wanted to. Lamont was then able to step aside from the case (and the NCASF, for that matter), which then moved on to Morford. Morford, as the actual legal custodian of the records, could not evade the request so easily as Lamont. Prosecutors insisted that Morford both deliver a list of contributors to the NCASF and tell Congress who edited the Council's newsletter, *The Reporter*. Morford refused these demands, according to him on principle. HUAC indicted

[212] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Letter from Corliss Lamont to John S. Wood, December 9, 1945; Box 4, Folder 43.
[213] Ibid., Telegram directed to 45 key organizations and 22 individuals by Richard Morford, April 12, 1946; Box 4, Folder 43.

him for contempt, and courts sentenced him to three months in jail for his intransigence.[214]

There was no public outcry against HUAC's decision to find Morford in contempt. The indifference of the sort of people who might well have rallied around Morford had his trial occurred in the 1930s, was perhaps an indication of the anxious direction American culture had traveled since World War II. The idealism and sentimentality of the war years was over. Accompanying the rise of HUAC and legal crackdowns on dissent was a national mood of existential dread and suspicion. This facilitated the political repression of the late 1940s. As historian William Graebner describes, instead of the morally simple Capra films, "White Christmas," and Wonder Woman of the early 1940s, Americans in the late 1940s produced narratives commenting on the "ugly truth about the essential nature of modern humanity" that had been revealed by the war years, which showed the lies and danger concealed beneath an innocent exterior.[215] The ubiquitous film noir stories, too, engaged a world in which life was ambiguous and messy, whereas allegorical tales such as Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" examined a society that was externally serene but internally brutal, ruthless, and arbitrary. See, too, *All About Eve* from 1949, wherein a seemingly innocent actress is revealed to be "cold, deeply ambitious, and calculating…"[216] All of these narratives coincided with HUAC's perspective: that the United States was infiltrated with communists and dupes of the same, all of whom were subverting America's institutions for the benefit of a foreign

[214] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 1: 197.
[215] William Graebner, *The Age of Doubt: American Thought and Culture in the 1940s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 46.
[216] Ibid., 45.

power. In such an environment, Americans could not take chances. If the government deemed a man like Morford a criminal, Americans reasoned there was probably a cause.

Meanwhile, a cultural front had opened against the NCASF concurrent with the cases against Lamont and Morford. At the forefront was liberal anticommunist journalist Frederick Woltman. Woltman made his name as a progressive and pro-labor reporter in the 1930s (he won a Pulitzer Prize for reporting on a real estate mortgage bond racket in 1931), but redirected his talents to the exposure of communists after the Cold War began. He conducted a campaign against the NCASF from the platform of his column in the *New York World-Telegram*, peaking in intensity in October of 1946.

The catalyst for the anti-NCASF pieces was Woltman's feeling that the Council was opposing the Baruch atomic control plan, a proposal by the United States to the Soviet Union to regulate atomic weapons and energy.[217] For many Americans, the Soviet refusal to agree to the Baruch Plan, which involved the United States voluntarily giving up its nuclear weapons on the condition that the rest of the world agree not to produce any of their own was the final proof of Soviet bad faith. The Soviets had countered that the Americans should instead give up their nuclear weapons first as a starting point, without conditions. The actual sticking point for the Soviets, though, was the American insistence on United Nations inspection of world arsenals in the Baruch Plan. Stalin believed that the UN was an American puppet, and thought that the Americans would simply use it to gain intelligence about Soviet capabilities – something Stalin very much

[217] The Baruch Plan for nuclear control is examined in Shane J. Maddock, *Nuclear Apartheid: The Quest for American Atomic Supremacy from World War II to the Present* (University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

wanted to keep secret after four years of mass slaughter of Soviet soldiers on the Eastern Front. But most Americans reasoned that the Soviet plan was to convince the Americans to give up their atomic weapons, produce its own, and then blackmail or even launch a preemptive strike against the United States. Claiming that the NCASF opposed the Baruch Plan allowed Woltman to frame their rhetoric for peace in the most disingenuous possible light and allowed Americans to categorize the Council as insincere and cynical communist stooges. The NCASF, in fact, did not oppose the plan and never had but found the accusation of its adherence to the Soviet line on this matter difficult to disprove.

Woltman went after the NCASF where it was most vulnerable – its politician and businessmen sponsors. He named these sponsors in his column. "By letting their names be used as sponsors of the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, Inc.," Woltman wrote in his first salvo, "they are… giving more prestige and respectability to one of the principal pro-Soviet propaganda agencies in this country."[218] The *New York Herald Tribune* and other newspapers owned by anticommunist print magnate William Randolph Hearst joined Woltman in his crusade against the NCASF. The *Herald Tribune* led with the following attack a month after Woltman's first column: "There has never been any valid reason why anybody should not have known that the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, Inc., is one of the foremost communist 'transmission belts' in the United States… the Hearst Newspapers exposed the Council years ago… how do

[218] Frederick Woltman, "American-Soviet Friendship Council Uses Names of Leading Non-Leftists," *New York World-Telegram*, October 15, 1946.

any of the gentlemen who have had their names implicated justify any degree of support of a propaganda organization the very existence of which is inimical to Americanism IN OUR DOMESTIC AFFAIRS?"[219] It was an effective campaign. Indeed, Woltman and the Hearst papers deserve most of the credit for the NCASF's loss of mainstream support after World War II. Melish explained the nature and extent of the exodus in a letter to the NCASF constituency:

> To date, of nearly two hundred sponsors, about a dozen have apparently fallen victim to this campaign. Unfortunately, these are men of national standing whose action in resigning has furnished Woltman with powerful ammunition. These sponsors made no effort to check the truth of the Woltman allegations nor did any of them consult with us before releasing their statements of withdrawal. The publicity surrounding these resignations has naturally attracted wide attention. The Hearst Press has taken up the hue-and-cry, Time Magazine has added its voice, the national wire services have passed along, until now these Woltman-inspired stories have been printed and reprinted in every section of the country. Obviously, the hope behind this whole campaign is the provocation of a mass withdrawal of our sponsors that will seriously impair the whole movement for American-Soviet Friendship that we represent.[220]

As sponsors left, they issued public letters explaining that they were withdrawing support over one Council statement or another. Woltman collected and publicized many of these letters in his column. No sponsor admitted that the public outing in Woltman's column instigated their departure from the Council, yet nearly all of the sponsor withdrawals occurred within weeks of the first piece and made mention of its allegations (and besides, they sent their letters of withdrawal to Woltman). Former Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, for instance, asked the NCASF to take him off the sponsor list due to the "considerable variance" between his views and those of the Council – specifically

[219] "Ashamed of Their Company?," *New York Herald-Tribune*, November 11, 1946.
[220] "Richard Morford Papers; TAM.361," Letter from William Howard Melish, December 17, 1946; Box 8, Folder 9.

regarding the Baruch Plan and their support for the candidacy of Henry Wallace (another position the Council had never advocated in public).[221]

Similar falsehoods proliferated in these letters, most of them painting the NCASF as a duplicitous and treasonous organization which had misled its members. When Senator Leverett A Saltonstall insisted that he had never supported a political organization and had rather joined when the Council "was an effort to assist the Russian people when they were in want of clothing and other things," the NCASF leadership decided this was all too much.[222] The NCASF released a statement in October of 1946 regretting "that the pressures of the day have led the Senator to withdraw his sponsorship," but declared it "inconceivable" that Saltonstall could have been asked to sponsor the Council on "any other basis that its fully publicized program." The NCASF program, they said, had not changed since the organization's foundation in 1943.[223] Morford released another statement that month, asserting that the NCASF had in fact favored the Baruch Plan, but merely "rejected the spirit of irreconcilability" projected by many American newspapers regarding the American and Soviet positions on nuclear power.

Few were interested in the actual nature of NCASF claims, however. Americans thought they could see the monster behind the Council's seemingly innocuous rhetoric. As condemnations of the NCASF proliferated, the organization became less attractive to the independent socialists who, after all, wanted to use the organization to popularize

[221] Ibid., Letter from Harold L. Ickes to Harry Fairchild, October 18, 1946; Box 8, Folder 9.
[222] Ibid., Letter from Leverett Saltonstall to NCASF, October 19, 1946; Box 8, Folder 9.
[223] Ibid., Press release to the Brooklyn Eagle by NCASF; October 23, 1946; Box 8, Folder 9.

their ideas, not ostracize them. Only the most devoted Sovietophiles remained. Even Corliss Lamont, the organization's founder, quietly and stepped away to focus on his teaching.

The Christian socialists soon felt pressure as well. Shortly after the Woltman-prompted mass sponsor exodus, the vestry of Brooklyn's Episcopal Church of the Holy Trinity began the process of ousting William Howard Melish from his position as assistant rector. It was a confusing episode both caused by and influential toward the course of the NCASF. The press had drawn attention to Melish in New York since he replaced a disenchanted and burned-out Lamont as chairman of the NCASF in 1946. Woltman was a contributor to this, referring to Melish in print (both inflammatorily and accurately) as "…not only a fervent admirer of the Soviet system… [but also] an equally ardent admirer, defender, and associate of American communists."[224]

Melish, for his part, was popular among the Trinity congregation, which had a long tradition of self-sufficiency and a belief in ecclesiastical freedom of speech. The vestry at Holy Trinity and Long Island Diocese Bishop James P. DeWolfe, however, thought that all the Melish publicity was harmful to the church. They questioned Melish's father, John Howard Melish, the full rector, on his son's activities and the organization that he chaired. The NCASF, they told him, was encouraging to the American Communist movement, and communism was incompatible with Christianity.[225]

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[224] Frederick Woltman, "Old Communist Friend Heads Pro-Red Council," *New York World-Telegram*, October 16, 1946.
[225] Melish Defense Committee., *The Melish Case: Challenge to the Church.* (Brooklyn: The Committee, 1950).

When John Howard Melish made it clear that he would not fire his son, the vestry requested that both Melishs resign. Both refused, and John Howard Melish was suddenly fired for being "too old" to run Holy Trinity. The younger Melish was firm in his conviction to stay put and the congregation made known its support for him. The Bishop and vestry voted to remove him anyway. Melish continued to conduct his duties (now as full rector) regardless for almost ten years. Battle lines were drawn between the bulk of the Episcopal hierarchy, which voted overwhelmingly and consistently to oust Melish from Holy Trinity, and the congregation, which very much wanted him to stay and did not hesitate to tell the vestry so. Melish all the while insisted he was not a communist and had never been one. Yet, he continued to inflame his opposition with statements condemning the United States' government for "the present drive toward war and the attempt of a frightened leadership to protect the economic structure of the country from long-overdue changes by means of vast military subsidies to industry and by the deliberate suppression of all elements that criticize the official program…"[226]

Attacks on Christian socialists through their religious institutions were not new or rare: Morford had faced his own siege in the 1930s and Unitarian Stephen Fritchman was forced to leave his church in Massachusetts around the same time that the crusade against Melish began. While churchmen marred by the "red" brush usually lost their congregations, they seldom withdrew from public life, and Melish was no exception. But the stress was nevertheless painful for Melish and harmful for the NCASF. The battle for

[226] "Young Melish Sees Ban on Criticism: Says 'Frightened Leadership' Seeks to Prevent Needed Changes in Our Economy," *New York Times*, April 4, 1949.

Holy Trinity so distracted Melish that he stepped down from the NCASF chairmanship in 1949. He claimed that, "…the increasing responsibilities of my parish have made it very difficult to give the Council the time that it deserved of its chairman." Losing Melish, one of the less radical and more thoughtful voices in the NCASF, at such a crucial time was a major blow. Combined with Lamont's departure from the movement and the loss of many of the more moderate sponsors because of abuse from the media, the NCASF would enter the 1950s seriously undermanned from an intellectual perspective.

As the Cold War heated up and fears of espionage increased still further, Attorney General Tom Clark decided to add the by now deeply unpopular NCASF to the Attorney General's List of Subversive Organizations, which he released in December of 1947. Clark intended the list to serve as an aid for determining the loyalty of US government personnel. But it actually served as a comprehensive blacklist of leftist organizations that could be used by all manner of government agencies in order to discredit Americans by associating them with treason and subordination to the CPUSA or Soviet Union. According to *Prologue,* the magazine of the National Archives and Records Administration: "… [the List] was quickly adopted by a wide variety of public and private groups, including state and military, defense contractors, hotels, the Treasury Department (in making tax-exemption determinations), and the State Department (in making passport and deportation decisions), to deny employment or otherwise discriminate against listed organizations or persons alleged to be affiliated with them."[227]

[227] "Prelude to McCarthyism: The Making of a Blacklist," accessed December 3, 2014, http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2006/fall/agloso.html.

For the NCASF, the Attorney General's list had immediate stigma. After placement upon it, the NCASF was unable to so much as rent large halls for its events and radio was no longer receptive to its speakers and advertisements. The NCASF responded in June of that year by suing the Attorney General, accusing him of violating the Council's First, Fifth, Ninth, and Tenth Amendment rights. Aside from a complementary article in the *Washington Post,* which argued that the list was bad form (even though it also thought the NCASF was probably subversive), there was little support from outside the organization.[228]

Lawsuits then began to pile up against the NCASF. The next round of prosecution was based on a 1950 piece of legislation called the Internal Security Act but better known as the McCarran Act in honor of its sponsor, Nevada Democrat Senator Pat McCarran. The McCarran Act was a revival of the Mundt Bill (which had been defeated in the Senate twice) with a bit of tweaking. Instead of requiring communists to register with the Attorney General, an idea that Congress was still unwilling to institute, the McCarran Act mandated that "communist front" groups had to do so as organizations.[229] To the surprise of absolutely no one, the Attorney General's List of Subversive Organizations was the starting point in determining whether an organization was such a communist front. "Members" of groups, who were judged as such by a Senate subcommittee (the Subversive Activities Control Board [SACB]), were not permitted to leave the country or become citizens if they were not already. President Truman, no friend of communism or

[228] "Fixed Star," *Washington Post*, July 1, 1948.
[229] 81st United States Congress, "Text of the Internal Security Act of 1950" (Documents of American History II), US Statues at Large, 81st Congress, II Ses., Chp. 1024, pp. 987-1031, accessed March 2, 2015, http://tucnak.fsv.cuni.cz/~calda/Documents/1950s/Inter_Security_50.html.

progressives, was so doubtful as to the act's constitutionality that he used his veto, reasoning, "We must be eternally vigilant against those who would undermine freedom in the name of security."[230] Congress did not share Truman's reservations and overrode his veto on September 22, 1950, the same day it was issued.

The McCarran Act was problematic legislation in numerous ways, not least because it criminalized intentions rather than actions. This was a radical departure from American legal standards. As concerns the NCASF, the flaw that was most apparent in the law was its criteria for the labeling of a communist front organization. The McCarran Act defined a communist front as "Any organization in the United States… which (A) is substantially directed, dominated, or controlled by a Communist-action organization, and (B) is primarily operated for the purpose of giving aid and support to a Communist-action organization, a communist foreign government, or the world communist movement…"[231] The NCASF of the Cold War did not fit either definition. In practice, however, the SACB tended to assert that paralleling positions of the Soviet government was enough to count as aiding the world communist movement. Since Soviet positions during the Cold War included (whether or not one takes the positions seriously) disarmament, world peace, and racial and gender equality, the McCarran Act had in essence dubbed the entire peace movement, civil rights movement, and liberal Christianity to be collections of communist fronts.

[230] Richard S. Kirkendall, *The Civil Liberties Legacy of Harry S. Truman* (Truman State University Press, 2012), 190.
[231] 81st United States Congress, "Text of the Internal Security Act of 1950."

In 1954, noting that the NCASF had not registered as a communist front (which it had never been ordered to do), Attorney General Herbert Brownell pressed charges against it for violating the McCarran Act. The task of the prosecution was to prove that communists and the CPUSA dominated the NCASF and that its program functioned to the benefit of international communism. Brownell's basic argument was that the NCASF was actually the same organization as FSU. This was an important, as Brownell could prove that FSU was a communist front much more easily than in the case of the NCASF. After all, FSU had never tried particularly hard to hide its connections. If Brownell could laden the NCASF with FSU's institutional history, he would not have to bother uncovering existing ties between the NCASF and CPUSA. His backup argument was that the Council had paralleled communist positions: a nightmare of a legal argument, as it required proving 1) what a communist was; 2) what organizations spoke for communists; 3) what a communist position was; 4) what communist positions were subversive, 5) that the NCASF echoed those positions, and 6) that this implied any sort of connection or proved subversion on the part of the NCASF.[232]

The government's case was farcical. It would take wild indifference to facts and the workings of ideology to assert, as Brownell did, that Corliss Lamont, William Howard Melish, and Richard Morford were "secret Party members." It is also difficult to imagine the Council giving money to their own employees consistently, let alone to the CPUSA. To backup these and other assertions, however, the government had a stream of

[232] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Excerpts from the Opinions of the Justices, Supreme Court of the United States, Delivered on April 30, 1951; Box 4, Folder 49.

"witnesses." The more damaging among the witnesses were John Lautner, Joseph Zack Kornfeder, Harvey Matusow, and Louis Budenz: ex-CPUSA members who practiced the art of witnessing professionally for the FBI.

None of the professional witnesses were actual participants in the NCASF, or knew any of the principal members personally. Yet, they held the burden of making much of the government's case. Kornfeder asserted that Soviet commands were behind the transition from the FSU to the NCASF. Lautner, Matusow, and Budenz each claimed that one person or another had told them that each individual leader of the NCASF was a Party member. His testimony reached its peak of absurdity when NCASF counsel David Rein asked Matusow if a friend had identified Morford as a communist at a speaking engagement. Matusow responded, "One by one, so and so would speak, Lillian Gates, Richard Morford would speak, communist, communist, et cetera." Echoing the skepticism of almost anyone told of such an unlikely situation, an incredulous Rein asked, "As each member came up he said 'he is a member of the Communist Party'?"[233] This, at the very least, would be indicative of bizarre conversational styles on the part of Matusow and his friend. At any rate, it was the definition of hearsay.

Regarding the parallel positions portion of the government's case, the main effort was an exhaustive examination of NCASF literature. The government also compared NCASF literature to communist journals and other publications. Most of the publications from both sources were of World War II vintage, when both the NCASF and CPUSA had

[233] Ibid., Memorandum on the Summary of Testimony of Harvey M. Matusow before SACB Hearing; Box 4, Folder 48.

been as pro-America as the American Legion, but also pro-Soviet and pro-alliance. The government ignored all of the pro-American rhetoric throughout the literature, including such socialist and subversive notions as support of American troops and the need to buy consumer goods to help the economy. Instead, the government used the pro-Soviet sentiments as proof of the NCASF's treachery. The NCASF was in a strange position, being condemned for perspectives on friendship which a decade before they had received the personal thanks of Dwight Eisenhower for advocating. As Morford and Ted Bayer noted, "…the accusation of the Government against the National Council when it comes down to brass tacks is that we believe in the necessity and possibility of friendship between the USA and the USSR and that a policy of peaceful coexistence is the only alternative to war."[234]

By now exiled from the mainstream completely, with the media all but out of reach, the NCASF's only hope to win this case was a reliance on legalistic arguments that might convince the court that the law had not been breached at all (as opposed to the accurate but futile approach stressing that the government had exceeded its authority: an argument favored by most organizations under indictment). This was, indeed, the NCASF's case. Rein convinced Clyde R. Miller of the Institute for Propaganda Studies to write an extensive report on Council literature in order to show that it was not subversive. Miller argued that NCASF literature was definitely propaganda, but that he saw nothing objectionable about it. He also saw nothing untoward in the NCASF's lack of criticism toward the Soviet Union, as – true or not – such a perspective would be counter to the

[234] Ibid., Letter from Ted Bayer and Richard Morford to National Council, June 7, 1954; Box 4, Folder 43.

Council's mission of convincing Americans to see the Soviet Union in a different way than to which they were accustomed. Miller castigated the government for taking portions of NCASF literature out of context to frame a narrative of subversion, claiming, "In general, the opinions expressed in the Council's propaganda for friendly wartime and peacetime relationships with the Soviet Union are based on well-documented facts," and that Council propaganda was, "for the most part reasonable and moderate in tone." There were no signs, Miller insisted, of an organization that wanted to overthrow the US government or advocate for others to do the same.[235] However, what might have convinced a jury of reasonable doubt was not persuasive to the five-person SACB panel. They ruled against the NCASF, setting off a series of appeals that would extend well into the 1960s.

Throughout these attacks of the early Cold War, the NCASF had a consistent public relations strategy: assert continued loyalty of the NCASF to the United States and its interests, deny the government's authority on civil liberties grounds, and question the motives of anti-Soviet politicians and the media. This stand was not at all fatalistic or apocalyptic: it relied on faith that the American people were capable of critical thinking even during the Cold War and that American institutions had safeguards against abuse of power by political elites. It was the complete opposite of the approach taken by the communists in contemporary trials, who usually claimed that the American justice system was rigged and illegitimate. But the NCASF found no more success than the communists did: in fact, their approach turned out to be almost uniformly ineffective. The American

[235] Ibid., Report on Certain Publications of the NCASF by Clyde M. Miller; Box 4, Folder 50.

public thought enemies were everywhere (indeed, this was the decade of widespread UFO and sex crime scares). The government faced no opposition in its determination that the NCASF was among them.

Ironically, the branding of the American-Soviet friendship movement as treason became a self-fulfilling prophecy. As persecution grew, the less radical members were forced to leave or face exclusion from a society of which they were still very much a part. As these Christian and independent socialists left, communists gradually filled the vacuum, making it less likely that the NCASF could or would take critical stands against the Soviet Union. In this context, the NCASF never stood a chance of integrating into the mainstream. Like the protagonists in the detective films that were so popular in the 1940s, the NCASF had been set up to take a fall by forces beyond their control, in a corrupt system that no longer made sense to them.

## 1956

1956 was a turning point for Sovietophiles. Many Americans – former Soviet friends Sidney Hook, Max Eastman, and John Dewey among them – had said for years that the Soviet Union was closer to a 19th century elitist autocracy than a progressive paragon of equality. However, many others on the Left felt, sometimes with good reason, that the criticism was a reflection of ideological bias. After 1956, dismissing anti-Soviet criticism became much more difficult, if not impossible. First, new Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev's February 1956 speech to the Twentieth Party Congress, "On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences," was smuggled into the West and published in the *New*

*York Times* in March and June.[236] In that speech, Khrushchev revealed the extent of Stalin's crimes. He condemned Stalin's "cult of the individual," his execution of the Old Bolsheviks in the phony Moscow Trials, his various lies and distortions, and his use of the Soviet secret police (the NKVD), to terrorize Soviet citizens.[237]

Reading the speech prompted many to deem the ideals of the Bolshevik Revolution to be dead. [238] The worst accusations of the anti-Soviet press had been correct all along. The previous twenty years, in which Stalin asserted the Soviets were building a new civilization, had been a sham. American communists, at least those willing to listen, learned that the Soviet Union was just an authoritarian state with progressive trappings. Even the CPUSA became deeply divided. For some American communists, this revelation was the most shocking of their lives. Dorothy Healey, a CPUSA veteran back to the 1920s, wrote, "We had marched for so many years with the purity of the Soviet Union as our banner. It was not just a public thing, you felt it, believed it. You had no difficulty in dismissing the stories that were told about the Soviet Union as lies, nonsense. And here you were being told that not only were those stories true but that they went beyond anything you ever heard from enemies of the Soviet Union."[239]

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[236] Harrison E. Salisbury, "Secret Khrushchev Talk On Stalin 'Phobia,'" *New York Times*, March 16, 1956; Harrison E. Salisbury, "Khrushchev Talk on Stalin Bares Details of Rule Based on Terror," *New York Times*, June 5, 1956.
[237] Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev and Boris I. Nicolaevsky, "The Crimes of the Stalin Era, Special Report to the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union" (New Leader, 1956).
[238] Maurice Isserman, "The 1956 Generation: An Alternative Approach to the History of American Communism," *Radical America* 14, no. 2 (April 1980) is a good overview of how the Secret Speech affected leftists in America. But even more interesting are the memoires of people who were Communists at the time. See Edith A. Jenkins, *Against a Field Sinister: Memoirs and Stories* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1991); Joseph R. Starobin, "1956, A Memoir," *Problems of Communism* 15 (December 1966); John Gates, *The Story of an American Communist.* (New York: Nelson, 1958).
[239] 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), 23.

Khrushchev's speech could not have come at a worse time for the American-Soviet friends. McCarthyism was finally dying down. In the words of one constituent, new people were beginning to attend NCASF meetings and "some middle of the road people were opening their minds." After the revelations became public, there was considerable confusion in the NCASF about how to keep the constituency from fragmenting. Some leaders wanted to do nothing. Perhaps, some hoped, the outrage would tire itself out and a statement would be unnecessary.[240] This was a viewpoint espoused by true believers in the Soviet project whose admiration was untouched by the revelations. Ted Bayer and Jessica Smith, the loyal communists, were in this camp, but so were some remaining independent socialists like John Kingsbury (the NCASF chairman who took over when Melish stepped down) and longtime board member Emily Pierson. Instead of allowing their esteem for the Soviet Union to diminish, these members doubled down on their convictions. Some were unsure of the Khrushchev speech's legitimacy as a document. More, however, found the Soviet Union's progress so promising and incredible that they did not want to dilute its appeal by emphasizing problems they believed to be firmly in the past. [241]

Others in the organization, however, felt that the NCASF had a moral obligation to condemn Stalinism and acknowledge to the constituency that – despite previous statements by the NCASF to the contrary – the Soviet Union had committed grievous errors. In this corner were the Christian Socialists Morford, Melish, and former reverend

[240] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Letter from Richard Morford to Charles F. Weller, April 6, 1956; Box 5, Folder 6.
[241] "Richard Morford Biography Materials," 1: 290.

Arthur Moulton, along with the few remaining civil liberties-oriented independent socialists, like William Mandel and Frederick Schuman.[242] A vote at the annual May membership meeting showed that those who wanted the NCASF to comment on the speech were in the majority. A strong but optimistic statement was prepared. If released, the statement would have been a dramatic reversal. It criticized the Soviet Union's betrayal of the "basic principles of socialist democracy and collective leadership." It also lamented the NCASF and other progressive groups' championing of Stalin during the preceding decade.[243] In a country that loves nothing more than acts of contrition, the statement could have made all the difference in the NCASF's attempt back into the American mainstream.

The opposition in the Council, however, dragged its feet. Arguing on behalf of organizational democracy (while actually subverting it), Bayer and Smith demanded that Morford send his statement to the membership for approval. Morford agreed. Upon seeing the statement, Kingsbury threatened to resign, a threat he acted upon after holding up the statement for two months. In his resignation letter, Kingsbury castigated the NCASF for believing the veracity of a "proported [sic] text" of Khrushchev's speech "released by the State Department." He called the revelations of that speech "allegations the truth about which we are in no position to evaluate."[244] Then, at the next board meeting, in July, Smith and Pierson claimed too much time had gone by since the Secret Speech and that a statement would now be awkward. They called for a vote on setting the

[242] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Box 1, Folder 41.
[243] Ibid., Draft of Statement on Secret Speech; Box 1, Folder 41.
[244] "W.E.B Du Bois Papers (MS 312).," Letter from John Kingsbury to Richard Morford, June 24, 1956, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

statement aside forever. The measure passed, albeit against opposition[245] Much as in the CPUSA, the loyal supporters of the Soviet Union managed to outmaneuver the critics and thus were able to retain a disproportionate voice in the organization.

The decision not to issue a statement was probably a great missed opportunity for the NCASF. Much as the Nazi-Soviet Pact split the left wing of American liberals in 1939, the NCASF's failure to take a stand on Stalin's crimes split the remaining non-communists in the American-Soviet friendship movement in 1956. The dispute left the communists dominating an organization with no remaining credibility to the American public. To many constituents, the accusations of HUAC, Woltman, and the SACB all suddenly seemed to ring true. Many of them would never trust the NCASF again. The ranks of the Christian and independent socialists were decimated. William Mandel dropped out of the Council amid the indecision to release the statement in May, asserting, "the Council is doomed to sterility."[246] Schuman stayed, but refused to appear at their functions.[247] Herman Reissig, a former ally at the Council for Social Action of the Congregational Christian Churches, told Morford that the NCASF needed to employ more balanced criticism. The organization, he wrote, seemed to think, "friendship means uncritical friendly feeling toward one party and an undiscriminating condemnation of the other."[248]

[245] "W.E.B Du Bois Papers (MS 312).," Letter from John A. Kingsbury to Richard Morford, June 24, 1956, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.
[246] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Letter from William Mandel to NCASF, May 19, 1956; Box 2, Folder 39.
[247] Ibid., Letter from Frederick L. Schuman to Richard Morford, September 17, 1956; Box 2, Folder 39.
[248] Ibid., Letter from Herman F. Reissig, September 26, 1956; Box 3, Folder 19.

In particular, the lack of a statement was upsetting to the Jewish members of the Council. Though their dissatisfaction came to a boil after Khrushchev's speech, it had been simmering for a decade. After the Holocaust, the creation and then survival of the state of Israel was of paramount importance to most American Jews. While the Soviet Union was the first nation to recognize Israel, the United States nevertheless became the new state's chief ally. In the 1950s, the Soviet Union, therefore, harshly criticized Israel. The Soviets conflated Zionism with nationalism and called Israel an imperialist lackey of the United States. When the Soviet Union armed and sponsored Israel's Middle Eastern adversaries, it began to seem logical for American Jews to judge the Soviet Union as their enemy as well.[249]

Khrushchev's speech confirmed the allegations from American and European Jews that the Soviet Union was not just anti-Israel but anti-Semitic. Khrushchev explained the realities of the 1952 Doctors' Plot, in which the Soviets arrested a group of Jewish physicians on the groundless charges of attempting to assassinate Stalin.[250] In New York, the constituency felt so betrayed by these revelations that discussions of the nature of Soviet anti-Semitism and the extent of evidence thereof consumed most of the Council meetings in the city for a decade.

As the constituency crumbled, the NCASF struggled to figure out how to respond. One episode in particular demonstrates the desperation of the leadership of the NCASF at

[249] On the Soviet Union and its relationship with Israel, see: Jon D Glassman, *Arms for the Arabs: The Soviet Union and War in the Middle East* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975).
[250] Louis Rapoport, *Stalin's War against the Jews: The Doctors' Plot and the Soviet Solution* (New York: Free Press, 1990) was the first full treatment of the Doctors' Plot of 1953; Jonathan Brent and Vladimir Pavlovich Naumov, *Stalin's Last Crime: The Plot against the Jewish Doctors, 1948-1953* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003) uses newly available KGB sources.

the time. Confused and lacking direction, the leadership of the NCASF called on an old friend to set the picture straight: Anna Louise Strong. Strong, once the most prolific and popular propagandist of the Soviet Union in the United States, was an American philosophy PhD turned journalist who had rushed to the Soviet Union in the 1920s to see the construction of socialism first hand. In the 1920s, her romantic reports of Soviet progress to American newspapers fired the imaginations of a generation of American socialists and liberals.[251] Strong lived in the USSR for decades, married a Soviet Communist Party member, and started up *The Moscow News*: the first English-language daily periodical in the Soviet Union. Even this Sovietophile par excellence ran afoul of Stalin's paranoia, however, as the Soviets arrested and exiled Strong in 1949 on espionage charges.[252] Dmitri Malenkov, Stalin's temporary successor, finally cleared Strong of all charges in 1955. She was, it turns out, a terrific sport about the episode. She rejoined the ranks of Soviet sympathizers with enthusiasm.[253] She remained a popular, if polarizing, figure on the Left.

Strong now spoke at a public forum to one thousand people in New York for the NCASF on June 12, 1956, and elicited such interest that "300 people on the walks had to

[251] Early plans for this dissertation included Anna Louise Strong as a key figure, but reflection revealed that she was more akin to the paradigm within which resides John Reed than to that of Corliss Lamont and other American-Soviet friendship personalities. Anna Louise Strong, *I Change Worlds: The Remaking of an American* (New York: H. Holt and Co., 1935) is her midlife autobiography. Tracy B. Strong and Helene Keyssar, *Right in Her Soul: The Life of Anna Louise Strong* (New York: Random House, 1983) is the most comprehensive work devoted to her; Robert William Pringle, "Anna Louise Strong Propagandist of Communism," 1970 is a more critical approach.

[252] The only account of Anna Louise Strong's arrest in the Soviet Union is her own, produced for the *New York Herald Tribune* upon her 1949 return to the United States. Anna Louise Strong, "Jailed in Moscow," *New York Herald Tribune*, March 27 - April 1, 1949.

[253] Special to The New York Times, "Soviet Clears Anna Louise Strong Of '49 Spy Charge, Blaming Beria," *New York Times*, March 5, 1955.

be turned away."[254] In a letter to a contributor, Morford wrote, "her talk was constructive and a positive help in the discussion." On the other hand, she was too indicative of the old fellow-traveler paradigm for Morford's comfort. Despite her name recognition, Strong was hopelessly out of touch with where the American Left was in 1956. While her speech was not documented, she published an article that same year on her thoughts about the Stalinist revelations. Therein, she argued against criticizing Stalin. He was not present to defend himself (historical scholarship was apparently a no-go with Strong), she said. And besides, she would still rather go to heaven as Stalin than as Truman, Herbert Brownell (the Attorney General who pressed charges against the NCASF among others), Dulles, Hoover, or Churchill. She fell back upon well-worn apologist ad numeram and non-sequitur, asserting that before the Revolution she "found Russia a land of illiterate peasants, where children crouched all winter indoors on the family oven… today all children trot to school in shoes."[255] This sort of rhetoric was not going to work in the Cold War and Morford knew it. He wrote to a constituent:

> Miss Strong herself has not yet come to the fullest appreciation, it seems to me, of the widespread evils which developed under the [Stalin] dictatorship. She had a tendency to rationalize the violations of democracy in terms of the exigencies of the situation, the struggle to compel a united nation in order to withstand the assaults from unfriendly nations outside the Soviet Union. But granted this problem, there could be no justification for the extremity of the measures that were taken [in the Soviet Union under Stalin].[256]

At the same time, however, the leadership was at a loss for where else the organization could turn. Communists were the one faction that was not jumping ship from the NCASF.

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[254] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Letter from Richard Morford to Elsie Tyndale, June 27, 1956; Box 2, Folder 49.
[255] Anna Louise Strong, "Critique of the Stalin Era," *Mon. Rev. Monthly Review* 8, no. 3 (1956): 103.
[256] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Letter to Elsie Tyndale, 1956; Box 2, Folder 49.

It was tempting to just tell them what they wanted to hear while waiting for the heat to die down.

Instead of dying down, however, the conflagration became an inferno by November. That month, the Soviet Union invaded Hungary with over 31,000 troops and 1,500 tanks, crushing an attempt by Hungarians to withdraw from the Warsaw Pact. The Soviets, even under the supposedly more liberal Khrushchev, were revealed to be so obsessed with creating a ring of subservient puppet states that they were unwilling to consider both the wishes of the people who lived in those states and their well-being. The vaunted Warsaw Pact – the "alliance" of socialist states in Eastern Europe – began to look like a prison of nations. The supposed Soviet commitment to democracy and peace was undermined internationally, as was their reputation for a commitment to humanitarian-guided social reform. Even the CPUSA adopted a resolution that intervention in Hungary had been a mistake, though some expert political maneuvering by Eugene Dennis managed to quash the dissent in what was left of the Party within a year. [257] The Party's venerable *Daily Worker* newspaper fell into the hands of opponents of the Hungarian invasion, however, and had to be closed down rather than be allowed to proselytize for the opposition.[258]

In the NCASF, the frustration with the Soviet Union was palpable. The divisions created by its latest outrage were extreme. Morford bypassed the board and wrote a letter to the constituency directly, asserting that "the Russians will have to adjust their relations

[257] Numbers from "Lib.ru/Фантастика: Чекмарев Владимир Альбертович. Будапешт 1956," October 12, 2008, https://web.archive.org/web/20081012224546/http://fan.lib.ru/c/chekmarew_w_a/text_0200.shtml.
[258] Starobin discusses this episode in depth. Starobin, *American Communism in Crisis, 1943-1957*.

within and without to a new pattern of living that moves toward democracy, and less coercion and more freedom."[259] But, as in 1948, what the leadership of the NCASF said or did not say was irrelevant. The steady stream of critical letters withdrawing support from the NCASF became an avalanche. One letter from a constituent, Hugh Weston, summed up to Morford the disenchantment felt by many Sovietophiles, as their favorite country seemed to be becoming an imperialist vulture-state:

> Either you are too ignorant to learn or too prejudiced to think. You seem to have about the quantity of brains God gave a corkscrew. Here the Hungarian, Polish, and Yugoslav workers are fighting for their lives against the Russian thugs and gangsters, and you come out with some crap and trash trying to excuse this nauseating filth on the grounds that the Hungarians are led by fascists… You are obviously enemies, objectively, of the Soviet people, of socialism, and of the whole working class. You should fold up shop… You have learned nothing from the Khrushchev report. You are still afraid to study anything… Sooner or later, as the gathering forces of progress grow and as the Molotovs and Suslovs are hanged or executed, you will come to your senses, as the common people rise… When you come to your senses, it will be too late. The great march of the people to democratic and people's socialism will have passed you by.[260]

This was harsh criticism, especially when one considers that the organization had never advanced the positions claimed by Weston. But the NCASF had done so little to distinguish themselves from the Soviet Union that it was not surprising that nobody else could tell them apart.

After November, the refusal to come out strong against the Soviet Union was destroying the NCASF. Yet, the Soviet apologists in their ranks – mostly the communists, but also some of the hardened remnant of the independent socialists – refused to budge from their standpoint of unabashed praise toward the USSR. They rarely missed any hint of anti-Soviet comment in NCASF copy and consistently demanded that Morford

[259] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Letter from Richard Morford to Abraham J. Isserman, October, 1956; Box 3, Folder 17.
[260] Ibid., Letter from Hugh Weston to Richard Morford, December 22, 1956; Box 3, Folder 18.

eliminate signs that a debate over Soviet policy so much as existed within the NCASF. For instance, when he saw the reprinted Melish speech from the 1956 rally (in which Melish criticized the Soviet invasion), a New York constituent named Besse Strabhurger wrote to tell the organization that she would no longer be giving them donations. She asserted that, "the only mistake they [i.e., the Soviets] made was in not crushing the Fascist-clerical revolt in Hungary soon enough." He also suggested that the CPUSA, *Daily Worker, New World Review,* and possibly the NCASF were controlled by the FBI.[261] In this hyperbolized and polarized environment, the NCASF could not win.

While many Communists in the NCASF seemed to want to pretend that Hungary and the Secret Speech had never happened, everyone outside of the organization wanted to hold the NCASF accountable for Soviet actions. Hungarian immigrants in the United States were livid at the war against their country. They protested against the NCASF as if it were a representative of the USSR. The Pythian hotel on the Upper West Side in New York, about to host the 1956 NCASF annual rally, feared property damage from enraged Hungarian immigrants and begged the Council to call it off.[262] Because the annual rallies were such important events for the NCASF, the organization's leadership refused. Many liberal speakers – including Lamont, who was supposed to make the opening address – declined to go to the rally, where two-hundred protestors lined the streets outside the venue. They were surrounded by fifteen-hundred onlookers and two-hundred police

[261] Ibid., Letter from Besse Strabhurger to NCASF, December 3, 1958; Box 7, Folder 11.
[262] Ibid., Letter from Richard Morford to National Council, November 12, 1956; Box 2, Folder 39.

officers assigned to keep the peace. Only six-hundred constituents braved the pickets to enter the Pythian, and protestors pelted many of them with eggs and ammonia.[263]

Two speakers at that rally go some distance to show how far apart the Christian socialists and communists had been driven by the preceding year. Melish, the pacifist Christian socialist, was heartbroken by the Hungarian invasion. At the Pythian, he did his best to repair the situation with a speech in which he admitted, "there is something pathetic and tragic about the damage done to a serious social ideal by the inconsistencies and outright errors of those who advance it." He also condemned "the products of a police state that has been allowed to flourish all too-uncontrollably" in the Soviet Union. But whatever benefit this might have had in press coverage was negated by the words of the far more high-profile Paul Robeson.

Robeson, the staggeringly gifted baritone star best known today for his performance of "Ol' Man River" in the 1936 film production of *Show Boat,* was both the Council's big trump card in the 1950, and its most dangerous wild card. Robeson and his wife Eslanda were consistent supporters of the NCASF until his death in 1976. He performed nearly every year at the rallies until his health worsened in the early 1950s. Robeson had become politically active in the 1930s, with the Spanish Civil War serving as his gateway into progressive causes and organizations. He was drawn to the Soviet commitment to making racism extinct, and was encouraged when went to the Soviet Union in 1934. "Here, I am not a Negro but a human being for the first time in my

[263] "Pickets Harass Pro-Soviet Rally: 200 Jeer and Toss Missiles-- Rev. W.H. Melish and Paul Robeson Are Targets," *New York Times*, November 14, 1956.

life…," he asserted.[264] His enthusiasm for the USSR's equal rights made him incapable of nuance regarding the USSR. Robeson became among the most passionate of Sovietophiles: he defended the Moscow Trials in 1937 and claimed that anyone who "lifts his hand" against the Soviet government, indeed, "ought to be shot!"[265]

By the late 1940s, in response to the continued and massive discrimination and violence against black Americans in the United States which continued after the war, Robeson became more aggressively hostile toward both American society and policy. In 1949, he went to the World Committee of the Partisans of Peace in Paris and stated that, in the case of war between the United States and Soviet Union, black Americans could not be expected to stand with the former. Robeson was essentially blacklisted in the United States after that statement and confined his appearances to events and concerts on behalf of left-leaning groups like the NCASF -- the communist portion of which held a similar degree of commitment to the Soviet Union.[266] Robeson was, therefore, a lightning rod of controversy in 1956. If the Council needed any single member to refrain from an inflammatory statement to the press, it was him. Yet Robeson was defiant, telling the press that he wished the new (puppet) Hungarian government well. He said that the attempted Hungarian revolution "was brought about by the same sort of people who

[264] Joy Gleason Carew, *Blacks, Reds, and Russians: Sojourners in Search of the Soviet Promise* (Rutgers University Press, 2010), 143.
[265] Vern Smith, "'I Am at Home,' Says Robeson at Reception in Soviet Union," *Daily Worker*, January 15, 1935.
[266] Starobin, *American Communism in Crisis, 1943-1957*, 211–13.

overthrew the Spanish Republican government" – i.e., fascists.[267] His comments were relayed in every newspaper in New York.

When Morford sat down to write his annual New Year's letter on the last day of 1956, he was unsure of the future of the NCASF. He admitted that "new moral and political problems" were "striking at the very heart of our reason for being." The Secret Speech and Hungarian invasions had blindsided Morford and the board. Yet, reactions by the constituency and the wider public provoked only paralysis. 1956 forcibly revealed a serious problem: the NCASF coalition was a fragile one and the differing needs of the constituency were such that the organization was horribly compromised in its capacity to respond to crisis. Nearly any action taken by the leadership in response to Soviet outrages had a negative consequence within the constituency, as did doing nothing. 1956 showed the Council that the political atmosphere both within and without the organization was too thick to facilitate breathing.

The year was also important for what it revealed about the Communists of the NCASF. In what would appear, in retrospect, as the setting of a precedent, the Communists in the NCASF refused to act pragmatically. They privileged their ideological purity over the efficacy of the only organization in America dedicated to peace between the United States and Soviet Union. Had they been willing to set aside their politics and think long-term, the NCASF might have been able to use 1956 as an opportunity. They could have reestablished the organization as an independent entity

[267] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Address – Paul Robeson, November 13, 1956; Box 7, Folder 8.

guided by humanitarian values. But this was stymied. At their worst, the Communists in the NCASF would continue to play the role of the apocryphal "wrecker" of Soviet myth. The NCASF communists might not be able to prompt a united organizational front in support of Soviet actions, but they could at the very least spoil any chance of the NCASF releasing critical commentary that might improve their odds of success with the public. The organization could not live with them, nor without them.

## Shifting Gears

If the NCASF was to regain influence in the United States, it would have to be outside of the realm of politics, where the fracturing in the constituency undermined its efforts. The shift away from politics was belated but was eventually accomplished by the end of the 1950s. It consisted of the dropping of anti-NATO and pro-Soviet rhetoric and the proclamation of faith in the process of disarmament negotiations undertaken by President Eisenhower and Premier Khrushchev. The new program aimed to emphasize the shared humanity between Americans and Russians, much as the NCASF had done in World War II. This effort had two primary elements: treating the Soviet Union as a subject of study rather than reverence and showing Americans the cultural heritage of the Russian people.

The board of directors began to first explore the idea of focusing on the Soviet Union as a subject of study in 1949, in the midst of the failure of the three campaigns. It appointed board member Mary van Kleeck, a labor reformer and educator (and independent socialist), to investigate the possibility of a conference called the Research

and Study Conference on Preliminary Findings Concerning the Reorientation of American Policy. The conference would have featured prestigious professors and non-partisan academic inquiry. It could have showed to Americans that the NCASF had more on its agenda than was imagined. Responses to van Kleeck's inquiries were less than encouraging. Professor Mortimer Graves admitted he was "dubious" about inclusion in such a conference, as he was skeptical regarding the bias inherent in the conference's very title.[268] Ralph Barton Perry, who had participated in the Congress of American-Soviet Friendship, went further, writing that he was, "very skeptical of the usefulness of the National Council at the present time."[269] Professor Schuman argued that while "the outline seems to me promising," it would be useless in the absence of "some vigorous and honest criticism" of the Soviet Union.[270]

At the heart of this wholesale rejection was the fact that the American educational establishment was not ready to look at the Soviet Union in anything but a critical light. This was for good reason: Truman's Executive Order 9835 allowed state boards of education to fire communists and suspected communists from teaching positions. Twenty percent of HUAC "witnesses" (meaning, suspects) were college teachers or students. Those who did not manage to decisively prove an apolitical or anticommunist past often lost their jobs.[271] Schuman's comment had been a pointed one: the only way professors and other educators could afford to participate in an educational effort on the Soviet

[268] Ibid., Letter from Mortimer Graves to Mary Van Kleeck, August 23, 1949; Box 6, Folder 48.
[269] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Letter from Ralph Barton Perry to Mary Van Kleeck, August 24, 1949; Box 6, Folder 48.
[270] Ibid., Letter from Frederick L. Schuman to Mary Van Kleeck, August 25, 1949; Box 6, Folder 48.
[271] Ellen Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

Union was if the conference adopted, at the least, a critical tone which assured observers that the educator was not a communist. In light of this response, the board deemed the conference premature.

Despite the cancellation of the Conference, the NCASF's political impotence made education attractive regardless. The conversation expanded in 1950. Mary van Kleeck and Margaret Lamont – wife of Corliss and veteran of socialist causes – thought that "in view of the necessary retrenchment and reorganization [of the NCASF]," resources "should be devoted in almost complete fashion to our peculiar job of interpreting the life and activities of the Soviet Union to increase American understanding."[272] An end to peace action such as the NATO and Truman Doctrine campaigns, they reasoned, was the only way the NCASF could escape from having their work overshadowed by one Soviet crisis after another, and liberate themselves from the Second Red Scare paradigm. The majority of the membership agreed with them. The motion to focus on education carried at the 1950 Annual Meeting of the National Council.

The membership, then, was ready to focus on education. The planned shift, however, could not pick up steam with the board. Jessica Smith and Morford, for instance, urged continued emphasis on peace work. This was predictable in Smith's case due to her position's adherence to the Soviet/CP line. Morford, however, based his judgment on not only his continued commitment to peace work but also on the scarcity of

[272] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Memorandum from Richard Morford to John A. Kingsbury, May 5, 1950; Box 1, Folder 35.

resources. He argued that there was no point in focusing on the production of new literature about the Soviet Union as van Kleeck and Margaret Lamont suggested so long as the infrastructure of both the national organization and the local societies were insufficient to distribute it. While Morford found the Council's shortcomings in education "inexcusable," he also noted that educational institutions were reluctant to cooperate with or engage the NCASF, making the reach of any educational effort questionable. "They not only keep the Soviet Information Bulletin out of their libraries, they call for its burning," he argued. He had little confidence that the NCASF would be any better received.[273] The front of Smith and Morford managed to delay the implementation of a serious education initiative for years. Van Kleeck, the chief proponent of the education initiative, tired of the NCASF's lack of activity on that front, and lost interest in the organization altogether.[274] But with the dual crises of 1956, the time for hesitation was over. Morford defected to the pro-education quorum, as he had to admit that the Council had to adopt a more low-key image in the face of American public hostility or die. The organization continued to urge small-scale peace campaigns but shifted into more of a services model, providing literature and information – some acquired from VOKS and others produced internally – to educational institutions and individuals alike.

It was a wise decision. Education on the Soviet Union was underdeveloped in the United States during the 1950s. The US government began devoting substantial resources

[273] Ibid., Annual Report by the Director to the Members of the National Council of American–Soviet Friendship Annual Meeting, March 30, 1950; Box 1, Folder 68.
[274] Van Kleeck's departure was unfortunate for the NCASF, especially considering her upward trajectory in the organization. The Board had even voted her into the chairmanship in 1949, but she declined because of the poor reaction to the education conference made her think that her expertise in education would not be terribly important to the Council at the present time.

to studying the Soviet Union, as did the Ford Foundation, after World War II, but these efforts were focused through a lens which viewed the USSR as a future adversary. Study of the Soviet Union, under the umbrella of "Russian Studies," was also primarily an elite affair in the 50s. Scholars in Russian Studies were part of a "vibrant enterprise making headlines, advising presidents, and shaping foreign policy…," but there was little infrastructure for teaching Soviet culture, politics, and history to the American masses.[275] This would not change until at least 1957, when the launching of Sputnik made "catching up" with the Soviet Union" seem imperative. Given the vacuum in Soviet studies for primary students and most undergraduates, then, the NCASF's perception that there was an opening in education about the Soviet Union in the United States was perhaps the most astute observation in the organization's history. They found a gap in the educational establishment's coverage and in filling that gap made themselves genuinely useful to American society.

Americans indicated that they were ready to learn more about the Soviet Union, as well. An unexpected development following Khrushchev's revelations was an explosion in requests for material from the NCASF: an organization most educational institutions would not touch even five years before. The NCASF first noticed the change upon publication of a new pamphlet, "USA Welcomes Soviet Farmers," which was itself welcomed by libraries to a degree not experienced by the organization since the mid-1940s.[276] Americans were sending requests to the NCASF for information about the

[275] Engerman, *Modernization from the Other Shore*, 3.
[276] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," General Yakhontoff Tour, 1957; Box 7, Folder 9.

Soviet Unions in the hundreds, without apparent concern for the organization's sinister reputation. Professors purchased pamphlets in bulk, sometimes adding NCASF literature to their sociology, history, and political science syllabi. High school and college students deluged the New York office with letters asking for sources for assignments on the Soviet Union. Most of these requests asked for information about specific Soviet fields. Others were more bizarre, including an example which read, "Dear Mr. Morford: I have to write a 5000-word thesis for the fulfillment of my graduation requirements. I am writing on 'The Blueprint of Satan's Iniquity.' I am showing how Satan has used Communism to destroy millions of souls thruoghout [sic] the world. I have a document stating that you are affiliated with more than 50 Communism [sic] Fronts. I would like to have a statement from you, stating that you are with these fronts and names of other known ministers who are communists. Thank You."[277]

In the shift to education, the work of Elizabeth Moos was vital. Moos was a well-known progressive educator in the 1930s, having been the director of the Hessian Hills School in New York (before her staff drove her out for an alleged authoritarian temperament). She became interested in the Soviet Union as a result of its educational system, which she believed conformed to her goal for American schools: "to help the child function as an integrated member of society, not as an isolated individual."[278] Such was her interest in the Soviet Union that she went back to school in her 50s to earn a master's degree in Slavic Studies. Moos was also a communist: She joined a communist

[277] Ibid., Letter from Dan Slagill to Richard Morford, February 18, 1967; Box 3; Folder 19.
[278] Paul J. Ramsey, *American Educational History Journal: Volume 40 #1 & 2* (IAP, 2013), 290.

group in Croton, New York, whose meetings she often attended with her daughter Ann (the infamous Ann Moos Remington who later testified against her husband William in a HUAC trial).[279] In 1951, Moos founded the Peace Information Center, which distributed the Stockholm Peace Appeal – a Soviet-sponsored campaign to ban all nuclear weapons – to Americans. In response to these activities, HUAC subsequently indicted her for failing to register as a foreign agent, though they could never make charges stick.[280]

Moos first became involved with the NCASF through the Boston society during World War II. She quickly moved up to the national office in New York to run first the Nationalities Committee and then the Education Committee.[281] Moos became an NCASF board member in 1953.[282] Her great contribution, however, was in literature, not organizational politics. In 1950, she produced a comprehensive book on Soviet education under the NCASF imprint: *The Educational System of the Soviet Union.* That book was cited in nearly every article written about Soviet education in the 1950s and 1960s.[283] While the book is primarily descriptive rather than polemical, Moos' thesis is that Soviet schools are integrated into politics and society and therefore allow children to receive instruction in consistent moral values for their entire upbringing. As Moos wrote, "The achievement of the goals set in character-building, say the Soviet educators, will be the

[279] This story is told in full detail in Gary May, *Un-American Activities: The Trials of William Remington* (Oxford University Press, USA, 1994).
[280] United States., "Hearings," v.; United States. et al., *Report on the Communist "Peace" Offensive; a Campaign to Disarm and Defeat the United States.* (Washington, 1951); "Foreign Aide Charge Denied by Mrs. Moos," *New York Times*, April 3, 1951.
[281] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Membership Meeting, 1963; Box 1, Folder 70.
[282] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," Elizabeth Moos, 1941-1970.
[283] Elizabeth. Moos, *The Educational System of the Soviet Union.* (New York: National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, 1950).

result of correct methods of discipline, and in the Soviet Union discipline includes not only behavior in class and satisfactory accomplishment of school work, but personal relationships in the home and in society. School procedures and practice are motivated by 'a recognition of the supreme rights and dignity of the human personality,' summarized in the term much-used in educational writing, 'Soviet humanism.'"[284]

Her book was more popular than previous NCASF work for three reasons. First, Moos' approach was to set aside propagandistic praise of the Soviet system, and indeed, to set aside all value judgments altogether. Instead, she reported the Soviet perspective *as a perspective,* rather than as objective truth. Second, Moos did not discuss politics, only the effect of Soviet education on its people. Third, Moos, perhaps due to her communist fealty, had ties in the Soviet Union that other academics could not match, and hence had access to reams of data that had never been seen before in the United States. As Morford noted, "the virtue is that it [the book] represents an extraction of major items from a great mass of data which is not readily available or useable by most people."[285] Moos was, accordingly, published in academic journals despite her book bearing the NCASF imprint.

By 1956, Moos released a follow-up, *Higher Education in the Soviet Union* to similar success. She was proving what some members of the NCASF had been saying for over a decade, that tone mattered. While an objective and descriptive approach was not sensational, that was fine by Morford. He had surely received enough press for one

[284] Ibid., 60.
[285] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Morford to Mary Dreier, October 29, 1956; Box 3, Folder 8.

lifetime during HUAC trial. Citation records show that the books were being read and NCASF's distribution and library records reveal that the books were ubiquitous in American educational institutions – Moos' 1956 work, for instance, reached at least 2,200 institutions around the country.[286]

It became apparent that, with McCarthyism discredited since the Army-McCarthy hearings of 1954, Americans were less afraid of guilt by association than a few years before. They were willing to learn about the Soviet Union so long as the medium seemed impartial. The NCASF therefore embraced Moos' objective tone, focus on the people of the USSR, and emphasized its connections with institutions in the USSR. The organization began to distribute dozens of books about the Soviet Union on many different subjects as well as bibliographies and research guides. By the middle of 1957, the shift to education had given the NCASF a new lease on life. In that year, it sent publications to 1,556 public libraries across the nation, putting NCASF material in every town of ten-thousand people or more. Nearly a thousand colleges and universities also received their material. Many of them requested additional copies for student reference.[287]

Then, in 1958, the NCASF received more good fortune: the formalization of cultural exchanges between the United States and Soviet Union in the form of the Lacy-Zarubin Agreement (formally, the "Agreement between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on Exchanges in the Cultural, Technical, and

[286] Ibid., Morford to Mary Dreier, October 29, 1956; Box 3, Folder 8.
[287] Ibid., Box 3; Folder 20.

Educational Fields"). Cultural exchanges had been a successful element of the NCASF's program during World War II. The science committee of the NCASF, for instance, established international contact between 122 scientists and translated and published fifty Soviet articles in the United States in 1943 alone. Witnessing the success of the science division, the NCASF formed many committees in the 1943-45 period, all based on the non-partisan sharing of ideas by professionals. An architects' committee sought to acquaint American architects with trade requirements in Russia, to initiate exchange of building and planning information, and to familiarize visiting Soviet specialists with American building developments. An artists' committee exhibited the work of Soviet artists for American audiences – often for the first time – and hosted touring Soviet artists. Americans responded with excitement: three-thousand guests attended an exhibit of Soviet art at the Metropolitan Museum on November 4, 1943. A popular musicians' committee, meanwhile, assembled albums of American music for Soviet troops. They also held concerts of American orchestras playing Russian music.[288] The most active of the exchange committees, however, had been the committee of women. Formed in early 1944, the committee of women sent childcare supplies to the Soviet Women's Anti-Fascist Committee that year and held numerous conferences discussing the problems of home and professional life for women in both the United States and USSR. Later that year, they assembled a Mother and Child Care Library for the use of Soviet women who lacked access to such information.

[288] Ibid., Box 5; Folder 6; ibid., Box 1; Folder 64.

For the NCASF, exchanges had ended for the most part with World War II. This was not only due to a decline in organizational resources, but also to Stalin's domestic campaigns against foreign influence.[289] As Kiril Tomoff explains, "One of the main cornerstones of those campaigns was an attack on real and perceived Western influence, especially in the arts and scholarship."[290] Between the end of World War II and 1953, the two nations negotiated cultural exchange on a project to project basis. After Stalin died, however, exchanges became more widespread. In the 1955-1956 concert season, the Soviets reopened exchanges when they sent pianist Emil Gilels, violinist David Oistrakh, and cellist Mstislav Rostropovich on tours of the United States.[291] American audiences greeted these tours with open arms and wallets. Oistrakh's tour, for instance, sold out in two and a half hours.[292]

The Lacy-Zarubin Agreement of 1958 opened up more possibilities. While Lacy-Zarubin did not introduce new features into cultural exchange, the bilateral cultural agreement "codified and normalized the cultural exchange practices that had developed over the course of the 1950s" between the United States and Soviet Union in a variety of areas.[293] These areas included television and radio broadcasts; agriculture, medicine, and industry specialists; visits by representatives of cultural civic, youth, and student groups;

[289] Kiril Tomoff, *Virtuosi Abroad: Soviet Music and Imperial Competition during the Early Cold War, 1945-1958*, 2015, 15.
[290] Ibid.
[291] Ibid., 119.
[292] Ibid., 121.
[293] Ibid., 16.

artistic performers; and official government tours – among others.[294] As far as the NCASF was concerned, the most important feature of the agreement was the provision that Americans could now sponsor the importation of Soviet performers to the United States, instead of having to rely on their governments to do so.

The announcement of Lacy-Zarubin lifted the mood of the NCASF national office and its eleven remaining societies immediately.[295] This development, had been well-timed, too, because the NCASF had finally elected a new chairman to replace Kingsbury in 1957: the widely admired realist artist, Rockwell Kent. The NCASF had another chance at a brand new start and seized it. A 1958 memorandum outlined the thoughts of the leadership on the opportunities presented by cultural exchange for the NCASF:

> The cultural exchange program has created a receptivity on the part of an ever-growing number of people who heretofore were unaware of, indifferent to or critical of the possibilities that acquaintanceship with the Soviet Union might bring to our country… the role of the Council must be peculiarly its own… A peculiar role for the Council will prove itself through activities in two major areas… (1) Information Services (2) Promotion of Cultural Exchange at the local Level. While these activities are not political, it is our belief that such program can bear a considerable influence among the American people in the direction of creating and crystallizing the desire to find ways of peaceful co-existence with the Soviet Union.[296]

Most of the Soviet performers of the next decade came in under the wing of an impresario named Sol Hurok. Hurok was a Russian émigré who had outstanding success in creating a near-monopoly on Soviet entertainment in the United States during the Cold War.[297] Beginning with individual performers such as pianist Vladimir Ashkenazy in

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[294] "Text of Lacy-Zarubin Agreement, January 27, 1958," *Passing Through the Iron Curtain*, accessed November 20, 2014, http://librariesandcoldwarculturalexchange.wordpress.com/text-of-lacy-zarubin-agreement-january-27-1958.
[295] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 2: 168.
[296] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Role and Program, National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, Fall 1958; Box 1; Folder 93.
[297] Sol Hurok's is an interesting story in its own right. See his biography, Harlow Robinson, *The Last Impresario: The Life, Times, and Legacy of Sol Hurok* (New York: Viking, 1994).

1956, Hurok paid the expenses of the Soviet performers and reaped enormous profits. Tomoff argues that the Soviets worked with Hurok for numerous reasons, including his superior connections and skill in negotiating the entertainment industries in the United States, and because of the hostility faced by the NCASF and other friendship organizations in their own country. Working through Hurok instead of the friendship organizations allowed the Soviets to "minimize the suspicion with which Soviet citizens might be greeted in the West and capitalize on the fascination that they held."[298] Still, the NCASF and its societies helped with Hurok's financing. For all of Hurok's tours in the late 1950s, the NCASF were permitted by Hurok to buy large quantities of tickets upfront and, in a legally questionable practice, sell them to the constituency for profit under the claim that the excess was "donations."[299]

In 1958, the Moiseyev Dancers arrived in the United States via Hurok, with a tour partially facilitated through covert NCASF assistance. The reception by Americans was rapturous.[300] The *New York Times* called the one-hundred-piece ensemble, "…in a word, terrific," and the *LA Times* dubbed them "sensational," noting, "There is hardly a seat left for any performance."[301] In the aftermath of the Moiseyevs, NCASF-assisted Soviet entertainers came to the United States in a deluge. Each year presented Americans with a new Soviet act to see. The sixty-five-person Beryozka Dancers came in 1958, followed

[298] Tomoff, *Virtuosi Abroad*, 173.
[299] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," National Council of American-Soviet Friendship.
[300] In her dissertation, Victoria Hallinan analyzes the Moiseyev Dancers as cultural diplomacy. Victoria Hallinan, "Cold War Cultural Exchange and the Moiseyev Dance Company: American Perception of Soviet Peoples," *History Dissertations*, May 1, 2013.
[301] Albert Goldberg, "Sensational Moiseyev Dancers Will Open to Shrine Sellout Saturday," *Los Angeles Times*, May 18, 1958; John Martin, "The Dance: A la Moiseyev," *New York Times*, April 20, 1958.

by the Bolshoi Ballet in 1959 and 1962, the Moscow State Symphony in 1960, the Moscow Circus in 1963, and the Moscow Art Theatre in 1965. These tours were a revelation, introducing hundreds of thousands of Americans to Russian and Soviet culture. The performances also brought in millions of dollars at the box office (most of which went to Hurok). The 1958 Moiseyev tour broke a New York theatrical box office record. The "Ed Sullivan Show" featured them for a full hour that year.[302] Yet, the most impressive event was the Russian Music and Dance Festival, a two-week engagement at Madison Square Garden that included performers from the Moiseyev and Bolshoi companies, as well as numerous regional dance ensembles and choirs. There were two-hundred performers at this event.[303]

Hurok and the NCASF had tapped into something interesting in American culture: a desire for "high" foreign art, for "elite" and sophisticated entertainment that was not being met by other outlets in the United States. While capitalist American culture was, ironically, becoming more populist, with folk, country, and blues music all selling millions by the early 1960s, Soviet culture – so proletarianized in the 1930s—became profoundly conservative during the Cold War, stressing the same "high" culture desired by New York's opera crowds.[304] The Soviets placed themselves in opposition to the "low-level…ephemeral, narcotic trash, and Disneyland fantasies" of American mass

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[302] John Martin, "Moiseyev Gross May Set Record: Soviet Dancers to End Tour Tomorrow With $1,600,000 in Box-Office Receipts," *New York Times*, June 27, 1958; Jack Gould, "Moiseyev Dancers: Russian Troupe Scores a Resounding Hit on the 'Ed Sullivan Show,'" *New York Times*, June 30, 1958.
[303] John Martin, "Dance: Russian Festival at the Garden: Building Fairly Shakes With Troupe's Vitality," *New York Times*, July 8, 1959.
[304] David. Caute, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy during the Cold War* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 8.

entertainments.[305] Soviet intellectuals, backed by and employed by the state, argued that the Soviet Union was the true heir of the legacy of the Enlightenment. They advocated a "classical-realist aesthetic in literature and art" which worshipped the Greeks as well as the European Renaissance.[306] The ideal was to popularize such "high" art: to elevate the taste of the masses, rather than to meet the masses on "their level." Soviets extolled the "timeless" virtues of narrative, harmony, and perspective, and accordingly condemned modernism and the avant-garde, which dominated the tastes of American artists of the 1950s, as "decadent."

Another important facet of the NCASF's cultural program, Soviet films, were similarly conservative but considerably less popular. During World War II, the NCASF acquired Soviet documentaries and feature films from a company called Brandon Films. Brandon was the premier source of independent and foreign films in the United States during the 1930s and 40s.[307] Rather than showing the films themselves, the NCASF publicized viewings in movie houses in conjunction with VOKS. The Soviet Union, through its cultural agencies VOKS and SSOD, as well as the Soviet embassy and its consulates, provided documentaries to the NCASF and its societies at no cost from the early 1950s. The films from Soviet sources were all in Russian, with English subtitles provided. [308]

[305] Ibid.
[306] Ibid.
[307] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 2: 129.
[308] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Board of Directors minutes, 1966; Box 1, Folder 46.

The NCASF began to acquire films directly from the USSR in 1951, albeit in such a trickle that the NCASF film library was limited to thirty or forty films for years.[309] This total gradually increased to about four-hundred in the 1970s. Soviet documentary films were an important tool for the NCASF in their attempts to reach beyond their core constituency – indeed, Gennady Fedosov thought them the most crucial part of their program. The NCASF sent films across the country to educational institutions on request, including 1,600 universities and some 700 high schools. The NCASF showed most films to audiences of thirty to one-thousand people. It sent films to institutions at cost, not even seeking a profit.[310]

Yet, watching the films today, one is struck how much more effective the NCASF program could have been with a better selection of films. A large portion of the films provided by the USSR concern Soviet industry. They proudly trumpet obscure statistics, free of context, as evidence of socialism's progress. One would suspect that Americans, especially American youth, would be bored silly by such movies. By all accounts they were. More effective are the slice of life documentaries, on topics like "Budget of a Soviet Family," and those addressing youth, the benefits of socialism for ordinary people, and religion.[311] Even these, however, appear intended by the Soviets for the converted. In a typical example of Soviet themes, one movie about a youth festival (intended to be

[309] Ibid., Board of Directors minutes, 1951. Box 1, Folder 36.
[310] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Report on Activities, 1963; Box 1, Folder 97.
[311] *Budget of a Soviet Family* (NCASF, 1980).

shown to American children) proclaims, "There must be no shirkers! There is no aspiration higher than to be a working man."[312]

While David Caute is correct in assessing that, by and large, the Soviet Union and United States were able to agree on the broad strokes of social values "to an extent that may seem astonishing," (they concurred on the importance of public education and ending discrimination, for instance) their cultures were obviously very different.[313] By the American standards of the 1960s, sentiments such as those in the previous paragraph would have appeared hopelessly antiquated. The United States has always thrived on the notion that social mobility is a constant possibility. Working-class Americans of the twentieth-century did not traditionally toil out of a sense of responsibility to their nation, or out of a love for producing products needed by others. They worked hard in the hopes that, if they did so, they could someday do something else. A communalistic approach to work in which one labors on behalf of their society instead of just themselves and their families – such as that advanced by the Soviet films – had not been a significant feature of American working-class culture since World War II, when the goal of defeating Germany and Japan facilitated themes of group unity and duty.[314] Indeed, by the 1960s, Americans were anticipating a "post-scarcity" economy, driven by an increase in automation and an accompanying decline in manual labor. The massive increase in students attending universities and the incredible growth of businesses oriented around services meant that Americans felt less connection to factory work and unions than at any

[312] *The Song of the Bugle* (NCASF, 1970).
[313] Caute, *The Dancer Defects*, 4.
[314] Graebner, *The Age of Doubt*.

point in the century. Americans were, in the main, moving away from collectivist values rather than toward them. Existentialism, which was explored by European writers such as Sartre and Camus in the 1950s, but became popular in the United States during the 1960s, was an individualist creed devoted to examining the self. The ascendance of this philosophy, which aimed to cope with the loneliness resulting from a detachment from society, was a severe departure from the society-oriented strains of positivist thought in the 1930s and 40s, which still reigned in the Soviet Union.

The cultural differences that made many of the Soviet films useless did not escape the notice of the NCASF leadership. Leaders often noted that, indeed, the films had begun to feel hokey and antiquated from the early 1950s onward. In a 1952 meeting of the executive committee, one member lamented, "the few [films] that have come to us are not satisfactory for our use." They argued that, to reach Americans, "we would need to create our own."[315] A 1955 report asserts that a film about Camp Artek is the runaway audience-favorite "because of its brevity." The others, the report explains, need to be truncated, as, "it is best always to cut one of these films off before the audience tires." Realizing the limitation of their influence, the NCASF did not request that the Soviets make different kind of films – knowing they would not listen anyway – but rather asked them only to send the films that might stress commonalities rather than highlight cultural disparity. Elizabeth Moos, for instance, asserted that the films far too often showed

[315] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Minutes of the Meeting, Board of Directors, Tuesday-- September 23, 1952; Box 1; Folder 37.

Communist Party celebrations and congresses, which reinforced the idea that the Soviet Union was staid and formal. She noted:

> While these are beautiful, they are not as effective as educational material because they do not depict ordinary, everyday, life. In considering documentaries for the USA the producer should start from the assumption that the average person in our audience has utterly preconceived ideas that are false about life and work in the Soviet Union, particularly about the family and trade unions. Pictures of the wonderful new projects and great buildings do not affect this false concept. Pictures of children and parents at home, people at the market, people enjoying themselves in the park, libraries, etc., are helpful.[316]

The NCASF consistently asserted to VOKS and SSOD that it needed up-to-date films about culture, edited in a sophisticated manner that would appeal to American audiences. For whatever reason, such films were not forthcoming.

The disparity between the reception of Soviet entertainers and of Soviet films tells us a great deal about the prospects of American-Soviet friendship in the late 1950s and 1960s. It turned out that wealthy, urban Americans were more than happy to absorb Russian entertainment, especially that which descended from the same European and classical lineage of art with which they were already familiar. While Soviet propagandists appear to have been under the impression that the less radical Soviet culture of the 1960s, as represented in their films, might be welcomed by those Americans who attended the performances of Soviet entertainers, they were dead wrong. Americans were no more willing to embrace Soviet ideas than ever before. This probably puzzled the Soviets. Had not the abrogation of traditional social and cultural mores been among the primary complaints Americans had offered about the Bolshevik Revolution in the first place? But the discarding of the Soviet revolutionary and radical edge proved almost irrelevant in

[316] Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht and Mark C. Donfried, *Searching for A Cultural Diplomacy* (Berghahn Books, 2013), 59.

terms of the USSR's appeal to Americans. American individualism recoiled at the loss of identity represented by a conservative communalistic culture every bit as much as that represented by a radical communalistic culture.

The NCASF leadership realized by the 1960s that the only way to get past the cultural and ideological differences between the two nations might be to ignore cultural differences and dwell only on the qualities and aspirations one might find in all people: such as a love for peace, friends, and family. This approach was best represented by people-to-people exchanges. People-to-people exchanges usually took the form of a group of a specific demographic (whether youth, factory workers, scientists) visiting their foreign counterparts in the United States or Soviet Union, to better facilitate the ability of Americans to see themselves in the Soviet people.[317] The NCASF loved people-to-people exchanges because they enabled American-Soviet friendship advocates to outflank the self-defeating Soviet narratives. They allowed Americans to see Russians and other Soviet ethic groups as "just folks," rather than representatives of a hostile system and alien culture. NCASF leaders reasoned that the more Americans could identify with the Soviet people, the more likely they were to view Soviet proposals for peace as originating in good faith. As Howard Parsons wrote, "Trust! It is the key to all sound and creative human relations – and hence the key to peace and friendship among peoples."[318]

[317] Recent research into American anti-Islamic attitudes after the San Bernardino terrorist attack of 2015 suggests that pragmatic and idealistic messages are both less effective in convincing people to revise their bias than is humanizing the perceived enemy. This suggests the NCASF was on the right track. See Evan Soltas and Seth Stephens-Davidowitz, "The Rise of Hate Speech," *New York Times*, December 12, 2015.
[318] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," "Peace and Friendship: The Imperatives of Our Time," by Howard Parsons; Box 1, Folder 18.

The first Cold War-era people-to-people exchange of significance was when twenty British workers went to the Soviet Union in 1950. It was only in 1955 that people-to-people exchanges began to occur between the United States and Soviet Union in earnest, however. When the State Department allowed Soviet farmers to visit Iowa in August of 1955, on President Eisenhower's orders, it was a sensation.[319] By the end of the month, the State Department was receiving ten recommendations a week for people-to-people exchanges from Americans all over the country.[320] Exchanges became widespread after the Lacy-Zarubin Agreement.

The NCASF, through its connections to the Soviet Union, became one of the foremost proponents of people-to-people exchange in the 1960s and 70s, offering relatively cheap experiences with the minimum of hassle. Such facilitation was welcome, because arranging a tour of the Soviet Union for Americans, or of the United States for Soviet citizens, was, after all, complicated during the Cold War. Within the Soviet Union, arrangements had to be controlled and itineraries directed by one of many sometimes redundant government agencies.[321] The NCASF could make the process less difficult through its contacts at the Institute for Soviet-American Relations but there were still hiccups. They were, for instance, powerless to determine the activities Americans could undertake once they were abroad. Before 1958, only individual tourists (rather than those on package tours) could conduct trips to the Soviet Union, much to the discomfort of the Soviets. The Soviet agencies tended to prefer to work with organizations rather than

[319] William M. Blair "U.S. to Let Russians Visit Iowa Farmers," *New York Times*, March 12, 1955.
[320] Special to The New York Times, "Many in US Urge Soviet Links," *New York Times*, August 30, 1955.
[321] Among them the infamous Intourist, Sputnik (for youth tours), and the Committee of Youth Organizations (for official youth festivals and conferences).

individuals. Philosophy professor Michael Fisk, who went to the Soviet Union in 1956 with a group of students from San Francisco State College, revealed the reluctance of the Soviet Union in dealing with informal groups in a letter to Morford.

> Most of the individuals I wrote to [in preparation for the trip] did not answer my letters: one or two answered, but said they would be out of Moscow when we visited there. However, we learned that they were in Moscow and evidently simply did not want to talk with us… In our 28 days in Russia we were not able to meet a communist spokesman with whom we could discuss developments. I was told that all Communist Party officials were out on the farms… When I asked the Kiev guide, who knows the city very well, the guide told me he did not know where the communist headquarters was.[322]

While the NCASF would eventually participate in large-scale people-to-people exchanges, in the 1960s the leadership was still trying to figure out the most effective approach for making visitors to the Soviet Union into NCASF advocates. The NCASF gravitated toward arranging "professional" tours: tours in which it provided thematic itineraries for groups of people from a given profession. Such tours were attractive due to the success with which the NCASF had arranged them in the 1940s. Professional tours were effective for both outreach and revenue, as arranging tours provided the NCASF with commissions from the American travel agents like Anniversary Tours. It also provided the Soviet Union with a captive audience for revealing the virtues of its system.

Factory worker tours to the Soviet Union were the most difficult to pull off and were seen as something of a panacea by the NCASF leadership. Most of the important leaders of the NCASF had formed their ideological framework in the 1910s and 1920s, when American socialism was reliant on a labor constituency. To the Old Left, reaching labor was reaching America – a perspective only fortified by their contacts in the Soviet

[322] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Letter from Alfred G. Fisk to Richard Morford, September 18, 1956; Box 7; Folder 91.

Union (who continued to assert the importance of labor in the United States). The historic experience of the American-Soviet friendship movement reinforced this (labor formed the core of early friendship groups like the STASR).

NCASF leaders though that if American workers could only know about the high-status of workers in the Soviet "workers' paradise", they surely would gain a new appreciation for the USSR and its system. Organized labor, however, had been anticommunist for decades in the United States. It was not receptive to its members engaging with the Soviet system, or with the NCASF. Reaching workers was, therefore, a challenge; turning them into NCASF advocates was, by the middle of the Cold War, rough going indeed.[323]

The NCASF's kept at it, however, and made a big push for a people-to-people labor tour in 1964. Morford hired Holocaust historian and journalist Charles Allen, Jr. to write a pamphlet about labor unions in the Soviet Union. [324] The pamphlet was "directed to rank-and-file workers" and endeavored to cover "all basic information about Soviet

[323] The connection between labor and the American Left has a vast historiography. The chief works serve only to get one started on the topic. On the initial attraction by workers to Communism, see Irving Bernstein, *The Lean Years; a History of the American Worker, 1920-1933.* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960); Robert W. Cherny, William Issel, and Kieran Walsh. Taylor, *American Labor and the Cold War Grassroots Politics and Postwar Political Culture* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004). Ronald W. Schatz, *The Electrical Workers: A History of Labor at General Electric and Westinghouse, 1923-1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983) presents the history of Communism's appeal, and labor's later revulsion toward it through the lens of a single organization. Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes* (Princeton University Press, 1999); Paul Buhle, *Taking Care of Business: Samuel Gompers, George Meany, Lane Kirkland, and the Tragedy of American Labor* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1999); Colleen Doody, *Detroit's Cold War the Origins of Postwar Conservatism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013) shape the whole saga through something of a tragic narrative. Roy Godson and Roy Godson, *Labor in Soviet Global Strategy* (New York: Crane, Russak, 1984) discusses the Soviet attempts to relate to international labor. Ronald Radosh, *American Labor and United States Foreign Policy.* (New York: Random House, 1969) investigates the American attempts to do the same.

[324] *Ohio Jewish Chronicle*, February 2, 1924.

trade unions, the living standards of the Soviet workers."[325] The plan was to distribute the pamphlet among American workers, who could have their piqued interest satisfied by NCASF-sponsored trips to the Soviet Union. The NCASF hoped that, once in the USSR, American workers could see "the enterprises where Soviet workers would be on their jobs… in the neighborhoods where they live, in their home, in the shopping centers, and in the house of culture where workers go for recreational and educational pursuits." Crucial to this was the opportunity of the American workers to have unfettered conversations with officers of Soviet trade unions – something that could only happen with unprecedented cooperation from Soviet authorities.[326] By 1968, Morford had established the groundwork for a major campaign. He had interviewed factory workers across the Midwest to gauge their interest. This was considered sufficient to justify hiring future Detroit mayor Coleman Young as a Trade Union Director, though Young appears to have rejected the offer.[327]

But though the pamphlet was produced by Allen, distributed by the NCASF, and by all accounts enjoyed by the few workers who were able to read it before the NCASF ran out of money, the ISAR balked at the idea of American workers being given free rein to visit Soviet factories. The ISAR also refused to allow Allen increased access to create a more comprehensive work that could reach more people.[328] For whatever reason – a

[325] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," The Story of the National Council, An Informal record of Activities of the year September, 1963 through August, 1964; Box 1; Folder 97.
[326] Ibid., Memorandum from Richard Morford to Alexei Stepunin, April 1, 1966; Box 4; Folder 25.
[327] Young was considered a potential hire because of his many contacts in United Auto Workers and his progressive bent. Klehr, Haynes, and Radosh – without offering evidence – call Young a "secret CPUSA member": presumably based on his membership in fronts. Guilt by parallelism lives.
[328] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Box 4, Folder 25; "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution," NCASF.

lack of confidence in the NCASF, security concerns, or just their standard failure to prioritize and reply to correspondence – the Soviets buried the best chance they had in years to influence the American workers they so prized.

The 1956-1968 period was one of renewed unity for the NCASF. The Christian socialists, communists, and independent socialists had managed to set aside lingering resentments from 1956 in order to focus upon an educational program. They discarded the political elements of their program and instead used the expertise of the membership and connections with the Soviet Union to help facilitate a mini-boom of Soviet cultural influence in the United States during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Thousands of Americans who would never have seen a Russian opera or dance performance were able to do so because of NCASF funding and administrational work. Perhaps tens of thousands were introduced to Soviet literature as a result of the NCASF outreach to libraries. While the NCASF could not expect anywhere near the support from prominent Americans that they received in the 1940s, the organization, improbably enough, reached its greatest influence on American society after 1957.

The organization was not, however, able to translate this success into any kind of political action. While the NCASF was quite successful in introducing Soviet culture to Americans after 1957, tapping into a reservoir of curiosity toward the Cold War enemy that suggested further possibilities, their efforts were stymied by poor cooperation from the Soviet Union and cultural differences between the United States and USSR. Ironically, the NCASF had survived opposition from the American government in the early 50s only to find that there were serious barriers to cooperation on the Soviet side.

The Soviet Union, having lost touch with American social and cultural attitudes since World War II, was unable and unwilling to serve as the partner the NCASF needed in order to significantly increase the interest of ordinary Americans toward the Soviet Union.

## Czechoslovakia and After

Broadly, the NCASF had three great crisis periods, in which the constituency of the NCASF was pulled apart due to external events. First was the anticommunist assault of the late 1940s, triggered by the opening of the Cold War. This development stripped the NCASF of most of the independent socialists and forced the Christian socialists to direct the organization for several years. Second was the fallout from the 1956 Khrushchev speech and invasion of Hungary, which revealed a gulf between the Christian socialists and the unexpectedly resurgent communists. Hungary forced the organization to shelve politics entirely lest it risk its own implosion. Third was the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

In early 1968, Czechoslovakia, whose absorption into the Warsaw Pact in 1947 for many marked the beginning of the Cold War, embarked on a program of reforms under the guidance of Alexander Dubcek, first secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. Dubcek's liberalization and decentralization of his nation disturbed the Soviet leadership. In particular, the Soviets were concerned about leadership changes that could disrupt the "party, police, and army channels" which the Soviet Communist Party used to

exert influence in Czechoslovakia.[329] The breaking point was in March, when the Czech president, Antonin Novotny, resigned, and was replaced by Dubcek himself, without Soviet input. The Soviets believed this set a dangerous precedent. Further, East Germany and Poland feared that Czechoslovakia would defect to NATO, leaving the flanks of their nations exposed to Western encroachment. In August, Warsaw Pact forces invaded Czechoslovakia and removed Dubcek from power by force, ending another attempt to break free of Soviet constraints.[330]

Upon learning of the Soviet armed response to the Czechoslovakian "Prague Spring" in late August of that year, the NCASF leadership again diverged. Whereas there had been two positions in the 1956 debates, now there were three perspectives represented on the board. There was a hardline, uncompromising pro-Soviet position asserting that the Soviet invasion was a proper response to a coup engineered in the West. This position was held by the more radical independent socialists like Rockwell Kent and most of the communist leaders of the local societies, especially Holland Roberts in San Francisco. Another group held that opposition to the Soviet action was necessary on moral grounds. This viewpoint was argued by the Christian Socialists Morford, Melish, and Howard Parsons. A third perspective offered cautious, constructive criticism of the USSR for its actions without outright condemning them. This position was advocated by Jessica Smith, who had at last reached something of a breaking point in her relationship with the Soviet Union. Overall, this was a moderate shift toward critique, which reflected

[329] Karen Dawisha, *The Kremlin and the Prague Spring* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 19.
[330] Dawisha, *The Kremlin and the Prague Spring*.

the worldwide trends among communist parties of the 1960s. Though the American Party was as loyal to Moscow as ever, most European communist parties had become open to the idea of there being routes to socialism apart from that adopted by the Soviet Union. The international appeal of Mao in China meant that the Soviet Union was no longer as sacred to communists as it once was. Many communists were now willing to question whether others could improve upon Soviet methods.[331]

Those in favor of a critical statement prevailed in 1968, though the resulting work was not as strong a break with Soviet apology as Morford and others had hoped. Crafting the statement took many meetings over a period of months. The original version of the statement decried the Soviet invasion, emphasized the existence of different views on the board. It stressed the continuing need for friendship between the United States and Soviet Union. The statement was most likely the work of Jessica Smith. There were some large concessions to Kent in a long diversion contending that West German fascists prompted the Prague Spring. It spent the vast majority of its five pages attempting to justify the Soviet invasion through appeals to the necessity to "save socialism in Czechoslovakia." It even featured a recitation of the Soviet record for proposing peace with the United States and its performance in World War II.[332]

Releasing that statement would likely have been a disaster. Morford wrote a new draft, in which several key paragraphs were added that questioned Soviet logic. He put

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[331] On the changing attitudes of Communists in Europe after the Second World War, see Richard Kindersley, *In Search of Eurocommunism* (London: Macmillan in association with St. Antony's College, Oxford, 1981); Donald Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism: The West European Left in the Twentieth Century* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1996); Adam Westoby, *The Evolution of Communism* (New York: Free Press, 1989).

[332] "Richard Morford Papers; TAM.361," Original Czechoslovakia Statement, 1968; Box 9; Folder 50.

into words the frustrations of thousands of socialists and wavering communists around the world, writing, "We share a deep concern for the problem, still unsolved in socialist countries and in all other countries as well, of how to reconcile political liberty and freedom of expression with the controls necessary to safeguard the form of government supported by the majority of people. We agree that the problems inherent in the modes and limits of freedom of expression should be solved by democratic means, in accordance with the traditions and needs of each country, and not by force, internally or from abroad." Even more profound was a paragraph that questioned the legitimacy of the Soviet notion of collective security altogether. Morford argued that the Soviet Union was just advancing its own interests on other nations without regard for what the people in those nations wanted, much like the United States was in Vietnam.[333]

The second draft would have represented a revolutionary change in policy for the NCASF. It met with such opposition among the leadership, however, that Morford revised the statement two more times. Rockwell Kent, initially supportive of the concept of a statement in the belief that the NCASF would express the same unreserved praise for the Czechoslovakia invasion as he did, panicked upon reading the second draft, as he realized that there was no one else on the board who agreed with him on the justice of the Soviet invasion. He was amazed that a critical statement toward the Soviet Union was an actual possibility. In October, two and a half months after the Soviet invasion, he convinced Morford to prepare a third draft with softened language. Yet, in the new draft, Morford largely ignored his advice. He sharpened the assertions of parallels to Vietnam.

[333] Ibid., Czechoslovakia Statement: Revision #1, 1968; Box 9; Folder 50.

He wrote, "None of us believes the aggression of the U.S. government has one shred of justification but some of us think that it is difficult, if not impossible, at this point, to find justification for the Soviet interference with the sovereignty and self-determination of the Czechoslovak nation." This third draft would have been nearly as dramatic a shift as the second, though it was somewhat schizophrenic in tone and emphasis.[334]

Not surprisingly, considering that Morford had ignored their criticism, the board rejected Morford's third draft as well. Smith wrote a last draft. It was mild, with most of the fire from the two middle versions absent. It eliminated the Vietnam comparison while preserving the essence of the argument against the Soviet invasion. Yet, somehow, more anti-American rhetoric had slipped in. There was now a new paragraph asserting the veracity of a Soviet conspiracy theory about West German neo-Nazi infiltration into Czechoslovakia. This was the version that was released, as if nothing had been learned since 1956.

Not releasing the first revision of its Czechoslovakia statement to the public was a fateful decision. Such a statement could have signaled a new and more balanced approach to the constituency that would have echoed the non-political work they were already doing in education. Such logic might have been on Morford's mind as he formed his perspective on the crisis, as he wrote to a friend in September of 1968, "Our concern must be to reach a wider constituency, not primarily progressives and leftists, and we shall have to reckon with the fact that this larger constituency is probably in considerable

[334] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Czechoslovakia statement: Revision #2; Box 8; Folder 50.

majority not in approval of the action taken by the Soviet Union."[335] Yet, it is not at all clear that the membership would have accepted a critical statement, as even the final statement was too much for some. Uncomfortable with any criticism of the Soviet Union at all, Kent threatened to resign his chairmanship, though he changed his mind later. Elizabeth Moos actually carried through with her own resignation. Response in letters to the final and tepid statement ranged from mild support ("it is as good a statement as a divided Board can produce") to anger. Why, constituents asked, was the Council making such a fuss about a matter of "self-defense" taken "to save the world from a war of annihilation"?[336]

The rupture within the board had become serious. The Christian socialists – Morford, Parsons, Fritchman, and Melish being the most important – were increasingly vocal about human rights, and increasingly skeptical of Soviet assurances that they were being respected in the Warsaw Pact. The communists – an increasingly dominant portion of the membership who somehow seemed to grow in influence in the NCASF as the CPUSA *declined* – were, meanwhile, terrified of losing their last pro-Soviet outlet.

There was no longer anything the least bit revolutionary or even liberal about the Communists in the NCASF. They defended the institutions of an authoritarian foreign power which refused to change itself and fought to prevent change in others, while ignoring the actual needs of the people who they, of course, claimed to act in the interest of. They championed an arbitrary empire at the expense of every other aspect of identity.

[335] Ibid., Letter from Richard Morford to Eugenia Wolfson, September 16, 1968; Box 5; Folder 26.
[336] Ibid., To Friends of the Society for Cultural Relations, September 4, 1968; Box 2, Folder 1.

The Christian socialists, meanwhile, whose perspective was based on a two-thousand-year-old religion, were the radicals of the organization now. They spoke against the abuses of the capitalist and socialist worlds alike, instead urging a moderate course emphasizing cooperation between both sets of nations based on their shared humanity. The independent socialists, meanwhile, were for the most part long gone, having determined that the Soviet Union no longer possessed any progressive bent and that its supporters lacked the potential for mass appeal. The few who remained, like Rockwell Kent in New York and Harry Steinmetz in Los Angeles, had divorced their support of the Soviet Union so thoroughly from their usually pragmatic ideology that there was little that could shake them from their allegiance now. These two, for instance, supported the communists on nearly every issue in the 1960s and 70s.

Meanwhile, American society had changed in ways that made it increasingly unrecognizable and confusing to the NCASF. In particular, the Soviet Union no longer enjoyed any significant support in the United States. Marxism remained a factor in the 60s, but its advocates were revisionist independents like CLR James, the Trinidian anti-Stalinist who had been calling the Soviet Union "a fascist state" since before World War II. There would be no help for the NCASF from such quarters. Even more disturbing to the NCASF, however, was the New Left. These American young people possessed the passion for equality and justice of the early communists but rejected the Soviet Union as a stodgy dinosaur. These were communalists who, deprived of using the internationalist communist example due to bipartisan anticommunism and the crimes of the Soviet Union, celebrated individuality and the mystery of the self. Their followers sought

spiritual authenticity, not material progress. The Soviet Union and its narrative was not compelling to such people.

Perhaps as a result of their inability to connect with Americans born before the Cold War, the NCASF directed most of its energy at a program for youth exchanges in the 1970s. The NCASF had been engineering youth tours to the Soviet Union in piecemeal fashion since 1961. Americans jumped at the opportunity. The number of children they sent expanded tremendously when they convinced ISAR to begin inviting NCASF-sponsored American children to Artek in 1971.

Artek was a Soviet summer camp established in the Crimea in 1925. In its initial state it only accepted small groups of privileged children from the Soviet Union. In her book about the politicization of children in the Cold War, *Innocent Weapons,* Margaret E. Peacock asserts that there were several agendas at play in the opening up of Artek. For one, it was helpful for the Soviet Union's image to facilitate relationships between their own children and those of the rest of the world. Most of the activities at Artek consisted of outdoor sports and other bonding endeavors. "By all accounts," she writes, "most kids had a great time." Other, less honorable, intentions on the part of the Soviets included comparing the children of capitalist and socialist countries for propaganda purposes. Another agenda was the communication of Soviet perspectives to young people of foreign nations, before a bias against the USSR had set completely set in. Along these lines, Artek (much like the World Youth Festivals, which also featured children

sponsored by the NCASF) included courses and meetings presenting a Soviet slant on history and current affairs. [337]

The NCASF, however, had different purposes for the Artek exchanges and youth tours. American and Soviet young people meeting in friendship and learning their similarities, after all, was at the heart of the NCASF program. As NCASF literature reads, "The boys and girls of the U.S.A. come home with precious memories of these friendship that have been established, with countless photographs that have been taken that are made into slides. Then these boys and girls begin to tell the story of their experience to boys and girls in the communities in which they live and indeed to adult audiences which hear them gladly, and so understanding and appreciation grow among our people here."[338] In addition, the NCASF knew that American newspapers tended to interview young Americans upon their return from the Soviet Union. This could be a public relations boost for the Council. The best example is Samantha Smith, a ten-year old who went to Artek in 1983 after stirring a media blitz with a letter to Yuri Andropov.[339]

Young people who visited the Soviet Union often returned reoriented on the Soviet Union and Cold War. Sometimes they remained interested in these issues into adulthood.[340] At Artek, American children were immersed in Soviet everyday life, with

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[337] Margaret E. Peacock, *Innocent Weapons: The Soviet and American Politics of Childhood in the Cold War* (UNC Press Books, 2014).

[338] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," "Camp Artek Delegation 1974;" Box 8, Folder 8.

[339] Samantha Smith, the ten year-old who helped put American-Soviet relations in the public eye in the early 1980s, has several biographies about her. Patricia Stone, Martin and Bernard Doctor, *Samantha Smith, Young Ambassador* (Vero Beach, Fla.: Rourke Enterprises, 1987) is the best of the lot. She was not connected to the NCASF.

[340] Sometimes high-profile youth exchanges backfired, however. When Charles White and Michael Cutting, two American radicals in their 20s, were invited and went to the First Soviet Youth Conference in Minsk under NCASF sponsorship, they encountered a rigid Soviet delegation unwilling to steer away from

tours of Soviet institutions, attendance of Soviet cultural events, and steady contact with Soviet children. American youth groups enjoyed the sightseeing that trips to the Soviet Union provided in abundance, as well as the experience of a sense of camaraderie with Soviet children they had previously been taught to think of as their Cold War enemy. This contrasted with, and to an extent was undermined by, the formal structure of the tours (as mandated by the Soviets), which usually consisted of staid meetings and conferences on topics such as patriotism and internationalism. The NCASF could never convince SSOD to loosen up its schedules for the children, to better facilitate informal – but more meaningful – friendships across national boundaries. There are signs that the Communist Party was apprehensive about American tourists, however young, and discouraged their youth from associating too closely with them. As early as 1960, the Party publicly warned its youth against 'idle' contacts with visitors from the United States." It asserted that "addiction to American chewing gum and rock 'n' roll dancing" were "the first steps toward possible involvement in United States espionage activities."[341] The Party warned its citizens of "ideological 'erosion' of Soviet society". To some extent, the Soviets assumed that American children were participants in this erosion.[342]

narrow Marxist-Leninist lectures. Rather than engage in an honest dialogue, Cutting and White contended that the Soviet youths refused to admit or discuss Soviet problems, and laid all blame for the world's ills at the feet of the capitalist nations. When White and Cutting returned to the United States, the story was everywhere, creating major headaches for NCASF outreach.

[341] Seymour Topping, "Soviet Bids Youth Shun US Visitors: Party Warns Against 'Idle' Contacts and 'Notorious' American Way of Life," *New York Times*, September 2, 1960.

[342] Peter Grose, "Leaders in Soviet Fear West's Radio Is Ensnaring Youth: Soviet Disturbed by Western Radio," *New York Times*, March 25, 1966.

The NCASF was considerably more adventurous. Many of the young people who went to Artek through the NCASF were children of leftists to begin with (so-called "red diaper babies") and had preexisting inclinations toward the Soviet Union that were strengthened by the Artek experience. But the NCASF also sought apolitical or even conservative youth, who, leadership reasoned, the American media would trust more than the children of leftists. The NCASF picked young people for tours and Artek based on how likely they seemed to be to report on their activities to other people, rather than a predisposition to sympathy for the Soviet Union.

According to Morford, this approach produced some discord with SSOD. SSOD administrators claimed to the NCASF that it wanted delegates from the United States who represented mainstream sentiment. But SSOD was then annoyed if the American young people displayed any resistance to the Soviet perspective that was crammed down their throats. Eventually, Morford began to instruct Soviet workers at Artek to dispense with heavy-handed propaganda. He refused to send children to Artek unless he first approved the Soviet program. He wrote to the local societies in frustration:

> It would seem that they [the Soviets] just do not understand that we send out on this group young people who never before have been in the Soviet Union so that Soviet adult methods of propaganda cannot be imposed upon them. That propaganda has to be made concrete in terms of visitation, in company with Soviet young people, to those enterprises and places where socialism is successfully in operation. The Soviet job [propaganda] has to be done in the social context not by any formal seminars around the table with the presentation of papers by each side and discussion.[343]

Why did the Soviets push so hard? They certainly had no illusions of converting America to communism, one youth at a time. On the contrary, the Soviet attempt to

[343] "Richard Morford Papers; TAM.361," Memo to local societies, July 29, 1974; Box 9, Folder 68.

control the field of discourse between the American and Soviet children was about preventing the American children from destabilizing the narrative the Communist Party had so carefully constructed about American children in the Cold War. American parents were presented in the Soviet Union as "being unable to support their families and [children] were thus forced to go without." Children were "unprotected from hunger and destitution and envious of the Soviet system and the lives its population enjoyed." American children were also supposed to be ignorant, or at least un-empowered: a hilarious notion to anyone familiar with the United States of the 1960s and beyond. American kids," Peacock writes, "…were [presented as] unable or unwilling to address not only questions of politics, economics, and ideology, 'but the defense of the rights of the young.'"[344]

SSOD was, then, in a precarious position in which it had to claim to welcome diverging perspectives and ideas because there could be no suggestion that Marxist-Leninist thought was incapable of coping with ideological challenges. As Alexei Yurchak has noted, much of Soviet discourse in the last few decades of the USSR's existence was performative: symbolic rituals explicitly intended to reinforce the Marxist-Leninist dominance over thought, but which implicitly admitted its limitations on a meta-level to those familiar with the discourse itself. When the Soviet leadership claimed to welcome dissenting viewpoints, the meaning to everyone in the Soviet Union was that dissent was not welcome. The NCASF, however, lacked the ability to decode the discourse. When the Soviets asked for Americans who represented the mainstream, they really wanted

[344] Peacock, *Innocent Weapons*, 45.

children who were used to hearing criticism of the United States, who could convince Soviet children through their passivity to criticism that the United States was a corrupt and fracturing hive of villainy they did not seek to defend. On top of the obvious linguistic barrier, then, the NCASF and Soviet Union were trying to break past a formidable discursive one. [345] This explains both the consistent frustration from both sides regarding the other's conduct, and simultaneously (considering the equally dramatic shifts in American culture during the Cold War) suggests the likelihood that the two parties were never on the same page.

Despite a lessening rapport with the Soviets, however, the youth exchange programs rejuvenated the NCASF once again in the late 1960s and early 70s. Donations in those years were three times what they had been in the 1950s. Further, it brought in a new cadre of American-Soviet friends. Work on youth exchanges required more specialized skillsets, and frankly more energy, than most of the remaining members of the NCASF had in the 1970s. A new influx of young members joined up to fill these positions, many of whom were highly educated professionals like translator Fay Greenbaum, who joined the NCASF through its Russian language teaching program (the Living Language Seminar). Most of the new members were so-called "red diaper babies," who grew up immersed in radical politics. They did not feel the alienation of the rest of their generation because they had always been connected to an "international community of people working for social change." Since they had always considered themselves

[345] Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

opposed to the prevalent attitudes in Western society, the red diaper babies were saved from having to cope with a sudden awareness of their oppositional identity in young adulthood. The NCASF was a natural rallying point for such people, though there were never enough of them to create a succeeding constituency for the organization.

Despite the support of a younger contingent, however, the national leadership was becoming more out of touch with the local societies, and accordingly, less influential "on the ground." While the national leadership continued to see the big picture and hence recognize the need to reach diverse audiences and try new things, the local societies had become almost entirely comprised of current and former CPUSA members whose perspective was considerably more narrow. The local leaders were battle-weary communist veterans of the Old Left, like Eugenia Wolfson of Los Angeles; Frank Batterson of Seattle; and Sonia Kaross of San Francisco. Most were in their 70s or 80s. They were impressive and formidable figures who continued to inspire respect on the Left but were far more cautious (and, ironically, conservative) than both the national leadership and the new wave of NCASF supporters. No matter how much the national leadership worked on agendas for a national program, they almost invariably stalled in the local societies, which ignored them. As Morford explained in a document on his tenure at the NCASF submitted to Gennady Fedosov, the local society leaders were looking for different things out of the NCASF than the national leadership. He wrote, "I have not been able to get society leadership to push their horizons out; their vision is limited; their concepts of the task are not large. They come to an executive committee meeting with little sense of excitement. In five minutes they are bogged down in and

quibbling over petty details of some small project. There is no time spent in surveying the total challenge and mapping out future programs."[346] What the local leadership wanted was, instead, to entertain Soviet guests, watch Soviet films together, and throw social events intended for a homogeneous audience. Such a description is, of course, that of a culture club, not the mass-membership advocacy organization founded in 1943.

Some younger members, like Fred Gratz in Los Angeles, were tempted to move on to more active causes in light of the entrenched attitudes in the local councils. Gratz argued that at the least it was time for a changing of the guard in the American-Soviet friendship movement:

> I believe that our leadership is badly in need of an infusion of young blood. The old timers are well tested and well experienced and most represent fine traditions. But we must admit that they are advanced in age, their strength is not what it was, and we must launch a membership drive, make a talent search for people in the prime of life who can be trained and capable to succeed the current leadership when necessary… My impression is that the present leadership doesn't want new blood otherwise it would make an effort in this direction.[347]

Gratz may have been on to something: the late 1970s Los Angeles society, for instance, was holding its board meetings in the mid-morning, when almost everyone under sixty was either at work or college.[348] The newer societies, like Buffalo, Boston, and Detroit, had membership and leadership much younger than the older core of societies, and were more committed to the prevention of war between the United States and Soviet Union than to nostalgia. However, the aged and retired communist contingent bested the newer

[346] "Richard Morford Papers; TAM.361," A Critical View of the NCASF Program by Richard Morford, October, 1980; Box 10; Folder 30.
[347] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Fred Gratz to LA Council, March 27, 1980; Box 5, Folder 26.
[348] Ibid., Fred Gratz to LA Council, March 27, 1980; Box 5, Folder 26

participants in numbers, commitment and influence. Many young people drifted in and out of the NCASF in the 1960s and 70s, but few stayed for long.

By the mid-1970s, Morford was convinced the NCASF as structured was unworkable. So long as the local societies resisted change, the National Council would be unable to have any impact outside of New York. This issue became urgent as he prepared for retirement. As much as he was at odds with the communists during his tenure, Morford was respected by almost everyone in the American-Soviet friendship as a pivotal figure. He was beloved for his obvious moral integrity. The NCASF held together during his tenure as executive director because he was at its center. Morford worried that the Council's mission might not survive his absence. In 1977, Morford and the communists of the local societies enacted a compromise at the Midwest Regional Conference in an attempt to resolve their differences. A reorganization reversed the power dynamic between the national and the local leadership. It was broadly intended to make "strength, power, and accountability" vested in local societies, "rather than in individuals" (the latter meaning Morford and the "at large" members of the board).[349] What this meant in practice was that the National Council became a membership organization, with local societies becoming official affiliates of the national. Local societies were now entitled to membership on the NCASF board, which was realigned to consist almost entirely of the leaders of the local societies. New Yorkers of more moderate stripes and national

[349] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Organizational Structure, 1977; Box 2; Folder 7.

reputation had dominated the previous board. They now had to step down, Morford excepted.

In return for this "more democratic" structure, the local councils would have to pay dues and bring their bylaws in line with those of the NCASF. Morford thought this would ensure some degree of unity. Further, every local society was required to incorporate a youth department and have at least one paid, full-time employee. Morford believed this would ensure outreach and professionalism.[350] Each society had to have at least twenty members for affiliation and the members needed to be "representative" of business, trade unions, youth, women, ethnic, and political interests. The reorganization also officially added peace action, such as a campaign in favor of the SALT II treaty, along with recommendations for expansion to under-served groups (i.e., trade unions and minorities), a newsletter, and a study of Americans to determine their concerns about the Soviet Union, to the program.[351] There was now, for the first time, a standardized arrangement for local societies that demanded they meet certain standards in order to represent American-Soviet friendship.

The 1977 reorganization was a calculated risk by Morford. If the local societies were willing to guarantee that the NCASF would strive to remain an advocate of social reform and commit to a base level of organization, he would agree to hasten the passing of the torch into their hands. The risk did not pay off: almost all of the advocacy of the NCASF after Morford's retirement took the form of sponsorship of work done by other

[350] Ibid., Box 2; Folder 7.
[351] Ibid.

peace groups, and there was little attempt on either a national or local level to bring in new membership or support. The local societies transferred their aesthetic and character to the national organization, the latter of which was now doomed to become as insular and incestuous as the former.

Almost thirty years after HUAC accused the NCASF of being a communist front, the organization was in the hands of the communists for the first time. These people had been passionate and dynamic during William Foster's and Earl Browder's day but had been reduced by age and opposition into narrow-minded and suspicious gatekeepers of a treasured past they cared more about than they did the future. The Christian socialists who gave the organization its soul were departed or dead. The brains of the organization, the independent socialists – the Corliss Lamonts and William Mandels whose privileging of goals over ideological purity had pushed the NCASF toward mainstream Americans -- had lost interest, passed away, or, in case of Harry Steinmetz, been expelled for their failure to conform to the new order. All that was left were the communists, the administrative heart. But without the other factions, there was little reason to keep the organization beating. There was no longer any ambition or moral drive. It is ironic that in the late 70s and early 80s, the greatest opportunity for organizational expansion in perhaps the NCASF's entire history due to Glasnost and Perestroika, most of the constituency lost its will to fight.

## Chapter 3: Corliss Lamont – A Pragmatist in Utopian Clothing

If there were a theme in Corliss Lamont's personal life, it would be autonomy. Born the son of a wealthy partner in the gargantuan financial firm, JP Morgan, in 1902, Lamont could have had a ready plan from birth, for his entire life, if he so chose. Yet, he was committed to his own path from an early age. He opted against a career in finance and toward the considerably less materially rewarding world of academia, via the discipline of philosophy. Instead of relying on his father's connections and influence, Lamont found his own associations, ingratiating himself into a board of directors post in the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and a professorship at Columbia University. While Lamont's wealth had obviously opened a lot of doors for him, he quickly established himself as a man who succeeded upon his own merits. By the early 1930s, indeed, Lamont was carving out a promising career as a public intellectual.

If there were a theme to his professional life, it would be a search for social justice. A student of John Dewey, Lamont was committed to pragmatism, a philosophy which rejects superstition and metaphysics in favor of an understanding of truth based upon a demonstrable relationship between an assertion and reality. It was a perfect philosophy for an autonomous thinker like Lamont who was interested in truth, rather than partisanship or ideology. In 1949, he published *The Philosophy of Humanism*, the most influential work of his career. A book with seven (and counting) editions which still ends up on secularist reading lists, *The Philosophy of Humanism* assimilated the work of John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, and Lamont's former graduate advisor Frederick

Woodbridge, to argue that improving the world for the people who lived in it, in the here and now, was the only cause for which it was worth fighting. He spent much of his adult life advocating for causes which he believed contributed to the greater agenda of human happiness, including democracy and civil liberties, through organizations and institutions.

Yet, despite the presence of these themes consistently throughout his life, Corliss Lamont spent a fifteen-year period utterly infatuated with the Soviet Union, a nation that spent the 1930s proving itself the embodiment of values opposite the ones Lamont claimed to hold dear. He extolled the virtues of Stalin and ignored or rationalized Soviet atrocities against their own people and other nations alike. He persevered even when his advocacy of the Soviet Union placed him in opposition to his fellow pragmatists, most of whom had sworn off the USSR by the mid-30s. He subordinated his previous preoccupations – civil liberties and humanism, among them – to the overriding task of protecting the reputation and arguing the benefits of the Soviet system. Lamont became chairman of FSU in 1933 and founded the NCASF in 1943. As chairman, he guided the latter organization and the movement which birthed it to their greatest triumphs in World War II before dropping out of the movement in the late 1940s. To many American intellectuals, even to some former friends, Lamont was, therefore, synonymous with the paradigm of the "fellow-traveler" or "useful idiot": A communist who worshipped at Stalin's altar of progress, who was willing to say absolutely anything so long as it improved the lot of his foreign master.

How does one reconcile the contradiction between how Lamont lived his own life and the values he implicitly supported through his advocacy of the Stalinist Soviet

Union? In this chapter, I posit that Lamont has been misinterpreted for over seventy years. Rather than a slavish devotee of Stalinism, I argue that he was a slavish devotee to a certain vision of progress. I contend that his collection of influences led Lamont to seek a world united by socialist governments defined by equality, planned economies, and technologically-driven prosperity. For a time, particularly between 1933 and 1946, he saw the roots of these attributes in the Soviet Union. He thought the possibility of the Soviet utopia justified a great deal of devotion and faith. However, as the post-World War II years endured crisis after crisis as a result of Soviet policy with no perceptible benefit, Lamont saw how *un*-equal, how *unjust*, and how *un*-pragmatic the Soviets really were. He began to doubt the Soviet commitment to, much less its ability to advance, the upward trajectory he envisioned, no matter how long the timeline. Accordingly, his commitment to, and even interest in, the USSR itself gradually waned. Without the narrative of progress, he saw that there just was not much to the Soviet Union to idealize.

I first discuss Lamont's early life and the intellectual influences that set him on his course as a simultaneous pragmatist and techno-utopian. I show how Lamont integrated those influences during the Great Depression into his own unique school of socialism, which he called Socialist Humanism. Next, I analyze how his influences and ideology brought him to his advocacy of friendship with the Soviet Union. Finally, I examine Lamont's reconsiderations of the Soviet Union, determining the process and reasoning of his move away from friendship work: the fixation that was, for fifteen years, his life's primary focus.

## Intellectual Influences

Corliss Lamont was born in Englewood, New Jersey, in the Palisades just north of Manhattan. His mother, Florence, was a graduate of Smith College and an indefatigable world traveler. His father, Thomas, was a self-made banker who had attained such success in his field that he was made a partner at JP Morgan & Company. Thomas was also on the governing boards of Phillips Exeter Academy, Harvard University, was a trustee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and the temporary owner of the *New York Evening Post.* The Lamonts were integrated into so-called high society and thoroughly connected to the titans of American society and culture. Their children had every opportunity to pursue their interests and to succeed. In a time when letters of introduction were still common, few opened more doors than those of Thomas and Florence Lamont.

Corliss, indeed, was born into a world of privilege and would never find himself "in want at any time."[352] Perhaps more importantly, however, he was also born into a household where intellectual curiosity was encouraged. The Lamonts fostered "a zest for knowledge and a liking for the best in literature, music, and the arts" in each of their three children.[353] The children were encouraged to stay informed on issues of national and international importance, form their own opinions about them, and engage in debate with others. Though allied, to a degree, with the political and economic establishment, Thomas

[352] Corliss Lamont, *Voice in the Wilderness; Collected Essays of Fifty Years.* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1974), 298.
[353] Corliss Lamont, *Yes to Life: Memoirs of Corliss Lamont.* (New York: Horizon Press, 1981), 17.

and Florence made no attempts "to silence or censor" diverging ideas from their children.[354] By the time he was a teenager, Corliss was accustomed to formulating and discussing arguments both political and philosophical in nature and his perspective began to separate itself from that of his parents. Corliss always thought it was his parents' generosity that made him so willing to dissent from popular opinion later in life.[355] In a family of conservative Republicans, he considered himself a liberal Democrat by his teens.

Some children of wealthy parents became obsessed with preserving what they have and accumulating still more. Others cannot stop thinking about what others do not have. Corliss Lamont was in the latter category. This was encouraged by his attendance at Phillips Exeter Academy from 1916 to 1920, a first-rate school which brought together children from across the United States and "from many different strata."[356] Further, growing up Presbyterian in a fairly religious household during the first two decades of the twentieth century, Lamont was instilled with the program of the Social Gospel movement, which aimed to use religious institutions to prompt social progress. Corliss "felt a burning admiration for Jesus as a man and a fervent wish to live up to his ethical ideals."[357] At one of his family's gigantic Christmas parties as a youth, he read a self-written invocation about Christ: "Jesus gave up his life to bring peace on earth and goodwill among men. A selfless martyr for the cause of humanity, he displayed in his teachings and actions a radically democratic spirit and a deep sense for the fundamental

[354] Ibid.
[355] Lamont, *Voice in the Wilderness; Collected Essays of Fifty Years.*, 298.
[356] Lamont, *Yes to Life*, 29.
[357] Ibid., 28.

equality of man; a fearless fighter for his vision of the true and the good, he died on the cross in moral challenge to the established institutions and social iniquities of his time."[358] This was no small example against which to measure oneself. From an early age, however, Lamont believed it to be his responsibility to employ his "superabundance of energy" to making the world better than it was.

In his desire to make the world fairer, more just, and more generous, Lamont was on familiar territory for Americans. Throughout American history, the expectation of social progress was a chief factor in the formation of an American identity. Indeed, most American intellectuals before the 20th century perceived history as a gradual incline that would end in some form of social perfection. When Lamont grew up, one popular perspective on progress was driven by the lingering theories of an English philosopher, Herbert Spencer. Spencer constructed a popular interpretation of Darwinism that posited that evolution meant "guaranteed perfection."[359] Spencer in 1862 argued that natural selection led to conflict and competition, which ensured development of humankind as a species and led to progress. This profound misunderstanding of Darwin's findings (Darwin never gave humanity Most Favored Species status) blossomed into Social Darwinism by the 1870s. Spencer's followers claimed that society did not need to be improved on a macro level, as it was nature's responsibility to make people better, and therefore improve society in the aggregate. The Social Darwinists, in other words,

[358] Ibid., 21.
[359] David W Marcell, *Progress and Pragmatism: James, Dewey, Beard, and the American Idea of Progress* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1974), 100.

managed to make a profoundly radical scientific development into a bulwark of determinism and conservatism.

There were others in the Anglo-American world, however, who felt that nature needed a bit of help for progress to occur. They found it hard to look at the highly stratified, industrial hellscape that was Western civilization at the turn of the century and conclude that things were getting better. Active prevention of war by a regulatory international agency was one popular idea for stimulating human progress: after all, wars, and the armament industries they promoted, had a habit of disrupting the normal course of nations, wasting enormous human and material resources. Some intellectuals believed that the surest way to prevent war was to eliminate the legal, cultural, and economic differences between nations altogether through a world government. The idea was discussed seriously in the United States only in the years immediately before World War I, prominently by Theodore Roosevelt. World government never picked up steam among Americans. The horror of mechanized slaughter unleashed by World War I revived the idea, however. By the time Lamont went to college at Harvard University in 1920, there was new hope, as Woodrow Wilson proposed the creation of a League of Nations to resolve disputes between nations within a democratic framework.[360] Lamont, for one, was fascinated. He believed the League offered the opportunity to remake the world into a more pleasant place on a grand scale.

[360] On the League of Nations and the international order after World War I, see Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (London: Macmillan & Co. ltd, 1946).

One of the most persuasive proponents of the League of Nations was British science-fiction writer HG Wells. Through his studies for an English literature degree (he hoped to be a writer himself), Lamont became familiar with the work of Wells, whom he had met through his family years before. Lamont and Wells had found each other on the same page, so to speak, in their previous meeting, arguing on the same side against Lamont's parents on the issue of the League of Nations (Lamont and Wells were for it). Wells was important to Lamont for his cogent rhetoric on the League on behalf of the League of Nations Association, a group of British intellectuals who took it upon themselves to convince Britain of the League's importance. Wells believed that the League of Nations was essential to progress. He had argued for decades that "where conflict between nations could arise, it would arise."[361] Even before World War I, Wells saw that defensive alliances and imperial protection were only a stopgap fix for the inevitable descent of the world into permanent war. The League, however, could be an enduring solution. In an article in *Atlantic* in 1919, Wells and his Association made their case:

> The idea of war has revealed itself in its full hideousness. All the world has come to look upon it as am sort of mythological monster which, if left to itself, will periodically reemerge from hell, to devour the whole youth and the whole wealth of civilized mankind. It is useless to dream of clipping the wings or paring the claws of the dragon. It must be slain outright if it is not to plan unthinkable havoc with civilization; and to that end the intelligence and the moral enthusiasm of the world are now, as we see addressing themselves.[362]

[361] John S Partington, *Building Cosmopolis: The Political Thought of H.G. Wells* (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 1.
[362] "The Idea of a League of Nations - The Atlantic," accessed March 22, 2016, http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1919/01/the-idea-of-a-league-of-nations/306270/.

Wells proposed a far greater mission for the League than Wilson had perhaps ever envisioned. This was expressed in his 1918 book, *In the Fourth Year*.[363] Each country, in his system, would derive power *from* the League, as a federal entity. Each nation would have representation in a council and would have to abide by the League's decisions or risk forceful intervention. Wells' League would have a monopoly on armed force, leaving its members no recourse but to argue their conflicts in front of the council.[364] As implemented in 1920, however, the League looked nothing like what Wells wanted. The real League looked more like an international debate club than a regulatory body. Wells washed his hands of it.

The issue of the League, as disappointing as it had turned out, was a gateway for Lamont into Wellsian thought. Wells had been had been advocating socialism since the late 19th century. He argued that socialist reform needed to happen not on the micro, municipal level, as his gentleman comrades in the gradualist Fabian Society suggested, but rather on a macro level, with people fully aware and approving of the dramatic nature of the changes. "Democratic socialism is the only possible sane and living socialism," he wrote in one of his two early twentieth-century books on socialism. "The only possible socialistic state is a state which is understood, upheld, willingly and cheerfully lived, by the great mass of people."[365] Instead of provoking change slowly, even deceptively, like the Fabians wanted, Wells therefore thought that the entirety of the capitalist system needed to be uprooted all at once, preferably by mutual consent. His reasoning derived

[363] H. G Wells, *In the Fourth Year: Anticipations of a World Peace* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1918).
[364] Ibid.
[365] {Citation}

again from his hatred of war, and the capitalist system's connection to it. War, Wells argued, was based in commercial competition. If there was no economic competition, there would be no basis for conflicts between nations. Socialism, by which he meant an actively ethical system which distributed resources equally to all citizens, could make that economic competition obsolete, and thereby end war.

In Wells' back catalog were numerous ideas for the creation of the perfect society that joined a peaceful foreign policy with a socialist economic system he argued for in real life. Utopian literature was as old as literature itself but Wells brought to the genre a greater vision for the role of technological-driven efficiency in future human happiness. Wells thought that the old concepts for a perfect society, from Moore to Bellamy, were implausible in the modern world because they were "all perfect and static States, a balance of happiness won for ever against the forces of unrest and disorder that inhere in things.[366]" He thought such ideas had little resonance in a world of political, social, scientific, and economic change, as existed in the 20th century. He believed the solution was a fully centralized state, capable of reacting to changing circumstances quickly and ready to embrace the changing needs of the people. This state, Wells was sure, would be based on a simultaneously more compassionate *and* better ordered system than capitalism. The state would, for instance, function as a "guarantor of basic housing, education, and a minimum wage in order to enable the poor and uneducated to raise themselves out of mire and poverty and ignorance." [367]

[366] Partington, *Building Cosmopolis*, 49.
[367] Ibid., 51.

Wells was perhaps the first techno-utopian socialist: an intellectual who insisted on the potential of centralization and technology to allow an unprecedented degree of resource management, facilitating a more efficient distribution of wealth and goods. In Wells' estimation, the centralization necessary to bring prosperity to all citizens of a nation would only be possible with a state that was far more powerful and far-reaching than any that existed in his time. His utopia, as consistently advocated in his utopian literature, was reliant on a centralized, universal educational plan, made possible by advances in production and distribution technologies, as well as a state willing and able to throw its weight around. Using other technological advances, the government could enact such programs as sustainable farming and general environmental protection, which would end shortsighted ravaging of the world's natural resources and ensure the happiness of the human race for centuries to come.[368] Once individual nations had been sorted out, they could aid in the construction of infrastructural projects in third world nations.[369] This, combined with a minimum standard of living (an expansion on the then new concept of the minimum wage), would enable a greater degree of prosperity and equality than had ever been seen.[370]

Wells was an enthusiastic proselytizer for his own ideas. Most of his science fiction writing served the purpose of advocating for his pet themes of world government based on the technology of abundance, overseen by an intellectual or technical elite. *The Time Machine,* published in 1895, provided a cautionary tale with the Eloi, a race of

[368] Ibid., 3.
[369] Ibid.
[370] Ibid.

meek post-humans. While the Eloi possess all of the material prosperity they could want, they are decentralized and passive, and thus perpetually victimized by the warlike and Morlocks. A society of equals, Wells seems to say, is all for nothing without a regulatory body that can anticipate and react to danger. *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896*),* meanwhile, is a warning of the danger of progress run wild. By showing the atrocities committed by a scientist free from regulation and ethics and driven only by intellectual curiosity, Wells asserts the folly of science unguided by society (*The Invisible Man,* of 1897, has almost identical themes). *War of the Worlds,* published in 1898, encapsulates Wells' refutation of the "progress via evolution" ideas of Spencer and the Social Darwinists. Through an invasion by evolutionarily perfect alien beings who take what they want from lesser species, Wells reveals that we are not necessarily nature's favorite creatures. Biology does not necessarily work to the good of *humans,* Wells argues, and the only way we can ensure progress is to make it happen ourselves.

The archetypical example of Wells' socialist techno-utopia, however, was in his 1905 book, *A Modern Utopia.* In the world therein, a single world government runs the entirety of the planet. This government is driven by a voluntary elite sect called the Samurai, who facilitate the existence of an ultra-efficient society without manual labor or poverty. The people of this world are organized into one of four groups, each with strengths and weaknesses, and are given tasks and livelihoods accommodating their capabilities by the Samurai. All races and genders are equal in this utopia, drugs and meat are banned for the common good, and resources are controlled by the government. The currency of Wells' world is based on units of energy, which allow society to adapt to

value whatever work was most efficient. The result of all of these elements was a stable, efficient, peaceful, and endlessly happy world.

Lamont was fascinated with Wells' vision. Yet, life moves fast in one's early twenties and scarcely had he integrated one set of influences before he was confronted with another. After graduating *magna cum laude* from Harvard, Lamont spent a semester at Oxford College in Britain, using his family's letters of introduction as a door into English high society. He spent his free time with British intellectuals such as Wells, John Masefield, and Aldous Huxley: the last of whom redirected Lamont away from a poetry career toward one in philosophy instead. Accordingly, after an aborted attempt at a law degree at Harvard Law School, Corliss Lamont decided to study philosophy at Columbia University for his PhD in 1925. In his work at Columbia, Lamont was introduced to a to the work of John Dewey and Bertrand Russell. Both directed Lamont toward a more grounded, pragmatic perspective emphasizing practical solutions, without diverging him from his previous focus on equality and reason.

Lamont's academic advisor at Columbia was Frederick James Eugene Woodbridge, a realist who thought nature, not the supernatural, to be the source of human knowledge. Lamont considered him "one of the keenest minds" he had encountered. He credited Woodbridge for his own development into philosophy and away from religion.[371] Therefore, it is impressive than another instructor was even more influential on Lamont over the long-term. This instructor was John Dewey. John Dewey was a giant

[371] Lamont, *Yes to Life*, 33.

of American philosophy and the most profound intellectual figure in Corliss Lamont's life.[372]

Aside from perhaps William James, Dewey was the primary exponent of the philosophy of pragmatism. Dewey argued that most philosophical problems were due to the dualism (i.e., the separation between human consciousness, or knowledge, and reality) of the reigning philosophical paradigms of the day, such as the mind-body division in the work of Descartes and Kant. Philosophers of dualist schools asserted that the mind and body (in other words, the world and our conception of it) were reconciled only by the existence of a metaphysical force, an absolute (usually God), that allowed humans to translate perceptions into meaning. Dewey instead posited that an absolute was unnecessary to bridge a division between humanity and nature because that division did not actually exist (and nor did, in all likelihood, the absolute). To Dewey, our experience with reality is not separate from it, as the dualists claimed. Our experience with reality was, rather, a natural part *of* reality and could not be separated from it.[373] Meaning, or truth, depended not on how well an idea corresponded to an antecedent reality or coherence with other truths but instead "on its capacity to guide thinkers toward

[372] The works of Dewey are collected in convenient form in a set by Southern Illinois University Press. See John Dewey and Southern Illinois University (System), *The Early Works, 1882-1898.* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967); John Dewey and Jo Ann Boydston, *The Middle Works of John Dewey, 1899-1924* (Carbondale [etc.]: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983); John Dewey and Jo Ann Boydston, *The Later Works, 1925-1953* (Carbondale; London: Southern Illinois University Press; Feffer & Simons, 1981). He is the subject of many biographies as well, including George Dykhuizen, *The Life and Mind of John Dewey.* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973); Robert B. Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Cornell University Press, 1991); Richard J Bernstein, *John Dewey* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966).

[373] Like most philosophical terms, Naturalism has been employed for many different purposes and has held many different meanings. In general, it refers to a philosophy that does not appeal to the supernatural. Dewey was not the first person to apply the term to his own *specific* perspective within those general borders, nor the last.

a successful or satisfactory resolution."[374] Such a philosophical system placed philosophy and science on the same plane. Dewey thereby opened philosophy to scientific inquiry. Meaning and value could now be determined through theory, methodology, and evidence, rather than through a philosopher's arcane interpretation of a metaphysical source.[375]

Over the last century, the message of pragmatism has been simplified, in conventional wisdom, into "what is good is that which works," but this is to disregard a moral element of the philosophy which was always key to Dewey. Dewey thought that, by defining good and evil in relation to religious and metaphysical concepts, philosophers and theologians alike had done humanity a disservice. Both good and evil, he argued, were quite natural and understandable without an absolute. He wrote, "Goods *are*... but unfortunately, evils also *are*... Personally I don't need an absolute to enable me to distinguish, say, the good of kindness and the evil of slander, or the good of health and the evil of valetudinarianism. In experience, things bear their own specific characters."[376] Dewey believed one of the great values of a philosophy based upon experience is that it took good and evil out of the realm of the unknowable and into the domain of humans. He argued that moral judgments can be made scientifically rather than through appeals to deities or obscure texts.

The only question, then, was upon what basis should a moral judgment be made. In other words, what constitutes a *moral* success, a satisfactory resolution, to a pragmatist? To Dewey, this was always clear. Dewey was no utilitarian ethicist who

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[374] Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy*, 130.
[375] Ibid., 163.
[376] Dewey and Boydston, *The Middle Works of John Dewey, 1899-1924*, "Nature and Its Good: A Conversation" (1909).

argued that what feels good, in fact, *was* good. On the contrary, he believed that happiness was only an ethical standard if it was "rightly conceived" – meaning, if it satisfies the whole being of a person rather than just a small portion of a person's consciousness while conflicting with another part.[377] As humans are social animals, Dewey asserted that social good – the welfare of all those affected by an action – was the primary good into which one should take account when making decisions. A decision that made the most people's lives better was the only ethical one. Acting to ensure others the ability to satisfy their needs and desires (their "functions") satisfies the self, he posited.[378]

To Dewey, pragmatism was an American philosophy best suited for Americans. This was because he believed that social good was a democratic value and that the United States was the most democratic society on earth.[379] Dewey believed democracy was an ethical, even evolutionary, development – the best and fullest realization of human potential.[380] People could only be happy, he reasoned, if they were satisfying their functions. The satisfaction of functions can only occur if people are both free from restraints on their functions (tyranny) and possess the opportunity to make the best of oneself by fully realizing those functions.[381] Only in a democracy was the ability to realize those functions guaranteed by unalienable individual rights. These rights were "civil" liberties. He distinguished civil liberties from "natural" and "political" liberties by claiming that civil liberties were the rights of citizenship: a contractual agreement

[377] Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy*, 156.
[378] Ibid., 164.
[379] Ibid., 158.
[380] Ibid., 41.
[381] Ibid., 165.

between nation and citizen that could only be violated at the cost of the government's right to rule.[382]

When Dewey wrote about democracy, in the 1890s and 1900s, it was obvious to him that the United States, despite its strong democratic roots, was coming up short in crucial areas. Rather than associate democracy with laissez-faire industrial capitalism, Dewey believed them antithetical to one another. He contended that if democracy was going to live up to its potential, the political process needed to be more amenable to the equality of opportunity and the fostering of individuality and self-realization necessary for "effective freedom."[383] By World War I, Dewey saw that these measures were not forthcoming in the governance of the United States. He was convinced that the capitalist system was unable to provide a reasonable degree of employment or wages for the common people, in large part due to incredible inefficiency in the distribution of resources.[384] Dewey began to argue, in response, for the implementation of a socialist system in America. This system would involve "a federation of self-governing industries with the government acting as adjuster and arbiter…" that could ensure that prosperity was shared by all segments of the population.[385] By the time Lamont met him at Columbia, Dewey was an advocate of numerous socialist ideas, including guaranteed employment for every worker, a guaranteed minimum standard of living for every

[382] Dewey and Boydston, *The Later Works, 1925-1953*, "Liberalism and Civil Liberties" (1936).
[383] Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy*, 166.
[384] Ibid., 224.
[385] Dewey and Boydston, *The Middle Works of John Dewey, 1899-1924*, "What Are We Fighting For?" (1918), 105.

citizen, and the right of workers to control the operations of the factories in which they worked.[386]

Despite his socialist trajectory by the 1920s, however, Dewey was neither a partisan nor an ideologue. Dewey never belonged to the Socialist Party and so opposed the Marxian variety of socialism, not to mention the American Socialist Party's support of World War I, that he never took part in the short-lived American socialist movement. Unlike the Marxists, Dewey was not a determinist. He thought history was "pluralistic and novel, not dialectical."[387] Dewey was also a critic of Marx's notion of class war. It was too teleological – too reliant on a universe overseen by an absolute. Dewey, therefore, represented a path distinct from the Marxists: that of the independent socialist, motivated by preoccupation with social justice and truth, rather than power and affiliation.

While studying under Dewey, Lamont also made the crucial discovery of the work of Bertrand Russell, the most influential British philosopher of the 20th century.[388] Russell was a bit of a rogue philosopher, moving from philosophic school to school, taking what he liked and discarding the rest. Though he was not a pragmatist (Russell thought that pragmatists, in their association of truth with desirable results made truth as a concept uncomfortably subjective), his opposition to the legacies of 19th century Anglo-

[386] Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy*, 224.
[387] Marcell, *Progress and Pragmatism*, 253.
[388] Paul Arthur Schilpp, *The Philosophy of Bertrand Russell* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1971) is an overview of Russell's contributions. Ray Monk has produced a comprehensive two volume biography on Russell: see Ray Monk, *Bertrand Russell: The Spirit of Solitude, 1872-1921* (New York: Free Press, 1996); Ray Monk, *Bertrand Russell: The Ghost of Madness, 1921-1970* (New York: Free Press, 2001). The earlier, more succinct biography by Ayer is also useful: A. J Ayer, *Bertrand Russell* (New York: Viking Press, 1972).

American philosophy made him an occasional ally to pragmatists. Russell spent much of his early career exploring links between language and mathematics, ultimately resulting in the development of his analytic philosophy in the first years of the 20th century, which helped bring British philosophy back in line with empiricism and common sense after a sojourn into GWF Hegel's absolute idealism. To Russell, truth was determined by its logic. In other words, an assertion was true if its premises were true. Russell was therefore profoundly anti-metaphysical, believing that only ideas which made empirical sense were real.[389]

Russell's analytic philosophy was important to Lamont in many ways, but in large part because Russell was willing to take a stance on religion: a subject upon which Dewey nearly always hedged. Russell questioned the utility and legacy of Christianity and other major religions at the same time that Lamont was losing his own faith in God due to conclusions he was making based on pragmatism. In 1925, for instance, Russell urged the retirement of superstition in favor of scientific inquiry. In his essay, "What I Believe," Russell equated theological superstition with nationalism and called the concept of salvation an "aristocratic" and "individualistic" ideal.[390] Because salvation did not require the cultivation of a more moral society, only a more moral inner life, Russell thought it antisocial. He said religion "cannot serve for the definition of the good life."[391]

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[389] Peter A French, Theodore Edward Uehling, and Howard K Wettstein, *The Foundations of Analytic Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981); M. K Munitz, *Contemporary Analytic Philosophy* (New York, 1981); Peter Hylton, *Russell, Idealism, and the Emergence of Analytic Philosophy* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford Univ. Press, 1990) are all strong overviews of various aspects of Analytic Philosophy.
[390] Bertrand Russell and Rouben Mamoulian Collection (Library of Congress), *Why I Am Not a Christian: And Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), 75.
[391] Ibid.

To Russell, there were no shortcuts to a better world. Progress required "Intelligence, self-control, and sympathy" on a mass level.[392] While Russell did not believe in deity-mandated progress, he was optimistic for humanity. Without the hand of God, people were in control of their own destiny and free to reach as high as their abilities could take them.[393]

Two years later, Russell refined his arguments against Christianity in his influential pamphlet, *Why I Am Not a Christian.* At the time, many Christians eschewed literal interpretations of the Bible. These Christians argued that God was an internal, animating force, and that the important part of being a Christian was to live a good life (Richard Morford in Chapter Four was one of these Christians). Noting this modernist versus fundamentalist discourse in Protestant circles, Russell contends that to mean anything, Christianity must have a legible definition. Russell proposed that the criteria for a Christian should be a belief in God and immortality, and the belief that Christ is divine.[394] If we accept that definition, Russell argues that Christianity has no legs upon which to stand. Christian theology was contradictory, illogical, and ahistorical, he wrote, and the morals were questionable. Russell doubted the legitimacy of Christ as a prophet because he had believed in hell. No one who could believe in eternal punishment was in Russell's eyes humane.[395] But most damning was Russell's attack on the Church's legacy of reactionary politics and alliances with the political establishment: "Every single bit of progress in humane feeling, every improvement in criminal law, every step toward

[392] Ibid., 76.
[393] Ibid., 79.
[394] Ibid., 4.
[395] Ibid., 17.

diminution of war, every step toward better treatment of minorities… has been consistently opposed by churches."[396]

Russell had written on socialism as well. Russell's 1918 book, *Roads to Freedom: Socialism, Anarchism, and Syndicalism* was a sympathetic analysis of the various incarnations of the "urgent desire to lead men to the realization of the good."[397] In that book, Russell painted dissenters like socialists and anarchists as "rare and exceptional men who have that kind of love toward mankind at large that makes them unable to endure patiently the general mass of evil and suffering, regardless of any relation it may have to their own lives."[398] Russell wrote that these few functioned in contrast to the masses of the population, who think only of their own needs and behave within the confines of a station in life often inherited. It was a romantic view of dissent and the dissenter, an assertion that to take a minority position was in itself virtuous. A reader, and disciple, of Russell was not likely to fear either mass opprobrium or social isolation. Indeed, they would revel in it.

## Lamont and American Socialism

Before he began grad school, Lamont was a prototypical incrementalist liberal Democrat of his age, focused upon social justice but satisfied that the political machinery of the United States as it existed was sufficient to foster a more equal society. Yet, as Lamont entered his mid-20s, he had finished integrating a diverse assortment of

[396] Ibid., 20.
[397] Bertrand Russell and Paul Avrich Collection (Library of Congress), *Roads to Freedom: Socialism, Anarchism and Syndicalism* (London; New York: Allen & Unwin ; Barnes & Noble, 1966), 9.
[398] Ibid., 10.

influences into his worldview that, when added to his preexisting priorities, primed him for a more radical set of beliefs. From Dewey, he acquired a new socially-oriented definition of democracy and an acquaintance with socialism, but most of all the perspective of a pragmatist. From Bertrand Russell was added a distrust for the supernatural and toward those who believed in it, a corresponding sympathy for those who did not, and the confidence to face political martyrdom. Then there was Wells, who argued that a strong, socialist state meant peace, prosperity, and ethical evolution. When placed on the match that was the Great Depression, Lamont's formula combusted into a unique viewpoint he called "Socialist Humanism."

Lamont's journey from liberal to socialist was initially stimulated by his hiring at Columbia to teach an introductory course in philosophy in 1928, years before he even acquired his PhD. A typically gargantuan survey course, Lamont's "Introduction to Contemporary Civilization" provided him with an opportunity to read a wide range of material outside the purview of English literature and philosophy, allowing him to see the "interlinking" of "history and analysis of politics, economics, philosophy and science."[399] While preparations for his course prepared him for a more critical appraisal of American democracy, that appraisal itself was ignited by the Great Depression, beginning in 1929. The Great Depression made Lamont skeptical of the prospects of capitalism. He saw that America and Europe were "continually… in the midst of or on the edge of economic crisis."[400] By the time the decade turned, Lamont had speedily transformed into a

[399] Lamont, *Yes to Life*, 33.
[400] Corliss Lamont, *You Might like Socialism; a Way of Life for Modern Man.* (New York: Modern age Books, 1939), 56.

socialist. His combination of influences, however, made his beliefs of a nature with little precedent in American society.

One of the cornerstones of Lamont's belief system was John Dewey's pragmatism. Lamont became a Deweyian pragmatist in college, though he only discussed Dewey's philosophy in depth in his 1949 work, *The Philosophy of Humanism.* "In my opinion," Lamont wrote, "Dewey is the twentieth-century philosopher who so far has best understood modern science and scientific method and who most cogently developed their meaning for philosophy and culture."[401] Lamont identified with Dewey's rejection of dualism, which "implies a world-view in which Nature is everything, in which there is no supernatural, and in which human beings are an integral part of Nature and not separated from it by any sharp cleavage or discontinuity."[402] Lamont agreed that empirically-reasoned verifiability was the route to truth. "…a meaning or idea is to be judged true if, in acting upon it, we find that it accomplishes, in terms of concrete consequences, what it *purports* to accomplish; if the potential consequences claimed on its behalf actually take place and are verifiable," he wrote.[403] He argued that pragmatism was not just a philosophy but a door to employing scientific methodology in all facets of life. Lamont wrote, "This criterion of truth by which a theory or idea is pronounced correct according to whether it succeeds or fails in human verification and action is all-inclusive. It holds with equal relevance in the realm of physical science, of social science, of purely

[401] Corliss Lamont and Half-Moon Foundation, *The Philosophy of Humanism* (New York: Continuum, 1990), 40.
[402] Ibid., 24.
[403] Ibid., 240–41.

personal self-interest, of military tactics, of sports or indeed of any branch whatever of human investigation or activity."[404]

The most thorough explication of Lamont's personal values, as he refined them in the late 1920s and early 1930s, is in his 1938 book, *You Might Like Socialism.* In this book, he first advances "socialist humanism." Lamont intended this philosophy to provide Dewey's pragmatism with a strong intellectual heritage linking it to an impossibly broad and ancient agnostic tradition that included Aristotle, Hobbes, Spinoza, and Marx alike; to facilitate pragmatism's association with other ideas with which Dewey had never incorporated but were congruent with it; and to create punchier, more inclusive, and more contemporary branding. Lamont's interest in combining his influences is strongly evident in socialist humanism. In particular, he was combining the wide-ranging applicability of pragmatism with the anti-religious tendencies of Russell. But Lamont's ambitious Wellsian techno-utopianism was present as well. Lamont offered a comprehensive description of the ideal society he wanted to see come to life. This society would be based on the notions of a prioritization of the social good, the implementation of democracy "in its broadest sense," and wholesale socialist restructuring.[405]

Following Dewey's lead, Lamont asserted that pragmatic philosophies like socialist humanism were both moral and social. "The emphasis on Socialist Humanism," he wrote, was on the creation of a happier society. "It stands for the full-hearted

[404] Ibid., 241.
[405] Ibid., 257–58.

enjoyment and affirmation of life, for a forward-looking and socially-minded attitude in relation to the problems of society, for the co-operative endeavor of liberated individuals toward making human existence in this world attain those noble possibilities which have been the dream of every great prophet and statesman from Jesus and Plato to Lincoln and Lenin," he wrote.[406] A happier society would be possible, in Lamont's reckoning, if decision-making was based upon prioritizing the equality of opportunity of all citizens and furthering their interests. He wrote, "The inclusive philosophy of Socialist Humanism has as its supreme ethical aim the welfare and progress on this earth of all mankind, irrespective of race or nationality, religion or occupation, age or sex."[407] He argued that democracy was the only system of government which promoted the social good and hence was the only system capable of facilitating Socialist Humanism. Lamont ruled that democracy fostered an attitude "best expressed as a general one of well-wishing and friendliness toward all humanity and of faith in the ultimate sense of the common man to make reasonable decisions in the adventure of self-government."[408]

Lamont embedded a Deweyian critique of capitalism into the fabric of socialist humanism as well. He asserted that, should it proceed unchecked, capitalism could threaten the very practice of democracy in the United States. Lamont argued against capitalism on pragmatic grounds: on the basis that it was not proving a solution to the problems of the day. "The riots and revolutions, the brutal violations of civil liberty and ordinary humanity, which keep taking place all over the capitalist world are… directly or

[406] Ibid., 258.
[407] Ibid., 187.
[408] Ibid.

indirectly due to the class struggle inherent in the capitalist system," he wrote, because "the ruling class constantly tries to suppress the efforts of the proletariat and the other exploited sections of the people to obtain economic justice…"[409] Due to the oppressive measures of proponents of capitalism, Lamont argued, "None but those who make their observations in the manner of the familiar ostrich can continue to think that Capitalism and democracy are synonymous."[410]

Capitalism was primarily broken, Lamont thought, because it so completely perpetuated inequality in all facets of society. Not only was capitalism incapable of guaranteeing a minimum standard of living for American citizens, it also seemed to facilitate and even encourage the disenfranchisement of minority populations. Lamont, indeed, thought discrimination against black Americans was the most damning example of capitalism's failures: "The Negro minority, originally introduced into America on account of the lust for profits of planters and slave traders, has remained a subject class economically from the beginning; and has therefore naturally been unable to establish for itself political, cultural or racial democracy."[411]

If capitalism was the enemy of democracy, Lamont agreed with Dewey that socialism could be its ally. "Socialism," Lamont asserted, "not only provides the aim of building a more perfect society and the economic and political programs whereby this can be attained, but rounds out its synthesis by setting forth a carefully considered and consistent set of philosophical principles which are immensely superior to the confused

[409] Ibid., 225.
[410] Ibid.
[411] Ibid., 188.

medley of beliefs which Capitalism presents in this same realm."[412] Lamont emphasized socialism's capacity to guarantee employment to solve the economic problems and its advocating of political equality as a means of addressing the philosophical problems. Both would lead to the "reasonable level of economic security and well-being" he and Dewey wanted all citizens to have.[413] As such, Lamont believed that, in the long term, socialism was the best means of ensuring American democracy.

In the short term, however, Lamont viewed the paramount goal to be the shielding of America from the evils of capitalism through the protection and enshrinement of civil liberties. This was because, again, like Dewey, he believed that civil liberties facilitated the endurance of the individual against the tyranny of the state. He wrote, "It seems to me that sincere conservatives as well as liberals and radicals ought to be able to unite on the wisdom and necessity of preserving intact the guarantees on civil liberties which our forefathers wrote into the Constitution. Freedom of speech and opinion is something that may well be called an eternal principle of mature civilization. It will be an evil day if the people of the United States are ever forced to surrender the principle."[414] Lamont in particular held dear the freedoms of expression guaranteed in the Bill of Rights, believing them to serve an essential pragmatic service. "The free competition of ideas in the market place of public opinion is the best guarantee that truth and right will in the long run prevail," he wrote.[415] Because one never knows what set of experiences might lead an

[412] Ibid., 257.
[413] Ibid.
[414] Ibid., 215.
[415] Ibid., 210.

essential idea to surface, "any system of civil liberties worthy of the name means… civil liberties for *everyone,* without exception…"[416]

Lamont followed Dewey, too, in his independence from political parties. Lamont was an independent socialist for the entirety of his life. He did not belong to a political party or offer his support to one. While Lamont considered himself "a radical" in the late 1920s and 1930s, he made clear that he was "not an orthodox Socialist, an orthodox communist or an orthodox anything else... I have never been an enrolled member of any political party either conservative or radical."[417] Such a self-characterization seems to have come naturally for those in the pragmatism camp, probably because political parties encourage an adherence toward ideology of their members. Like Dewey, Lamont distrusted ideology because it placed one's loyalty in ideas rather than in the solving of problems. While he had a favorable appraisal of the Communists and Socialists during the Great Depression, he refused to join either party. "Being an independent has certain advantages and certain disadvantages, but anyway that is what I am," he wrote, as if there had never really been a choice in the matter.[418]

Due to his affinity for Bertrand Russell's writings on secularism, Lamont's socialism had a hard atheistic edge. Instead of worshipping a higher power, Lamont exalted in the potential of humanity for universal happiness. He wrote, "Socialist Humanism maintains a world-view which rules out all forms of the supernatural and looks upon Man as a fully natural part and product of the Nature that is his home."[419]

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[416] Ibid.
[417] Ibid., 19.
[418] Ibid.
[419] Ibid., 258.

Lamont found it important to be open about one's atheism during the Great Depression, as he felt that belief in a higher power was not only mistaken, but also intimately connected to the horrors of capitalism. "There can be no doubt that *organized* religion, whether in its Christian or other forms, has on the whole strongly supported the capitalist system and its characteristic institutions," Lamont asserted.[420] This was, he wrote, particularly true in the case of Christianity. "…the Christian hierarchy in general has maintained a conservative, if not reactionary, position in social and economic affairs and has tended to reflect the dominant capitalist attitudes of the day."[421] Lamont argued that religion, especially Christianity, was the enemy of human progress. If there was to be a breakthrough that improved the lives of humans, it would have to originate from a human, not a supernatural, source.

In his explication of what a finished socialist humanist society would look like, the influence of Wells was central. Lamont concluded that a techno-utopian order would be the catalyst for human progress in the absence of the divine. In *You Might Like Socialism,* he argued that socialism would fix the dire economic straits into which capitalism had shoved America. Lamont wrote, "Suppose the American people woke up some fine morning and read in the newspapers that every factory and farm in the country was operating at full blast, that all the millions of unemployed had been able to find jobs, that sweeping increases in wages would shortly go into effect and that for the first time in years the federal, state, and municipal governments saw the sure prospect of balancing

[420] Ibid., 265.
[421] Ibid.

their budgets."[422] To Lamont, this was no pipedream but rather the true potential of socialism in the United States.

The notion that socialism would repair America was standard independent socialist rhetoric in 1938: Upton Sinclair said very similar things in his End Poverty in California campaign of 1934. But Lamont did not stop at promises to end the Depression. In addition to fixing the economy, he posited that socialism would bring enormous wealth to all American citizens, "for it is precisely the destiny of Socialism to bring to the whole community those felicities of living that up to now only a small minority have had the chance to enjoy."[423] "The almost immediate outcome" would be a "$5,000 income for every American family…," he wrote, over two times the actual family income in 1938.[424] He claimed with fervent conviction, "*Socialism means wealth,* fabulous wealth, and eventually tenfold, yes a hundredfold, more wealth than capitalism has ever been able to bring mankind."[425] In the creation of this wealth, Lamont reasoned that the centralization of economic activities by the state was key. Once the economy was restructured efficiently, to enable "the public authorities to distribute and re-distribute the nation's capital resources according to the needs of the entire economy," "socialist planning" would ensure "a balanced and even distribution of capital resources, that is, social savings, in the directions most useful and important."[426] Like Wells, Lamont believed that centralization served another purpose in that it would keep the economy flexible.

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[422] Ibid., 61.
[423] Ibid., 60.
[424] Per the Bureau of Labor's "Inflation Calculator," Lamont's envisioned family income under socialism would amount to approximately $84,000 in 2015 funds. http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm.
[425] Lamont, *You Might like Socialism; a Way of Life for Modern Man.*, 62.
[426] Ibid., 70.

"Intelligent flexibility," he wrote, was "a natural and fundamental principle… in the dynamic and ever-changing society of today; the notion that Socialist planning implies some sort of strait-jacket thrown over the life of the people is very wide of the mark."[427]

Lamont wrote that a government really for and of the people would have drastically different, even *moral* priorities. Lamont claimed it was, for instance, "inconceivable for socialized capital to go into the production of things clearly harmful to health and well-being – such as noxious drugs, patent medicines and deleterious foodstuffs…" despite the public's "unintelligent and perverse demand" for such things.[428] Nor, he stated, would "vast quantities of capital" be devoted "into the building of palatial homes, yachts and other super-luxuries for a small class of the economically privileged while millions of families lived in houses beneath even a minimum standard of decency."[429] Instead, that production would be directed toward goods that could benefit the whole community.

It was only after the sharing of prosperity and perpetuation of an ethical economy that the real work could begin, however: the reorientation of society itself. Lamont opined that, as a result of a world without want, society would undergo a shift resulting in the "conscious, purposeful, non-automatic, unceasing function of the great community mind on behalf of the common good."[430] Under "unplanned capitalism," "the countless splendid individual intelligences and abilities of mankind keep thwarting one another" in

[427] Ibid., 84.
[428] Ibid., 70.
[429] Ibid.
[430] Ibid., 96.

"chaotic anarchy."[431] With "socialism's unlimited abundance," however, the United States could reach a new level of enlightenment. Lamont wrote, "A Socialist republic in the United States will not only preserve our democratic form of government, but will vastly enlarge our civil and political liberties by enforcing all constitutional guarantees in every corner of the land… Religious and racial minorities will enjoy full political and social rights. Women will see the dawn of a new day for their sex."[432] Lamont reasoned that, fully liberated, Americans could finally embrace science, free from the constraints of the imposed ignorance of poverty and capitalist-supporting supernaturalism. "At last," he wrote, "democracy will possess the proper intellectual bases."[433] Socialism, then, especially if guided by "Humanism," would provide equality, wealth, and moral and intellectual improvement.

But even a utopian United States was not the end of Lamont's vision. Lamont asserted that the adoption of socialism by the United States would be the beginning of a world socialist order the likes of which Wells had imagined in *A Modern Utopia* and other stories. "Socialist planning can never be considered complete," he insisted, "until, with the USA and all other nations closely co-operating, it goes into effect on an international scale as the basic foundation of that great and peaceful society which, long an ideal in the minds of statesmen, has become an acute necessity for our age."[434] Lamont saw the socialist states of the world merging into one nation, a united socialist earth. This Pax Socialista would enact worldwide plans that would "immeasurably raise the living

[431] Ibid.
[432] Ibid., 227.
[433] Ibid.
[434] Ibid., 96.

standards of all humanity and sweep unemployment, depression and war off the face of the globe."[435] It would be the world the League of Nations had hinted at but had not come close to delivering. "Looking very far into the future," Lamont wrote, "[Socialist Humanism] refuses to accept that doom for man and his earth predicted by both Christian prophets and modern astronomers. It has faith that the advance of science and of social-economic planning on an international scale – bringing into being a sort of *world* mind which is the nearest thing to divine omniscience that Humanism can imagine as existing – will result in such further conquests of Nature that human life and culture will be indefinitely and perhaps immortally prolonged on this planet."[436]

Unfortunately, the stunning utopia of Lamont's dreams would, he admitted, take quite some time to enact. In his book, Lamont sketched a Wellsian utopian scenario in which a socialist government comes to power democratically in America in 1952 and enacts its First Five Year Plan in January of 1953, fifteen years after his writing. But he argued that the transition could take much longer than that and probably would. "I believe that the great radical opportunity… will come, not necessarily during the next big depression, which American Capitalism is probably strong enough and rich enough to pull through, but in the depression following that."[437] At that point, he reasoned, "an alert and radicalized Farmer-Labor Party, Progressive Party, revamped Democratic Party, or whatever it may be called," could seize on the imagination of the electorate and take power on a socialist platform.[438] Even when the socialists did take power, which could

[435] Ibid., 97.
[436] Ibid., 260.
[437] Ibid., 300.
[438] Ibid.

take "at least another hundred years," there would be growing pains and surprises. Lamont thought socialist America would therefore probably not look as current radicals imagined. "Those radicals who insist that a Socialist society is a failure unless it conforms to every last detail of some pre-ordained picture, unless every last hangover from the past is eliminated and every rough edge planed smooth, will continue to be deeply disillusioned," Lamont cautioned.[439] A socialist society, rather, "must always give to the people big and creative and inspiring tasks to perform and must include also the hope of transcending itself."[440]

Lamont's melding of techno-utopianism and pragmatism differentiated him from other pragmatists of his day. There were two other prominent socialist pragmatists in the 1930s: Max Eastman and Sidney Hook. Max Eastman was a writer in the Harlem Renaissance, the radical editor of *The Masses* and *The Liberator,* a former PhD student of John Dewey, and an acquaintance of Lamont's in New York. Eastman and Lamont agreed on a few matters of socialism. Both were motivated by a desire to see full equality.[441] Both, too, hoped to see socialism thrive on an international scale.[442] But there was nothing of Lamont's faith in gradual, long-term transformation in Eastman. Lamont argued socialism would evolve almost naturally in a vague process of reform, but Eastman believed in the efficacy of revolution, of direct action: the need for one party to actively seize control of the reins of power from another.[443] Further, Eastman was a class

[439] Ibid.
[440] Ibid., 301.
[441] William L O'Neill, *The Last Romantic: A Life of Max Eastman* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 50.
[442] Ibid., 59.
[443] Ibid., 47.

warrior, whereas class was something that Lamont disregarded almost entirely.[444] Lamont felt that the future socialist state would be so prosperous that class consciousness was not essential. Everyone would be successful, he reasoned, so there was no need to topple anybody. Eastman wanted a state dedicated to the well-being of workers. Lamont wanted to see the well-being of *everyone* and thought that it was possible to do so.

Sidney Hook, meanwhile, was one of Dewey's students and a friend of Lamont at Columbia (Hook was a few years ahead of him). In the 1930s, Hook was a young star in the philosophy field and an advocate of Marxism. While Hook and Eastman certainly had their differences, their ideas about socialism and pragmatism were more alike than different.[445] Hook believed that Marxism and pragmatism were compatible, as both were revolutionary philosophies of social action.[446] Hook, too, was firmly attached to the notion of a "dictatorship of the proletariat" (which he said was equivalent to a "workers' democracy").[447] He thought that a revolutionary upending of society to the benefit of the workers was a fulfillment of pragmatism's potential to realign the world according to a more moral set of rules. Again, Lamont did not believe that a revolution was necessary or desirable, as progress would be the result of an evolutionary process of reform. Lamont thought efficiency and planning could fix society's problems and that they, not a messy revolution, were the pragmatic means of creating change. Hook, however, scoffed at

[444] Ibid., 46.
[445] Both Phelps and O'Neill discuss the differences and disputes between Hook and Eastman, with opposite conclusions as to who was in the right. Christopher Phelps, *Young Sidney Hook: Marxist and Pragmatist* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997); O'Neill, *The Last Romantic*.
[446] Phelps, *Young Sidney Hook*, 55.
[447] Ibid., 116–17.

Americans who believed that social troubles could be solved if "approached in a purely scientific way without class bias or distorting passion."[448]

At the same time, Lamont's study under Dewey differentiated him from other techno-utopians as well. Howard Segal has argued that the techno-utopians were a small group of mostly white Protestant men who envisioned a utopian United States that "technological progress would eventually make real."[449] In the novels written by these techno-utopians in the early 20th century, the narratives usually had America finding salvation in an efficiency-oriented society with a strong sense of community.[450] On these general principles, they and Lamont were on the same page. But Lamont was too attached to Dewey's notion of democracy and civil liberties to embrace the rather authoritarian efficiency cult often espoused by other techno-utopians. One techno-utopian writer, Harold Loeb, wrote, "Administration, in a technocracy has to do with material factors which are subject to measurement. Therefore, popular voting can be largely dispensed with. It is stupid deciding an issue by vote or opinion when a yardstick can be used."[451] This left little room for Lamont's "market place of ideas." Many techno-utopians also posited that citizens of utopia would display rigid conformity, "in dress, in length of hair, in food, and in not smoking and drinking."[452] Lamont knew the value of dissent far too well, and was far too independent himself, to support such an austere vision.

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[448] Ibid., 123.
[449] Howard P Segal, *Technological Utopianism in American Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 1. For a discussion of technological utopianism in socialist nations, see Paul R Josephson, *Would Trotsky Wear a Bluetooth? Technological Utopianism under Socialism, 1917-1989* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).
[450] Segal, *Technological Utopianism in American Culture*, 28.
[451] Ibid., 30.
[452] Ibid., 31.

Techno-utopians were also for the most part ahistorical. Their utopias were thought to be beyond history, making change itself obsolete. As George Morison wrote in *The New Epoch*, "The Lessons of history must be studied as showing the mistakes of the past, not as giving precedents to be follow now."[453] Lamont advocated pragmatism precisely because it could lead to a society that was constantly changing and constantly improving based on experiments and evidence. Moreover, most techno-utopians had profound confidence in the inevitability of their vision of utopia. Lamont's reading of Dewey and opposition to supernaturalism in all its forms made him realize that nothing was inevitable. His desired outcome for society rested on innumerable decisions made by very fallible human beings. Lamont's conception of his utopian vision as precarious would become very important in the decisions he made in the late 1930s.

## Lamont and American-Soviet Friendship

### Making Sense of the Soviet Union

When Corliss Lamont received his PhD in philosophy in 1932, he had the resources and credentials to do whatever he wished. Provided a generous stipend by his parents, he did not need to engage in the work of making a living and indeed chose not to: Lamont resigned his teaching post at Columbia after graduation. With the time he gained from no longer having to write a dissertation, lecture, and fill out university paperwork, Lamont dedicated himself to becoming a public intellectual. Given his family background, his academic record, and his own gregarious nature, organizations were

[453] Ibid., 23.

more than happy to have him. His most prestigious post was a membership on the Board of Directors of the ACLU, where he helped decide which cases the organization supported over a weekly lunch. He also served on the Advisory Council of the Friends of the Columbia Libraries, helping to secure the donations of what would become a world-class collection of manuscripts and personal papers. He also transformed his dissertation into a nationally published work, *The Illusion of Immortality* (1935). He wrote articles, made comments to newspapers, and was a consistent presence in the social pages. Lamont later summed up the early 1930s, in fact, as a time when he was stretched thin. "I always worked hard, in fact too hard because I let myself become involved in so many activities and organizations," he wrote.[454]

Opportunities abounded because the early 1930s were the salad days of the public intellectual. Even in the Depression, people read newspapers, magazines, and journals in abundance and it was not unusual to hear intellectual and political debate on radio programs, even in prime time. Further, the integration of planning into the economy, very much in Lamont's wheelhouse by 1932, was a hot topic, providing varying degrees of fame to intellectuals as diverse as Stuart Chase, George Soule, Gardiner Means, and Rexford Tugwell. Lamont was poised to make an impression from this stage, possessing both the brains and energy to enjoy a successful and prestigious career. Yet, beginning in 1934, he gave it all away by shifting gears and becoming a more or less full-time advocate of one of the least popular causes in United States history: friendship with the Soviet Union. Lamont published half a dozen articles about the promise of Soviet

[454] Lamont, *Yes to Life*, 35.

institutions through the rest of the decade, and even became the chairman of FSU in 1933. At a time when Lamont's fellow pragmatists were jumping ship from the notion that the USSR was a paragon of progress and democracy, Lamont was setting fire to the life boats.

There are no records indicating significant interest on Lamont's part in Russia during his youth, whether during the imperial period or the Bolshevik Revolution. Yet by the early 1930s, Lamont was paying attention. This was in large measure because of the positive assessments of his influences and colleagues, many of whom had traveled to the USSR and written on it during the preceding decade. The first time Lamont read about the Soviet Union was probably in the work of John Reed.[455] A veritable patron saint of the radical Left of the interwar era, Reed was a journalist who saw the Russian Revolution first hand and quickly took to the Bolshevik cause with enthusiasm. Reed's *Ten Days That Changed the World* depicted the Russian Revolution as "one of the great events of human history," and a "marvelous" adventure.[456] Reed told of a revolution from below, with masses of peasants, workers, and soldiers demanding that the Bolsheviks take charge of the nation. These masses fought reactionary propertied classes who "preferred the Germans to the Revolution."[457] Reed argued that the Western media favored those propertied classes and therefore filled Western newspapers with lies and

[455] There are numerous biographies of John Reed available, from the vintage to the contemporary. See: Granville Hicks and John Stuart, *John Reed; the Making of a Revolutionary,* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1936); Lincoln Steffens, *John Reed: Under the Kremlin* (Chicago: Printed by Will Ransom for the Walden Book Shop, 1922); Robert A Rosenstone, *Romantic Revolutionary: A Biography of John Reed* (New York: Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1975).
[456] John Reed, *Ten Days That Shook the World* (Waiheke Island: Floating Press, 2009), 7–8.
[457] Ibid., 19.

myths about the new Soviet state. Opponents of capitalism and friends of democracy, he suggested, should line up behind the Bolsheviks.

HG Wells, meanwhile, gave the USSR a techno-utopian's seal of approval. He saw enormous promise in the USSR, though he did not care for communism, which he found needlessly aggressive and doctrinaire.[458] More than for their ideology, Wells appreciated the Bolsheviks for their determination to make a better society. "While all the rest of Russia was either apathetic like the peasantry or garrulously at sixes and sevens or given over to violence or fear, the Communists believed and were prepared to act," he wrote.[459] Among such despair and deprivation, Wells admired Lenin for taking the initiative to rule the wrecked country in a manner that had the interests of the people at heart. He also appreciated the novelty of the Russian approach. "Lenin," Wells argues, "has recently stripped off the last pretense that the Russian revolution is anything more than the inauguration of an age of limitless experiment."[460]

In particular, Wells praised the communist government for ending chaos through planning and centralization. "It restored order – after a frightful lot of shooting – in the great towns. For a time, everybody found carrying arms without authority was shot. He action was clumsy and bloody but effective."[461] In a nation full of want and ignorance, Wells was impressed by the sheer vision involved in Lenin's schemes. If the nation remained in Lenin's hands, Wells thought, the communists could lay the groundwork to

[458] Wells called *Das Kapital*, "a cadence of wearisome volume about such phantom unrealities as the bourgeoisie and the proletariat," and "a monument of pretentious pedantry." H. G Wells, *Russia in the Shadows*, (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1921), 81.
[459] Ibid., 76.
[460] Ibid., 157.
[461] Ibid., 77.

"achieve great reconstructions," and indeed, "may succeed in establishing a new social order in Russia of a civilized type with which the rest of the world will be able to deal."[462] As overwhelming as Wells found the problems confronting the Soviet Union, he was impressed by how Lenin *did not* seem to find them intimidating. Wells wrote, "In him I realized that Communism could after all, in spite of Marx, be enormously creative… He at least has a vision of a world changed over and planned and built afresh."[463]

Bertrand Russell also influenced Lamont's attitude of optimism toward the Soviet Union, through his 1920 book *Bolshevism: Practice and Theory.* On a surface level, Russell's book is a devastating critique of the infant Soviet system. Russell had just returned from a visit to the Soviet Union and was disappointed at the intellectually lazy deification of Marx and Engels' work that he thought made Marxism into a substitute religion there. Russell claimed to have been looking for a state that used scientific inquiry to solve matters of policy rather than appeals to yet another sacred text. There is a sense that he felt cheated.[464] Further, he objected to the sectarianism that led to former Soviet allies becoming seen as apostates (as had only just begun during Russell's trip) and an overemphasis in the Soviet Union on egalitarianism at the expense of civil liberties. The fanaticism of the Bolshevik leaders, especially Lenin, disturbed Russell. "I went to Russia a Communist," he writes, "but contact with those who have no doubts has intensified a thousand fold my own doubts, not as to communism itself, but as to the

[462] Ibid., 174.
[463] Ibid., 161–62.
[464] Bertrand Russell, *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964), 6.

wisdom of holding a creed so firmly that for its sake men are willing to inflict widespread misery."[465] His was the first book published by a leftist personality critical of the Soviet Union.[466]

Russell gave the Soviets credit for a coherent philosophy but found its specifics problematic. The idea that "we act as we do because natural laws control us," as outlined in Soviet theory, meant to Russell that the Soviets had eliminated ethics as a concern and constraint.[467] Morality and power became conceptually synonymous. Russell also saw that Soviet communism would almost inevitably lead to a government legitimized only by its ability to compel its citizens to do as it wished through violence (interestingly, he had said the same about pragmatism). Because individual responsibility was diminished in the Soviet Union in favor of a focus on classes and occupations, Russell thought that citizens would have little motivation to work harder than the barest levels required to retain employment. Anything more would necessitate coercion by the state.[468] Russell found this future of a terror-based society profoundly depressing.

Despite these objections, however, Russell remained a supporter of, if not a believer in, the Soviet project during its initial years. There were things Western society could learn from the Bolsheviks, Russell maintained.[469] Regardless of their failings, the communists in the USSR were attempting to drive human progress beyond the capitalist

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[465] Ibid., 41. We must wonder what Lamont could have become had he agreed a bit more with Russell and a bit less with John Reed.
[466] Nicholas Griffin, *The Cambridge Companion to Bertrand Russell* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 8.
[467] Bertrand Russell and Charles R Pigden, *Russell on Ethics: Selections from the Writings of Bertrand Russell* (London; New York: Routledge, 1999), 197.
[468] Ibid., 202.
[469] Russell, *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism*, 5.

system and they must be allowed to continue. Russell was somewhat pessimistic -- he thought the Russians would have to orient themselves away from the "rough and dangerous" "pioneer method" of communism in which Lenin and Trotsky engaged – but he was certain that the Soviet experiment was a game still worth the candle.

Lamont's fellow pragmatists weighed in on the Soviet Union, as well. John Dewey, interested in the Soviet Union because of reports of a radically reformed educational system, traveled there in 1928 and wrote a series of *New Republic* essays about the experience. The most profound lesson Dewey took back from the Soviet Union was that communism, supposedly the impetus of the Bolshevik Revolution, was less important than where the energy unleashed by the Revolution would take the Russian people in he future. Indeed, Dewey thought that communism was ineptly and inconsistently applied in Russia. Yet, one could not deny that a change in perspective and values had taken place. "I am still at a loss in trying to formulate the exact importance of the communistic formulae and the Bolshevist ideals in the present life of the country; but I am inclined to think that not only the present state of communism (that of non-existence in the literal sense), but even its future is of less account than is the fact of this achieved revolution of heart and mind, this liberation of a people to consciousness of themselves as a determining power in the shaping of their ultimate fate," Dewey wrote.[470]

Dewey was describing the Soviet Union as a pragmatic embodiment, progressing not according to a staid system but rather according to the needs and wishes of its people.

[470] John Dewey and William W Brickman, *Impressions of Soviet Russia and the Revolutionary World, Mexico, China, Turkey, 1929.* ([New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1964), 7–8.

And *that* task, of creating a new kind of civilization that could change the world, was proceeding swimmingly. As Dewey wrote, "I can hardly do better than record the impression, as overwhelming as it was unexpected, that the outstanding fact in Russia is a revolution, involving a release of human powers on such unprecedented scale that it is of incalculable significance not only for that country, but for the world."[471] What he found especially exciting was that, because the Soviet Union would change based on real rather than theoretical situations, no one could say what shape a mature USSR would take. "This future society will undoubtedly be highly unlike the regime characteristic of the western world of private capital and individual profit," he enthused, "but I think the chances are that it will be equally unlike the society which orthodox Marxian formulae call for."[472]

In light of his evaluation, Dewey, like Reed, was aghast at the extent of distortion practiced by the Western media in its reporting on Russia. "If I learned nothing else, I learned to be immensely suspicious of all generalized views about Russia," he wrote.[473] The state simply progressed so fast that reports of months or years ago were no longer accurate, even "antiquarian."[474] Rather than starving in the streets, Dewey asserted that the Russians were doing just fine now: "although fairly long lines are seen waiting at some shops… there are no marked signs of distress; the people are well nourished; theaters, restaurants, parks and places of amusement are thronged."[475] He also denied that

[471] Ibid., 15.
[472] Ibid., 58.
[473] Ibid., 22.
[474] Ibid.
[475] Ibid., 12.

the tours conducted by Soviet officials for tourists involved any deception. Dewey argued that no state as busy as the USSR could be bothered with fabricating Potemkin Villages for a few hundred tourists. "The places and institutions that were 'shown' us…," he claimed, "were show places in the sense that they were well worthy of being shown."[476]

Sidney Hook had a similar appraisal of the condition and potential of the USSR. Hook, a Marxist by the late 1920s, spent an academic year in Moscow in 1929. Fed up with the chaotic state of capitalism in the 1920s and "its mad scramble for profit and place," and convinced that capitalist competition had caused World War I, Hook thought the Soviet system might both serve as a bulwark against the reactionaries who were already gathering strength in Europe and eliminate the ups and downs of the market.[477] "This conviction had been nurtured and strengthened by the Soviet Union's peace policy, its enlightened social legislation all along the line, and despite its orthodoxy, which I never shared, its declared educational theory and practice," he wrote.[478] Hook saw nothing in the year he was in Russia that changed his opinion, rather quite the contrary. He noted that he had been free to see what he wished in the Soviet Union. His overall impression was one of a nation in relative prosperity compared to the misery in some of the Western democracies of the period. His positive assessment of the Soviet Union was surely a motivation in his early work, in which Hook tried to link pragmatism to Marxism.

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[476] Ibid., 25–26.
[477] Sidney Hook, *Out of Step: An Unquiet Life in the 20th Century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 123–124.
[478] Ibid., 123.

Among the pragmatists, then, there was something of a consensus on the promise of the Soviet Union. Only Max Eastman was a dissenting voice. Initially, Eastman was a committed supporter of the Bolsheviks after the Revolution. It was his decision to publish the original articles that became Reed's *Ten Days that Shook the World* and he went to the Soviet Union in 1922, as soon as it was feasible for a tourist to do so. Yet, Eastman had few positive impressions upon his return. In 1925, he wrote *Since Lenin Died,* a searing indictment of the corruption and high-stakes infighting which dominated the Soviet leadership after Lenin's death in 1924. This was in large part driven by Eastman's devotion to Leon Trotsky, the fiery and brilliant Bolshevik leader who had been Lenin's heir apparent but who faced unexpectedly fierce opposition from Nikolai Bukharin and Josef Stalin in his attempt to lead the USSR. As Eastman wrote, "A group of leaders against whose domination Lenin warned the party, having disguised their own thirst of power privately under the legend that Trotsky is a Bonaparte, and having disguised this private legend publicly under the legend that he is the leader of a 'deviation to the Right,' and having thus built up an ideology exactly twice removed from the simple truth, have succeeded in deceiving… or silencing… all those strong Communists who might oppose them."[479]

To Eastman, who had assumed that the Bolsheviks were better than such behavior, the factionalism of the mid-1920s was disillusioning. To him, no amount of potential progress could make up for a process that was flawed on so fundamental a level. "…they have thrown to the winds that intellectual honesty before the proletariat which

[479] Max Eastman, *Since Lenin Died* (London: Labour Pub. Co., 1925).

was the essence of Lenin's character and teaching," he wrote, which had been "a main source of the unqualified authority of the Russian Communist Party in the international movement of labour."[480] Eastman believed this indicated that the Bolsheviks were not a pragmatic regime. "In place of the flexible and concrete realistic thinking of Lenin… [his successors have provided] a bigoted religious devotion to a supposed abstract canon of Leninism," Eastman argued.[481] He had no confidence that such a system could produce anything positive.

The message Lamont took away from the words of his friends and influences was that the Soviet Union was a facilitator of progress for the human race. Its commitment to socialism and overthrowing of an archaic, repressive tsarist order could serve, they argued, as an example for how society could adapt to the conditions of the twentieth century. It was important that nearly all of these writers asserted the existence of serious flaws in the Soviet approach and even more so in their execution but subordinated those failings to the potential embodied in the Soviet project.

Lamont became curious about the Soviet Union later than all of these authors, in part because his own interest was to a partial extent due to their own. In 1932, intrigued by the reports he had read about the success of Stalin's First Five Year Plan, Lamont and his wife Margaret, herself a member and officer of the American Socialist Party in New York, went to the Soviet Union for the first time. It was a two-month tour that took the Lamonts through Leningrad, Moscow, and down the Volga River through Kazan,

[480] Ibid.
[481] Ibid.

Samara, Saratov, Stalingrad, Rostov, and into the Black Sea. Many of his intellectual influences revealed the Soviet Union to be a fascinating laboratory for socialist practice. Lamont wanted to see how the Russians were proceeding and determine their prospects. He also wanted to figure out for himself which assertions in the American press were accurate and which were anti-Soviet propaganda.[482]

The Soviet Union was in the American newspapers a great deal in 1932. Having marginalized his opponents -- first Trotsky, then Bukharin -- Stalin embarked his nation on the First Five Year Plan in 1928. At its end, he announced dramatic gains in industrial and agricultural output. The Soviets accomplished this progress, Stalin claimed, through the institution of planning-based experiments such as the *kolkhoz* (collective farm) and the setting of production quotas.[483] Stalin and the Central Committee also introduced enormous cultural changes and began to boast about the constructing of a New Soviet Man.[484] In this new Soviet Union – a very different world than that encountered by Wells, Russell, and Reed – Lamont hoped to find evidence of progress beyond what his mentors had found.

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[482] Corliss Lamont and Margaret Lamont, *Russia Day by Day; a Travel Diary*, (New York: Covici, Friede, 1933).

[483] As it turned out, the First Five Year Plan was a rather spectacular failure in the short-run, although it paved the way for eventual Soviet superpower status in the long term. For more on the First Five Year Plan and its fate, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Robert C Tucker, *Stalin in Power: The Revolution from Above, 1928-1941* (New York: Norton, 1990).

[484] The Soviet Cultural Revolution, which is usually bracketed by the years 1928 and 1933, was identified by Sheila Fitzpatrick, who also wrote the essential works on the subject. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992); Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921-1934* (Cambridge, Eng.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Sheila Fitzpatrick et al., *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928-1931* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978). Fitzpatrick's dissertation turned first monograph discussed early Soviet cultural policy under Lunacharsky. See: Sheila Fitzpatrick et al., *The Commissariat of Enlightenment* (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1970).

Like Russell and Wells before him, Lamont found many problems in the Soviet Union upon arrival. Unlike them, his complaints were bourgeois, not philosophical. He found, for instance, the number of beggars in Leningrad distasteful.[485] Buildings in the cities were crumbling and did not appear to be in any state of repair by the Soviet authorities. Lamont was most worried by the peasants themselves, who were perhaps too "backward and ignorant" to appreciate the advantages socialism could give them or work together with the proletariat. In his journal, Lamont laments that the first communist revolution occurred in this non-industrialized nation because the Comintern would now probably postpone revolutions in other nations until the Russians could get their country up to speed – and who knows how long that could take.[486] "Marx's prediction may be correct after all…," Lamont writes, "…the first successful proletarian revolution will come in a highly industrialized nation, because in Russia there has not yet been a successful proletarian revolution."[487]

Nevertheless, once he got over his culture shock, Lamont found a lot more about the country that he liked. Some of his excitement was the result of the comfort afforded to Lamont and his wife by VOKS. VOKS treated Lamont to a private, chauffeured Lincoln, as well as interpreters, for the tenure of his stay in Moscow. While many Americans objected to a level of luxury that the Soviets denied their own people, Lamont did not. It was, he explained, rational for the Soviets to treat Western tourists like celebrities. "The Bolsheviks are well aware that if visitors to Russia find themselves

[485] Lamont and Lamont, *Russia Day by Day; a Travel Diary,* 11.
[486] Ibid., 48.
[487] Ibid., 49.

dreadfully uncomfortable, they will discourage other tourists from coming and will be inclined to view conditions in the Soviet through the colored spectacles of irritation and complaint," he writes.[488] The Lamonts saw concerts and other entertainments in every city they visited and ate good food and slept in fine accommodations.[489] The Lamonts were shown factories, collective farms, and institutions and allowed to question Soviet civilians at will, suggesting to him that the Soviets had little to hide.

However, far more important to Lamont than the physical conditions was the spirit behind the changes that the Soviets were trying to enact. The Soviet Union appeared novel in its first two decades: no nation had ever so explicitly (and not *only* explicitly) renounced inequality, racism, religion, and sexism. Lamont found this atmosphere thrilling. In particular, he was impressed with an anti-religious museum in Leningrad, which institutionalized spiritual mockery. Exhibits ridiculed the old Christian superstitions and condemned the Orthodox Church's frequent alliances with "antisocial institutions and practices." Even a priest, Lamont mused, might be inclined to give up the "folly of his old beliefs" when presented with such a display.[490] Having come from a thoroughly demoralized America, Lamont also marveled at the Soviet experiment changed the psychology of the common people. "Men and women lose themselves in the new loyalties and cease thinking about their personal worries and problems," he writes.[491]

[488] "Corliss Lamont Papers," "Russian Travel Diary," 1932, p. 10; Box 2, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.
[489] Lamont and Lamont, *Russia Day by Day; a Travel Diary,* 148.
[490] Ibid., 20–21.
[491] Ibid., 59.

Lamont had come to the Soviet Union fearing that communism had become a substitute for a religion for the Bolsheviks. While some Americans were disappointed in "compromises" like the NEP of the mid-1920s, such experiments were exactly what Lamont liked about the Soviet Union. He wrote, "They show a willingness on the part of the Communists to face the facts and to exercise an intelligent flexibility in carrying out their program."[492] Lamont would have been devastated had he arrived in the Soviet Union to find a state precisely shaped to conform to Marxist theory. Upon his arrival, however, he believed he saw evidence of the Soviets transcending ideology with pragmatism. Moreover, he found the achievements resulting from that pragmatism to be extraordinary. The way he saw it, the lot of workers, progressive legislation, the discarding of superstition, educational enthusiasm, equality of race and gender, and the attitude toward sex were far in advance of the United States already. Improvements in a relative sense, i.e., compared to Russia under the tsars, were so amazing as to be impossible to calculate.[493]

Evidence of the grave dangers to the Soviet project were available, had Lamont been of a disposition to give them credence (beyond mere documentation in his journal). The Lamonts met a Russian who returned from the Ukraine in Moscow, who told them about the famine that would prompt the Ukrainian genocide (Holodomor). Lamont showed no indication of understanding the extent of the problem and further did not question the man's allegation that the peasants themselves were to blame for it (by eating

[492] Ibid., 149.
[493] Ibid., 150–51.

and selling too much of the food provided by the government, he was told).[494] Others, too, told them this greedy peasants narrative and Lamont was inclined to accept it. This, despite an encounter with a Soviet woman who accosted another group of tourists, asking, "Why the devil do you bring these foreigners around here? The apartments are nice and clean, but what good does that do us when we are starving to death?"[495] It is not difficult to unpack his reasoning. Some of the methods of the Soviets might be morally questionable (he never knew for sure: unlike, for instance, Anna Louise Strong, he never put Soviet atrocities under the rug *on purpose)* but Lamont would stomach them if he thought them likely to lead to better conditions eventually. This, to Lamont, because of the huge portions of future worship and anti-supernaturalism in his philosophy, was what pragmatism was all about – the ability to see past the appearance of a situation in order to determine its real significance. Many are the claims that the Soviets "snowed" fellow travelers, showing and telling them what they wanted to hear while the masses suffered outside of the narrow boundaries of the government-curated tourist experience.[496] At least for Lamont in 1933, that assumption did not hold true. His was not a case of naivety so much as a conscious choice between two seemingly reasonable alternatives. He saw the roots of progress, as well as indications of structural failings and moral lapses. So

[494] Ibid., 43.
[495] Ibid., 65.
[496] This is the perspective of Hollander and Caute, and many others. See: Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba, 1928-1978* (Lanham: University Press of America; Distributed by National Book Network, 1990); Caute, *The Fellow-Travellers.* David-Fox, however, comes to similar conclusions as I do here. He argues that the Soviets were showing travelers Communism as they saw it, and the travelers chose to believe the Soviet narrative because it conformed with their existing views. Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to Soviet Union, 1921-1941* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

important were the former, however, that he privileged them entirely over the latter. Lamont believed in 1933 that the Soviets were practicing a primitive sort of Socialist Humanism: one from which America and the world could learn, as well as draw inspiration from.

## Into the Fire

Upon arriving back in America, Lamont was determined to become more involved in repairing the fractious relationship between the United States and Soviet Union. Lamont wanted America to come to socialism through the democratic process. He believed that American-Soviet friendship could facilitate this eventuality if Americans were taught about Soviet triumphs. As he wrote in 1933, "For the whole of a nation there must be one great all-inclusive Plan, covering all divisions and subdivisions of industry and agriculture, under one unitary budget and investment control. And this is exactly the kind of Plan that the Soviet Union has."[497]

Lamont joined FSU in 1933. He quickly became its chairman due to his lack of affiliation with the Communist Party and corresponding accessibility with the mainstream. In this capacity, he worked closely with the communists who controlled the organization. Especially after 1934, when the Popular Front policy went into effect, Lamont found himself more and more working in concert with the communists in causes from American-Soviet friendship to civil liberties to anti-fascism. Lamont became convinced that, while they might be a bit coarse and overly doctrinaire, the American

[497] Corliss Lamont, *Socialist Planning in Soviet Russia* (New York: Friends of the Soviet Union, 1933), 5.

communists were a useful and valiant agent for change in America. Their nascent conciliatory attitude toward liberals and socialists suggested that they might even have the potential to urge a democratic triumph of socialism in the United States.

Lamont's cooperation with the communists and integration into their circles provoked little comment from his anti-ideological pragmatist peers for the first half of the 1930s. His participation in FSU became a powder keg, however, with the Moscow Trials (beginning in 1936 and lasting into 1938). When Stalin prosecuted supposed Trotskyists in the Soviet Union for conspiracy, the American Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky sent a commission headed by Lamont's former teacher, the seventy-eight-year-old John Dewey. Dewey, who had run-ins with obstructionist American communists in the early 30s in his teachers' union, was fed up with the American party altogether, ruling that it was "almost incredibly stupid..."[498] He had, accordingly, become more suspicious of the intentions of the Soviet party as well, if not necessarily more hostile. At any rate, he believed that Trotsky deserved a fair and transparent trial, which he was most assuredly denied in the Soviet Union despite the trial's "public" nature.

The commission, known informally as the Dewey Commission, consisted of a veritable super group of independent leftists, including Franz Boas, John Chamberlain, John Dos Passos, Sidney Hook, Norman Thomas, Edmund Wilson, and others. Most of the members were Trotskyists, who interrogated Trotsky in Mexico with the purpose of proving Stalin's charges false. Dewey, however, insisted on a fair evaluation resting on scientific inquiry. He found more than enough evidence of corruption and brutality to

[498] Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy*, 479.

prove that, not only was Trotsky not guilty, but that something dark was amiss in the Soviet Union. Dewey announced in December of 1937, "The great lesson to be derived from these amazing revelations is the complete breakdown of revolutionary Marxism… The Russian experiment proves conclusively that when violence is used to bring about economic and political reform, the method of force must be employed to keep the new government in power."[499] No matter the Soviet achievements in the economic sphere: Dewey ruled that success was all for naught if it were not "rightly conceived," and Stalin was clearly not concerned with the social good. Here, Dewey and Hook at last closed ranks with Eastman. The pragmatist perspective on the Soviet Union had become hostile.

When the Commission ruled the charges false and the Moscow Trials a "frame-up," it provoked a civil war in the Left. Battle lines were drawn between those who supported Stalin's rule in the Soviet Union (including Lamont), and those whose views more aligned with Trotsky or who found the Dewey Commission's findings persuasive.[500] While fellow Soviet friend Anna Louise Strong (astonishingly, a friend of Trotsky's) defended the legitimacy of the Trials even though she knew they were rigged, Lamont's perspective was simpler. He contended that, despite the evidence to the

[499] Dewey and Boydston, *The Later Works, 1925-1953*, "The Significance of the Trotsky Inquiry" (1937).
[500] We today have as much information about the Moscow Trials as can be considered possible. The original Dewey Commission report was released as Commission of Inquiry into the Charges Made Against Leon Trotsky in the Moscow Trials and John Dewey, *Not Guilty: Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Charges Made Against Leon Trotsky in the Moscow Trials.* (New York: Monad Press; distributed by Pathfinder Press, 1973); for Trotsky's own take, see: Leon Trotsky and Commission of Inquiry into the Charges Made against Leon Trotsky in the Moscow Trials, *Stalin's Frame-up System and the Moscow Trials*, (New York: Pioneer Publishers, 1950); for Browder and the CPUSA's counter-interpretation, see: Earl Browder and Communist Party of the United States of America, "Lessons of the Moscow Trials," *Communist.*, 1938. The press coverage of the Trials in America is the subject of James K Libbey, "American Intellectual Reaction to the Moscow Trials, 1936-1938: Editorial and Journalistic Expressions.," 1970; Vadim Zakharovich Rogovin, *Stalin's Terror of 1937-1938: Political Genocide in the USSR* (Oak Park, MI: Mehring Books, 2009) is a monograph detailing the entire episode.

contrary, Trotsky and his allies *really were* attempting to overthrow the Soviet state out of "resentment because the Soviet people refused to follow his hair-brained policies, and driven to the most fearful extremes by his megalomaniac itch for political power."[501] Lamont could thus "hardly blame the Soviet Government for dealing sternly with plotters and wreckers who aimed to pull down the structure of the first Socialist society."[502] He trusted Stalin's judgment in the manner of punishment inflicted on the "conspirators."[503] His communist friends and the *Daily Worker* cheered him on.

Lamont felt the Dewey Commission represented a danger to the reputation of the Soviet Union. He created and publicized a petition declaring it illegitimate. He also authored an open letter to *Soviet Russia Today,* in which he pled with the liberals on the commission to think about the consequences of their actions. By questioning the Soviet state, he argued, these liberals were endangering the safety of Europe.[504] Besides, anyone who hated the Soviet Union was an enemy of progress. As Lamont wrote in a 1937 article, "…there can be no doubt that of all countries on earth the Soviet Union is today the greatest hope and defender of those ideals of world peace and understanding which have been an inspiration and a goal for countless men and women of good will in all ages."[505] He would not risk such a "hope" lightly.

Here was Lamont's techno-utopianism triumphing over his pragmatism. Such was his desire for the perfectly pragmatic socialist society in the far future that he was willing

[501] Lamont, *You Might like Socialism; a Way of Life for Modern Man.*, 128.
[502] Ibid.
[503] Ibid.
[504] "An Open Letter to American Liberals," *Soviet Russia Today*, March 1937, 14–15.
[505] Corliss Lamont, "Champion of World Peace," *Soviet Russia Today*, March 1937, 20.

to ignore Soviet assaults on the democratic process and civil liberties he treasured. His faith in Soviet progress made him unable to conceive of Stalin's Russia as the Dewey Commission did. When Lamont saw the Soviet Union, he continued to perceive only an evolution of Wells' characterization of that nation during Lenin's day: a society transcending the brutal primitivism of its present through grand, long-term vision and reliance on scientific method. Given where the Russians had been, what they were up against, and where he believed they were going, current outrages faded from view. To such a perspective as Lamont's, protestations about the Moscow Trials could only be understood as quibbles, as a listener's irritating interruption of a piece of inspiring rhetoric on pedantic grounds. In other words, the Dewey Commission's complaints were a distraction that simply missed the point. The planned, efficient, and prosperous world society Lamont envisioned, to which the Soviet experiment was inexorably leading, silenced all concerns about a tumultuous present.

It was in the aftermath of the Moscow Trials that Lamont began to lose his less radical friends and come under withering fire for supporting tyranny from colleagues and journalists.[506] While Lamont was annoyed by their attacks – as he said to close friend Anne Lindbergh in 1946, "You get tired of being smeared!" – what hurt the most were the salvos from his fellow pragmatists.[507] Despite all that Lamont and most of his colleagues had in common, including the vigorous advocating of equality, democracy,

[506] Decades later, Lamont conceded his error in judging the Trials legitimate. He, too, referred to them as a "frame-up," and regretted his defense of them. He deemed he had, perhaps, been guilty of "believing over-long," to the effect that he was forever misrepresented as an apologist for Stalin.

[507] Lamont, *Yes to Life*, 26.

and civil liberties, one's assessment of the Soviet Union and its role in the modern world, Great Satan or savior, had become the great debate of the late 1930s. Lamont found himself on the opposite side of those whom he had once had the most in common. Among his chief antagonists was Sidney Hook, Lamont's friend from Columbia and by the Moscow Trials a popular Marxist theorist. Hook had turned against Stalin and the Soviet Union beginning around 1934. That year, he had expressed dismay at Stalin's penchant for murderous purging, which Hook referred to as "horrendous excrescences."[508] His feelings hardened still more over the next few years. By the time of the Moscow Trials, Hook was a leader in the nascent anticommunist left which had coalesced in New York. A premature Cold Warrior, Hook claimed that in the Moscow Trials he had "…discovered radical evil… as ugly and petrifying as anything the fascists had revealed up to that time…"[509]

Lamont and Hook had a famous and tumultuous relationship after the Moscow Trials. Hook, a communist turned anticommunist academic, went to great pains to show Lamont how wrong he was at every opportunity. Lamont called Hook a "rabid red-baiter and leading partisan of Leon Trotsky" in the *New York Post,* which was at least a little accurate but not at all civil. Lamont also, in effect, severed his ties with Dewey, who had been Hook's advisor at Columbia, by calling his participation in the Trotsky Defense Committee a "tragic farce" and asserting that Dewey's reputation was at risk.[510] Hook, devoted to Dewey, was outraged.

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[508] Sidney Hook, "Democratic and Dictatorial Aspects of Communism, The," *International Conciliation* 16 (1935 1934): 452.
[509] Hook, *Out of Step*, 218.
[510] Corliss Lamont, "Faith in the Soviet Union," *Soviet Russia Today*, August 1937, 6–7.

Hook (along with his biographer, Edward S. Shapiro) maintained that he aimed to lead Lamont out of the poisonous influence of Stalinism and into respectable academic circles again through his badgering. If that were the case, writing and publicizing an article in *Modern Monthly* titled "Corliss Lamont: Friend of the GPU,"[511] as Hook did in 1938, was probably not the way to go about resurrecting reputations (the GPU was the Soviet secret police: the precursor to the NKVD and KGB).[512] A favorite attack of Hook's was to latch onto Lamont's statement in a 1938 radio address which claimed that, "the Soviet regime and its achievements are indivisible."[513] Hook thought Lamont was arguing that might made right.[514] Lamont was not saying this but he was not saying something altogether more respectable, either: in context, he is suggesting that observers give the Soviets the benefit of the doubt in absence of definitive proof to the contrary because the Soviet Union had earned this through its humane achievements. Hook, who thought this proof existed, deemed Lamont "morally dead."[515]

Max Eastman was another participant in the battles which followed the Trials. Eastman, after his disappointing experience in the sectarian world of Soviet politics in

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[511] Sidney Hook, "Corliss Lamont: Friend of the GPU," *Modern Monthly* 10 (March 1938). The article explains the controversy of the Moscow Trials, and paints Lamont as a dupe for whom Stalinism was a new religion. It is full of well-crafted ad-hominem and 1930s-vintage attempts at psychoanalysis, as well as a few interesting details about the Dewey Commission's investigation.

[512] It is difficult to take Hook's purported noble purpose seriously, considering his public and private attacks on Lamont, and his improbable assertion that he (Hook) was responsible for converting Lamont to atheism, socialism, and the Soviet Union (there is nothing besides Hook's word to back this up and a great deal to dispute it). Not to mention a June 22, 1966 letter to Lamont in which Hook told him that "it was not too late" to hang himself for his incorrect assessment of Stalin (Hook later disingenuously claimed he had been misinterpreted, somehow). We do not need to succumb to Hook's own questionable attempts at psychological analysis but one might well ponder why Hook, the former communist, found reason to treat Lamont so viciously.

[513] Corliss Lamont, "The Moscow Trials," *Soviet Russia Today*, January 1938, 26.

[514] It is interesting that this was also a charge Bertrand Russell had leveled at pragmatists like Dewey and Hook since the 1920s.

[515] Sidney Hook, "Corliss Lamont: Friend of the GPU," 8.

1924, became perhaps the first, and for many years easily the most well-known, anti-Soviet leftist in the United States. While he briefly expressed hope for the Soviet "experiment" in 1934, publishing an article about the progress made in Russia through socialization of industry and the removal of class privilege, he had doubled down on his skepticism again by the Moscow Trials. He said the Trials represented "a concentration of political power and privilege in the hands of a bureaucratic caste supporting an autocrat more ruthless than the Tzars had been."[516] In 1937, Eastman published the overtly condemnatory *The End of Socialism in Russia,* which left no doubts about his enmity toward the USSR and, this time, no room to retreat. Whereas Hook has suggested that atrocity was his reasoning for defecting from the Soviet cause, for Eastman it had always been about Stalin's betrayal of the Revolution's principles of equality and socialism. "Since Lenin's death," Eastman wrote, "ideology has prevailed in the ruling circles and the controlled press of Soviet Russia to the practical exclusion of scientific straight-thinking about society and politics. The assertion that they are 'building a classless society' and yet more, that 'socialism is finally and irrevocably achieved in the Soviet Union,' are but crowning instances of the process of universal self-deception… under cover of which the exactly opposite process is in full faith…"[517]

Like Hook, Eastman found Lamont a ready target for his invective against leftists who had not evolved in the same manner as he had. He wrote an open letter in *New International* full of disappointment toward Lamont: "The one priceless thing you could

[516] Max Eastman, *The End of Socialism in Russia,* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1937).
[517] Ibid.

have brought to the proletarian movement, coming from the source you do and with your education, was true knowledge and absolute principled integrity. Instead you are bringing a little money, a small gift even when it is large, and an increase of mental confusion and moral decay."[518] Lamont had admitted in private, Eastman asserted, that Stalin's regime was dishonest, but he "continued to run with the Stalinist chiefs."[519] It is not clear what he means by this, as Lamont did not have a close relationship with either the upper hierarchy of the Soviet government or Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) leadership. At any rate, Eastman accused him of supporting "independent revolutionary papers which still believed that scientific integrity and honest education of the masses is essential to the proletarian movement," but simultaneously giving money to the ascendant Stalinists. Eastman wrote that Lamont had the intelligence and ethics to understand how unjust the Moscow Trials were and how disastrous they would be for the American left, but he lacked "the force of character" to stand up to the majority.[520]

Meanwhile, Lamont's faith in the Soviet Union only became stronger. In 1937, he wrote a piece about the Soviet Union in *Soviet Russia Today* called "Champion of World Peace." "Since the open Fascist offensive against world security," he wrote, "the Soviet Union has maintained its role as the leading defender of the rights of small nations and of international peace in general."[521] He commended the Soviets for "exposing and

[518] Max Eastman, "A Letter to Corliss Lamont," *New International* 4, no. 4 (April 1938): 122.
[519] Ibid. We do not know if Eastman's assertion is true. Lamont never suggested to anyone else that he saw through Stalin's lies.
[520] Ibid. This barb might have been designed to hurt Lamont via his reverence for Russell, who always argued on the necessity to take a moral stand.
[521] Corliss Lamont, "Champion of World Peace."

opposing the aggression" of Japan in China, Italy in Ethiopia, and Germany in Spain.[522] Here, we can see another reason for Lamont's stubborn obstinance. As war approached on the horizon, he clung to the Soviet Union as the world's one hope for sanity. He argued that the yearning for peace was genuine in the Soviets because "the economic roots of war within the USSR have been permanently eliminated."[523] Lamont's hope was that the outcry over the Moscow Trials would soon die down and the world could then notice the sheer *good* the Soviet Union was doing on behalf of the planet by checking its aggressors.

It turned out, however that as dramatic as the Moscow Trials debates were, they were only a prelude for the conflict the next year over the Nazi-Soviet Pact. The Nazi-Soviet Pact was a horrifying and embarrassing experience for most Popular Front liberals, whose consciences were stressed by the association of the Soviet Union with Nazi Germany. One would expect this to be the case for no one so much as Lamont, who had authored a statement a couple weeks before the signing of the pact on behalf of the Committee of 400, which dismissed the idea that the Soviet Union had gone at all soft on fascism (seldom has anyone's timing been so bad).[524] Instead, Lamont supported the pact publicly, as if he had not in fact asserted that the Soviet Union remained a "bulwark against war and aggression," thirteen days earlier.[525] The press and other intellectuals crucified him for his shameless adherence to the communist line and unconditional

[522] Ibid.
[523] Ibid.
[524] "To All Active Supporters of Democracy and Peace," *Soviet Russia Today* 8, no. 5 (September 1939): 24–25, 28.
[525] Ibid.

support of the Soviet Union. It was his positions on the pact and Moscow Trials that led to Lamont's evisceration in Lyons' *The Red Decade,* which defined Lamont's character for a generation for the public. Lyons was perhaps the first employer of the "fellow-traveler" trope, wherein American-Soviet friends championed the Soviet Union because of personal and moral failures. In his work, Lyons attributed a Freudian motivation to Lamont's leftism, and called him "…one of the most pathetic figures thrown up to public view by the Red Decade [i.e., the 1930s]. He spared neither his money nor his energy in defending the mass slaughter in Russia and in damning those who dared examine that horror."[526]

Yet, from Lamont's perspective, there was no shift in his thinking. He had not previously considered a non-aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union, but it made sense to him after the fact because it was making the best of the "hopeless situation" in which the Soviet Union had found itself. American liberals saw the pact as an opportunistic swallowing of Poland and focused on how it was an aid to Hitler. Lamont perceived it as a security issue. After Britain and France abandoned Czechoslovakia in 1938, it was clear to the Soviets that their previous policy of creating an anti-fascist coalition had been unsuccessful. Better to tide Nazi Germany over than to risk the destruction of the Soviet Union as an entity, Stalin reasoned. Pragmatists like Dewey saw the pact saw it as an alliance with hatred and barbarism that made the Soviet Union into a state that stood for nothing. This, to Lamont and others in the American-

[526] Eugene Lyons, *The Red Decade; the Stalinist Penetration of America* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1941), 257.

Soviet friendship movement, was ironically perceived as naivety. If the Soviet program really was, as Lamont claimed, "the most heroic achievement in the history of mankind," then surely its essential task was to persevere and keep the chance for progress alive, regardless of what compromises had to be made in the short term.[527]

Lamont never recognized how far his advocacy for American-Soviet friendship and defense of the Soviet Union had taken him. We certainly can. Where, one wonders, was Dewey's "righty conceived" social good in the Soviet Union's alliance with a nation that was obliterating dissent on an unprecedented level? Lamont acknowledged that there was little freedom of political expression in the Soviet Union but it was his "guess" that democracy would "evolve" in the Soviet Union. This despite the existence of only one political party in the present. Dewey could have told him that democracy does not work that way: people are not granted freedoms as they have earned them, they grow into the freedoms they have been granted. And in the absence of freedom, where did Lamont expect social good to arise in the Soviet Union? After all, Dewey had claimed social good came from people serving their functions in a free society: an impossibility in a society in which a bureaucratic elite decided what its people were ready for and when. Lamont had become so consumed with the precarious nature of progress that he had cannibalized every other major aspect of Dewey's philosophy in order to sustain it.

[527] "Communism Held Certain: Corliss Lamont Says We Will Have Such Rule Within 25 Years.," *New York Times*, June 1, 1934,

## Reconsiderations

For the most part, accounts of Lamont's life in the literature tend to stop here, with the Nazi-Soviet Pact. This sets up a tidy tragic narrative of a man with good intentions who, in his failure to think critically, fell in love with a tyrant and lost his soul to totalitarianism. Too scared about his privilege and reputation to risk joining the Communist Party but too radical to feel at ease in capitalist society, the story goes, Lamont found himself on his own. That narrative is indeed affecting. But the story is not Lamont's. Lamont was not a man in thrall to the Soviet Union. He was enthralled, rather, by what the Soviet Union could do in the future. Just as soon as most accounts of Lamont's life drop out, in 1939, what it means to him begins to change. Whereas his response to crises in the 1930s reveal his intellectual struggles, namely his inability to reconcile pragmatism and techno-utopianism, the post-Nazi-Soviet Pact period shows him evolving. A series of Soviet actions made him uncertain of whether the Soviet Union deserved the status with which he had endowed it, even if he never doubted the importance of a socialist example for the rest of the world. So dramatic was the change in Lamont's perspective that, by 1950, the Soviets who had once deemed him "politically very close to us," were characterizing him as "a great fumbler and one of the hesitating liberals."[528] It is my contention that we cannot understand Lamont without taking this later period of his life into account. His positions and reactions show that while he never gave up on the need to advocate for progress toward an international utopia, the extent to

[528] These quotes come from research done by Svetlana Chervonnaya in CPSU archives in Moscow. "H-Net Discussion Networks - Corliss Lamont (Chervonnaya)," accessed January 28, 2015, http://h-net.msu.edu

which he believed the Soviet Union represented this vision declined. This change in perspective, I argue, was due to the actions of the Soviet Union and its communist allies in America.

We cannot rule definitely on why Lamont withdrew from the American-Soviet friendship movement in the late 1940s. After World War II, he almost never acknowledged how important the movement had been in his life between 1932 and 1946 and never talked about his decline in participation. We can see in retrospect, however, that the key element that disentangled Lamont from the Soviet Union turned out to be civil liberties, which the Soviet Union and its CPUSA allies consistently disrespected both at home and abroad. This led Lamont to question how suited either were for the role in which he had cast them: as facilitators of the social good (and eventually, perhaps even utopia). Increasingly, he began to see the Soviets and communists as a supporting role in this struggle, perhaps even occasional adversaries, rather than a lead.

The invasion of Finland in 1939 (in the so-called Winter War) by the Soviet Union was not as strong a tremor to the Left as the events of the preceding year.[529] Almost all of the Popular Front liberals had turned against the Soviet Union already. Those who remained Sovietophiles by the Winter War after all, had a strong stomach for both atrocity and irony. The excuses this time gave "naivety" a miss and surged straight into "disingenuous," with some Sovietophiles arguing that the Soviet Union was acting in self-defense (against a country a mere fraction of the Soviet Union's size and military

[529] The best English language source for the Winter War is Max Jakobson, *The Diplomacy of the Winter War; an Account of the Russo-Finnish War, 1939-1940*, 1961.

strength, with no perceivable war aims), and others throwing up their hands, emphasizing that since Finland had been a part of Imperial Russia, why not?[530]

Lamont's reaction to the Winter War sheds some light on his thought process regarding the USSR. Unlike the Moscow Trials and the Nazi-Soviet Pact, Lamont could not make sense of the Winter War. He understood Stalin's realpolitik reasoning, which subordinated Finnish self-determination to the Soviet desire for more defensible positions around Leningrad, but he did not share it. Given the Nazi-Soviet Pact there did not seem to be a clear and present danger from the direction of Finland. This was not progress; it was medieval expansionism. Lamont publicly referred to the invasion as "an act of aggression and a terrible mistake." Unfortunately, by this point none of the people who would have agreed with him were listening anymore. He later came around on Finland, to an extent, but doubts had been planted.[531]

Skepticism of Soviet behavior was not alleviated by the behavior of the American communists during the years after the Winter War, either. The US Congress took the interwar moment of profound communist unpopularity to pass the Smith Act.[532] It is ironic that the first target of Smith Act prosecution in 1941 was not the CPUSA but rather a Trotskyist splinter group opposing that party called the Socialist Workers Party (SWP).

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[530] David Caute's work remains the best source for the reactions of American intellectuals on the Left to Soviet activity in the 1930s. See David Caute, *The Fellow Travellers: A Postscript to the Enlightenment* (New York: Macmillan, 1973).

[531] Lamont's doubts about Finland were somewhat and somehow alleviated by the German invasion of the Soviet Union in World War II. "…these new Soviet territories functioned as a very necessary and successful buffer against the first surprise onslaught," he writes. Further, we should not feel too bad for Finland, he claimed, because "The Finnish government demonstrated its natural affinity for fascism by lining up with Hitler." That the Finns might have allied with Hitler for the precise reason that the Soviets had attacked them without cause does not occur to him. Lamont had found his justification, however logically convoluted.

[532] Described in Chapter Two

The Attorney General charged SWP leaders with working with a Minneapolis union to "advocate the overthrow of the U.S. government."[533] To be fair, the SWP did call for "an action program which would bring about the overthrow of the existing capitalistic society and the government which supported it."[534] Espousing, rather than carrying out, violent revolution had not, however, been illegal in the United States until the Smith Act, and there appeared little reason to suspect the SWP posed any threat. As historian Thomas Pahl writes, "…one is struck by the lack of concrete evidence of overt acts indicating actual danger to either our government or our democratic way of life."[535]

The CPUSA, in its response to the government's action, saw not impending danger only opportunity. It supported the government's decision.[536] Gloating communist leaders alleged that the Trotskyists of Minnesota were a fifth column ready to subvert the United States government, ignorant of the precedent they were setting. The American Left was reeling at this point and needed unity if it were to have any effect on American politics. Nevertheless, the CPUSA was more concerned with fighting Soviet wars than American. With Trotsky murdered in 1940, the CPUSA saw the Minneapolis episode as a chance to finish off Trotsky's influence in the United States. Many American communists served as government witnesses out of a desire for revenge against the

[533] Steve Clark, "How CP USA Backed Smith Act Convictions of SWP, Teamster Leaders," *The Militant* 69, no. 20 (May 23, 2005).
[534] Thomas L. Pahl, "The G-String Conspiracy, Political Reprisal, or Armed Revolt?: The Minneapolis Trotskyite Trial," *Labor History* 8, no. 1 (Winter 1967): 22.
[535] Ibid., 51.
[536] On the American Trotskyists in general, see: Constance Ashton Myers, *The Prophet's Army: Trotskyists in America, 1928-1941* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977). Thomas L. Pahl, "The G-String Conspiracy, Political Reprisal, or Armed Revolt?: The Minneapolis Trotskyite Trial," *Labor History* 8, no. 1 (Winter 1967) discusses the persecution against the SWP specifically.

separatist SWP and ideological purity on the Left.[537] More than the Moscow Trials or Nazi-Soviet Pact, the CPUSA response symbolically killed the Popular Front. It showed that the CPUSA was everything that anticommunists had warned liberals about in the previous decade: opportunistic, self-serving, petty, and subservient to a foreign state whose interests did not coincide with what was best for the American Left.

As Lamont saw it, persecuting people who disagreed with you on peripheral points was no way to build a movement. Lamont opposed the prosecution and described the CPUSA support of the Smith Act as, "one of the typically foolish actions of the Communist Party during this period."[538] It was the sort of sectarianism he despised, seeming to him to be along the same lines as the Dewey Commission's splintering of the Left in its defense of Trotsky. Lamont was the leading author of an ACLU resolution condemning the US prosecution of the Trotskyites and donated to their defense. He later suggested that his level of commitment in this episode led the American communists to become suspicious of working with him even on projects in which their interests aligned. He wrote, "I vehemently reject the Communist position that one must break off all personal relations with political enemies."[539] Two years later, Lamont was outraged when the CPUSA attacked philosopher George Santayana as a "fascist," with little cause other than that he very clearly was not a communist and had written in the *New Masses* to that

[537] Thomas L. Pahl, "The G-String Conspiracy, Political Reprisal, or Armed Revolt?: The Minneapolis Trotskyite Trial."
[538] Corliss Lamont and Jerold S. Auerbach, *Reminiscences of Corliss Lamont*, 1960, 14.
[539] Corliss Lamont, *Why I Am Not a Communist* (Self-published, 1952), 13.

effect.[540] Later he claimed, "Communists in general tend to fling around the word *fascist* as carelessly as many people fling around the term *Communist."*[541]

Lamont regressed somewhat during World War II, when he was the public face of an American-Soviet friendship movement which had become more popular than ever before. His letters to Sidney Hook during this period are boisterous and strident. They read as the work of a man who feels he is on the right side of history. His major work during the war, *Soviet Russia and the Post-War World,* suggested that Lamont was ready to dismiss any chance of Soviet wrongdoing based on a logical examination of their motives – again, as in the Moscow Trials, he was assuming the Soviet state was in the hands of a rational actor who believed what he claimed to believe. Yet, Lamont resigned his chairmanship of the NCASF in 1946. Claim as he did that his departure was due to a lack of time for extracurricular activities (and certainly this played a role), the long slow fade in Lamont's participation in retrospect appears to be a deliberate extrication. In 1947, still a board member of the NCASF, he insisted against the wishes of Jessica Smith on the insertion of the following sentence into an NCASF statement on foreign relations: "However, our friendly feeling for Soviet Russia does not mean that we are uncritical of Soviet policies."[542] Two years later, he wrote a letter to the editor of the *New York Times*, in which he posited "…Soviet Russia, like the United States itself, is a mixture of good and bad," with "serious shortcomings." He continued, "To be concrete, I believe it is

[540] Corliss Lamont, Joel Bradford, and Howard Selsam, "Is Santayana a Fascist?," *New Masses,* April 11, 1944.
[541] Corliss Lamont, *Why I Am Not a Communist*, 8.
[542] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," NCASF board minutes, June 11, 1947; Folder 32; Box 1.

clear that the U.S.S.R., for whatever reasons, has lagged lamentably behind the United States in the development of civil liberties and political democracy…"[543]

The timeline suggests that an important piece of this puzzle was the April 1945 Duclos letter, a piece written by French communist Jacques Duclos which – with obvious support from Moscow – declared the American communists revisionists who refused to acknowledge the inevitability of war between capitalism and communism. Much like the Minneapolis Trotskyite affair, the Soviet Union showed through its condemnation of Earl Browder's attempt to liberalize the American Communist movement that it was more interested in ideological purity than world socialism. As a result of Browder's public shaming on behalf of the Soviets, the CPUSA became less pragmatic than ever. The Popular Front was essentially decapitated. Lamont would not have been able to miss that the immediate postwar, in which the United States and Soviet Union were supposedly allies, was the best opportunity for the establishment of an understanding between Americans and Soviets since the Bolshevik Revolution. However, for the second time in five years, the interests of the Soviet Union hobbled the CPUSA's chances of winning over Americans.

The imprisonment and then exile of Anna Louise Strong in the Soviet Union in 1947 also gave Lamont pause. Lamont and his wife knew Strong, having met her in the Soviet Union in 1932. In the 30s, Strong had been, with Lamont, the foremost exponent of American-Soviet friendship. Strong's downfall began in February of 1947, when she repeatedly lobbied the Soviet government to go to China as a correspondent to the World

[543] Ibid., "Relations with Russia," by Corliss Lamont, November 23, 1949; Folder 14; Box 1.

Federation Congress. Out of nowhere, police took her from her home in Moscow, briefly jailed her, and then dropped her off in Poland. The Soviet government then accused her of being a spy and banned her from the country. American communists ostracized her in response.

Once in America, desperate for work, Strong wrote a series of six articles for the conservative *New York Herald Tribune* in which she told her story. She did not blame the Soviet state, but rather the "great spy scare spreading over the world which comes from the Cold War."[544] Strong continued to push the Soviet perspective regardless of her current heretic status. She could not say enough about how nice her cell had been, for instance. It did not matter. The American communists and the *Daily Worker* turned against Strong, in lockstep with the Soviet accusations. The *Daily Worker* claimed her articles in the *Herald Tribune* were of "a familiar Trotskyite line," and argued that the charges against Strong were based on her "long-range activities."[545] Eugene Dennis of the CPUSA rejected Strong's $1,000 donation for the legal defense of eleven Communist Party leaders as "tainted."[546] This to a woman who had defended every Soviet action since the 1920s with conviction, even abandoning her friend Leon Trotsky during the Moscow Trials.[547]

Strong's arrest horrified Lamont. He could not interpret it as pragmatic. Anyone could see Strong was harmless at worst and a serious asset at best. He hoped that reason

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[544] Anna Louise Strong, "Jailed in Moscow."
[545] "Anna Louise Strong Writes Anti-Soviet Series for Trib," *The Daily Worker*, March 27, 1949.
[546] "Reds Spurn $1,000 Gift of Anna Louise Strong," *New York Herald Tribune*, March 30, 1949.
[547] As it turned out, Strong was a victim of Stalin's inner circles' paranoia about Chinese agents in the Soviet Union. The Soviets admitted as much in 1955.

might still win out, however. A group of progressives led by Lamont sent a letter of protest to the Soviet embassy over the Strong arrest. Lamont argued that the Soviets had not granted Strong due process and asked the Soviet ambassador to review her case.[548] After his work on American-Soviet friendship over more than fifteen years, he never received a reply. While Lamont was already probably on his way out of the NCASF (he sent a letter somewhat critical of the Soviet Union to the *New York Times* two months before Strong's arrest), Richard Morford claims that the Anna Louise Strong arrest and the Soviet and NCASF failure to respond to it was the reason that Lamont resigned from the NCASF board in 1949.[549] The timeline, again, backs this assertion up. After 1949, he never engaged so eagerly in the NCASF, or any outlet of American-Soviet friendship again. He even let his National Council status lapse in the early 50s.

In 1949, Lamont solidified his break with the Council, however subtly, in what was intended to be his greatest contribution to the field of philosophy through his briefly aforementioned book, *The Philosophy of Humanism.* This book is a comprehensive statement on the beliefs and standpoints of his socialist humanism, which he rebrands as "secular humanism" for the benefit of the Cold War era. For the most part, the book is a restatement of the Deweyian pragmatism in which Lamont had been trained and therefore, was something of a landmark after Lamont's seeming discarding of pragmatism in the late 1930s. By releasing this major work in 1949, consisting of 1920s vintage pragmatism mixed with Russellian secularism and civil libertarian protests at an

[548] Corliss Lamont, *Why I Am Not a Communist* (Self-published, 1952). Lamont incorrectly remembers the date of the letter here as the spring of 1950. It was in fact April 12, 1949.
[549] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 172.

overreaching government, Lamont was attempting to recast himself as a rogue philosopher existing outside of the realm of ideology. Lamont was certainly not applying to rejoin pragmatist circles with his book: both Hook and Eastman were undergoing a shift into neo-conservatism during the Cold War. That was never going to happen with Lamont. He was, however, clearly trying to reposition himself as the sort of empirically-minded, independent socialist he had been before he left for the USSR. It was as if the traumatic ideological battles of the 1930s, and Lamont's bold drawing of lines within them, had never happened: as if it had all just been some horrible dream.

While *Philosophy of Humanism* reads rather like a retro tribute to Lamont's pre-Soviet perspectives, there is one huge difference. The Wellsian technocratic utopianism or yearning for world government are nowhere to be found. Instead, the book is filled with pleas to live in the everyday rather than in the hypothetical world that could be or even what is likely to be. "In an era of continuing crisis and disintegration like that of the twentieth century," Lamont writes, "we face the temptation of fleeing to some compensatory realm of make-believe or supernatural solace… Humanism stands uncompromisingly against this tendency…"[550] It was no longer enough that an action could benefit "some far-off earthly end:" the action had to help humans in the short run and come from genuinely good intentions. "The good person is one who not only has good motives and acts according to reason, but who is also effective in the successful adjustment of means to ends," he argues.[551] It is, of course, impossible to completely

[550] Lamont and Half-Moon Foundation, *The Philosophy of Humanism*, 16.
[551] Ibid., 257.

reconstruct Lamont's motivation but one imagines that, while watching the Soviet Union obliterate dissent in Czechoslovakia and Poland after World War II and then seeing them turn those nations into satellites, Lamont judged his mistake to have been a reliance on an overly future-oriented perspective. Lamont served notice that he intended to play a different role in the 1950s than the 1940s. This time, there would be no rationalizations of bad behavior, no matter the good long-term intentions.

Lamont's views on the Soviet Union thereafter became more complicated. His praise became measured, and was countered with frequent criticism. In 1951, he wrote his last major work on the Soviet Union, *Soviet Civilization.* While primarily positive, Lamont did not deny how far the Soviets had to go to reach acceptable standards of conduct. He wrote, "[I do not negate the fact] that the administration of justice in the Soviet Union has been biased and harsh towards those considered enemies of the socialist state; that the Soviet authorities, relying on an omnipresent secret police, have jailed tens of thousands of blameless individuals in their periodic purges; and that Soviet prisons and labor camps have frequently failed to maintain decent and healthy conditions…"[552]

Lamont did not, however, become a Cold Warrior. He denied the Soviets had any aggressive intent. He claimed they were acting, often misguidedly, on behalf of a need for security. He blamed the escalation of the Cold War on the United States, arguing that the conflict was driven by anti-communist ideologues and a fatalistic, apocalyptic perspective on the part of President Truman and his advisors. He believed that the Soviet failings were often driven by the harsh reception the nation had received from capitalist

[552] Corliss Lamont, *Soviet Civilization.* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1952), 88.

countries since 1917 and America's continued confrontational approach. "…Some of the missteps that Soviet Russia and other members of the Communist bloc have taken in foreign policy are attributable in no small degree to fear of American intentions and a sharp defensive reaction to them," he wrote.[553] When reading Lamont's arguments in the 1950s, one is reminded of Jean Paul Sartre's 1951 admonition to Camus, in which the former noted that, "The Iron Curtain is only a mirror, in which each half of the world reflects the other. Each turn of the screw *here* corresponds with a twist *there,* and finally, both here and there, we are both the screwer and the screwed."[554] In contrast to the bipartisan Cold Warrior consensus in America, Lamont and Sartre were arguing that the United States demonized and provoked the Soviets at their own peril.

Lamont's willingness to allow slack to the Soviets waned with each succeeding crisis. By the early 1950s, after the Soviet absorption of Eastern Europe and development of atomic bombs, Lamont had become thoroughly disenchanted. He no longer identified himself with the Soviets or the American communists at all. He made this plain in his 1952 pamphlet, "Why I Am Not a Communist."[555] After having denied Communist Party membership in an almost yearly ritual going back to the 1930s, Lamont had become "very bored with it all" and decided to create a document he could cite in response to

[553] Ibid., 383.
[554] Ronald Aronson, *Camus & Sartre: The Story of a Friendship and the Quarrel That Ended It* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 150.
[555] Corliss Lamont, *Why I Am Not a Communist*. The title is a reference to the numerous "Why I am a Communist" pamphlets produced by Communists in the first half of the 20th-century. Also, note that Lamont's disenchantment with Soviet progress did not mean a softening of his attitude on the United States. He continued to believe that US policy toward the Soviet Union was misguided, as reflected upon in his book, *The Myth of Soviet Aggression.*

accusations.[556] The pamphlet consisted of a list of fifty-three ideological, philosophical, and political disagreements he had with the CPUSA and Soviet leadership (which, in 1952, had the same perspective). Amid criticisms of Soviet civil liberties, Lamont asserted that he was a Deweyian, not a dialectical materialist; a humanist, not an economic determinist; a pragmatist, not a dogmatic positivist. He still claimed to be a socialist but reiterated that he did not advocate the class warfare of the Russian Revolution. He claimed that the only way he was a communist was in the "loose way like Senator Joseph McCarthy [used the term]," which would apply equally well to not only Lamont but Franklin Roosevelt and Wendell Willkie as well. Lamont characterized himself as a "moderate, independent and freewheeling American radical" doing his own thinking.[557] Where once he asserted, "the Soviet regime and its achievements are indivisible," Lamont was no longer willing to recite the communist line and found it acceptable to criticize the Soviet Union on any number of policies.

This was no *Homage to Catalonia*, George Orwell's classic account of gradual disillusionment with the communist cause in Spain: Lamont lacked interest in shaming the Soviets and had no untold story to reveal. *Why I Am Not a Communist* was not, after all, *Why I Am No Longer a Communist.* Lamont's book was a statement of fact, an admonition against his critics for their failure to understand crucial distinctions. It is important to note, however, that these distinctions were ones he had previously not felt necessary to highlight. He found them terribly urgent for the rest of his life. He never

[556] Ibid., 5.
[557] Ibid., 6.

again tolerated press accusations of his allegiance to communism. In 1963, he sued *The Spectator* over a Robert Conquest article that referred to Lamont as "Communist line," for instance, and won a retraction from both the magazine and the historian.

Meanwhile, Lamont was finding other opportunities for public outlets far away from American-Soviet friendship. Senator Joseph McCarthy called him in as a witness in his 1953 probes against the US Army because an official US Army book on the Soviet Union included a bibliography listing Lamont's 1946 book, *The Peoples of the Soviet Union.*[558] Lamont was by now a well-known Sovietophile, so McCarthy claimed his presence in a bibliography proved the army was corrupt. But Lamont, in true Russellian fashion, was energized by battling authority figures. In the words of journalist and friend IF Stone, "…Lamont failed to be awed. Instead of pleading the Fifth Amendment, he challenged McCarthy's authority and invited a test by contempt citation, even risking a perjury charge in the process by denying that he was a Communist."[559] In a remarkable bit of legal scholarship, Lamont's lawyer, Philip Wittenberg, discovered that McCarthy's Committee on Permanent Investigation had never received the proper authorizing resolution from its parent committee. As such, McCarthy's committee was operating illegally. Rather than risk years of his work being abrogated by the Supreme Court, McCarthy dismissed Lamont's charges, saving him from a certain contempt charge.[560] McCarthy then gave up on Lamont and instead focused his attacks on an army officer

[558] Corliss Lamont, *The Peoples of the Soviet Union* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1946); the bibliography listing Lamont's book is in United Nations Command and U.S. Army Far East Command, *Psychological and Cultural Traits of Soviet Siberia*, (1952).
[559] I. F. Stone, "McCarthy, Lamont, and Military Intelligence," *I. F. Stone's Weekly*, October 3, 1953.
[560] Lamont and Auerbach, *Reminiscences of Corliss Lamont*, 54.

named Irving Peress – the beginning of the direct investigations of the army that would be McCarthy's downfall.

The fight against government persecution, which led to badgering by the FBI for the rest of Lamont's life, renewed Lamont's interest in domestic affairs. Over the course of the 1950s and 60s, he broadened his efforts to include suits against the Post Office, State Department, and protests about infringements upon academic freedom. He had found a new niche that allowed him to take advantage of his strengths – charisma, a conscientious attention to detail, stamina, and essentially limitless money – while earning himself significant respect among the press and public. Lamont embraced this role as a civil liberties champion and released another book in 1956 that represented his new priorities. In *Freedom is as Freedom Does,* Lamont argued that dissent was among the most valuable products produced by a democratic society. He wrote that, "The so-called crackpot often turns out to be a trail-blazer; the genius frequently starts his career as a minority of one."[561] As a result, the government needed to guarantee the right by anyone to advocate anything, regardless of how "ludicrous, obscene, obsolete, or subversive to the majority."[562] Where once Lamont had focused on preserving democracy through the cause of socialism, after the 50s he did so almost exclusively through the defense and promotion of civil liberties.

Therefore, the Khrushchev speech was not a matter of reckoning for Lamont. Lamont had already made his break and found his new path. He did not merely accept the

[561] Corliss Lamont, *Freedom Is as Freedom Does; Civil Liberties Today.* (New York: Horizon Press, 1956), 7.
[562] Ibid.

reality of Stalin's atrocities after Khrushchev's speech made it okay to do so. He had been criticizing Soviet abuse of civil liberties for a decade (though he does not appear to have accepted that the Moscow Trials were a charade until the speech) and had emphasized his own independent position in fifty-three ways four years before. As he explained in a 1956 letter to Bertrand Russell, Lamont accepted Khrushchev's analysis of Stalin "in general, if not in every detail," and acknowledged the innocence of the victims of the Moscow Trials. But he did not believe that Stalin's oppression precluded an appreciation of his economic and foreign policies, which Lamont still asserted had been a promising development.[563] There is no sign that Lamont felt any particular trauma from the Khrushchev revelations, nor did it seem to fundamentally alter his perception that the Soviet Union was, in balance, a positive factor in the history of the twentieth century.

The invasion of Hungary, however, was troubling. It was disheartening for the same reason as Finland had been: it did not make sense. There was no pragmatic reasoning for the invasion. Keeping the Hungarians in a national jail did not promise to make anyone's life better in the short term and the invective it engendered by leftists worldwide in the long-term made socialism harder to advance, not easier. The idea that Stalin was murderously paranoid, as revealed by Khrushchev's speech, did not damage Lamont's views of the Soviet mission. The crushing of a people's revolution, of the sort that had begun the USSR itself, by Stalin's *successor* did. In an interview with Mike Wallace a year later, Lamont told Wallace that he judged the invasion of Hungary "an

[563] Nicholas Griffin, *The Selected Letters of Bertrand Russell, Volume 2: The Public Years 1914-1970* (Routledge, 2013), 156.

external tragedy and intervention and cruelty on the part of the Russians which I could not approve."[564]

The dominos fell from there. Lamont argued in later years that the Soviet Union had not necessarily moved progress because the "draconian dictatorship" that ruled it was a danger to the cause of socialism. He asserted that the Soviet experience led people to assume that socialism was inherently connected to an "austere garrison type of government," rather than a fulfillment of democracy in its purest form.[565] Lamont's anger at the Soviets after 1956 was not the equivalent of Max Eastman's in 1925 or Albert Camus' in 1946, both of whom reacted to the Soviet betrayal of ideals with a sense of outrage. Lamont's reaction was closer to weary resignation: like a disappointed father who at last decides his wayward child is not worth his time. Lamont's was close to the trajectory of, again, Jean Paul Sartre, a very different intellectual in many ways but one who similarly believed in the Soviet Union's potential for over a decade after it was fashionable in the Left. In 1956, Sartre posited that "the Hungarian massacre" meant that it was "no longer possible to be friendly toward the ruling faction of the Soviet bureaucracy." [566] It is easy to imagine the existentialist Sartre and pragmatic Lamont toasting to that sentiment. By the late 50s, Lamont was drifting in and out of the American-Soviet friendship movement to the point that Morford and Kent could no longer be sure of his participation in events or his support of Soviet policies.

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[564] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," Night Beat transcript, March 8, 1957; Corliss Lamont.
[565] Lamont, *Voice in the Wilderness; Collected Essays of Fifty Years.*, 198.
[566] Aronson, *Camus & Sartre*, 201–2.

Lamont's "unreliability" to his former allies is displayed by the Bernard Koten affair of 1963. Koten had been the curator of the ARI's library.[567] When that organization dissolved, the library spun off into its own institution, of which Koten was director.[568] This library was the most complete source of Soviet literature in the United States.[569] Koten was an occasional NCASF guest and speaker and was outspoken on his Sovietophile perspective. He was as solid an American supporter of the Soviet Union as one was likely to find. In August of 1963, Koten led a group of students to the USSR as tourists in affiliation with Afton tours. On August 29, Koten's group reported to the press that their leader had disappeared. The American embassy concluded that he was "probably" under arrest. The next day, Intourist announced to the international press that the Soviets held Koten in Tbilisi "on charges of homosexual activities with a soviet [sic] citizen."[570] While Lenin had decriminalized homosexuality in 1917 in the Soviet Union, Stalin had once again made it a crime in 1933. Homosexuality was not tolerated particularly well anywhere in 1963 but in the Soviet Union it carried a potential penalty of years of hard labor.[571]

This was a delicate situation for all parties. NCASF leaders Richard Morford and Rockwell Kent were in direct communication with SSOD over the matter and Lamont

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[567] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Award of the Bronze Star, Bernard Koten, January 16, 1945; Box 7; Folder 42.
[568] "Richard Morford Papers; TAM.361," Box 9; Folder 47.
[569] "U.S. Tour Group Guide in Russia Disappears," *Los Angeles Times*, August 29, 1963, 1.
[570] "U.S. Tour Guide Under Arrest, Russian Says: Homosexual Activity Complained of," *Chicago Tribune*, August 30, 1963.
[571] At present, the only comprehensive work on homosexuality in the Soviet Union is Dan Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia: The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

may have contacted them independently as well. Lamont's immediate reaction was to make plans for a press conference deploring Koten's imprisonment. This was in opposition to NCASF chairman Rockwell Kent, who, motivated by homophobia, deemed Koten's behavior "a disgusting affair" and preferred to deal with the Soviets behind closed doors. Kent wrote to Tamara Mamedova, head of SSOD, "We have too much respect for Soviet law and justice to presume to intercede on anyone's behalf beyond asking… that whatever leniency toward Koten Soviet law permits should be accorded him in view of his activities for peace and friendship…," but he refused to let the NCASF take the matter public or even to personally appeal to Khrushchev. Morford, meanwhile, appealed to Soviet Ambassador Anatoli F. Dobrynin but was also against making the matter public: presumably out of a desire to avoid further bad publicity toward the USSR.[572] When Lamont told Morford that, "often publicity was the only thing that brought action from the Soviets,"[573] Kent wrote Lamont in a panic to dissuade him, using the kind of apologetic reasoning Lamont might have found compelling in the 30s:

> What, in our understanding, is a serious crime in the Soviet Union has been committed by a man who is presumably thoroughly familiar with Soviet law. Respecting that law and its administrators, I can only feel that justice should be permitted to take its course, uninfluenced by special pleas… Dear Corliss, can't you see what is so clear to me: That the punishment our press would inflict upon Koten would be far worse – and in the long run far more injurious to him – than anything within reason (and Soviet law is reasonable) that a Soviet court might impose? I beg you, Corliss, to head off this proposed feeding of at present helpless Bernard Koten to the hyenas of our ravenous and utterly unprincipled and merciless press.[574]

[572] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Letter from Rockwell Kent to Anatoli F. Dobrynin, September 3, 1963; Box 7; Folder 42.
[573] Ibid., Letter from Richard Morford to Rockwell Kent, September 15, 1963; Box 7; Folder 42.
[574] Ibid., Letter from Rockwell Kent to Corliss Lamont, September 12, 1963; Box 7; Folder 42. Kent had a rhetorical style employing frequent use of the "royal we."

Lamont agreed to hold off on publicity but wrote Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei A. Gromyko, with whom he had a "long and pleasant acquaintance," to protest, first on September 9 and then on September 18. Lamont asked that the Soviets provide Koten with legal representation and allow him to contact his friends and family. He also offered to meet with Gromyko to discuss Koten's case, though we do not know if such a meeting ever took place.[575] The Soviets released Koten and sent him to Vienna on September 28 after a month in jail. Though Kent asserted "we have had no doubt whatever that he would eventually be quietly released and sent home,"[576] it is more likely that the risk of bad publicity from Americans influenced the Soviets than that a Soviet bureaucrat's heart spontaneously grew several sizes. Before the threat of American publicity by Lamont and Koten's other friends surfaced, the Soviet foreign ministry had told the American embassy that they would try Koten on a morals charge.[577] Lamont may well have played a role in saving Koten from a dire fate.

As the sixties blossomed and the Soviet Union bungled from one crisis to another, Lamont saw that their "austere, garrison-type" socialism did not have strong prospects of progressing into an ideal society. While not useless, the Soviet experiment was clearly a false positive. After he made this assessment, Lamont became public about his belief that it was "unfortunate that socialism has come into power first in countries like Russia and China, which were terribly backward in a democratic sense…" (echoing his own kneejerk sentiment of 1932, though for different reasons). He lamented that socialism had not first

[575] Ibid., Letter from Corliss Lamont to Andrei A. Gromyko, September 18, 1963; Box 7; Folder 42.
[576] Ibid., Letter from Rockwell Kent to Richard Morford, September 30, 1963; Box 7; Folder 42.
[577] "Russians Free U. S. Instructor," *Washington Post*, September 29, 1963.

surfaced in a democratic nation "like Great Britain or France or the United States," instead, which would have allowed people to see socialism's benefits without autocratic scars.[578] He thought that the Soviet Union had made considerable improvements since Stalin's death but he was nonetheless discouraged. Lamont explained, "It [the Soviet Union] has tried to suppress criticism of official policies and doctrines by arresting dissenters, and sending them to labor camps. To anyone believing in a democratic political system, it has been extremely disappointing that the Soviet Union during its more than sixty years of existence still falls so short of being a true democracy."[579] Lamont even cast doubts on the genuineness of Soviet socialism. He thought that Soviet leaders had tried to implement national planning too fast, when they should have first instituted economic planning on local levels first to work out the kinks.[580] Whereas he had once expected socialism to reach maturation in the Soviet Union "almost overnight," by the last decade of his life he reasoned, "It may take two centuries or more to do that in the Soviet Union."[581] Even he was not willing to wait that long.

## Epilogue and Conclusion

While one might assume Lamont's passion for peace and equality might have finally found a large audience in the New Left in the 1960s and 70s, this never happened. Lamont was intensely critical of the new radicals. He condemned the students as "infantile leftists who are endangering the cause of intelligent radicalism and a

[578] Lamont, *Voice in the Wilderness; Collected Essays of Fifty Years.*, 310.
[579] Lamont, *Yes to Life*, 40.
[580] Corliss Lamont, *A Lifetime of Dissent* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1988), 366.
[581] Lamont and Auerbach, *Reminiscences of Corliss Lamont*.

democratic transition to a better society."[582] He longed for the days when pragmatic, organized communists of the Old Left dominated the world of dissent, because at least they argued on the basis of logic rather than emotion.[583] Lamont, of course, had never had use for emotional appeals. As a pragmatist and Russellian realist, Lamont had always sought to ground his arguments in reason. Even if the evidence for his assertions could only be found in a hypothetical utopia, his arguments were at least designed with coherence in mind.

Bob Dylan's appearance at an Emergency Civil Liberties Council dinner in 1963 well encapsulates the disconnect between Lamont and the New Left on a philosophical level.[584] Lamont invited the iconic singer, then a young man of twenty-three, to receive the ECLC's (Emergency Civil Liberties Committee) Tom Paine Award "in recognition of distinguished service in the fight for civil liberty." Lamont thought it important for the ECLC (and older radicals like himself) to "make the effort now to comprehend" the message of an "idol of the progressive youngsters of today."[585] Dylan's seemingly improvised speech was confusing and muddled, reflecting his extreme inebriation that evening. But he, perhaps inadvertently, reflected how his generation was diverging from Lamont's. Dylan was uncompromising and emotional. "…I've read history books, I've never seen one history book that tells how anybody feels. I've found facts about our

[582] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," Letter to the New York Times from Corliss Lamont, May 17, 1968; Corliss Lamont.
[583] The differences between the Old and New Left are interesting, and are discussed in 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).
[584] It is perhaps not surprising that there have been several books written about Bob Dylan's politics. The best is Jeff Taylor and Chad Israelson, *The Political World of Bob Dylan: Freedom and Justice, Power, and Sin*, 2015.
[585] "Letter from Corliss Lamont to the ECLC," December 19, 1963, www.corliss-lamont.org/dylan.htm.

history, I've found out what people know about what goes on but I never found anything about how anybody feels about anything happens. It's all just plain facts. And it don't help me one bit to look back," he said.[586] Lamont lived for facts and history. In a philosophy guided by the scientific method, one cannot determine truth without context, whether reported history or experience. Lamont's brand of philosophy was not concerned with "how anybody feels," but rather with meeting certain standards of well-being. Quality of life was determined through analysis of objective and relative conditions. However, Dylan and his ilk could not care less about context. Feeling and conscience guided their perception of truth, not results. Despite being on the same side as the New Left on most issues, Lamont must have considered them more mysterious and alien than even the reactionaries who had attempted to silence him in the 1950s.

However, unlike so many of his fellow supporters of the American-Soviet friendship movement who hardened with time and age in a world that seemed increasingly backward, Lamont chose to accept that times had change and mellowed. He relaxed, became open to new ideas, and set himself to enjoying life. He became downright whimsical.[587] The people and trends he had thought to be regressive in his youth no longer struck him as the real impediments to progress. His writings in the 1960s and beyond indicate a greater tolerance toward the mainstream and a suspicion toward

[586] "Transcript of Bob Dylan's Remarks at the Bill of Rights Dinner," December 13, 1963, www.corliss-lamont.org/dylan.htm. He ended his remarks by expressing empathy for Lee Harvey Oswald, who had shot the President of the United States a month before. One can imagine how the booing and hissing ECLC crowd must have felt. Something, indeed, was happening there, but they did not know what it was.
[587] Indeed, in 1978 he amused his family by belatedly jumping on board the "roots music" phenomenon which began in the 1950s, releasing an album of show tunes from his youth on the Folkways label. Lamont's patrician New York accent, charming formality, and amateur musical talents make the record a minor gem.

dogma in all its forms. Even the Church, which he had opposed since at least his Columbia years, no longer warranted his derision. This was largely due to the anti-Vietnam stance of much of liberal Christianity. Churches, he concluded, had been a better ally to leftists than the unions ever had.[588] He gave donations to the Unitarians for years because "their churches became centers of inspiration and liberal thought."[589] Perhaps religion could be metaphor after all. He defended Pope Paul against accusations of irrelevance and debated liberals who thought that the Church hierarchy might influence American Catholic politicians. The real enemies of progress, he decided, were the extremists. Better to line up with Hofstadter and Boorstin, "consensus" historians who sought to see things as they really were not how they could be, than to waste one's time on flights of fancy. Between the communists and Nazis, it was clear to Lamont that a passionate politics was a dangerous politics.

Lamont was back where he started: an independent socialist with a penchant for civil liberties, an interest in social good and justice, and no ideological ties. Russia, in retrospect, was the great aberration of his life. His advocacy of Soviet policies in the 1930s and 40s put him in the unfamiliar position of placing ideology before reason. In his quest to cultivate what he thought were the seeds of progress in the Soviet Union, he neglected to note, or worse rationalized into irrelevance, that in its efforts to grow his plant was smothering everything it touched: even his cherished strains of civil liberties, equality, and justice. But distracted as he was by the prospects of a better world, Lamont,

[588] Lamont, *Yes to Life*, 51.
[589] Ibid., 50.

in the end, remained a pragmatist. When his seedling for progress began to look like a hideous pumpkin, he did the same thing his friends Sidney Hook and Max Eastman had done when they realized the same: he stopped watering the damn thing, moved on, and tried to do better next time.

## Chapter 4: Richard Morford – Facing the Social Imperatives of the Gospel

In 1954, a young Chicago woman named Valerie Vance Dillon became an FBI informant within the NCASF, and wrote a story about her experience for the *Chicago Daily Tribune.*[590] It is perhaps the least exciting "spy story" in the history of espionage. Dillon met Richard Morford, the executive director of the NCASF, on a flight from New York to Washington DC. She later joined the Chicago Council at the FBI's request. Dillon attended some meetings, read some literature, and heard some controversial statements about American policy, all without notable incident. "The adventure of a lifetime," indeed.[591] Nevertheless, Dillon's purple prose and an imaginative *Tribune* artist attempted to inject the article with sinister, noir-ish tension. Regarding Morford, she wrote that, "I glanced at him, wondering what secrets that strange smile held." Meanwhile, in an artistic rendering in the insert, a predatory Morford leers at Dillon. It is a hilarious and sad relic of Cold War hysteria.

The portrayal in Dillon's article of Morford as a menacing subversive is a comical reversal of reality. Richard Morford was a Presbyterian minister who acquaintances characterized as gregarious, positive, and an open-book. Yet this article, along with the unrelated HUAC investigation that eventually resulted in a jail term, were Morford's only

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[590] Valerie Vance Dillon, "I Spied on Chicago Reds!," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 24, 1954. The article was written after Dillon testified in the McCarran Act case against the NCASF. Just as in the article, she had little of interest to talk about in her testimony, aside from an anti-NCASF riot which occurred in Chicago that she only heard about, rather than experienced. NCASF council David Rein also demonstrated that Dillon had a tendency to fill in blanks in her memory with artistic embellishment, though her testimony was so inconsequential that it did not really matter.

[591] Ibid.

brushes with serious publicity on a national level. He was the single most important member of the American-Soviet friendship movement, which he led for over three decades. Somehow, though, he has flown completely under the radar of that movement's critics. Scarcely a monograph is published on the Popular Front that does not mention the NCASF, but there exists no detailed discussion of Morford and his role. This is unfortunate, as Morford is a more interesting figure and representative of a much more interesting paradigm than was the "fellow-traveler" trope which has attracted considerable scholarly interest.

Morford's story, more than any other, disrupts the view that the NCASF was directed by Communists and Soviet sycophants. Morford was a Christian socialist who had little interest in the Soviet Union for the first half of his life. He was not involved in the NCASF's communist-led predecessor organizations in any capacity. He did not have any significant connections to the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA), the standard well from which executive staff were drawn for the so-called communist fronts like the NCASF. Instead, he came to the American-Soviet friendship movement after 1945, through the hope of preventing a third world war. He believed that as long as the possibility of nuclear war loomed on the horizon, no cause could be more important than increasing the bonds of friendship with the Soviet Union and the United States. While anticommunists and the US government derided the Soviet peace initiatives as a calculated sham, Morford took them seriously. He often doubted and criticized the efficacy of the methods of the Soviet leadership but judged the matter of peace between the superpowers to be too important to ignore.

Morford's great dream and partial accomplishment was to transform the NCASF into a Cold War successor of the interwar Popular Front. The Popular Front of the 1930s allied liberals with the radical Left in an effort to fight fascism, promote equality and advance the New Deal. Morford, a pacifist who knew that humanity was in existential danger in the Cold War, hoped to forge the NCASF into a similarly broad conglomeration, with the goal of furthering peace between the United States and Soviet Union. Morford sought to both complicate and humanize Americans' perspective on the Soviets by presenting evidence of American antagonism toward the USSR and of sincere Soviet peace efforts. If Americans could perceive the Cold War in a more balanced manner, he reasoned, then perhaps the NCASF could organize the unheard masses of Americans into an anti-Cold War coalition that could make its will felt in Washington. Maybe, Morford imagined, the NCASF could save the world from itself.

In this chapter, I discuss the intellectual life of Richard Morford, explaining the source and nature of his beliefs, his impetus for participating in the American-Soviet friendship movement, and the manner in which he shaped and was shaped by the movement. I argue that Morford, as a socialist, was indicative of a different, Anglo-American ideological lineage from that of the Bolshevik-influenced communists and Trotskyists. He was a product of the Christian socialist tradition originating in the second half of the 19$^{th}$ century, which in turn was a part of the Social Christianity movement that blossomed in Britain and America. He approached the crises of the twentieth century as a modernist Christian who saw God as a universal force. This force, he believed, urged humans to create a Kingdom of Heaven on earth rather than in an afterlife. Morford

believed that socialism was the way to bring forth that kingdom in the midst of the Great Depression. His interest in socialism, pacifism, and an activist ministry brought him to leftist secular causes with a Christian bent, including the House of Friendship and United Christian Council for Democracy.

Unlike any other character in this dissertation, the Soviet Union did not become a matter of concern for Morford until after World War II, when he judged that a war between the superpowers would be so devastating as to make an earthly paradise of spiritual fulfillment a lost cause. The NCASF offered a way for him to work toward ensuring that did not happen. Over the course of the next 35 years, he used the NCASF to further better relations with the Soviet Union. He also used the organization as a secular ministry, in which he promoted the values he had preached in his church. In the process, Morford worked to build a broad American peace movement while facing prosecution from the US government and increasing doubts about the political wisdom and morality of Soviet policy.

## A Socialist Christianity

Richard Morford was born in 1903 in Onaway, Michigan. Onaway was a tiny town at the northern tip of the state's lower peninsula, only founded ten years before with the belated arrival of the railroads. In 2015, Onaway has all of 800 residents. It was somewhat bigger in Morford's youth, attaining the three-thousand citizens necessary for city status in 1903. Onaway back then was structured around several churches, along with a one-room schoolhouse. The town consisted of a single large street, sporadically dotted

with log cabins. The most important employers were the logging companies, which found no end of supply for their industry in the northern forests of Michigan. The town only received access to a proper highway in the late 1910s. The only ways in or out prior to that was via either the Detroit and Mackinac railway line (which had allowed the town to exist in the first place), or the old plank and gravel Cheboygan trail. The closest town of any size to Onaway was Cheboygan, a comparative metropolis of six-thousand souls. While Onaway had ambitions to become a county seat, a propensity for forest fires and the severe ups and downs of the forestry business meant the town remained profoundly isolated.[592]

A life in a town like Onaway was not for everyone. Morford wanted to find a way out from his adolescence onward. But, for a lower middle class kid in rural Michigan, there were only so many options. Morford explored all of them. With a youthful case of sciatica, the army – that oft-imagined route from nowhere to somewhere – was out of the question. His best hope, he reasoned, was to become a success at business and indeed, there were opportunities along those lines. Morford's banker father Frank was successful and popular and was beginning to set up connections throughout Michigan for the State Savings Bank. Richard, perhaps hoping to follow in his father's footsteps, applied himself at business from early childhood.[593]

What stands out the most about the young Morford is his work ethic, in part developed because of his father's demand that Richard work if he wanted money for

[592] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," Part 2.
[593] Ibid., part 1.

anything more than room and board. He began to work as an office boy at age twelve in a sawmill and was promoted to a full staff member the next year, in the accounting department. After graduating from high school three years early, he got a job at the same school teaching bookkeeping, stenography, and typing. At the age of seventeen, he became a full-time employee at the sawmill, then switched to doing stenography at the courthouse. By eighteen, Morford had six years of working experience, and had mastered every facet of office work. It is no wonder he later claimed to be unable to remember any national or international news from his boyhood: there had been no time to learn of it.[594]

There was, however, something Morford missed in the business world: the sense of making meaningful connections with other people. Morford was a compassionate and outgoing boy. When he was fifteen, a local preacher named Marshall Reed saw this in him and believed Morford was meant to help others. Reed thought Morford had the potential to make a real difference in people's lives. Reed told the young Morford, "If it ever comes into your thinking to consider the ministry as a calling, I hope you will give it serious consideration."[595] To this point, such a possibility had not occurred to Richard. His parents were both Methodists, one of the more liberal Protestant denominations in the first half of the 20th century, but religion made little impression on Richard until his teenage years. This was not for lack of trying. His mother was devoted to the Church, insisting on weekly attendance and a refrain on Sunday labor for the family. She carried a Bible under her arm on the way to church, which embarrassed Morford to no end: "only

[594] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," part 1.
[595] Ibid., Part 2, 8.

the most religious did this kind of thing," he explained in later years.[596] He was uninspired by Sunday School and was put off by the giant tent revival services of the traveling theologians who often stopped in Onaway, who Morford later compared derisively to Billy Graham. To Morford, it was all too much drama, too much ritual, and not enough action.[597]

It was only in his late teens that Morford gravitated toward the Church as his means of escape. The impetus seems to have come from his membership in Marshall Reed's Epworth League, a young people's organization for the Methodist Church in which he received almost all of his religious education. Morford took to preaching at least as well as Reed had predicted, and knew that he had found his life's calling. He had a local preacher's license by the age of 17, and was soon conducting his own services as a traveling preacher in Onaway and surrounding towns.[598] In 1921, he had saved up enough money to enroll in Albion College, a Methodist institution in southwest Michigan, where he hoped to begin his training as a professional cleric.

## Morford in the 1920s

Morford did not know it yet but he was to become a major figure within the Christian socialist movement. To allow us to properly contextualize Morford's position within the Protestant churches, let us take a diversion into the state of the Protestant dominations up to the late 1920s, when Morford became a full member, and their

[596] Ibid., 19.
[597] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," part 1.
[598] Ibid.

relationship with socialism. To many, a Christian socialist appears a contradiction in terms. This assumption is premised on Karl Marx's own atheism, the materialist girding of Marxism, and the Soviet Union's anti-religion campaigns. Yet, Christianity and socialism are not inherently at odds, whether in a historical or philosophical sense. There was a long tradition of socialism preceding Marx's class-based, highly theoretical variety. Pre-Marxian socialists, particularly in Britain, were usually Christians. Influenced by the work of utopian author Edward Bellamy, these early socialists tended to appreciate a planned economy and political apparatus as the way to bring forth the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. The first theologian to widely disseminate this message was Frederick Denison Maurice, who argued as early as 1838 that heaven was not a place but a metaphor for what was realizable through socialism. The Kingdom was not a distant ideal to Maurice but rather a "real, living… community of righteousness" that could be created in the short term.[599]

By the end of the 19th century, the ideological descendants of Maurice had fixated on the massive social problems which existed in industrial cities, both in the United States and Britain. As moral and social degradation seemed to expand, the influence of the Church appeared to decrease, which suggested that new tactics were necessary.[600] The Christian socialists "concentrated on the relation between declining religious influence and growing social tensions between the haves and have-nots." They believed that, should equality be increased in modern society, the result would be a more

[599] Paul T Phillips, *A Kingdom on Earth: Anglo-American Social Christianity, 1880-1940* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 1.
[600] Ibid., 49.

moral populace. They wanted to transfer traditional "village" standards of morality (honesty, concern for one's neighbors, care for those who were less fortunate) to the urban masses, and believed that the greatest impediment to this was the inefficiency and callousness of the capitalist order, which prioritized profits and discouraged empathy.[601]

One important Christian socialist leader, CM Morse, summed up the attitude of many others when he asserted, "…with social inequality among members outside the Church, there cannot be religious-social equality in it."[602] Morse's solution involved a more active ministry that could establish a dialogue with the working classes and work for their gain.[603] This socialist-influenced perspective, that a church should be involved in social services, is known as the "institutional church" model.[604] For the most part, at least before World War I, Christian socialists advocating the institutional Church were accepted by the Church both in Britain and the United States, so long as they stayed out of politics. As Paul Phillips writes, "socialism on the hustings was unacceptable."[605] George D. Herron, an American clergyman and socialist who led the Social Gospel movement in the 1890s, became a cautionary tale when he attacked capitalism in public and equated individualism with sin.[606] After campaigning for socialist Eugene Debs for president in 1900, Herron was stripped of his ministry and exiled from polite society. A line was established: while it was well and good to advocate socialism in an oblique sort of way, religion and politics were separate worlds, and never the twain should meet.

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[601] Ibid., 57.
[602] Ibid., 68.
[603] Ibid., 69.
[604] Ibid., 70.
[605] Ibid., 207.
[606] Ibid., 220.

For many Christian socialists, such a division would not do. One such was Walter Rauschenbusch. Rauschenbusch was convinced that the Church needed to become involved in politics. Having spent eleven years ministering to a congregation mired in poverty in New York City, Rauschenbusch observed that the "conventional pietism" of the past was of no use to people "out of work, out of clothes, out of shoes, out of hope."[607] In his 1907 book, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, Rauschenbusch argued that contemporary Christianity had become impotent in people's lives. But he went much further in his criticism of the Church in his third book, 1912's *Christianizing the Social Order*. This book was a socialist critique of capitalism, blaming the capitalist system for the inability of Western societies to build anything approaching a Christian social order. Such an order, he asserted, rested on economic democracy and social justice: two things capitalism had shown no ability to deliver. This was because capitalism was based on un-Christian principles, such as competition, monopolistic autocracy, and the profit motive.[608]

Rauschenbusch believed the solution to the anti-Christian capitalist order was a socialist economy. Because a moral economy required the existence of social justice, collective property rights, industrial democracy, equality, and community-wide cooperation, socialism was "the strategical key to the spiritual conquest of the modern world."[609] Contrary to the assertions of Marx, Rauschenbusch posited that "one would be

[607] Charles Howard Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism, 1865-1915* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press; H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1940), 216.
[608] Ibid., 224.
[609] Ibid., 227.

a better Christian for being a socialist, and a better socialist for being a Christian."[610] In essence, Rauschenbusch was trying to make Christianity, which had begun as a religion for the poor but had been since coopted by the rich, relevant to the working class by helping to make Christianity, and the world, more amenable to them.

In the years before World War I, Rauschenbusch's ideology would be joined to that of other socially-conscious Protestant theologians and would itself become known as the Social Gospel. The Social Gospel briefly dominated Protestant ecclesiastical debate during the 1910s. Not every, or even most, preachers who advocated the Social Gospel were socialists, but there was significant overlap. The uniting factor was a belief that the role of the Church had to change in modern society – something a great many liberal and Left preachers could get behind. In practice, most proponents of the Social Gospel were more moderate and cautious, than Rauschenbusch, working for social justice in the contemporary world "short of social reconstruction."[611]

At the core of the ethos of Christian socialists and other radical movements aiming to transform the Church was theological modernism: a focus on the *themes* of the Bible rather than its exact literal content. Modernists argued that Biblical stories existed to make a point about the nature of God and His relationship to humanity. The stories took the shape that they did because they had been crafted by ancient Christians to appeal to other ancient peoples. In a 1915 sermon, Henry Emerson Fosdick, a Presbyterian theologian, explained the origin of modernism in the Church: "For the first time we know

[610] Ibid.
[611] Dorn, *Socialism and Christianity in Early 20th Century America*, 25.

in some thorough fashion what contemporary meanings these writings [i.e., the books of the Bible] bore to those who originally wrote them and first listened to them… [we] find ourselves plainly among a primitive people, dealing with ideas that we know to be childish and recognize to be outgrown."[612] Since we cannot reconcile the modern world with the superstitions of such a people, Fosdick said that it is the clergy's responsibility to "perceive the real nature of God's revelation in the Bible."[613] Clergy should not be focused on what the ancient Jews and Christians perceived but rather upon the themes that gave those perceptions power: the deeds accomplished under the influence of God. It did not matter to Fosdick that the world was not created in six days, or that Paul's fight against sin was not really anthropomorphized into a demon. The important part was that clergy conveyed that God *did* create the world, that Paul *did* fight his sin with the help of God's love.[614]

Yet, scarcely had the Social Gospel began to make itself felt upon the American social fabric when it began to fall out of favor with Americans themselves. Historian Paul A Carter offers numerous causes for the decline of social Christianity which began almost simultaneously with the twentieth century's third decade. First, the Social Gospel was associated with Prohibition (enacted in January, 1920) in the minds of many Americans. Many Social Gospel proponents supported Prohibition, at first out of humanitarian concern for alcoholics. Americans, as a result, began to associate the Social Gospel advocates with political reaction, or with an ivory tower legalist morality that was

[612] Harry Emerson Fosdick and N.Y.) Union Theological Seminary (New York, *A Modern Preacher's Problem in His Use of the Scriptures* (New York: Union Theological Seminary, 1915), 18.
[613] Ibid., 27.
[614] Ibid., 29.

out of touch with the real world. Second, the Social Gospel suffered in proportion to the growth of fundamentalists in the Protestant churches. Counter to the modernists of the Social Gospel, who saw much of the Bible as symbolism, the fundamentalists had a literal understanding of Scripture, seeing a simple but strict reading of the Bible as a solution to the "corrupting" influence of modern society. Fundamentalism found traction among the uneducated laity, who had no difficulty in privileging religion over science. Third, many middle class parishioners were displeased with the socialist rhetoric often employed within the Social Gospel. These parishioners used their influence through the Church's budget to direct ecclesiastical policy. Last, the First World War undercut the Church's moral authority. Many churchmen had argued in 1917 that the war was a battle between good and evil: an idea difficult to support after the harsh and opportunistic Versailles Treaty. The support most churchmen gave the war created the perception that the Social Gospel had become corrupted by its encounters with the secular world. Some theologians argued that in its attempt to become an active part of the world, the Church had lost what made it pure. For all of these reasons, by the mid-1920s, the Protestant churches had, for the most part, moved away from advocating social reform, and back toward sitting upon their aloof perch.[615]

The strength of the reaction against the Social Gospel in the United States was amply displayed by the Scopes Trial of 1925. Fundamentalists who could not figure out how to reconcile a literal reading of the Bible with the conclusions resulting from the

[615] Paul A Carter, *The Decline and Revival of the Social Gospel; Social and Political Liberalism in American Protestant Churches, 1920-1940.* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1956).

Theory of Evolution decided that the latter was simply flat-out wrong. Fundamentalists claimed that "no man believing in evolution could enter the Kingdom of Heaven," therefore drawing a line behind which there was no retreating. By creating a mass populist movement, the fundamentalists were able to outlaw the teaching of evolution in first Oklahoma in 1923 and then Tennessee two years later. When Tennessee teacher John Scopes taught evolution anyway, he was tried in criminal court and somehow convicted, despite a heroic performance by Clarence Darrow as defense attorney. Scopes was eventually freed on a technicality by the US Supreme Court but the Tennessee trial was still a significant display of power by the fundamentalists. For all of the desire of the Social Gospel advocates to introduce reform into the Church and make religion more relevant in people's lives, they were proved outgunned by the fundamentalists, who sought to fight the future by keeping the Church and society immobile.[616]

While the Social Gospel was weakened, however, a faction of churchmen in the 1920s continued to argue on the necessity of churches becoming a part of society. One area in which these progressive churchmen tended to intellectually congregate was the cause of pacifism, which, in the wake of World War I, was deemed an imperative position if humanity was to be kept from destroying itself. Instead of enforcing peace, many progressive churches had decided that they must switch tactics and instead outlaw war. The Federal Council of Churches was the early 1920s rallying point for pacifist

[616] Robert Moats Miller, *American Protestantism and Social Issues, 1919-1939* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1958).

clergy. It served as an anti-war lobbying group in Washington, where it passed dozens of resolutions against war and even the production of armaments.[617]

Among the most prominent pacifist churchmen in the 1920s was Englishman LP Jacks. Jacks advocated a refashioning of Christianity into a more simplistic, less legalistic apparatus that could better serve the common man. "The common man," he wrote, "is the appointed saviour of the world." Jacks was an opponent of denominationalism (i.e., the segregation of the Protestant Church based on variations in belief and ritual) and liturgy. "I began to see that this hearsay, second-hand stuff about God and Christ, in which I was so prolific, was not religion, but at best only a reminiscence or ghost of religion."[618] Jacks railed against the passive Protestant establishment and for a remolding of the Church into something of use to its parishioners in their daily lives.

In his 1924 book, *The Lost Radiance of the Christian Religion,* Jacks wrote that the Christian churches had "lost the note of encouragement, and acquired again that very note of repression which has no place in the good news of Jesus Christ."[619] Christianity had become a "religion of the old which has lost some of its saviour by being adapted to the minds of the old."[620] In essence, the tone of the Church had shifted from the New Testament's optimism and humanity to the Old Testament's "colder conceptions of God, of man, and of the universe."[621] Jacks doubted if the message of Christ, which he saw as

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[617] Carter, *The Decline and Revival of the Social Gospel; Social and Political Liberalism in American Protestant Churches, 1920-1940.*
[618] Alan Ruston, "Lawrence Pearsall Jacks," *Dictionary of Unitarian & Universalist Biography*, July 23, 2003, http://uudb.org/articles/lawrencepearsalljacks.html.
[619] LP Jacks, *The Lost Radiance of the Christian Religion,* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1924).
[620] Ibid.
[621] Ibid.

an announcement of the possibilities inherent in the world and humanity's place within it, had ever really taken hold anywhere in the world. Civilization, he said, "instead of concentrating on development… concentrated on *government."* Because church authorities were unwilling to work together with their citizens to become better people, they treated them as dangerous beings. Churches needed to instead ally with their parishioners, as a united front in search of spiritual enlightenment. Jacks thought it imperative that the old hierarchical relationship between churchman and church-goer be discarded.[622]

To prompt the kind of sweeping change Jacks envisioned, a new type of progressive churchman emerged in the 1920s: a priest/activist hybrid with a contemporary perspective. In part a response to the theological reaction of the formalists in the Scopes Trial and the complacent nature of mainstream society in the 1920s, this new preacher paradigm embraced the Left without euphemism and was not afraid to get its hands dirty in political debate. Among the most important of these churchmen was Congregationalist minister AJ Muste. Muste bridged Marxism and Christianity as never before. Raised in working-class Grand Rapids, Muste believed class consciousness in unions was essential to eliminating inequality in the United States. He participated in many labor strikes, and formed the democratic socialist American Workers Party in 1933. As had Herron, Muste believed American clergy needed to act more like Christ. And to act like Christ, Muste argued, one must work with the underprivileged and oppressed.[623]

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[622] Ibid.
[623] A. J Muste, *Fellowship and Class Struggle* (New York: Fellowship of Reconciliation, 1930), 6.

Muste wrote that adopting the sensibilities of the oppressed required clergy to become uncomfortable with wealth and privilege. Identification with the impoverished and needy must be "thorough-going and uncompromising."[624]

Another churchman who was integral to the destruction of barriers between Christianity and leftist politics was Englishman Harry F. Ward. In the first half of the 20th century, no churchman on the Left was as influential to a new generation of socialist, activist American clergy than Ward. Ward took the institutional Church to new heights, bridging liberal Protestantism with both secular political advocacy groups and the United States Communist Party. Ward had impressive sway with young churchmen, both as a teacher at Union Theological Seminary and as an officer of numerous liberal organizations, including the ACLU (which he chaired between 1920 and 1940). Few churchmen put as much effort into proving the inadequacies of capitalism as an economic system as Ward. None allowed themselves to so ingratiate themselves with the radical Left while doing so.

Ward came to socialism organically, reaching conclusions about the necessity of a new economic system based on his own experiences with the poor rather than through Marxist theory. As such he was more in favor of persuading through arguments than dogma. In 1914, he described the necessity of a democratic socialism and the Church's alliance with that cause, without ever using the dreaded "S" word itself. "Christianity," he wrote, "involves a complete democracy of life."[625] Since Christianity has been about "the

[624] Ibid., 10.
[625] Harry Frederick Ward, *The Social Creed of the Churches,* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1914), 11.

extension of privilege from the few to the man," it was unacceptable and un-Christian that some social groups suffered from "definite handicaps" in the prosecution of a good, Christian life. These handicaps included the cost of legal procedures, the lack of effective franchise for minorities, and "injustice in transportation and industry" which denied men equality of opportunity. If Christians really loved their neighbors as themselves, Ward asked, how could they bear to see a neighbor's children "deprived of opportunities for health and education and spiritual development"?[626] Ward took the socialist elements of Christianity that had always been there and made them seem as natural and American as democracy itself.

Ward saw the crisis of confidence in American society after World War I (the same crisis that allowed an event like the Red Scare to happen) as an opportunity to transform the Church into a more active institution. "The people," he wrote, "must be brought to see life whole. At present they see it only partially, and usually from the standpoint of self-interest."[627] Facilitating such a "wholeness" of vision was the best way to stop another war, and hence save civilization from itself. He explained that it was not sufficient to armor the world's nations in pacts and agreements that condemned war. What was necessary was an entirely new world geared toward peace:

> The choice now is between the religion of war and the religion of peace. The religion of war is glorious. It calls out all the energies of life in supreme moments of conflict. But it hurts and destroys. It is the religion of aristocracy… The religion of love is more glorious. It also requires courage, endurance, sacrifice. It calls out all the energies of life in a continuous conflict with nature and with evil, in a sustained career of service… it heals and renews. It is the religion of democracy. It makes not lords but freemen… It develops a society of producers cooperating together in the

[626] Ibid., 158.
[627] Harry Frederick Ward, *The Opportunity for Religion in the Present World Situation /* (New York: 1919).

> production of economic goods and using them for the development of all the higher values of life, not for a chosen few, but for all the people.[628]

Ward blamed the war on capitalism. The was because he saw war as an outgrowth of self-interest: what he called "the profit motive." The search for profit, Ward argued, has enormous detrimental effects on society. It damages and destroys the instruments of production, causes the creation of inferior and harmful goods, and increases the cost of living.[629] What is more, the profit motive did not even produce an efficient system, as it led to overdevelopment of profitable risk industries and a starvation of essential industries to the bare minimum.[630] The only reason profit-seeking had not destroyed civilization, Ward wrote, was because "it is restrained by social control, and because even under industry for profit the integrating stimuli of workmanship and group loyalty still operate to modify its workings."[631]

Suffice it to say, then, Morford lived in a socio-religious environment of fierce debate and high stakes. During the 1920s, Morford swam in this turbulent river and simultaneously began to develop an interest in politics as a result. This was an enormous change for him. His ignorance of politics as a young adult was so complete as to be impressive. He claimed not to have known so much as who the president of the United States was for much of his youth and could not recall having thought about World War I or the Treaty of Versailles when they actually occurred.[632] Politics entered his life when

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[628] Ibid., 39.
[629] Harry Frederick Ward and League for Industrial Democracy, *The Profit Motive: Is It Indispensable to Industry?* (New York City: League for Industrial Democracy, 1924).
[630] Ibid.
[631] Ibid.
[632] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," part 1.

he went to Albion College, a Methodist school in southern Michigan: not exactly an urban setting, but much more connected to the political culture of the United States in the 1920s than was Onaway.

It is tempting to squint and intuit signs of Morford's eventual Social Gospel via Christian socialist leanings in his childhood – in the tremendous work ethic, for instance, or the distrust of religious theater of the sort that the revivalists pedaled. But Albion is the first time he displayed any evidence that he was going to be an activist. At Albion, through contacts he made first at conferences for Methodist organizations, Morford first gained the perspective of a pacifist. While he had no documented opinion of World War I as it occurred, he learned a great deal about it in the aftermath. In notes for his memoirs, Morford explains that he was driven to make people understand the real nature of the war. "…there wasn't any very real consciousness then of the truth of that war, namely that it was a war not to make the world safe for democracy as Woodrow Wilson said, but a war to save German markets," he said.[633] Because he felt the war was about economics rather than ideals, Morford felt "duped."[634] He and his friends in the anti-war movement in Albion vowed to do their best to prevent another war, and never to take part in one.

When he branched out into anti-war conferences, he was first exposed to the theology of Christian socialism. One important moment in his political development was when, in 1924, Morford encountered Rauschenbusch's work. After reading Rauschenbusch's views on Christian socialism, Morford was convinced: "I counted

[633] Ibid., 1: 48.
[634] Ibid., 1: 50.

myself a socialist and a pacifist" from that day forward.[635] He was not shy about sharing these convictions, either: he "preached" socialism, and outreach toward the poor and minorities, at Albion during his last year there. The former was probably why he was temporarily expelled from the school before being saved by a kindly professor who insisted upon reinstating him two days later.[636]

After graduating from Albion in 1925, Morford further explored the Christian socialist ideology when he went on a trip to Europe for the Fellowship of Youth for Peace in 1925. The Fellowship of Youth for Peace was a project started by the Fellowship of Reconciliation. It was one of the premier pacifist religious organizations in the world in the 1920s -- especially for a Methodist like Morford (25% of Methodist ministers once belonged to the Methodist branch of the Fellowship of Reconciliation). Rauschenbusch had joined in 1917. LP Jacks and Harry Ward were both members as well. The Youth for Peace conference had a pacifist mission, taking on as its task the outlawing of all war and, according to Morford, it served as a clearing house for the ideas of his influences: certainly Muste, Jacks, and Ward at the least. The organization's purpose and program were pure Christian socialism. The Fellowship argued that the causes of war were economic injustice, racial prejudice, overpopulation, nationalism, and traditional and irrational national sentiment. The solution, it claimed, was a world federation of nations: not dissimilar from HG Wells' vision for the League of Nations.[637]

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[635] Ibid., 2: 12.
[636] Ibid.
[637] Fellowship of Youth for Peace, *The Fellowship of Youth for Peace: Purpose and Program.* (New York, N.Y.: Fellowship of Youth for Peace, 1916).

Morford never went in for the world government message but was a firm proselytizer for another of the conference's messages: "never again war." In meeting with leaders of the European youth pacifist movement, particularly Britain's Harold Bing, Morford discussed the lessons learned from the First World War. Morford soon realized he was on the left edge of the pacifist movement. While the British talked about "the Versailles Treaty and Pres. Woodrow Wilson," and Wilson's rhetoric about making "the world safe for democracy," Morford and his fellow Methodist youth did not buy it. "We knew better," he later said, having been schooled in the teachings of postwar progressive churchmen.[638] During his visit, Morford attended meetings of another organization, War Resistors International and met famed anarchist Emma Goldman. He was impressed with Goldman and thought her ideal, in which people lived harmoniously together and "rid the world of the heavy hand of government" was interesting, even if he deemed anarchy a less than promising prospect.[639]

Upon his return to the United States, Morford had a great deal to process. From an apolitical youth, he had become immersed in the world of fascinating political creeds in a few short years. He continued to believe in socialism but had no outlet for the ideology. He was hired as a high school principal in the small, rural town of Romeo, Michigan, and thought it wise to keep his convictions to himself for several years. In fact, Morford stopped preaching altogether in Romeo, perhaps out of the fear that, as in Albion, he could not trust himself to not give his sympathies for the downtrodden away. But, in a

[638] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 2: 14.
[639] Ibid.

stroke of luck, a preacher named George Ratcliffe became minister of the Congregationalist Church in Romeo shortly after Morford's arrival. He and Morford lived in the same boarding house. Ratcliffe had just graduated from the famed progressive Christian sanctuary, Union Theological Seminary in New York, and had been a student of the great modernist theologian, Harry Fosdick. As Morford wrote, "This rubbed off on me." Within a few years, he had decided on a new course. Soon, he saved enough money to leave rural Michigan once more, this time for good. His destination was Union Theological Seminary.

## Morford in the 1930s

In 1928, the cause of reform in the United States appeared desperate. Prosperity in the country seemed to be such that its citizens were blinded to the government's shortcomings. The *Churchman* declared, "The country has been made rich beyond endurance."[640] Then, within two years, the Depression tore the whole social fabric asunder. Few events have affected intellectuals as much as the Great Depression of 1929-1933. As Frank Warren argues, "for a generation of liberals who had learned their social philosophy under the humanistic influence of Dewey," the Great Depression "meant not only a failure economically, but a failure in human terms – capitalism did not permit the fullest human development."[641] This meant that more intellectuals than ever became open to the notion of radical change both in the economy and society. The inevitable fall of the

[640] Carter, *The Decline and Revival of the Social Gospel; Social and Political Liberalism in American Protestant Churches, 1920-1940.*, 144.
[641] Warren, *Liberals and Communism*, 34.

capitalist economies, and how to salvage societies afterwards, became a topic of much credence and debate during the Depression.

This transformation of perspective applied as much to the theologians of the Protestant churches as anywhere else. Historian Paul A Carter explains the dramatic surface effects of the Great Depression upon Protestant denominations: "The School of Hard Knocks was in session, and men learned. As the number of those who walked the streets swelled by the million, the Church began to learn, too. Budgets fell off; pastors found themselves spending more and more of their time finding work for unemployed parishioners; the churches began to be called upon for charity in amounts so enormous as to strain their resources."[642] The major effect of these developments was to push Protestant churches to the Left. The central bodies of Protestant denominations began to question capitalism as never before. The Presbyterian General Assembly proclaimed in 1932, "The world's economic system stands today distraught and bewildered in the presence of a crisis precipitated by the very principles upon which it had been assumed general prosperity was based."[643] The ecclesiastical journals, the Episcopal *Churchman,* for instance, and the *The Baptist,* became standard bearers of dissent every bit as much as leftist journals like *The New Masses.* Individual clergy, following the example of Harry Ward and AJ Muste, often went radical in response to the unprecedented crisis before them, daring their congregations to follow.

[642] Carter, *The Decline and Revival of the Social Gospel; Social and Political Liberalism in American Protestant Churches, 1920-1940.*, 142.
[643] Ibid., 143.

Union Theological Seminary became the central institution of these new activist-theologians. "1929 just rocked us all… This really did turn the whole seminary around. It turned everybody around, it turned all of us around," Morford remembered while preparing his memoirs.[644] Across the street from Columbia University where Corliss Lamont was teaching and going to graduate school, Morford studied at the premier interdenominational educational facility for liberal Protestant clergy. A few of Morford's Christian socialist influences were teachers there: Henry Emerson Fosdick and Harry Ward, for instance, were both faculty. Reinhold Niebuhr, the famed Midwestern socialist theologian, was also on staff. As the Great Depression deepened, Niebuhr's rhetoric became increasingly revolutionary with students like Morford. During Morford's years at Union, Niebuhr was developing the ideas he espoused in his landmark 1932 book, *Moral Man and the Immoral Society.* In that work and in the "bull sessions in the Social Hall" that he held with Ward, Niebuhr "rallied in large part to demolish the liberalism of those who clung to the dream of social change through educational and evangelical means, and to press the case that justice could not be realized through the rigors of a more ethical religion, at least not apart from a vigorous alliance with countervailing power leveraged against economic privilege."[645] In so doing, Niebuhr and other activist Union teachers helped Morford transition from a passive to an active socialist.

In Manhattan, the effects of the Great Depression on city residents were obvious to the Union students. As Morford later explained, "If we were not already so, this made

[644] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 1: 81.
[645] Reinhold Niebuhr and Larry L Rasmussen, *Reinhold Niebuhr: Theologian of Public Life* (London; San Francisco, CA: Collins; Harper & Row, 1989), 10.

radicals of us."[646] Horrified by the extent of the poverty in the city, Morford spent much of his free time organizing clothing donations for the Lower East Side, and organized garment workers with Harry Ward in the Garment District further west. He saw how state welfare was unable to keep up, and decided that more drastic solutions were needed. Accordingly, he and many of the Union students, became activists at night.[647] They reached out to working-class New Yorkers and were arrested occasionally for their attempts to organize labor. "The cases would always be dismissed," he later said, "…but if one of your leaflets fell to the ground, that was all that was necessary. The police would go after you."[648]

It was both the rhetoric of theologians like Ward and Niebuhr, and his experiences in New York, that led Morford to make contact with local Socialist Party offices, in either 1929 or 1930, when the need to make changes in the society and economy of the United States appeared most urgent.[649] The Socialist Party, after a decade of battering from the Communist Party, was an all but spent force in most of the United States. However, the Socialist Party was able to maintain a vital presence in New York. Its program argued that unemployment, poverty, and insecurity were all caused by the "concentration of wealth." The Party did not seek revolution but rather an amendment (as had been

[646] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 2:19.
[647] Ibid., 2: 20.
[648] Ibid., 82.
[649] "Richard Morford Papers; TAM.361," Letter to Socialist Party, October 22, 1934; Box 2; Folder 6. In his biographical manuscripts, Morford claims that he joined the Socialist Party in Morristown. His personal files evince that his membership dated back to his time at Union, as offered in the text. Kathy Kahn and Richard Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 1986 1984, 117, Box 3; Folder 22-23, Abbott Simon Papers; TAM 346; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.

proposed by the leftist Republican US Representative Vito Marcantonio) to give the federal government the ability to "extend the power of the government to act for the welfare of the people."[650]

Capitalism as designed, the socialists said, was not operating in concordance with liberty. Workers were not really born free, as under capitalism they were born needing to have a boss (in contrast to many capitalists, who are born knowing they will never have one). The Republican and Democratic alliance with plutocrats meant that the government only represented lawyers, corporations, and speculators, and socialists said that this favoritism led to the Great Depression. By allowing the government to act on behalf of the poor, the socialists wanted to "reestablish the principles of Americanism." Their program called for old age pensions, a heavy capital-gains tax, a heavy inheritance tax, unemployment insurance, the abolition of child labor, higher wages, and fewer work hours.[651] Socialism would build atop the existing capitalist order, with the starting point that "men are equal, and the things men need should be commonly owned."[652]

We can see documentation of Morford's evolution, from Social Gospel-influenced and modernist social critic before the beginning of the Great Depression, to full-fledged Christian socialist activist, in his sermons. Months before the stock market crash in October, 1929, Morford's first student sermons at Union were primarily of a Social Gospel bent, extolling the virtues of an active religion that was important in one's daily life. "There is missing that fellowship of love, and a family has been broken on the

[650] "Richard Morford Papers; TAM.361," Letter from Morristown branch of the Socialist Party, 1936; Box 2; Folder 5.
[651] Socialist Party of America, *Socialism and Americanism* (Chicago: Socialist Party, 1931).
[652] "Richard Morford Papers; TAM.361," "What is Socialism," pamphlet, n.d.; Box 2; Folder 5.

rocks of *things seen,"* he said, implying that a focus on the material was leading Christians to neglect their spiritual wellbeing. "We live in two worlds… the seen has been for us the *real* world, and has shut us from the unseen. We have missed the mark in failing to convince ourselves that it is only the unseen world that has lasting significance," he said[653] This placed Morford firmly in the camp of the institutional Church but it could have been heard in a sermon ten or fifteen years before. While there are signs that Morford had already integrated much of the socialism of Christian socialist pioneers like Rauschenbusch, his anti-capitalist rhetoric, however, was mild, and focused upon the ways in which capitalism clashed with the Church, rather than ways in which socialism was consonant with the latter: "Busy each day and all week with manipulating the seen, how can one find time for private worship or public worship – for enrichment of the deeper resources that alone hold life intact and make it seem worth the effort – renewing the *inner* man as Paul spoke. Where can there be time?"[654]

After the stock market crash, though, his sermons become less oblique, more urgent and more radical. In his first major sermon after the onset of the Depression, one can see that Morford's influences were coming together to form a distinctly Christian socialist perspective. For the first time, we can see clearly the influence of both the working-class sympathies and anti-capitalism of Ward and Muste. Morford was uncompromising, arguing that "We are going to see if we have a compassionate disposition that there is an essential clash between the ethic of Jesus which tells us to love

[653] Ibid., "The Seen and the Unseen" (1929), 2; Box 2, Folder 2.
[654] Ibid., "The Seen and The Unseen" (1929), p. 4; Box 2, Folder 2.

our neighbor and the accepted rule of business which commands us to make a profit out of him."[655] As if to eliminate all ambiguity, he continued: "We will see that in the light of Jesus' ideal kingdom, we are clothed in rags: the rags of an un-Christian civilization."[656] To face this crisis, he asserted that clergy would have to endorse the institutional Church model, as posited by CM Morse, as never before. He promoted a view of the institutional Church that would have made LP Jacks jealous, as he chastised his fellow students for only trying to attend to the spiritual needs of congregations: "Jesus tended to the need *first at hand* as he stepped out of the synagogue and beheld suffering. His church will want to act the same way. Its ministry will be inclusive. To find a job for a man out of work or to pay the rent for the family, to furnish some clothing to tide them over is quite likely to prove more Christ-like than preaching three sermons on Sunday."[657]

Morford never graduated from Union: his extracurricular aid to the homeless and agitation of labor took far too much of his time. He was, however, ordained as a Presbyterian minister (he defected from Methodism due to the Methodist insistence that Christ resulted from a virgin birth) anyway. In 1931, he received a post at First Presbyterian Church in Morristown, New Jersey, as minister of education. In this capacity, he delivered irregular sermons to the congregation: perhaps one a month. These sermons were almost all heavy in socialist and anti-capitalist content, despite a conservative congregation. Remarkable in his frankness, Morford introduced a 1931 sermon with what was simultaneously a disclaimer and a Rauschenbachian assertion that

[655] Ibid., "Compassion and the Unemployment Crisis," December 4, 1930, 9; Box 2, Folder 2.
[656] Ibid., "Compassion and the Unemployment Crisis," December 4, 1930, 9; Box 2, Folder 2.
[657] Ibid.

socialism was 21st century Christianity: "My philosophy of economics is what is commonly tagged socialistic, the kind of a philosophy that might reasonably be expected of any young Christian minister today."[658] Ministers should be socialists, he said, because capitalism could only supply material gains, even in the best of times. By associating progress with things, Americans had lost sight of their spiritual needs: "Our mistaken notion is that the amazing and continuing increase of scientific research, which developed along practical lines and put into our hands such marvelous tools, spells an inevitable progress in civilization. But the very roots of decay inhere in the abundance of scientific power unless it can be harnessed and turned to the development of the finer relations of men so that we can live together as friends," he said.[659]

A year later, Morford was still more assertive about the need for radical change, in both the United States' economy and in Christianity. In one 1932 sermon, he argued that the pervasiveness of the Great Depression was a sign that capitalism was in its death throes. "I do not wish to be hard-headed, nor idealistic," he said, "but as a matter of fact what has come to an end is the era of expansion for capitalistic industrialism."[660] He suggested socialism as an alternative during the current crisis, because "social control of the means of production seems to me more Christian than absolute private control."[661] He then went into a full-scale explication of his ideal socialist economic program: "Adequate minimum wage laws would be a Christian accomplishment. A compulsory system of unemployment compensation with adequate benefits based on contributions by the

[658] Ibid., "America's Way Out," August 23, 1931, 2; Box 2, Folder 7.
[659] Ibid., "America's Way Out," August 23, 1931, 2; Box 2, Folder 7.
[660] Ibid., "The Church as a Re-Maker of Society," August 21, 1932, 1; Box 2, Folder 12.
[661] Ibid., Ibid., "The Church as a Re–Maker of Society," August 21, 1932, 7; Box 2, Folder 12.

government, by employers, and by the workers would be Christian… Old age pensions for men and women sixty years of age and over would be a Christian-like arrangement… To make sure that our laborers are protected against accident and sicness [sic] through health insurance and improved systems of workmen's compensation in which all of us share in the maintenance – is Christian."[662] Like Niebuhr, he argued that a truly Christian world could only exist with economic change coupled with religious teaching. What was keeping this world from becoming reality was selfishness – selfishness that led humans to massacre each other in wars and exploit each other in industry. "But you and I have not loved others enough. Else we would not have killed them in the World War," he said in another sermon that year.[663]

Morford believed the Church could play a fundamental role in bringing his Christian socialist ideal into being. But first, Christians would have to set their own religious house into order. "Let us plunge straight to the center of the crisis within Christianity. We are not a power in the world because we are shaky in our own convictions about Him who is the center of our faith," he said in 1935.[664] Christians, Morford claimed, had stopped seeing Jesus as a spirit living inside them, with real capacity to make the world better *through* them: "[Some] of us talk about Christ much as we would talk about Abraham Lincoln. What a good life! The wisdom of his words, the charity of his deeds. We admire him. He is an example. But we don't put very much content into the word "example." Surely Jesus Christ is greater than Abraham Lincoln!!

[662] Ibid., "The Church as a Re–Maker of Society," August 21, 1932, 8; Box 2, Folder 12.
[663] Ibid., "Loving All People," June 24, 1932, 2; Box 2, Folder 12.
[664] Ibid., "The Crisis in Christianity," June 9, 1935, 2; Box 2, Folder 15.

A matter of degree, we say. Is that all?"[665] Christ's relevance to Morford, on the other hand, was that he showed "that love is in the nature of things, that it is the final truth, the rock-bottom fact about the universe… he believed, therefore, that love should govern all the aims and relationships of men."[666] The capitalist system, with its constant wars and rampant poverty, was an antithetical influence, to the point that Morford argued Christians were "not ready to offer a Social Gospel to the world. The faith that's in us is not clear enough."[667]

Ultimately, Morford's proselytizing for his political beliefs resulted in him losing his pulpit in 1936. Even in the so-called "red decade," holding true to one's socialist convictions carried a price (really, it is remarkable he lasted as long as he did). The Church's chief benefactor, a Colonel Babcock, was a successful business owner and opponent of socialism. He became concerned that Morford was spending time with the Young People's Socialist League, the youth arm of the American Socialist Party, which he lectured in February.[668] Morford's proselytizing for socialism in sermons and teaching of socialist economics to the Church's young people could not have helped. It was a community rumor in Morristown that a "bloc within the church boards" disapproved of Morford's ideology and conduct.[669] One trustee claimed that the "older, more influential members of the congregation" were afraid that the "liberal" Morford would "inculcate socialist doctrine in the young people." Morford's job, they said, was not to "mix politics

[665] Ibid., "The Crisis in Christianity," June 9, 1935, 3; Box 2, Folder 15.
[666] Ibid., "The Crisis in Christianity," June 9, 1935, 4; Box 2, Folder 15.
[667] Ibid., "The Crisis in Christianity," June 9, 1935, 7; Box 2, Folder 15.
[668] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 2: 26.
[669] "Richard Morford Papers; TAM.361," Rev. Morford's Return Sought by 3 Societies, by Fred Crane, from an unknown New Jersey newspaper, March 10, 1936; Box 3; Folder 5.

with religion."[670] Babcock requested Morford's resignation, which he got in exchange for paying Morford's outstanding debts to Union.[671] Morford's removal attracted considerable attention from newspapers, especially because of the outcry from several groups in Morristown, all of which sought his return. The young people of First Presbyterian were especially angry. Their fury was compounded by the fact that the other church leaders did not so much as make an announcement that Morford was gone.

Morford was not the first minister asked to leave a church for a socialist slant and would not be the last. He may, however, have been the first to be reappointed to his position after public protest. For his part, Morford initially refused to reveal what had happened but after his reappointment explained that the issue was his politics, or more specifically, his advocating of them in church. "Christians everywhere must mix their religion with the political, economic, and social life of our day," he said.[672] The Church, he claimed, was guilty of hypocrisy when it fired or forced the resignation of liberal ministers. He asserted that if the Church was serious about creating Christ's vision on earth, it would have to honestly look into the means which humans have found to implement it.[673]

By the middle-1930s, as the Great Depression's effects failed to be alleviated through the New Deal, many theologians were becoming increasingly outspoken about the need for more radical solutions even despite some conservative reaction. The ultimate

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[670] "Another 'Liberal' Loses His Pulpit: Morristown Pastor Is Second in Week to Quit Jersey Post in Dispute Over Views.," *New York Times*, March 11, 1936.
[671] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 2: 26.
[672] "Retained Minister Says Christians Must Mix Belief with Social Life," *Newark News*, March 25, 1936.
[673] "Statement by Rev. Morford," *Hackensack Record*, March 25, 1936.

example of theologian as activist, and one to whom Morford looked up to, was Presbyterian minister and occasional Socialist Party presidential candidate Norman Thomas. Thomas viewed the period as both a warning and an opportunity. With the Great Depression as an example, Americans could now take stock of the dangers of unfettered capitalism and adopt a new economic paradigm. In 1936, Thomas explained that the worst thing for Americans to do was to stand still. "The philosophy of muddling through, the consolation that we shall survive this crisis since we have survived others only to stumble into another some seven or eight years hence, is no comfort at all," he wrote.[674] These crises occurred because business owners sap away profit and "invest but wastefully and without comprehensive plan."[675] In an earlier article, Thomas offered the solution to this inadequacy: "fundamental economic reconstruction or revolution." Thomas saw the socialists as peace workers, whose role was to prompt change in the United States while ensuring a reliance on non-violent methodology.[676]

Between 1936 and 1942, Morford had a chance to take such a role in the building of an institutional church. He left Morristown and became a minister at the House of Friendship in Albany, New York, a division of Protestant Family Welfare. The House of Friendship was a "mission church," and an attempt at a more inclusive and active approach to Christianity.[677] There is some indication that Morford was given the job by

[674] Norman Thomas and League for Industrial Democracy, *Why I Am a Socialist* (New York City: League for Industrial Democracy, 1936), 3.
[675] Ibid., 7.
[676] Norman Thomas, "Removing Economic Barriers to Peace," *The World Tomorrow*, November 1931, 358.
[677] "Richard Morford Papers; TAM.361," Character Building Activities (House of Friendship), nd; Box 3; Folder 20.

the House of Friendship's Steve James because James knew Morford's liberal ideology and wanted him to shake things up (the other leaders were "fundamentalist in Bible interpretation.")[678] The one-hundred families who attended the House of Friendship as parishioners received standard Protestant religious services like communion, baptism, and funerals, but the greater priority was on "welfare," or "character building" activities.[679] These included classes designed to teach the poor valuable skills, as well as free activities for children throughout the week. The House of Friendship, for instance, instructed poor women on the importance of a proper diet for growing children and taught them in the "happy and wise handling of little children."[680] Morford and the rest of the House of Friendship leadership viewed their institution as a key member of the community of Albany. They spent much of their time on community improvement projects, including cleaning up vacant lots, tidying up run-down houses, and bringing community leaders into the slums to teach them how their constituents were actually living.[681]

Morford continued to fill his interactions with the congregation with messages for social and economic reform. At the House of Friendship, even Morford's devotionals (brief, thematic prayers meant to prompt parishioners to think about God and their relationship) were often dedicated to messages of equality. "The way we still persist in marking ourselves off into classes and races, into opposed national or religious groups,"

[678] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 2: 28.
[679] "Richard Morford Papers; TAM.361," Character Building Activities (House of Friendship), nd; Box 3; Folder 20.
[680] Ibid.
[681] Ibid.

he lamented in one devotional, "continues to produce appalling misery, breaking and destroying the self-respecting spirit of worthy men and women."[682] In another, he excitedly extolled New Deal programs: "Do you realize what Works Project Administration labor has done for us in our own community? The wealth that has been added by their employment. Did you see the new Loudonville Reservoir?"[683] Other sermons argued against racism specifically, or asserted that there will be a class war in America, or that America was in fact not a democracy due to the sheer extent of inequality. Because his politics and religion had become synonymous to him, Morford found it difficult to argue in one realm without introducing the other.

Even when his colleagues did not ostracize him for his politics, bad press over them sometimes forced Morford to limit his participation in causes in which he believed. This was the case regarding the Federation of Churches. A mini-crisis surfaced revolving around the arrest of CPUSA leader Earl Browder in 1940 for passport fraud. Morford and many others believed Browder's arrest to be politically motivated by Browder and the CPUSA's support of the Nazi-Soviet Pact the year before. Morford was in sympathy with Browder's position, and agreed to participate in a campaign of clergymen with the aim of securing Browder's release. Morford's participation in what became the National Free Browder Congress was minimal, amounting to little more than a couple of signatures. Yet, for the Albany branch of the American Legion, this was over the line. They publicized Morford's participation in the campaign, and suggested that the Albany

[682] Ibid., Morning Devotions, November 6, 1939; Box 3; Folder 17.
[683] Ibid., Devotional, d.; Box 3; Folder 17.

Federation of Churches backed his position. The Federation of Churches, with a leadership more conservative than Morford, responded by disassociating themselves from him. They declared that Morford's views did not represent the organization's.[684] Morford, realizing he was going to be no help in an upcoming fundraising drive for the organization, resigned and moved to New York in search of a project where his beliefs would be an asset instead of an embarrassment.[685]

By the end of the 1930s, Morford was determined to marry social reform to religious instruction. His experience at Union Theological had shown him the vast need for bringing Christian values, which he judged to be unambiguously socialist, into American society. At Morristown, Morford had tried to improve his parishioners' lives by introducing them to socialist concepts and the primacy of love as a social value but was censured and never allowed by his superiors to make the most of the opportunity. At the House of Friendship, he was able to make a genuine difference in his parishioners lives by joining religious services to social welfare ones but was again confronted with Christians who believed that the Church needed to say out of politics. Perhaps, he reasoned, it was time to bring his talents and values to an outright secular organization, where he would not have to overcome so many barriers.

[684] "Free Browder Link Denied by Churches," *The Knickerbocker News*, March 30, 1942.
[685] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 2: 32.

## Morford, Christian Socialism, and the Soviet Union before the NCASF

As a socialist and Social Gospel advocate in the 1930s, Morford, at some point, had to come into contact with the CPUSA, and through them, the USSR. As capitalist economies crumbled around the world, the Soviet Union stood inviolate. The Soviets, in 1929, instituted the ambitious Five Year Plan, which would soon make the Soviet Union one of the chief industrial nations in the world. As such, the Soviet Union appeared a parallel but very different, economic universe. It had significant appeal to most Americans with beliefs similar to Morford. As Frank Warren writes, the Soviet Union did not just attract American leftists because it was a planned economy, "it was the audacity, the boldness, the enormity of Russian planning that riveted the attention of sympathizers."[686] The Soviet Union was a nation, therefore, that was doing everything Morford had argued in support of during the early 1930: surely, one imagines, it was a significant matter of discussion for him during the period. Yet, Morford hardly said a word about the Soviet Union for the entire decade. No support for or interest in the Five Year Plan, no trips to the Soviet Union, no excuses for the Moscow Trials. In short, Richard Morford was *not* a Sovietophile.

During the 1930s, the standard route from the political mainstream into American-Soviet friendship was through association with communists met via the Popular Front. While the Popular Front transcended political parties, being more than anything else a "social democratic culture," communists played a key role.[687] As Denning

[686] Warren, *Liberals and Communism*, 70.
[687] Denning, *The Cultural Front*, xvii.

notes, "Any history of the Popular Front must give the Communist Party its due – it was without doubt the most influential left organization in the period and its members were central activists in a range of formations and institutions."[688] These communists often took part in organizations dedicated to causes whose merit the entire Left could agree upon, such as civil liberties, anti-fascism, and industrial unionism. They often then introduced non-communists to the cause of American-Soviet friendship from within these groups. Corliss Lamont, for instance, made his entrance into FSU through communist-sympathetic contacts made at the ACLU. Most of the several thousand members of FSU had similar stories, as did, later, tens of thousands of members of the NCASF.

Every major figure in this dissertation was a Popular Frontist to some degree. All solidified or found their connection to the Soviet Union through communist allies discovered through Popular Front organizations. All had, accordingly, a fairly positive view of communists during the course of the 1930s – if not after. But Morford's ultimate role in the NCASF was an odd thing indeed, as there is no documentation of him having any substantial sympathy for communism or communists during that decade. During this period, despite his support of Browder, socialism, and progressive causes, Morford knew almost nothing about communism, or the Communist Party. He has left little record of interest. Morford had read the House of Representatives report on communist propaganda in 1931, which argued a number of hysterical assertions, including that the ACLU was a communist front, that the CPUSA be made illegal, and communists be forbidden

[688] Ibid., 6.

naturalization.[689] As revealed by his support of Browder, he also thought the campaigns against communists and communism were unjust and unnecessary. However, he never made contacts with the Party, and while Morford knew about Harry Ward's American League for Peace and Democracy, he had nothing to do with them or the other pro-communist "fronts" of the 1930s.

What we know about Morford's early feelings about the communists is not positive. He viewed them as an unfortunate manifestation of American secularism and as an indication of the failure of the churches. He, a devout pacifist, found the CPUSA's "pragmatic" shifts of policy darkly amusing, particularly the Nazi-Soviet Pact. He later described the communist reaction as follows: "…and of course, they [the CPUSA] were an organization that was always pushing their propaganda, so when they switched they had to rationalize the propaganda."[690] His sole public statement on communism in the 1930s came in a 1937 sermon, wherein he lamented the secularism which was gripping the world's most dynamic societies – something for which he blamed the churches themselves:

> With religious enthusiasm, mark you, this secularism makes a god of the nation or of the communist utopia – Germany, or Russia… Over against this we put our Christian faith, the fundamental tenet of which is that 'nothing is worthy of our supreme devotion short of the reality upon which we and the whole structure of our lives ultimately depend.' In our search for the meaning of life, you see, we cannot stop short of God… It is one of the tragedies with which Christians have to live that authentic elements of Christianity are embodied in the movement of communism which has turned against all religion… What I am suggesting with all the power I

[689] House of Representatives. Special Committee to Investigate Communist Activities in the United States United States. Congress (71st, *Investigation of Communist Propaganda.* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. print. off., 1931).
[690] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 140.

> have is that the root of secularism is growing strongly in our world cannot be cut except by the inner transformation of the churches themselves.[691]

To Morford, then, the secularism championed by communists was not a long-awaited embrace of empiricism but an unfortunate mistake engendered by the Church's failure to work on behalf of social change.

Philosophically, Morford was at odds with the communists as well. This is particularly apparent in his emphasis on the spiritual at the expense of the material, which stands apart from the materialism of Marxists and Leninists. Marxism was grounded in materialism. As Marx wrote, "The mode of production must not be considered simply as being the reproduction of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather, it is… a definite form of expressing their life… as individuals express their life, so they are. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production."[692] Marx was not arguing that the primary motivation of humanity was to acquire goods, as some of his critics claimed.[693] Instead, he was positing something more deterministic: that identity was derived from what one did in order to produce the things necessary for survival.

Morford, meanwhile claimed that there was no necessary relationship between standard of living and one's standard of *life*. Wealth and things did not produce joy and love – they cut people off from these feelings.[694] "Consumptionism," he said, "does not

[691] "Richard Morford Papers; TAM.361," Is the Church Equal to the Crisis?," sermon, May 30, 1937; Box 3; Folder 10.
[692] Karl Marx et al., *The German Ideology* (New York: International Publishers, 1972), 7.
[693] Erich Fromm and Karl Marx, *Marx's Concept of Man* (New York: F. Ungar, 1966).
[694] "Richard Morford Papers; TAM.361," America's Way Out, sermon, August 23, 1931; Box 2; Folder 2.

make for character…,"[695] it made for loneliness as the needs of the human spirit went unfulfilled.[696] The Industrial Revolution had led Marx and capitalists alike (as well as techno-utopian socialists like Lamont) to think that material prosperity and material innovation was an indicator of progress. But according to Morford, these things were just fluff if they could not make for better people.[697] Actual progress, he thought, could only come from spiritual growth, which entailed attaining a higher capacity for love of humanity. So much of our unhappiness, Morford contended, was due to our misunderstanding that the "seen world" was the "real world." In fact, "it is only the unseen world that has lasting significance." Real progress was spiritual progress, which could be attained by a complete "reverence for personality" (meaning, as opposed to reverence for position, status, or objects) akin to that displayed by Jesus.[698] To attain this, Americans needed to practice real charity, which to Morford was not a mere "hand-out," but had to constitute "complete reverence for persons and an opportunity for abundant living in every department of life for all men."[699] The significance of charity in this sense was not a transfer of wealth, but an offer of oneself, for the purpose of making the donor as well as the recipient a better person.[700]

By acquiring our happiness through "what we can get our hands on," Morford thought Americans had forgotten that love and family is not nourished by things, but

[695] Ibid., America's Way Out, sermon, August 23, 1931; Box 2; Folder 2.
[696] Ibid., Friends, sermon, August 2, 1936; Box 3; Folder 1.
[697] Ibid., America's Way Out, sermon, August 23, 1931; Box 2; Folder 2.
[698] Ibid., The Good Neighbor, sermon, November 1, 1936; Box 3; Folder 1.
[699] Ibid.
[700] Ibid.

rather "broken on the rocks" of them.[701] What is the difference between one man and another, he asked, if not "the nature of his aims and ideals, intentions and purposes"? While human beings may be improved by changing the physical environment in which they live, love can transcend "concrete situations and material circumstances."[702] Therefore, we must not continue to try to adapt our belief systems to science, but rather use science in the interests of the human spirit and religion.[703] He wanted people to "…return to a simple life." Living conditions were important but he believed that, for a Christian, they should have a ceiling – an idea that belies faith in boundless progress. Instead of succumbing to materialism, Morford believed we should look into asceticism, and hence return "from the flesh to spirit."[704]

Like Lamont, Morford disagreed with the communists on the nature of the economic change that needed to occur in the United States. While Morford was in favor of economic restructuring of the United States, he wanted change to be organic and voluntary. He saw consumer cooperatives as an important part of such a transition. Morford joined the consumer cooperatives wherever he lived, and became president of a Morningside cooperative in 1943-44. As early as 1936, Morford was taking part in the Albany Consumer Cooperative (ACC), an organization that advocated an alternative to capitalism, communism, and "corporatism (fascism)." Part of the wider consumer cooperative movement in the United States, the Albany Consumer Cooperative was more radical than its title suggests, arguing that the "old order is fast breaking down." The

[701] Ibid., The Seen and the Unseen, sermon, June 23, 1929; Box 2; Folder 2.
[702] Ibid.
[703] Ibid.
[704] Ibid., America's Way Out, sermon, August 23, 1931; Box 2; Folder 2.

"economic democracy" that the ACC proposed was based on collective, communal ownership of local producers and retailers. [705] In consumers' cooperatives, each member was given one vote, prices in cooperative stores were reduced to the lowest level that could allow the maintenance of the operation, and any profits were provided to the customers of the stores on the basis of their patronage.[706] This was not the Marxian "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need," so much as "from and to each according to their means and effort." Morford preferred such a "merit-based" approach to economic redistribution, rewarding cooperation with and exertion for the community instead of mere existence within it. In his social work at the House of Friendship, for instance, he rarely if ever gave money to his poor congregation (as his predecessor had). He instead strove only to help them figure out what welfare money was due to them.[707]

Without any foundation in communism or much sympathy toward its advocates, Morford was seemingly ill-placed to become the leader of the American-Soviet friendship movement. But the plot gets more unusual still. Perhaps the strangest single fact about Richard Morford's life, given his indefatigable work for the NCASF, was that (unlike Lamont, Kent, and Steinmetz) he did not have an infatuation with the USSR before coming to the movement. Despite the fact that the NCASF was the chief focus of his life, the USSR was never itself of particular interest to him. Rather, to Morford the Soviet Union was an ally, an entity which coincided with Morford's belief in the efficacy

[705] Ibid., Learn All About Consumers' Cooperation, The Cooperative League, pamphlet, d.; Box 3; Folder 8.
[706] Ibid.
[707] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 131.

of socialism and the maintenance of world peace. Morford's ignorance of the USSR itself was extraordinary. When asked in 1983 what thoughts he had about the Soviet Union in the 1920s, for instance, he answered, "None… there's nothing that's clear in my mind."[708] He had little apparent reaction to the Russian Revolution when it happened, never had more than a marginal understanding of how the Soviet Union functioned (in contrast to Lamont's comprehensive grasp of Soviet propaganda), and did not even visit the Soviet Union until he was in his 60s: thirteen years after he began running the NCASF! He often lamented how unprepared he had been to assume his job at the NCASF. "It's a shame," he said in the 1980s. "I still have to go to school to learn my Soviet history. Ought to be on the top of my head. But it isn't."[709]

We can understand Morford's reticence a bit better by looking at how other Christian socialists viewed the USSR in the 1930s. Opinions, in short, varied. While the post-World War II consensus by Republicans and Democrats alike was that the radical Left was a monolith in the 1930s, that was never true. As historian Frank Warren writes, "American liberalism, even left-wing liberalism, in the thirties must be understood in terms of conflicts, tensions, and a variety of trends and groups."[710] When presented with the same or similar evidence, different people came to different conclusions about the Soviet Union. Witness, for instance, the polarized perspectives on the Moscow Trials between Corliss Lamont and John Dewey. Opinions on the USSR were just as divergent among Christian socialists. Most were immediately impressed with an *idea* of what the

[708] Ibid., 58.
[709] Ibid., 145.
[710] Warren, *Liberals and Communism*, 218.

Soviet Union was but, upon going to the nation itself, they had varying amounts of confidence in regard to how much the Soviets were living up to that idea. Here, I will focus upon three Christian socialists and their experiences in the Soviet Union. All of them were important to Morford, and each would have complicated his understanding of the USSR in their presentation of their experience within it.

First among them, and the most favorable toward the Soviet Union, was Harry Ward. Ward first visited the Soviet Union in 1924. Upon his return, he assured Americans it was no utopia. Civil liberties were in a shambles there: "of freedom of the press there is none… the censor is still omnipotent if not omniscient."[711] Further, there was state oppression of religion, which Ward blamed on the communist prejudice.[712] His overall appraisal was thus one of critical sympathy. The Soviets were trying, he thought, but they had a long way to go before one could make a ruling on the efficacy of their experiment. If anything, Ward after this first trip sounds like a post-World War II Corliss Lamont, confident in Soviet potential but unsure of their trajectory.

Ward returned to the Soviet Union in 1931-1932, however, and now saw "real progress."[713] In particular, he praised the "feel" of the USSR: how, without social classes, everyone in the nation was on the same team. The Soviets, he claimed, had democratized their social structures, to the extent that the Soviet Union had become a new, and better, society.[714] Ward accordingly went so far as to say that the Soviet Union was the world's

[711] Harry F. Ward, "Civil Liberties in Russia," *The Nation* 120, no. 4 (March 4, 1925): 234–37.
[712] David Duke, *In the Trenches with Jesus and Marx: Harry F. Ward and the Struggle for Social Justice* (University of Alabama Press, 2003), 123–24.
[713] Ibid.
[714] Ibid.

only "democratized economy."[715]He praised the marriage of science, reason, and idealism that he perceived in the Soviet Union, and saw that nation as the great red hope of a world that could surely use some optimism.[716] What had changed, one wonders, other than the passage of seven years? While the Soviet Union was a more developed place in 1931 than 1924, perhaps the bigger difference was in Ward himself, who now had many personal connections with communists in Britain and the United States, and was less skeptical of the ideology and of those who preached it. Ward was now willing to take the Soviets for their word regarding their intentions, rather than to merely evaluate the evidence with which he was presented.

Remarkably, Ward was even no longer bothered by the repression against Christianity in his second trip to the Soviet Union. A consummate modernist, Ward had come to much the same conclusion regarding Soviet communism as had Morford regarding socialism in general: that it did not matter if an agent of God's will believed in the Christian conception of God. But whereas Morford employed this reasoning only so far as declaring socialism to be, in essence, a Christian project, Ward took things further. The Soviets were agents of God's will, he believed, because they were trying to improve society. Ward's biographer, David Duke, explains: "Ward continued to believe in a historical dynamic that impelled humanity toward its full realization. Ward and other religious folk called this dynamic "God," but Harry [Ward] also believed that one's faith in this dynamic was tested by action rather than by words. So what if Communists denied

[715] Ibid., n. location 2554.
[716] Ibid., n. location 2562.

God and Religion? They were willing to cooperate with the dynamic that pushes humanity upward."[717] Such a perspective is a logical extension of modernist discourse but also a very stubborn sort of monotheism: people working for the good of humanity, Ward suggested, are worshipping God whether they want to or not. At any rate, Ward became the Soviet Union's great white knight from the early 1930s onward. Like Corliss Lamont in the 1930s, Ward reasoned that the potential of the Soviet Union due to its pragmatic methodology outweighed whatever handicaps its ideology might present in the here and now. A true believer, he was noticeable in his reticence during the Moscow Trials but returned to Soviet advocacy with great gusto during World War II.

A Christian socialist with very different comments on the Soviet Union was Reinhold Niebuhr, Morford's former instructor and "the father of Christian realism."[718] While he was a member of the American Socialist Party, he was also a cynic who was skeptical of ideological dogma.[719] He had declined invitations to accompany friends to the Soviet Union since 1925 before deciding to finally examine socialism in practice in 1930.[720] Niebuhr nevertheless became enamored of the Soviet Union during this trip. He was impressed by the crackling enthusiasm Russians seemed to have for the implementation of communism. The most pragmatic of the Christian socialists, Niebuhr looked highly upon both the NEP and Stalin's political maneuvering of the late 1920s, considering them to be flexible adaptations to real world circumstances. Despite the poor

[717] Ibid., 149.
[718] Richard W. Fox, "Reinhold Niebuhr and the Emergence of the Liberal Realist Faith, 1930-1945," *The Review of Politics* 38, no. 2 (April 1976): 264.
[719] Chen Liang, "From a Christian Socialist to a Christian Realist: Reinhold Niebuhr and the Soviet Union, 1930-1945" (PhD dissertation, National University of Singapore, 2007), 40.
[720] Ibid., 49.

living conditions of the Soviet people and the condition of their infrastructure, Niebuhr came away surprised and impressed. He even accepted the Soviet regime's persecution of Christianity and its clergy, arguing that the alliance between the Orthodox Church and oppressive tsarist state had earned reprisal. "If innocent priests now suffer under the wrath of a revolutionary age," he wrote, "that may be one way of purging the guilt of the past."[721]

Niebuhr saw the violence of the Russian Revolution as a rupture: horrific, but necessary due to the depths of brutality into which the tsars had descended for centuries. He contended that the Soviets were fanatics and paranoid, but had reason to be. He also argued they were not aggressive.[722] Their chief goal, Niebuhr reasoned, was to prove that communism worked, not to conquer the world.[723] He reasoned that the best solution for everyone would be to resist the British and American hawks who sought to destroy the Soviet Union and instead allow it to live in peace.[724] After all, Niebuhr believed the competition between the communist and capitalist systems would improve both.[725] "In fellowship," Niebuhr wrote, "we learn from one another, while in conflict we accentuate each other's vices."[726]

Niebuhr's view of the Soviet Union – less complimentary than Ward's appraisals but largely positive and hopeful – was similar to that of HG Wells a decade before.

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[721] Reinhold Niebuhr, "Church in Russia," *The Christian Century* 47, no. 38 (September 24, 1930): 1145.
[722] Reinhold Niebuhr, "Making Peace with Russia," *The World Tomorrow* XIV, no. 11 (November 1931): 354.
[723] Ibid.
[724] Ibid., 355.
[725] Ibid.
[726] Ibid.

Communism might well be rubbish, Niebuhr argued, but the Soviet state was working based on a willingness to break with tradition and do what needed to be done. He extrapolated his perspective in a 1931 article in *The World Tomorrow,* the magazine of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. While Niebuhr did not see the Soviet Union as the future of world civilization, as Ward did, he nevertheless judged that he peace of the word rested on whether the great powers of the West could come to some accommodation with the existence of the Soviet Union.[727]

Norman Thomas took a much more negative view of developments in Russia during his own trip than had Niebuhr and Ward. Thomas did not go to the Soviet Union until 1937, well into the Great Terror. This was after the period of liberal excitement over Soviet industrial progress had ebbed. Whereas Niebuhr had found a nation whose people had embraced the government and system which had been imposed upon them, Thomas saw a repressive police state cowing the populace with fear.[728] Contrary to reports by many visitors (including Corliss Lamont) in the last five years, Thomas noted that he was accompanied by a Soviet "guide" at all times, and that Russians were afraid of associating with American visitors.[729]

Thomas thought the Soviets had interesting ideas, but that their implementation always relied on coercion and violence. Though there was substantial educational progress, there were no individual freedoms to be found.[730] The nicest thing he was willing to say about Soviet communism is that it was "a finer, more humane, and

[727] Reinhold Niebuhr, "Making Peace with Russia."
[728] Raymond F. Gregory, *Norman Thomas: The Great Dissenter* (Algora Publishing, 2008), 174.
[729] Ibid.
[730] Ibid.

inclusive conception than Hitler's tribal nationalism" – not a sentiment anyone would hang their hat on. Indeed, Thomas saw the Soviet Union as a mistake that world socialism would soon regret. "What has happened in Russia," he wrote in *The Socialist Call* that winter, "represents the degeneration of Socialism, the complete subversion of revolutionary idealism, and an all but fatal wound to working-class integrity and confidence in its own destiny."[731]. He came back from the USSR believing that no cooperation with the communists, even in the United States, was possible for liberals and socialists, as their goals were just too different.[732] The following years, of course, gave him no reason to doubt his conclusions about the Soviets. If not handled carefully and wisely, Thomas thought the issue of the Soviet Union could destroy the cause of socialism altogether.

So what are we to make of this? The attraction of the USSR was obviously one of degrees among the Christian socialists who Morford admired. All of them saw a deeply flawed society but interpreted that society in different ways based upon the context of their visit and their preexisting biases. Ward, a man with extreme sympathy for the American communists after the Great Depression, focused on Soviet progress in economics and social affairs and the meaning he saw *behind* that progress. A Social Gospel disciple, Ward was comfortable with the idea of a transforming society built around utopian, idealistic communities. He was thus able to, in Lamontian fashion, shrug off lesser disturbing features of the Soviet state and construe the greater as having been

[731] Ibid., 177.
[732] Ibid.

misrepresented by Western media and biased partisans. Whereas Lamont thought pragmatism and naturalism would lead the Soviets to greatness, Ward thought their spiritual goodness would do so. After all, he thought he knew these people and what they were about. No one could tell Ward that the Soviet project was detrimental to humanity when he saw God in it.

Niebuhr was more cynical to begin with. He could not help but dwell on the ideological disparities between his own independent socialism and the rigidity of the communists. Theologically an advocate of "the left-wing Calvinistic sects of the Cromwellian revolution" of the Reformation, Niebuhr saw society for what it was: harsh and unfair. He desired a society oriented more around the needs of the working class, hence his socialist convictions, but he had no illusions about the painful struggle that would be necessary to get there. Niebuhr did not, therefore, suffer any illusions about the communists being pragmatists. In his analysis of communism, he determined that it was essentially a religion driven by apocalyptic zeal. However, because Marx suggested that the disastrous end of capitalism would be followed by a glorious reordering of society, Niebuhr thought that the communist zeal was ultimately for the good because it was productive. Among the detritus of capitalist civilization during the Great Depression, the communists, he reasoned, were basically builders of civilization. They were fanatical but a net positive for a world that needed proactivity. As such, Niebuhr in the early 30s was prepared to see the Soviet Union simultaneously as a brutal theocracy and potential force for good.

Thomas, meanwhile, was a Social Gospelite like Ward and had been inclined to see the Soviets from Ward's perspective back in 1931. Had he written an account of the Soviet Union in 1931 or 1932, as Ward and Niebuhr did, he might have been as positive about Soviet fortunes as Ward. But by 1937, Thomas was wary of American communists. He had been burned by the Party in 1934, when his attempt to run for president of the United States on the Socialist Party ticket was waylaid by communist accusations that he was pro-management, pro-war, and pro-lynching.[733] Given this experience and the ongoing Moscow Trials, Thomas was of no mind to give the CPUSA's benefactors in Russia the benefit of the doubt. When presented with much the same society as Ward and Niebuhr (if anything, the Soviet Union was better off, materially, than in 1931), Thomas saw catastrophe where Niebuhr had seen hope and Ward truth.

If we try to place Morford on the spectrum of Soviet sympathies developed above, we can, of course, eliminate the oppositional Thomas perspective altogether. It is not probable that Morford would take on the NCASF directorship if he had seen in the USSR the same demon that Thomas did. As a devotee of the Social Gospel, believer in the possibility of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, and possessor of a willingness to appreciate God in atypical forms, it seems most likely that Morford would have been at the very least favorably inclined toward the Soviets, much like Ward. But at the same time, if one's preexisting opinion of American communists was important to one's perspective on the USSR as it seems, Morford would have been closer to Niebuhr than Ward, viewing the communists as ideologically misguided but potentially useful. Indeed,

[733] Ibid., 134.

in his memoir notes he appears incredulous about the Soviet friendship movement of the late 1930s, wondering, "But how could you promote friendship with the Soviet Union in the face of this link up of the communists and the fascists?"[734] As we have already seen, Morford was fearless in voicing support for unpopular ideas generally, and later had no problem advocating for the Soviet Union specifically when he felt they were right and Americans wrong. It would have been out of character for him to maintain reticence on the entire subject of the Soviet Union, as he did, if he had strong opinions one way or the other in the 1930s.

Perhaps the wisest course, then, is to rule out the polar Ward and Thomas perspectives as a possibility and tentatively suggest that Morford was, in his opinions on Russia, somewhere between Ward's optimism and Niebuhr's realism: favorably inclined toward the Soviets due to his Social Gospel and socialist beliefs but witness to too many conflicting messages to make a real leap into advocacy. His interest in the Soviet Union would have to wait until 1946, when the threat of a third world war between the United States and USSR drove Morford to promote friendship between the nations as an alternative.

## Morford in the NCASF

Despite his lack of interest in the Soviet Union during the 1930s, Richard Morford became the single most important member of the NCASF during the Cold War and the biggest influence in its direction during that time. The apocalyptic dread engendered by

[734] Ibid.

the conflict between the United States and Soviet Union inspired him as the Soviet Union never had and led him to take the mantle of the one organization he deemed able to stop it. His role can perhaps best be summarized by Edward Lamb, a successful industrialist who became a strong supporter of the NCASF. Lamb made a speech honoring Morford in 1966:

> He has dedicated the past 20 years of his life to this cause. He has gone to jail. He has endured personal abuses and official hostility… He has furthered cultural and business relationships between the East and West. He has opened the windows of friendship and human understanding. We, our children and the entire world are better because Richard Morford passed along the high road of our planet.[735]

Morford was seen by his peers as an impressive figure. This was because they recognized the context of his achievements. Amid a hostile American public and government, Morford reshaped the NCASF from a communist front into an activist coordinator of the embryonic American peace movement. He labored for years to build ties with other organizations interested in fighting for peace in the United States. When that was not sufficiently fruitful, he worked behind the scenes to facilitate an independent coalition that could do so. Even within the NCASF, Morford's efforts were more successful than they seemed at the time. While the NCASF had lost credibility with mainstream Americans, it provided something that no other organization did: a successor to the Popular Front with genuine national outreach, in which liberals, socialists, and communists could work together for the common goal of preventing war.

[735] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Edward Lamb, comments at Dinner honoring Richard Morford, January 26, 1966; Box 1; Folder 13.

Morford found the NCASF through the one and only Popular Front organization in which he participated. He joined the United Christian Council of Democracy (UCCD) in 1942, when he was hired as executive secretary of the United Christian Council for Democracy by friends Harry Ward and William Spofford. The purpose of the UCCD resonated with Morford from the first. It was an unofficial coalition of liberal church organizations including the Methodist Federation for Social Service, the Church League for Industrial Democracy, the Walter Rauschenbusch Fellowship of Baptists, the Presbyterian Fellowship for Social Action, the Evangelical and Reformed Council for Social Reconstruction, the Unitarian Fellowship for Social Justice, and the Fellowship of Southern Churchmen. The UCCD was intended to "promote education and social action."[736] It was founded in 1936 and seems to have been associated with communism fairly early, in large part due to Ward's passionate defense of the Soviet Union.[737] Ward's brand of liberal Christianity did not always go over well with audiences and critics, including his Union Theological Seminary colleague, Reinhold Niebuhr. After attending a conference of the UCCD in the 1930s, Niebuhr concluded, "The conference is *terrible.* American liberalism tinctured with radicalism… [in its] most *superficial* and most vapid form. I never thought Christianity could sink to such a farrago of nonsense…"[738]

Morford described the UCCD's activities as unrelated to the kind of shameless adulation to the CPUSA that Niebuhr implied. The main activities were lobbying to abolish the poll tax, fair employment practice, and the institution of a minimum wage.

[736] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 2: 32.
[737] "Religion: Christian Council," *Time*, February 5, 1940.
[738] Duke, *In the Trenches with Jesus and Marx*, 174.

Morford claimed to have pushed the organization in a more liberal direction and indeed the statements from his tenure as secretary read like more strident versions of the rhetoric of his 1930s sermons. In 1944, the UCCD argued, "The decision we have to make is whether our national economy and its international relations are to be administered by and for big business, or by and for the people through planning and administrative commissions composed of representatives of all groups which participate in the economic process."[739] Morford's role in forcing this decision was to lobby Washington and church leaders to support the UCCD's positions. [740]

Ward and Spofford had no apprehension about mixing politics with religion and encouraged Morford to do so. Ward had been, after all, arguing that socialism was a Christian responsibility since before World War I. All three were fervent supporters of the New Deal and Franklin Roosevelt and they made a good team. Unlike his bosses at previous jobs, Ward and Spofford encouraged Morford's involvement in more secular interests, as well. In 1944, they roused him to become active in the American Labor Party (ALP). The ALP had been formed in 1936 as an alternative independent worker's political party to the American Socialist Party. While it was formed with the intention of dividing the socialist vote in the 1936 Presidential Election, and therefore to prevent the American Socialist Party from playing spoiler and preventing the reelection of Franklin Roosevelt, the Party had evolved by the 40s into a rallying point for trade unionists and social democrats. The ALP rarely ran its own candidates until after World War II, instead

[739] "Our Economy Attacked: Called Anti-Democratic in Report of Church Group," *New York Times*, July 1, 1944.
[740] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 2: 158.

throwing its support and funds behind both Republicans and Democrats, on an election by election basis. Morford, who believed that labor was the decisive factor in making the New Deal work, devoted considerable time to organizing the ALP. He continued to work with the textile unions in New York, now on behalf of the ALP, and gave speeches for them around the city. He was awarded a vice-chairmanship of the ALP for his efforts.

While he was branching out into political organizations, Morford's interest in the Soviet Union was not piqued until World War II, when the Soviet Union was "losing millions of people," and the nation's struggle became a humanitarian matter.[741] With hindsight, he claimed that his biggest motivation had been the Battle of Stalingrad from 1942 to 1943. He found its scope terrifying and inspiring. Morford participated in RWR in an unknown capacity and regretted that his job at UCCD did not allow him to do more.[742] After telling this to Harry Ward, Morford was invited to the 1942 conferences convened by the American Council for Soviet Relations in which they planned out the structure and program of the NCASF.[743] He attended the Congress of American-Soviet Friendship at the end of the year, though only as a spectator.[744] When Morford left UCCD in 1945, Ward and Spofford – both sponsors of the NCASF and influential with that organization's leadership – convinced the NCASF board to give him an interview with Lamont in December for the recently vacated executive director position.

Unlike Corliss Lamont, Morford did not become involved with the NCASF out of an interest in the Soviet Union. As previously discussed, he was unmoved by that nation

[741] Ibid., 145.
[742] Ibid., 141.
[743] Ibid., 153.
[744] Ibid.

or its story throughout the 1930s, despite the preoccupations of his friends and mentors. The NCASF job was appealing to Morford because, for the first time since 1919, the Soviet Union and United States were on the verge of armed conflict. Morford had been spiritually cleaning up the consequences of wars since his days at Albion. A staunch pacifist, Morford had never been in favor of American intervention in World War II before the Japanese fleet attacked Pearl Harbor but he had lacked the stage from which to make a difference. This time, Morford wanted to be in on the ground floor. Therefore, he jumped of the opportunity to make an impact on tense American and Soviet relations through the NCASF.

The crucial question on Morford's mind was what would become of the American-Soviet military alliance of World War II. Would it usher in a new period of peace and prosperity the world over or would it crumble amid suspicion and avarice? Morford thought to ensure the former there needed to be a successor to the Popular Front: an organization or organizations that would fight for peace the same way armies fought for war, with efficiency, drive, and constant and thoughtful maneuvering. In this, Morford functioned as a proto-Henry Wallace, an anti-Cold Warrior who argued for a revival of the 1930s, with its New Deal restructuring of the state/society relationship and peaceful relations abroad, as opposed to the apocalyptic showdown posited by Dulles and the anticommunists. The stakes in this competition for the tone of postwar America could hardly be higher. As he wrote in his first report for the NCASF in 1946, "The world throbs with fear and hope, trembling on the edge of complete disaster and at the same

moment trembling on the edge of a peace which could bring freedom and security to all mankind."[745]

Morford, tuned into politics in 1945 to a degree he never had been before, was already concerned about the direction of US foreign policy. He thought that Secretary of State James F. Byrnes, who had a dangerously reductionist understanding of Stalin's motives, was a disaster in his negotiations with the Soviets after World War II.[746] It was clear to him that Byrnes "was even then trying to avoid negotiating with the Soviet Union," and that he had "daggered the whole situation."[747] Morford's hope was that a movement could be developed that would challenge the "Soviet aggression" narrative and help stop a war between the world's two superpowers. Morford was pleased when Lamont emphasized this aspect in their interview, arguing that "this was the most important thing in the world," and that Americans needed to work to "try to save that friendship."[748] What Lamont did not emphasize was also interesting. Though Lamont had known about the HUAC investigation of the NCASF since November 12,[749] and the NCASF board had voted on December 5 to refuse to cooperate with the committee, he

[745] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Annual Report, 1946; Box 1, Folder 65.
[746] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 163.
[747] Ibid., 1: 163.
[748] Kathy Kahn and Richard Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 1986 1984, 163, Box 3; Folder 22-23, Abbott Simon Papers; TAM 346; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University. Note that these quotes are Morford's recollections of his conversation with Lamont, not direct quotes *from* Lamont.
[749] Ibid., 51.

did not tell Morford this pertinent information.[750] The most Lamont let on was that there was an unidentified "struggle" ahead that would probably involve Washington.[751]

The board's reasoning for Morford's hire is mysterious, as no conversations were recorded. We know several things about the process. First, Morford later said Corliss Lamont and Melish were Morford's biggest supporters on the board at the time. Second, the second-choice candidate for the executive directorship was Craig Vincent. Vincent was, to put it lightly, a much more inspiring personality than Morford from a national perspective. He was charismatic, attractive, and a former member of the Colorado State Legislature.[752] During World War II, Vincent was appointed Atlantic Coast regional representative of the Recruitment and Manning Organization in the War Shipping Administration.[753] Also, Vincent was a CPUSA member.[754] That Morford would be picked over Vincent was no sure thing, or even likely. The chief reason why he was comes down to the forward thinking of Corliss Lamont.

Lamont, still chairman of the NCASF in 1945, looks to have influenced the hiring decision in Morford's favor. Lamont appointed a committee to make a recommendation on who to hire, for which he chose Melish, William Morris, Jr., Henry Pratt Fairchild,

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[750] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," NCASF executive board minutes, December 5, 1945; Box 1; Folder 30.
[751] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 163.
[752] Craig Smith, *Sing My Whole Life Long: Jenny Vincent's Life in Folk Music and Activism* (UNM Press, 2007), 63.
[753] Ibid.
[754] Ibid., 62. Vincent's identification as a Communist comes from his second wife, Jenny Vincent. His Communist sympathies were well known in the 1940s, with the venerable *Seafarer's Log* "outing" him as a fellow-traveler in 1941. When Vincent moved to New Mexico after the war, he opened the San Kristobel Valley Ranch, which was widely considered a recuperation site for persecuted Communists during the Second Red Scare.

and Dorothy Douglas.[755] They recommended Morford over Vincent. The committee was, it should be noted, comprised of public figures and none of them was a CPUSA functionary. Lamont, already aware of the HUAC investigation against the Council, had planned ahead. He wanted a non-political, uncontroversial figure like Morford, who had experience lobbying in Washington but could not be linked to the CPUSA.[756] Lamont was trying to put the NCASF on the best possible footing for the fight that was to come. Not for the last time, Morford's relative lack of bias was an asset.

The board vote was nevertheless contentious, with Morford acquiring only a narrow majority. Given the fact that neither Morford nor Vincent met with the full board for any sort of interrogation, the vote would have come down to a competition between the influence of the board members who did know them or had preconceived notions. It is clear that Melish and Lamont voted for Morford and given what we know about the partisanship of Bayer and Jessica Smith, it would be strange if they had not voted for Vincent. The vote, however, occurred when Smith was out of the country, which was probably fortuitous for Morford.[757] The identities of the board members who attended that day suggests that the members who wanted a broad, activist, independent Council

[755] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," NCASF executive board minutes, December 5, 1945; Box 1; Folder 30.
[756] There is another interesting bit about this hiring process. Lamont apparently pushed for Morford to be given the title of executive secretary, rather than executive director. Morford insisted on the latter as a condition of his employment, and was given it. As Lamont knew about the HUAC investigation, he may have been attempting to absolve Morford of responsibility for the NCASF's records.
[757] I do not argue that the timing of the vote was some sort of conspiracy against Smith and the Communists. In 1945, Jessica Smith's trip would have had to have been scheduled far in advance, and the vote recommending Edwin Smith's resignation as executive director only took place on November 8.

would have all had to vote for Morford for him to come ahead.[758] With that vote, the NCASF leadership had decided upon (if not unanimously) the direction of their organization. Political connections were eschewed in favor of the demands of the present situation and mainstream, liberal credibility.

The struggle foreseen by Lamont began only a week after Morford took over the NCASF and set the tone for Morford's tenure as executive director. When HUAC called Morford and Lamont to Washington and demanded to see a list of contributors to the NCASF, HUAC was not even a permanent committee yet. It was still a year before the famous Hollywood Ten case and two years before the investigation of Alger Hiss. After a farcical and failed feint against the CPUSA in the fall of 1945, HUAC launched an offensive on what they perceived as a more immediately dangerous target, the groups it saw as the most pernicious communist Fronts in America. Besides the NCASF, Congress moved against the National Federation for Constitutional Liberties and the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee (JAFRC).[759] That the NCASF was one of the first postwar targets of HUAC shows how effective it had been in reaching Americans during World War II.

Morford always later insisted that he had been aware of the HUAC investigation before he was called into court but he probably only found out after he took the job. There is an air of fatalism in Morford's description of his experience with HUAC. He

[758] More vote minutiae: Morford's recollection was that 15 members were present. The minutes document only 12, but such a discrepancy from either source would not be unprecedented. The minutes do not, for instance, list Melish, who almost certainly would have attended such an important vote.
[759] Walter Goodman, *The Committee: The Extraordinary Career of the House Committee on Un-American Activities* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1968), 178.

knew he and Lamont were recognized as the representatives of the NCASF by the committee and he claims there was never any question as to whether he would give in to the court (he would not).[760] This foretold a dire resolution for Morford, as there was an informal understanding between himself and the board that Lamont could not face legal repercussions.[761] Whether the imperative to protect Lamont came from Lamont's own fear of prosecution (as Morford suggests), or the board's refusal to lose the public face of their organization, is unknown.[762]

That Morford had to take the blame for an organization he had been involved with for all of a week was by no means certain. At the very least, Lamont's argument that he could not deliver records to the court because he was not their legal custodian is suspect. First, Lamont and the board had already voted to not cooperate with HUAC in December of 1945, before Morford took the job, meaning that he had little say in the decision unless he decided to quit. Second, though it is indeed traditional for an executive director to have custodianship of an organization's records, there was no provision in the NCASF bylaws specifying that such was the case. As an officer of the organization, Lamont was fully capable of legally delivering the records to HUAC if the board saw fit. In any case, Morford's willingness to be a martyr for the NCASF saved Lamont from criminal prosecution and the NCASF from having to betray its principles by cooperating with HUAC's dismantling of the Bill of Rights. No matter what one thinks of Morford's politics, his was a virtuous act consistent with his ideal for an activist ministry.

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[760] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 2: 177.
[761] Ibid., 172.
[762] Morford claimed that his taking the fall for the NCASF was a source of embarrassment for Lamont in their future relationship.

But a consideration of the context of HUAC investigations in 1946 goes some way to revealing why Morford fell on his sword on his own so unnecessarily. It appears that Lamont's "buck-passing" was actually part of a larger attempt by prosecuted organizations to launch a wider campaign in Congress about HUAC. The strategy, first adopted by the JAFRC, was to have each of the organization's officers refuse to hand over records and in the process implicate another officer as the responsible party. It was intended to delay the HUAC investigations, and prove to Congress that HUAC was of questionable efficacy. In the case of the JAFRC, all sixteen members of the executive committee refused to hand over the records and, as performance, blamed one another for their inability to do so (all using the same language). All sixteen were cited for contempt and served time.

The NCASF institutionalized the strategy as well, voting on February 13 to "direct" the executive director "and other officers of the board" "to resist to the maximum limit permissible under the law, the production of the books and records of the Council and giving of testimony on its internal affairs."[763] This campaign was in alignment with House representative Vita Marcantonio, a progressive ally who "knew everything that was going on," and who was trying to facilitate a debate in Congress on the merits of HUAC.[764] Morford's testimony aligned with the JAFRC strategy, as he obtusely stated to the committee that he could not produce records because they were not in the room and wasted time with semantic annoyances. But it looks like Lamont had cold feet about the

[763] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 2: 55.
[764] Ibid., 2: 54.

strategy, as he deviated from the script and "had not exactly refused to produce his group's documents but had merely said they were under Morford's control."[765] As a result, Lamont was the only one of the key defendants in the HUAC investigations of spring and summer 1946 to escape criminal prosecution.

The US Attorney General was left with a single target at the NCASF, and therefore treated the contempt trial against Morford, which took place in June of 1946, as a prosecution of the NCASF itself. Morford was treated as synonymous with the organization he had led for all of a few months. The trial was never so much about Morford's contempt of court (which was, to be fair, obvious) as a public venue to tar and feather the NCASF. The main problem with the NCASF, according to the government, was evidently its name, as explained by US Assistant District Attorney Charles B Murphy in his opening statement: "Well, friendship is alright, but sometimes friendship is dangerous… This friendship that is proposed (with the Soviet Union) may have a sinister connotation."[766] Instead of offering evidence of the Council's dangerous nature (which was a non-sequitur to begin with), the prosecution rested on the conceptual nature of the Council as the prosecution understood it. HUAC member John S Wood (a prosecution witness) said more and less than he meant to when he claimed on the witness stand, "Anti anti-Soviet propaganda is anti-American Government propaganda."[767] The jury was only permitted to hear 90 minutes of testimony in a six-day trial and very little of it appears to have been about HUAC or the contempt charge. Morford was nevertheless found guilty

[765] Goodman, *The Committee*, 179.
[766] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," The Case of Richard Morford, nd; Box 4; Folder 44.
[767] Ibid.

and sentenced to three months in prison and $350. In his statement before sentencing, he explained his reasoning for the refusal to hand over the records:

> …the actions of the Committee on Un-American Activities in the case of the National Council, if upheld, will disastrously undermine the Bill of Rights which is our proud heritage as American citizens and the foundation upon which our democracy has been built…. [the First Amendment is] a right to hold and express and opinion – an opinion contrary even to the opinion held by our government when, in good faith, we believe our government on a particular issue, acts contrary to the best interests and welfare of the people.[768]

One might assume Morford would feel betrayed, or at least bitter, about the HUAC episode. But he had an experience during 1946 that he claimed made everything worth it. One evening, he and Melish went aboard a Russian freighter docking in New Jersey, in their capacity as officers of the NCASF. This was Morford's first run-in with actual Russians and he did not know what to expect. The captain of the freighter introduced them to a mixed-gender crew, all young, between seventeen and thirty-five. All were friendly, joyful, and spoke English. Morford suddenly had a revelation:

> Indelible in the minds of these young people was the war; it had only ended a year before. It came out in conversation in spite of their evident reluctance to start such talk. Not one of them, apparently, but had suffered the loss of at least one loved one in the immediate family. Each of the crew had taken some part in the War. If they were young they had performed dangerous duties in protecting the home community and keeping it functioning. If they were older they had been soldiers at the front…Now I remembered what I had read in an account of the War that very morning. When the Nazis swept over the Ukraine they left behind them 200,000 dead in Odessa alone. These crew members were the boys and girls of Odessa. I understood the yearning of the young people on that shipboard, their anxiety for a chance to live. That night I knew for a certainty that I was on the right job. Between the people of these two countries friendship must be built. Together we must strive to put an end to war.[769]

Morford knew he had found his calling, and a short stay in jail did not slow him down.

[768] Ibid., Statement Before Sentence, Richard Morford, April 30, 1949; Box 4; Folder 44.
[769] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 2: 146.

Even aside from the government attacks and the jail term, Morford became director in a striking moment of transition. The NCASF was shifting from a popular, broad organization to a small-scale, specialized one. Operation Friendship, the grand expansion campaign of 1946-7, was a plan drafted by the board before Morford's hiring, probably in collaboration with the leadership of RWR before that organization disappeared. Operation Friendship called for the national organization to place new requirements on the local societies, an expanded staff, mass membership, and regional conferences. The plan ("beautiful on paper, no doubt," per Morford) also mandated the hiring of specialized leadership who would work directly with trade unions and other organizations. Morford tried to implement the plan, but the NCASF had fallen forty-four thousand dollars in debt by the end of the year. Only a timely loan from Lamont saved the NCASF from collapse. Operation Friendship was a disaster but it also cleared away much of the old communist leadership who sought to make a painless transition from RWR to the NCASF. They had not reckoned on the extent of anti-Soviet feeling in the United States after World War II, and "thousands of those who had been RWR adherents fell away quickly" as they grasped the new paradigm.[770]

Upon taking charge, Morford ran the NCASF much as he had run the UCCD and House of Friendship. He characterized himself as, "not much of an administrator… [I] didn't have friendly relations with [my] staff."[771] His personal management style rested on using himself as an example. He worked seventy hours a week into his 70s for the

[770] Ibid., 2: 85.
[771] Ibid., 2: 102.

NCASF (he classified himself as a "1.5-time worker"), did most of the organizational legwork himself, and often worked without pay. He was the sort of man who, when presented with the honor of a tribute dinner by his colleagues, would somehow end up planning the agenda for that dinner.

Morford focused upon outreach. While the organization was never again popular and received little press coverage after World War II, its pamphlets, newsletters, and statements were everywhere. As Morford wrote about NCASF outreach, "We were sending out releases to a battery of newspapers – all the wire services, the principal dailies, to the black press, to the Trade Union press, to the Church press and hundreds into the hands of leadership – all the leadership of the remaining local chapters and to key persons in other cities."[772] Morford's predecessor, Edwin Smith, had been content to issue broad instructions from the board to local societies, who would then implement them on the ground. Morford recognized that in the Cold War, there was more potential in letting the locals set their own agendas and in treating the national office like a New York local society. This decentralized approach traded discipline for flexibility. Instead of simply ordering the societies to participate in a campaign, he empowered the societies to choose their own course based on the unique circumstances of each city. Morford's management was not always popular, and often made colleagues feel like they were on the outside looking in. But his hands-off approach kept the organization together for thirty-five years, far longer than any of the other organizations that had similar trajectories to the NCASF up to 1946.

[772] Ibid., 2: 95.

Before Morford, most of the work of the NCASF was more or less public relations for the Soviet Union. At the core of the program was an assertion of basic American and Soviet unity – that negative stories about the Soviet Union were untrue, that Soviet institutions were basically democratic, and that Americans and Soviets were more or less the same. Morford established a new purpose. Henceforth, he determined that the NCASF would work for peace between the United States and Soviet Union above all other goals, regardless of the agenda of either country. The timing of the shift of the NCASF's rhetoric to world peace is interesting. The Soviet Union began presenting itself as a champion of peace with the Wroclaw World Congress of Intellectuals in Defense of Peace in August of 1948, and pushed the peace narrative hard from the formation of the World Peace Council in 1950 onwards. Morford's realignment of the NCASF into a peace organization therefore presages the beginning of the Soviet effort by two years, and the year that the Soviet policy reached its stride by four. The Soviet Union fell in line with the NCASF's policy, not the other way around.[773]

When the extent of government repression and public indifference toward dissent in the United States became clear in the late 1940s, the Communist Party went underground in the hope of waiting out the hysteria (or, as in the case of William Z. Foster and his acolytes, in anticipation of a climactic battle between the USSR and United States). Morford took the NCASF down a different path. He insisted, in spite of popular opposition, that his organization remain essentially a political one. That was

[773] On the World Peace Council, see Lawrence S Wittner, *One World or None: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement through 1953* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993).

often an unpopular perspective in the NCASF. Attempts were made on the board to engineer an end to political statements and campaigns at least twice, but these efforts were always stillborn, because Morford threatened to quit if the organization ceased being activist. Even so, some of the societies, particularly Los Angeles, refused to participate in political campaigns on principle. Yet, Morford remained firm on the need for political activism until his retirement.[774]

In Morford's reckoning, after all, the NCASF had a unique role in the American peace movement. It was the only existing organization in the postwar United States that understood the Soviet Union and its perspective. Morford believed that this mandated that the NCASF have a central role in American activism. Morford thought the NCASF could not split the political from the educational or cultural in its program: they were fundamentally connected, just as the politics in his sermons had been intrinsic to the religious content. If it were to fulfill its mission, the NCASF needed to make "clarification of the unresolved issues in the relations between the two countries that are now causing an increase in international tensions; and the building of wide public support for a positive policy of cooperation with the USSR to replace the current cold war policies."[775]

Aside from the three campaigns against US foreign policy in the late 1940s,[776] Morford's political focus was on nuclear weapons. Opposition against nuclear weapons drew on the same logic as his activism on behalf of American-Soviet friendship in the

[774] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 2: 46.
[775] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Statement, March 30, 1950; Box 1; Folder 35.
[776] See chapter 2.

first place: the need to prevent the sort of collateral damage caused by modern war, which represented an existential threat. In the early Cold War, Morford's NCASF was the primary opponent of atomic weapons in the United States. This was because of his emphasis on disarmament but also because of the historically weak state of the peace movement after World War II, both in the United States and the world. Pacifism had been a popular and pervasive cause into the mid-1930s but it had been sidelined by the Popular Front and its insistence on a united military effort against fascism.[777] The American commitment to World War II further decreased the peace movement's numbers and influence. Pacifism was an unpopular concept during the war and also a criminal one: thousands of activists and conscientious objectors were imprisoned. Morale was devastated. Pacifists had given their all to preventing the outbreak of World War II, to no avail. According to Lawrence Wittner, the movement's "inability to stop the war shattered its confidence and left it discredited and isolated."[778]

The peace movement that did exist was divided into several perspectives and constituencies. The largest groups in the United States were the War Resisters League, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), and the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR). There were also small pacifist groups from various religions (such as the Quaker Society of Friends), and coalitions of scientists committed to the abolition, or at least regulation, of atomic weapons. These peace groups were not lacking in engagement or direction. But, as Morford said, peace organizations in the United

[777] Wittner, *One World or None*, 42.
[778] Ibid., 43.

States were weak and uneven in coverage. Morford hoped to use the contacts and infrastructure of the NCASF to "creating an American peace movement" out of these scattered forces and in the process possibly save the world.[779]

The first NCASF anti-nuclear campaign was in 1946. Using the infrastructure of RWR, the NCASF distributed 50,000 pamphlets arguing for an international banning of the atomic bomb. It was a project conceived and launched before the Soviet effort against the atomic bomb in the United Nations.[780] Scattered attacks on US atomic policy followed for the next three years, before culminating in the Outlaw the Atom Bomb Rally in December 1949, the first organized opposition to the atom bomb since the Soviet Union developed their own atomic bomb in August of that year. The rally was meant to be an extravaganza of the caliber of the war years, with "representation from trade unions, fraternal groups, church and organizations, civic and community and Negro groups…"[781] Its aim was to "begin the mobilization of America's peace forces for the outlawing of the atom bomb and the ending of the cold war…"[782] "There," Morford argued in the press release, "the people will have a chance to express their urgent desire for peace, to repudiate the bipartisan road to war, to demand peace."[783]

The rally capped the Eastern Seaboard Conference, and was Morford's attempt to determine how much support existed for a peace movement in the United States led by

[779] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Annual Report, Richard Morford, April 11, 1951; Box 1; Folder 69.
[780] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 2: 234.
[781] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Press release, NCASF, November 8, 1949; Box 6; Folder 52.
[782] Ibid.
[783] Ibid., Press release, NCASF, n.d.; Box 6; Folder 52.

the NCASF. Still blindsided by the Cold War, Morford was "…stumped to know how best to… bring the people out," and turned to the leaders of other progressive organizations, such as Arthur Schutzer of the Labor Party, Elmer Benson and Henry Wallace of the Progressive Party, and civil liberties attorney O John Rogge for ideas on how to appeal to the now mysterious masses. In staging the rally, Morford was groping for the elements with which to forge a new American left from the ashes of the Popular Front coalitions of the 1930s and World War II. He was sure that the key message for this hypothetical constituency would be peace and disarmament, as he wrote in March of 1950 to the NCASF constituency:

> These twelve months have witnessed a gradual arousement [sic] in various sections of the American people and the first demonstrations of a peace movement. This has come about circumstantially because the cold war has been carried to such an extreme length as the decision to manufacture the H-bomb. Thus the people have come to realize in some measure the desperation of our policy-makers. Since that super and supposedly exclusive American weapon, the A-bomb… blew up in our faces, millions of people are no longer going to be fooled. The super-super weapon we make others can and will make also. Then how is the cold war to be won when both sides possess equal powers of mass destruction?[784]

Morford knew, however, that a movement would not organize itself. He would have to "turn the growing disillusionment and fear to constructive account," while combating the notion that "foreign policy is not the proper business of ordinary people."[785] He was aware that his was an appealing message for a significant portion of the population but had no clue as to their numbers or present state of mobilization. He believed that 1950, with the H-bomb at the tip of everyone's tongue, was the time to find out if the "bonds of anti-communist hysteria" had indeed been noticeably broken.[786]

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[784] Ibid., Annual Report, Richard Morford, March 30, 1950; Box 1; Folder 68.
[785] Ibid.
[786] Ibid.

This 1950 attempt to coalesce a peace movement proved premature. While the 12,000 people who attended the Outlaw the Atom Bomb Rally was somewhat encouraging, the attendance at the three-day Eastern Seaboard Conference was a sparse 300 representatives. Morford was dejected. "The quality of the presentations by some 19 persons of extraordinary competence and authority in the field of the Soviet Union and world affairs was uniformly high… but those who came were good people already in peace work… the attendance was disappointing. We tried for many more." The reaction on the board was a unanimous decision to contribute to the peace movement not by collaborating on the disarmament issue but by increasing "understanding of the life and activities of the Soviet Union and to place before the American people both the possibilities and necessity of restoring American-Soviet cooperation."[787] The NCASF would be "one sector of the peace movement," not its coordinator.[788]

The reason for the failure of Morford's ambitious goal was that mobilizing against nuclear weapons was simply not an appealing issue for Americans in 1949. This was due to the amount of war hysteria present, as well as an investment versus reward calculus. The Cold War United States had little interest in matching the amount of war material and soldiers that could be produced by the Soviet Union, a totalitarian society that was indifferent to consumer demand. This, combined with a lack of tolerance among Americans for friendly casualties meant that the atomic, and later hydrogen, bomb could be seen as a game-changing equalizer in a war with the Soviet Union. In the late 1940s

[787] Ibid., Annual Report, Richard Morford, April 11, 1951; Box 1; Folder 69.
[788] Ibid.

and early 1950s, pacifism was out, and a strong national defense was in. According to a poll in 1949, sixty-nine percent of Americans favored the building of the hydrogen bomb and seventy percent of Americans opposed a pledge promising to not use nuclear weapons first in a war.[789]

Perhaps even more important, the long-term effects of radiation both on humans and the environment were not widely understood until the middle 1950s, most dramatically with the unintentional effects of the Castle Bravo tests in 1954.[790] While Morford and others in the NCASF saw only the complications implicit in the use of nuclear weapons, most Americans had not yet caught up with them. It was also easy to get discouraged as a peace activist at the time: the US government had no interest in nuclear disarmament in this early period of the Cold War, and the Soviet Union – when push came to shove – was really only interested in disarmament on its own terms.[791] Cynics accused the NCASF and Soviets of insincerity. After all, all the humanitarian concerns about nuclear proliferation and devastation in the world had not stopped the Soviet Union from building their own atomic bomb in 1949. Anxiety over nuclear conflict would eventually be sufficient to make disarmament the core around which an activist movement could thrive but 1949 was not yet the time; nor was Morford's the ideal organization to prompt that movement into being through overt means.

The priority under Morford was always, however, to do more: to reach more people, to embrace more causes, to fight more injustice. The Cold War had made such a

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[789] Wittner, *One World or None*, 310.
[790] On Caste Bravo, see Jane Dibblin, *Day of Two Suns: US Nuclear Testing and the Pacific Islanders* (New York: New Amsterdam, 1990).
[791] Wittner, *One World or None*, 256; 288.

task problematic, especially through the NCASF. Public meetings under the auspices of the NCASF, or any organization that advocated American-Soviet friendship, had become difficult to carry out. Quality public halls would not rent to the NCASF, and the mediocre halls that would were charging double. This meant that the outreach of the NCASF through meetings, which had been its bread and butter, was capped at around 1,200 people – far too small to make a profit. Further, few people would distribute NCASF literature, which meant that Morford had to make expensive first-class cold mailings to individuals. Merchants would no longer donate goods for sale at fundraising bazaars.[792] In short, the NCASF had been incapacitated in its outreach and Morford needed to be more creative in order to make the organization a useful partner for other peace organizations. When it was no longer possible to construct a peace movement in the manner to which the NCASF had been suited, Morford attempted to do so through grassroots means.[793]

To see the state of the peace movement first hand and thereby figure out what he had to work with, Morford went on a one-person NCASF field trip in 1952 in the Midwest (an area Harry Ward had suggested might be ripe for activism a couple years earlier). He was not looking at former or current locations of local societies but rather areas that might facilitate expansion, whether for the NCASF or other peace organizations. He targeted Rust Belt cities like Cincinnati, Louisville, Dayton, and Columbus. Specifically, he tried to find out if it was feasible to develop a national

[792] "Richard Morford Papers; TAM.361," NCASF Projection of Program for 1954; Box 9; Folder 3.
[793] Tomoff notes a similar situation for Australian friendship organizations. See Kiril Tomoff, *Virtuosi Abroad: Soviet Music and Imperial Competition during the Early Cold War, 1945-1958,* 2015.

educational program that could "increase American-Soviet understanding and the improvement of relations between the two countries." Morford offered his time freely to any and all organizations who were willing to allow him a meeting.[794] For the most part, he met with progressive leaders in small meetings, establishing contacts with "progressive trade unionists," prominent black leaders (they were "more understanding and sympathetic than most people"), ministers, and rabbis.[795] There were a few tiny peace groups in every city, often connected with churches, with names like the Militant Church movement and Louisville Peace Crusade. Morford interviewed leaders of these groups every day for six weeks and left substantial quantities of Council literature with them.[796] He visited forty cities that spring in all.[797]

The next year, Morford followed up with the local peace workers, with the additional aim of assessing the engagement of industrial and agricultural workers around the country. In doing so, he witnessed the sorry state of peace work in the United States on the local level. Morford described the workers he met in Detroit, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, and other industrial cities as encumbered with "a growing sense of uneasiness, a feeling that before too long they might be thrown out of employment…"[798] He told of massive layoffs in the steel industry, and claimed that this led to reduced funds for progressive, pacifist groups. According to Morford, much of the financial backing of such groups had come from "progressive nationality groups" in more prosperous times,

[794] "Richard Morford Papers; TAM.361," Letter to National Field Leadership, January 26, 1952; Box 8; Folder 37.
[795] Ibid., Letter to National Council, February 14, 1952; Box 8; Folder 37.
[796] Ibid.
[797] Ibid., Highlights of Activities, Chicago Council, 1953; Box 8; Folder 58.
[798] Ibid., Notes to Supplement Brief Report on Activities, 1953; Box 8; Folder 58.

among which industrial workers were a large percentage.[799] "Not alone the defense of the foreign born but every other fight has been the responsibility of these progressives – for Negro rights, for the Rosenbergs, for peace," wrote Morford.[800] Much of the fight had been beaten out of them by 1953. Further, "public authorities" in these towns had made it their business to effectively disenfranchise the workers. In Youngstown, Morford heard tell of persecution against the local International Workers Organization union, as police were "denying permits for repairs and reconstruction, sending details… every time [a political] event took place…"[801] The state HUAC boards were also directing dozens of subpoenas at trade unions, asserting that they were riddled with communists.[802]

The agricultural workers were little better off. Morford had hoped that farmers, who he said were neglected in the Cold War United States due to the emphasis on defense and armament production, might have become agitated enough to find American-Soviet relations a pressing issue. Yet, he found that the National Farmers' Union, once the bastion of liberal farmers in the United States, was being challenged by the newer American Farm Bureau Federation: a "reactionary" union that "has gone along with the cold war program."[803] "Progressive farmers" had been exiled from local farmers union boards, and were being discouraged by the new conservative leadership from attending meetings at all. Many farmers he talked to considered the "war economy" to be "bad

[799] Ibid.
[800] Ibid.
[801] Ibid.
[802] Ibid.
[803] Ibid.

business," but those who were organized prioritized improving the welfare of farmers, not peace or friendship activism.[804]

At the end of 1953, Morford had visited ninety communities in seventeen states in two years. It is doubtful that anyone else in the United States had so complete a perspective of the American peace movement at that time. He wrote his friend Colonel Raymond Robins, one of the first Americans to enter the Soviet Union, with his thoughts on the peace movement after his field trip in 1952. "The progressive forces in each community are very small," he writes.[805] Each community had no more than a half dozen committed advocates, who were all responsible for keeping the public informed about a half-dozen important causes ("civil rights, protection of the foreign born, support of workers on strike (steel), peace").[806] Morford found "a willingness" in these over-burdened individuals "to skirt the issue of American-Soviet relations" in their work. During World War II, the NCASF had been able to educate entire communities about the issue by sending lecturing experts but the inability to hire suitable halls made this impossible during the Cold War. In this environment of repression, Morford ruled that the best the NCASF could do was "get the thinking of people centered on less ambitious approaches to the educational job," such as meetings in private homes rather than halls, and small-scale, person-to-person distribution of pamphlets.[807] It was a bleak forecast, considering that Morford had begun his grassroots campaign with the intention of forging a movement of collaborating peace organizations.

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[804] Ibid.
[805] Ibid., Letter to Raymond Robins, July 4, 1952; Box 8; Folder 47.
[806] Ibid.
[807] Ibid.

After the two discouraging field trips, as well as the failure of the Eastern Seaboard Conference and aborted Research and Study Conference, Morford reached the conclusion that if there was any sizable collection of peace workers in the United States, they were not interested in collaborating with the NCASF. He began working with Abbott Simon, the field director of the NCASF, "trying to shape up a peace movement here in this country" through other organizations.[808] This was no easy task in the early Cold War, either. As Robbie Lieberman describes in *The Strangest Dream: Communism, Anticommunism, and the US Peace Movement,* in this period "pacifists often received the same treatment as Communists."[809] The necessity of strong armed forces was accepted as a given in the United States, both by the bipartisan political establishment and the majority of citizens. There was aggressive "fear and intimidation" directed at anyone who made a habit of signing peace petitions (this was what Frederick Woltman defected from the Right over), as the difference between the Soviet and domestic pacifist doctrine had become a matter of nuance. This was an endless annoyance to non-communist American peace activists. Some of these groups were more willing to combat the perception of parallelism than others. The Fellowship of Reconciliation under AJ Muste, for instance, accused the communists of misusing the word "peace," castigating both the American propaganda which stated that peace was communist code and the Soviet propaganda that claimed that Americans wanted war.[810]

[808] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 329.
[809] Robbie Lieberman, *The Strangest Dream: Communism, Anticommunism and the U.S. Peace Movement 1945-1963*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 84.
[810] Ibid., 85.

When he worked through other organizations, though, Morford was able to make inspiring headway. The first and most significant attempt to navigate this unsettled context and create an NCASF front, as it were, was the Mid-Century Conference for Peace in May of 1950, founded in the wake of the failure of NCASF Research and Study Conference. The Mid-Century Conference was held in Chicago, and was presented as a forum for independent pacifists. Morford later claimed that he and Simon "built up" the conference from the National Council office:

> So he [Simon] was out on the road and had contact not alone with our societies but with all peace forces and all communities, so he was a very important factor in building it up. I stayed at the home base and handled the mimeograph, so to say… Abbott and I were just working hand in glove… He never made any move without consulting me, and we agreed upon tactics or in some cases it was strategy, as our whole thing got under way.[811]

Morford did not have clearance to use NCASF equipment and funds to do mailings for the Mid-Century Conference, or use his time on the job for organizing at promoting it, but he did so anyway. "If ever I worked day and night it was then," he later claimed. Having got the conference off the ground, so to speak, Morford transferred control to Chicago, where it was held, and allowed it to proceed independently.[812] The roles of Morford and Simon in the conference were not detected, even by the conference's critics.[813]

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[811] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 350.
[812] Ibid., 2: 111.
[813] Ibid., 2: 110. There is not a paper trail for Morford and Simon's involvement in the Mid-Century Conference. The reason for this is because the NCASF destroyed most of its 1949-1950 material for unknown reasons. Fear of the government using Morford's association with the WPC to sully the NCASF is the most likely reason. But his own words, plus the criteria of "means, method, and opportunity," as well as the fact that the Mid-Century Conference's program appears nearly identical to that suggested for the NCASF Research and Study Conference, speak to his credibility on the matter.

The conference was successful. A day-long program featuring over two dozen academic and religious leaders, it was reminiscent of the conferences the NCASF had pulled off in World War II. Participants discussed subjects Morford had labored to promote and encountered resistance against in his NCASF work, including the notion of peace as a proactive concept, the effects of the Cold War on families and communities, the political and psychological effects of the existence of nuclear weapons, and how the Cold War chipped away at civil liberties.[814] Even better, the Mid-Century Conference reached a different audience than was possible with the NCASF. In contrast to the case of the World Peace Council, none of the members of the sponsoring Committee for Peaceful Alternatives was a communist, and the conference was attended by a tremendous number of non-radical pacifists. The event culminated in a resolution expressing support for strengthening the United Nations, cooperating with peace movements around the world, and rousing Americans to actively protect peace.[815] After the conference, the Committee for Peaceful Alternatives became a permanent body in New York, had its own local societies, and became known for "criticizing both Soviet and U.S. policies."[816] Morford later reflected that, "Very few ever came to know that getting off the ground with the peace movement might have been delayed a long time if Abbott and I had not jumped in with both feet."[817]

[814] "W.E.B Du Bois Papers (MS 312).," Mid–Century Conference for Peace Program, May 1950, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.
[815] Wittner, *One World or None*, 204.
[816] Lieberman, *The Strangest Dream*, 101.
[817] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 2: 111.

The Mid-Century Conference was not without controversy. The Fellowship of Reconciliation, a socialist-leaning interfaith pacifist organization, accused the Committee for Peaceful Alternatives of having been created by communists.[818] No less a liberal clergyman than AJ Muste, who had become the foremost peace worker of any affiliation in the early Cold War, warned his colleagues against participation. Muste noted that the Labor Youth League supported the conference and made the amusing assertion that the lack of communist-affiliated sponsors meant that the conference *must* be controlled by them. "God knows that the peace and pacifist forces are weak enough as it is," Muste wrote. "Put them in the position where they can be plausibly lumped with organizations and movements which admittedly include Communists, and I think the effect may be disastrous."[819] There was no winning with logic of that sort.

Morford and Simon also tried to make their influence felt through the World Peace Council (WPC). Morford had been an advocate of the WPC since its foundation in 1948, and in the November 1950 conference in Warsaw, he managed to get Kingsbury and other NCASF supporters like Pauline Taylor and churchman Robert Muir in the American delegation. Morford was a member of the central body of the WPC, though this was "always down-played by [WPC president] Romesh Chadra."[820] The WPC was communist-dominated but in 1950 it was more or less the only game in town from a peace activist perspective. Morford thought the NCASF had to have representation. But this was dangerous ground. Ultimately, while the WPC gave Morford and other non-

[818] Lieberman, *The Strangest Dream*, 85.
[819] Ibid., 86.
[820] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 2: 108.

communist pacifists the hope that a new Popular Front was arising, it was a self-defeating effort that both polarized the peace movement and further diminished its influence with Americans.

There was great hope for the WPC when it debuted in 1948 in Wroclaw, Poland in the form of the World Congress of Intellectuals for Peace. The Congress was known to be a primarily Soviet affair but there was optimism among liberals in the United States, France, and Britain, that it might provide a rare forum for discussion of intellectual and cultural aspects of foreign affairs in the postwar world.[821] But it was soon clear that the communists who ran the conference had no intention of facilitating constructive discussion. Instead, the United States was blamed exclusively for the Cold War, and attacked in such terms that Kingsley Martin claimed that the rhetoric at the Congress "sounded like a declaration of war."[822] British scientist and communist John Desmond Bernal, a speaker, said that the USA "was being readied for a war of complete world domination" and compared it to Nazi Germany, while Soviet poet Ilya Ehrenburg deemed Westerners who would not sign the Congress' resolution (which criticized the governments of the United States and United Kingdom) to be "idiots and imbeciles."[823] Suffice it to say, this was no way to make friends or reach compromise. The Wroclaw Congress was followed by a World Peace Congress in Paris in 1949, which was no better, from a fair and balanced perspective. Attendee Jean Genet called it "the most concerted inflammatory anti-American propaganda effort in this part of Europe since the

[821] Wittner, *One World or None*, 175.
[822] Ibid.
[823] Ibid., 177.

beginnings of the Cold War." Dissent from the Soviet line, such as that offered by O John Rogge (who argued that both the Soviet Union and United States shared responsibility for the Cold War), was booed and hissed into oblivion.[824]

Morford took no direct part in those two conferences, but committed himself to the third in Stockholm in 1950. His reasoning may have been based on the fact that this conference adopted a more moderate tone and oriented itself around disarmament rather than around attacks on America. Morford and Simon knew the nature of the WPC, however, and were aware that participating in a communist-controlled conference would not make them friends domestically. The non-communist peace movement in America, such as it was, opposed the WPC and its work, to varying degrees. A 1949 World Pacifist meeting resolved that "…it is unwise for pacifists to collaborate organizationally for limited objectives with the Communist Party or with organizations in which it has substantial influence."[825] War Resisters International also declined to participate in the WPC, "because we know that those who control this organization do not believe in peace fundamentally and advocate it only when it suits their political ends."[826] Morford believed that Communists and the Soviet Union sincerely desired peace, but he strove to keep the NCASF's more liberal allies out of the WPC. He hoped that these allies could avoid becoming "badly marked" as radicals and could therefore credibly participate in a "broadly based peace movement" years down the road that the NCASF probably could not.[827] Accordingly, Morford and Simon tried to use their influence with the leaders at the

[824] Ibid., 179.
[825] Ibid., 186.
[826] Ibid., 187.
[827] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 330.

WPC to keep friend, liberal activist, and Methodist minister Willard Uphaus from attending, knowing that if Uphaus attended the American press would tar him as a communist.[828] This would have been an enormous setback, as Morford and Simon wanted to engineer Uphaus into leadership of the American peace movement.[829]

The Stockholm Peace Congress of March 1950 produced the Stockholm Peace Appeal, the great false panacea of the early Cold War peace movement. It was a petition, drafted at the conference, which called for "the unconditional prohibition of the atomic weapon," "strict international control" of atomic bombs, and asserted that any leader who used such a weapon in a first-strike capacity was guilty of war crimes.[830] This was as broad and uncontroversial an appeal as one could wish. Abbott Simon took leave of the NCASF for three months to run the national signature campaign in the United States. Morford directed the NCASF to also support the petition, arguing to peace workers around the country that "This Appeal should be placed before thousands in your city – yes, tens of thousands if your town is at all sizeable."[831] Over five-hundred million people signed the petition worldwide. Only two and a half million were Americans, however, which was considered terribly disappointing by the WPC.[832]

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[828] Ibid.
[829] Uphaus' coronation as head of the peace movement, of course, never happened. He went to the Paris Peace Congress despite Morford's efforts and lost his job as a result. A few years later, he was convicted to a year in prison on a contempt charge originating from a HUAC appearance. Uphaus went on to create a Connecticut NCASF council.
[830] Wittner, *One World or None*, 183.
[831] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Memo from Richard Morford to Leaders in the Field, July 6, 1950; Box 3; Folder 17.
[832] It is worth pointing out that four hundred million of these signatures were from Communist countries. The number, to be clear, encompasses the entire adult population of those countries. One can make of that what one wills. Wittner, *One World or None*, 183

The problem was that the Stockholm Peace Appeal came from the wrong source. In light of the Korean War, which began in June of 1950 and clearly featured Soviet assistance to North Korea's invasion of South Korea, the constant Soviet pleas for peace sounded hollow indeed. Morford decided that he did not want the NCASF to become associated with the WPC any longer. "It is of the utmost importance at this stage of development," he wrote to ARI SF, "that the American Peace Movement organizationally be completely indigenous, however sympathetic any of us may be toward the great movements of peace in other nations."[833] Yet he considered the Stockholm Peace Appeal to be politically innocuous despite its origin. His basic mistake here was to collapse the American left and NCASF constituency, believing that "all progressive forces" would champion the Stockholm Peace Appeal because it was apolitical and humanitarian. He still did not realize that the American Left and the Soviet Union were now incompatible. To the vast majority of the Left (and pacifists), the perceived motive mattered more than the message. The American Left rejected the Stockholm Peace Appeal as "camouflage for a totalitarian policy of militarism and domination."[834] The *New York Times* compared the morality of signing the Stockholm Peace Appeal to that of Stalin signing the Nazi-Soviet Pact.[835] Too many bad and cynical decisions had doomed the Soviet Union as an instigator of peace.

And so ended Morford's attempt to create an American peace movement from the scraps of the Popular Front. He made hundreds of contacts around the country, came

[833] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Letter from Richard Morford to Betty Hirschfelder, May 8, 1950; Box 3; Folder 47.
[834] Wittner, *One World or None*, 189.
[835] Lieberman, *The Strangest Dream*, 90.

closer than anyone else in the early Cold War to engineering a non-partisan forum for discussion of armaments in the Mid-Century Conference, made the NCASF the first American organization to protest nuclear weapons, and acquired first-hand knowledge of the resources for peace that were available. Repeatedly, he was shown that not only was it too soon for Americans to accept a peace movement but also that the NCASF was not considered a proper facilitator of it. Pacifists in the Cold War were treated by Americans as synonymous with communists even when the former directly opposed the position of the latter.[836] Morford had a tough sell, especially because his conception of the Left was stuck in the 1930s. That anticommunists like Norman Thomas, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Sidney Hook – a minority in the 1930s – now represented a majority in the Cold War had not occurred to him.

That was unfortunate because Morford was as effective and enthusiastic an organizer as was available to a proto-peace movement at the time. This became clear as other Americans tried to build a peace movement in the late 1950s. In 1957, for instance, American social activist Scott Nearing sent out a mass letter arguing that "the door is wide open for a broadly representative, non-sectarian, and non-partisan nationwide peace movement."[837] We can imagine how this must have irked Morford, considering that Nearing was describing exactly what Morford thought he was already doing. When the resulting meeting attracted less than a third of the audience Nearing had hoped for, he must have realized that Morford had made a dire situation look much easier than it was.

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[836] Ibid., 83.
[837] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Letter from Scott Nearing to Richard Morford, August 31, 1957; Box 2; Folder 51.

In response, Nearing did what many radicals interested in peace did in the 1950s: he joined the NCASF.

## Conclusion

When Corliss Lamont became uncomfortable with the Soviet Union's actions in the 1950s and the NCASF leadership's responses (or lack of) to them, he moved on to other causes. When Morford found himself in the same situation in the 1950s, he chose instead to take the initiative himself and make the NCASF into an organization he could be proud of as a clergyman. While Morford had never been officially defrocked, so to speak, by the Presbyterian Church and was not even informally ostracized, the Church no longer treated him as a part of its circle after he took the NCASF job. He continued filing the requisite paperwork to the Presbyterian Church as a minister but never again received replies from the administration.[838] He began to think of the NCASF as a ministry – *his* ministry. Activities and stances increasingly began to resemble Morford's decades-old vision for a new Christianity. Morford saw this as a subtle sort of proselytizing. The NCASF, he said, was "an opportunity to bear witness to a wide circle of friends of my commitment to Jesus Christ and support of the church."[839] He believed that he was bringing the Church to "non-believers" who would otherwise have little positive contact with the Christian perspective. This effort, he said, was successful. Once, Morford's liberal and progressive friends found the Church "other-worldly, therefore irrelevant."

[838] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 1: 413.
[839] Ibid., 1: 412.

But now "…they [non-believers] do see the churches as lifting the spiritual life of the community and ministering at the same time to people's material as well as spiritual needs, combatting racism, standing for senior citizens, engaging in the struggle against the arms race and for world peace…," he claimed in 1983.[840]

Like Corliss Lamont, Morford was always out of step with his times, and this only increased during the Cold War. Morford marks the forgotten left edge of a post-World War II diaspora of Progressive Christians. In the wake of World War II, the Protestant churches endured an epic seismic shift, as the Social Gospel, Christian socialism, and the institutional Church all crumbled as the Cold War progressed. Soviet aggression in Czechoslovakia and Poland, and later Hungary, led all but the staunchest Sovietophile clergy to renounce any association with Communists and the Soviet Union, and instead to throw their lot in with the United States in a contrived "clash of civilizations" narrative. Leading the charge against the Progressives was a former ally, Morford's former instructor Reinhold Niebuhr. Niebuhr swore off the idealism of his compatriots like Ward and Muste, and argued that war was, in fact, not always a bad thing: at least if it served the purpose of a greater good. Niebuhr preached a realist theology which mandated a separation of the material world from the Kingdom of Heaven because the material world was just not good enough for the expectations the Progressive Christians placed upon it. He championed segregation, praised the execution of the Rosenbergs, and lamented Joseph McCarthy's inefficiency in rooting out communists. Niebuhr took most of the Protestant churches with him. He came to enjoy a level of celebrity scarcely seen by a

[840] Ibid.

theologian, becoming the toast of intellectuals and presidents. Morford, meanwhile, along with a few radical holdouts like AJ Muste and Harry Ward, fought for peace and the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, and lived and died in relative obscurity as a result.[841]

Morford's greatest importance was perhaps his position at the vanguard of a small cadre of 1930s-vintage radicals who, without seeking a Soviet America, suggested political alternatives to the military-industrial complex and bipartisan anticommunist consensus in the United States. Along with Harry Wallace, and a scattering of pacifist organizations such as WILPF, Morford offered visions of an alternate reality in which the New Deal never ended and Soviet-American friendship led both countries into a new golden age. The opposition, however, having seen the experimentation and voicing of dissent that was so prevalent in the 1930s, were not about to let it happen again. Morford and other Old Leftists who refused the (so the Old Leftists perceived) Faustian bargain accepted by one time progressives such as Niebuhr, Sidney Hook, and Max Eastman – which allowed them into the halls of the establishment if they only discarded their principles at the front door – were shown no mercy. They were silenced, discredited, and disenfranchised by a Second Red Scare.

Yet, when he died in 1986, Richard Morford left an impressive record of achievements. He managed to increase awareness of the Soviet Union and pacifism in an era when neither were topics acceptable for public discourse. He stood up against unjust persecution from his government, serving as a model and inspiration to his peers. True,

[841] William Inboden, *Religion and American Foreign Policy, 1945-1960: The Soul of Containment* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

his was a tragic narrative of a man forced to turn a blind eye to events he found deplorable in order to hold together a shaky coalition which aimed to accomplish the most important cause in the world: to prevent a nuclear war. He sometimes ignored his own feelings in favor of the consequentialist logic of much of the organization, thereby depriving his constituency of his actual opinions and indirectly supporting the communist narrative by failing to refute it. Morford was aware of this, and later seemed mystified at his own behavior: "… [criticism of the Soviet Union] could have changed the whole course of things if there had been somebody in the leadership there that stood up," he said.[842] But we must keep this behavior in perspective: Morford did not lie through the NCASF, and he did not use the NCASF or its resources to corrupt people or organizations; rather, at his worst he did not tell the whole truth as he knew it. Morford came out of the NCASF relatively scot-free, morally speaking (though, ironically, he seems to have actually felt worse about it than anyone else).

The nature of his work in the NCASF had been dictated by his Social Christian ethos. His influences were church thinkers, not political analysts. Morford believed that a failing civilization needed to be rejuvenated through new ideas and sheer force of will, drawing upon a God who lived in and empowered everyone with the ability to do good. If enough people worked to their potential, he thought, they could create the better world promised by Christ: A Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Morford's contribution to this end was to work toward preventing a nuclear holocaust that would destroy the possibility of the kingdom forever. He was willing to work with, and compromise, with anyone toward

[842] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 279.

this task, including liberals, socialists, business leaders, communists, clergy, New Leftists, and a superpower.

Morford's grassroots and covert work with the peace movement was consequential. He made connections between peace workers around the country, presented venues for genuine debate, and in general kept important, virtuous issues – such as disarmament talks, cultural exchange, dissent, and peaceful coexistence – in people's minds. He also kept what had been a communist front honest, forcing it to contribute to just causes in constructive ways rather than compromise its agenda for the sake of unrelated Soviet or CPUSA goals. I maintain that Morford's hiring was representative of a desire on the part of the NCASF leadership (particularly Lamont) to have an independent organization that could make its own way through a difficult postwar climate. Morford fulfilled that wish. Throughout his tenure, the NCASF was an American organization dedicated to humanitarian and altruistic ends.

## Chapter 5: Rockwell Kent: A Man Out of Time

Rockwell Kent, a realist landscape painter and graphic artist who reached the peak of his success in the 1920s, has today largely faded from the memories of Americans outside the world of art collection. But in his own era and milieu – the art scene of the early 20th century in New York City – he was seen as an artistic force. From the "genteel poverty" of most of his youth, he became "undeniably one of America's most popular artists during the 1920s and 1930s."[843] He made dozens of landscape paintings, many of which today hang in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and other core institutions of American art. Most of these paintings document lonely and harsh locales, from Monhegan Island off of Maine, to Greenland, to Alaska, to Tierra del Fuego: all of which Kent's bold but simple style makes inspiring and even spiritual. He also displayed significant accomplishment in his graphic art, as demonstrated in the stark beauty of his illustrations in editions of *Candide,* the works of Shakespeare, and most famously, *Moby Dick.* In his woodblocks and lithographs, too, Kent created imaginative scenarios wherein he posited that sufficient connection with the beauty of nature could take humanity into a greater form of existence.

Kent was a dogged self-promoter with a tireless work ethic. He was devoted to the task of making a living as a creative craftsman at all cost. At various times he found steady work as an architect, a builder, and a printmaker. Once he even innovatively sold shares of "himself" as a corporation in 1919 to finance an artist's retreat in Alaska.

[843] Lee Milazzo, "An American Saga: The Life and Times of Rockwell Kent," *Dallas Morning News*, July 6, 1980.

Kent's prodigious work in the 1930s with advertising agencies partially legitimized the sale of drawings for advertising and marketing purposes, providing many artists the blueprint for a living during the Great Depression. Kent consistently fought the institutionalization of an art world which privileged collectors, museums, and critics above artists themselves. Kent organized independent exhibitions in the early 1910s, edited an independent art review journal in the 1920s, and organized and led artist unions in the 1930s.

Among the public, Kent was known as a rugged individualist, akin to Hemmingway or Thoreau. He lived a "notorious personal life," full of risk and adventure abroad and romantic turmoil at home.[844] His life was full of singular anecdotes, most inspired by a series of travel diaries Kent published in the 1920s, the popularity of which rivaled that of his paintings. Kent claimed to have ridden a whale in the Arctic after his boat capsized off Greenland in the 1920s. He was kicked out of Newfoundland in 1915 under suspicion of being a German spy. Such was his celebrity that an imposter once made a living out of pretending to be him for several years.[845]

Yet, despite a lifestyle celebrating his own individuality, Kent became a prominent champion of the Soviet Union in his later years. He even was the chairman of the NCASF between 1957 and his death in 1971. This was the longest term of any chairman of the organization and was during one of the most important (and interesting)

[844] Ibid.
[845] On Rockwell Kent the adventurer, see Rockwell Kent, *Wilderness a Journal of Quiet Adventure in Alaska* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1996); Rockwell Kent, *Voyaging Southward from the Strait of Magellan* (New York; London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1924); Rockwell Kent, *N by E* (New York: Brewer & Warren, 1930). All are highly readable and entertaining.

periods in the history of American-Soviet friendship. After the failure of Richard Morford's attempt to create a second Popular Front, landing a chairman of Kent's substantial cultural cache allowed the NCASF to transition into the 1960s, when looser restrictions on cultural exchanges gave the organization a second lease on life.

Anyone studying the full range of Kent's life is left with a glaring question: how did Kent get from here to there? Why did an American known for his individualism and success in an individualist field become enamored with a communist nation to the extent that he led a movement dedicated to improved relations with it? I posit Rockwell Kent came to the NCASF through a lifelong evolution of his social, economic, and artistic beliefs. Raised with an appreciation for art as a craft rather than an intellectual pursuit, Kent believed that art should have utility in the lives of everyday people, rather than serve as prestige pieces on a rich man's wall. This approach to art, which he inherited from the 19th century "craftsman ideal" movement that treated artists as workers rather than intellectuals, primed him for socialism, which he discovered through the Socialist Party in 1904. When joined with the heritage of transcendentalism, which he learned about in books on an artist's retreat, Kent's socialism gained a uniquely American and populist flavor, transforming into the ideology of an antimodernist. Kent doubted the narrative of American progress and instead celebrated the traditions and heritage of American values as represented in working people. In looking for a path to American future greatness, he sought a bridge to the past.

As his perspective was constantly at odds with both the progress-obsessed American left and avant-garde American art scene of the early 20th century, Kent became

an outsider in his country. He loathed the political and artistic establishment alike and all but wrote off the American people as their willing slaves. Kent became convinced that American society was a thing to be escaped and transcended, not celebrated or even reformed. Accordingly, he spent much of the first three decades of the twentieth century attempting to escape it. This all changed with the fear of the Great Depression and the threat of fascism, which inspired a large enough movement on the Left to convince Kent that change was possible, thus facilitating his entrance into the realm of politics. Kent then became a committed Popular Frontist, seeing in the Front's socialist/democratic ethos the same ideals which he had embraced in his youth.

While the Popular Front was not to last the 1930s, Kent immediately found a cause through it that inspired him even more: The Soviet Union. The aesthetic of Soviet artists, socialist realism, and the way in which the Soviet Union employed art to serve society rather than the individual -- the very things most American intellectuals loathed about Soviet culture -- were revelations to Kent. Never a political animal, Kent considered himself above the petty infighting that characterized so much of communist politics during the 1930s and 40s. This led him to shrug off the vicious twists and turns of Stalinist policy, such as the Moscow Trials, Nazi-Soviet Pact, and later Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Instead, he focused on the Soviet creation of a new society driven by the fusion of artist, worker, and prophet. Kent entered the universe of American-Soviet friendship, then, not through a wide-eyed failure to comprehend a Soviet shell game which substituted tyranny for freedom but rather through his own personal lifelong search

for his own vision of the populist and revolutionary spirit that he thought made America great.

## Early Influences: Transcendentalism Meets Socialism in the Age of Lenin

Rockwell Kent's early life was defined by a confluence of influences, most of them fiercely juxtaposed to the fashion of his day. From a working-class background one generation removed from wealth, Kent developed a reverence for art from a "craftsman ideal" perspective, in which art was to be approached with hard work and made useful for working people. This was antithetical to the growing institutionalization and bourgeoisization of art that had been taking place in the United States since the Civil War. With the assistance of the budding New York socialist world Kent also became a socialist, aiming for reform of the economy of the United States into a system more efficacious to the workers who fueled it: another unpopular position in the United States of the early 20th century when capitalists enjoyed largely unchecked power to shape society as they willed. His influences in the art world eventually direct him toward transcendentalism as well and the idea that humanity needed to take strength not from urban society but rather from nature and a greater understanding of the individual's relationship with it. The sum of these influences was to merge into a kind of antimodernism: a notion that America's strength derived from the spirit and traditions of its founding, which were contradicted and opposed by the "progressive" narrative of industrialization and capitalism that had been embraced by the establishment and American citizens alike.

*  *  *

Rockwell Kent was born in 1882, in Tarrytown, New York. Tarrytown was a bucolic Revolutionary War-vintage farming town that served as the inspiration to Washington Irving's "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." Kent's mother, Sara, was an heiress to a chandlery fortune, and his father – another Rockwell -- was a New York City lawyer. Sara's uncle and adopted father, James Banker – who Kent and his mother always mockingly referred to as "the Great Mogul" – did not approve of the match and all but disowned Sara as a result. In 1887, the senior Rockwell passed away of typhoid fever, leaving his widow with a five-year-old child and uncertain future.[846]

Times were tough for several years and the junior Rockwell spent his early childhood valuing frugality. Eventually, however, Banker's wealthy widow, Josie, reopened relations with the Kents. There were definite benefits of her patronage, including a first-rate education for Rockwell and the experience for him of traveling all over the United States. Rockwell thus grew up in an environment of enormous inconsistencies: huge opportunities were available to him through his great aunt, but his daily life he was firmly ensconced in the working class. This gave him the perspective of a tourist in his great aunt's world of plenty. Rockwell developed contempt for this world. Whereas he and his mother had to count pennies, Josie's existence was comparatively frivolous. The injustice rankled.[847]

[846] Rockwell Kent, *It's Me, O Lord: The Autobiography of Rockwell Kent.* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1955).
[847] Ibid.

Kent's household, usually consisting of his mother and her sister Jo and four children, was often on the verge of financial ruin despite Josie's occasional help. His mother and Jo, therefore, were "driven to the employment of every natural or acquired talent they possessed to earn more money."[848] Kent was taught to make things – cups, pots, jewelry – from a young age, and was good enough at it that he quickly "became a sort of junior partner in the industry."[849] He later estimated that he progressed into an art professional at the age of fifteen. As he later wrote, "My work in the production line at home, my increasing pre-occupation with drawing pictures – at home when I ought to be studying, at school when I ought to be listening; gradually, I came to feel… I would become some sort of an artist."[850]

When he left high school for higher education, he settled on architecture as a field in which he could use his artistic skill as a viable means to make a living. His talent was such that he won a scholarship at Columbia and trained under architect William R Ware. Particularly after attending an exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, wherein Kent determined that his paintings were easily as good as those on display, however, Kent decided he was more interested in painting. He therefore changed course and set out for a career as a professional artist and maker of "Art with a great big capital A."[851] He signed up to study with the realist artist William Merritt Chase at the New York School of Art in 1901, in the hope of making breakthroughs and connections.[852]

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[848] Ibid., 51.
[849] Ibid.
[850] Ibid., 65.
[851] Ibid., 73.
[852] Kent, *It's Me, O Lord*.

Chase was an impressionist: he painted life not just as it was, but as it appeared to him. He wanted to use art not as "self-expression," but to convey the majesty of the world to the viewer. As historian Barbara Dayer Gallti writes, painters like Kent, Charles Sheeler, and Georgia O'Keefe "gained from Chase an attitude of professionalism, technique, and tendency to eschew narrative… indeed, the common theoretical thread that ran through this teaching was the injunction to discard the story-telling picture that relied on sentiment for its appeal."[853] Kent described Chase's teaching in a similar fashion: "In his criticisms Chase was insistent upon one thing: Truth. Go before nature, use your eyes, and then paint what you see."[854] Kent was a favored pupil of Chase's because they shared the same basic outlook on the purpose of art: that it existed to record the beauty of the world and inspire humanity. "Truly, I loved this world of ours," Kent writes in retrospect, "I wanted to arrest its transient moods, to hold them, capture them."[855]

Yet, after his time at the New York School of Art with Chase, Kent returned to Tarrytown. His mother had at last inherited her portion of the Banker fortune in 1903 and Kent decided to leave his sparse student existence and live in security for the first time. He took a job with a local architecture firm and worked for a year in his former field of study. In his spare time in this period, he found he had a love of the classic Russian writers: particularly Peter Kropotkin, Alexander Pushkin, and Leo Tolstoy. These writers mixed a humanitarian's sensitivities to the plight of the working poor with the verve and

[853] Barbara Dayer Gallati and William Merritt Chase, *William Merritt Chase* (New York: Harry N. Abrams in association with the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1995), 130.
[854] Kent, *It's Me, O Lord*, 77.
[855] Ibid., 76.

polish of literary craftsmen and without mucking up the works with discussions of political or economic theory. Kropotkin was an especially important influence. One of the more revered Russian philosophers and authors of the modern era, Peter Kropotkin began his life as landed nobility, the son of a Cossack general. He ended it as one of the premier socialist thinkers of the second half of the 19th century and the leading theoretician of the anarchistic wing of Russian communism. In Kropotkin's most read and enduring work, *Mutual Aid* (1902), he argued that, contrary to assertions by Social Darwinists like Herbert Spencer, the main factor of evolution is not a struggle for life against the rest of one's species but rather an urge toward cooperation. He asserted that the center of human morality had always been an understanding "of the close dependency of every one's happiness upon the happiness of all; and of the sense of justice, or equity which brings the individual to consider the rights of every other individual as equal to his own."[856] When left to their own devices, Kropotkin asserted that humans tend to form informal and formal societies for mutual aid. It was not coincidence, he wrote, that religions around the world were all based on the concept of mutual aid, nor that marriage and the family unit had become foundational elements of nearly every human society.[857]

If the people have always sought to help one another for the betterment of all, Kropotkin contended that it had consistently been in the state's interest to work from a contrary motive and divide the population based on any number of factors. The state "weeded out all institutions in which the mutual-aid tendency had its expression,"

[856] Petr Alekseevich Kropotkin, Thomas Henry Huxley, and Paul Avrich Collection (Library of Congress), *Mutual Aid, a Factor of Evolution* (Boston: Extending Horizons Books, 1955), 6.
[857] Ibid., 222.

confiscating collective peasant lands, revoking the sovereignty of communities, and crippling the guilds.[858] Kropotkin argued that it was only after 300 years of such repression that the people of the Western world had lost their spirit for collectivism. The new, state-sponsored, perspective of the people, adopted around the Renaissance, was "an unbridled, narrow-minded individualism" which "relieved… their obligations toward each other."[859] This philosophy, according to Kropotkin, became nearly ubiquitous. But it was all a charade. Kropotkin noted that people rebel against the individualist creed daily almost despite themselves. These small and large rebellions were the only reason that society worked at all. This argument resonated with many people around the world who felt deadened and defeated by their society's obsession with the so-called "profit motive" and the belief that the profit motive had an almost behaviorist control on human actions.[860]

After being prepared for socialist and anti-statist ideas by Kropotkin, Kent was introduced to socialism in an American political context by Rufus Weeks. Rufus Weeks was a wealthy life insurance salesman from New York who became a Christian socialist.[861] Weeks, a family friend of the Kents, became a close friend of Rockwell's after their first meeting in 1904. Weeks discussed with Kent many of his concerns about the state of the world, most of which related to inequality of opportunity. He claimed that

[858] Ibid., 170.
[859] Ibid., 171.
[860] In recent years, several monographs have been devoted to Kropotkin's impact on intellectual history. See Brian Morris, *Kropotkin: The Politics of Community* (Amherst, New York: Humanity Books, an imprint of Prometheus Books, 2004); Jim Maclaughlin, *Kropotkin and the Anarchist Intellectual Tradition* (Pluto Press (UK), 2016).
[861] Ross Wetzsteon, *Republic of Dreams: Greenwich Village, the American Bohemia, 1910-1960* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 49.

socialism heralded a widespread devotion to the welfare of the whole of society: a march of progress toward the sense "that one cannot himself be healthy or happy unless the race is happy and healthy."[862] Socialism to Weeks was a recognition by humanity that economic factors were the paramount factor in human relations. If inequality were to be reduced, he wrote, there must be "the pressure and clash between enduring masses of men animated by opposite economic interests."[863]

Weeks took Kent to his first meeting of the Socialist Party, where Kent said the emphasis was on domestic matters such as full employment, child labor, an eight hour day, and labor's right to organize.[864] Weeks recognized Kent's potential for leadership and convinced him to practice speaking.[865] Within a couple of years, Kent considered himself a "Marxian socialist," and "revolutionary," though he lacked even a basic grasp of Marxist theory.[866] His primary interest in the ideology was its attempt to address injustice. Kent was troubled by the existence of privilege, inheritance, and the concentration of wealth "in hands which had not labored to create it."[867] He believed there would be future battles between a vaguely defined "working people" who took responsibility for themselves and their families and played by the rules in their communities, and a corrupt politico-social capitalist class which used its unearned wealth to maintain an undeserved and unethical domination of the workers. Kent cast his first

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[862] Edmond Kelly, Florence Kelley, and Oliver Wendell Holmes Collection (Library of Congress), *Twentieth Century Socialism: What It Is Not, What It Is, How It May Come* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1910), xii.
[863] Ibid., xiii.
[864] Kent, *It's Me, O Lord*.
[865] Ibid.
[866] Ibid.
[867] Ibid.

vote for Socialist Party candidate Eugene Debs in 1904 when he was twenty years old. His reasoning at the time was simple: "Why in the midst of plenty should there be such poverty?"[868]

Within a couple of years of living in Tarrytown, Kent became restless and uninspired. In 1905, he decided to give art another try. Seeking a new mentor, Kent turned to landscape artist Abbott Thayer, who lived and worked in the rugged mountains of New Hampshire. Kent, determined to learn from Thayer (who had taught his aunt years before), showed up at Thayer's door without notice one summer's day and announced himself ready to work. Fortunately, the two were artistically compatible and Thayer was receptive to Kent's apprenticeship. Kent had decided he wanted to paint landscapes and Thayer was one of the premier landscape painters of his age. A realist, Thayer taught a different style of painting than Kent had learned with Chase. Whereas Chase sought to paint nature as he wanted it, Thayer wanted to paint nature as it *was*, with no embellishment or digression. Thayer taught that an artist's job was to show the majesty of nature to the rest of humanity, not to "improve" it.[869]

Kent's earliest work reflects his priority on depicting beauty simply and honestly. *Dublin Pond* (1903), a representation of the landscape around Thayer's retreat in New Hampshire, is heavily indebted to Thayer's aesthetic, though the brush strokes retain an impressionistic quality from Chase's earlier influence. There are no people in the painting nor signs of human habitation. If we are to take a message from the work, it is the

[868] Ibid.
[869] Ibid.; Nelson C White, *Abbott H. Thayer, Painter and Naturalist.* ([Hartford: Connecticut Printers, 1951).

majesty of nature. This was, in itself, something of a political statement, as Kent was rejecting the tantalizing narrative of progress which dominated in the early 20th century in favor of a celebration of unadorned nature. But there was something missing. The painting lacks a sense of a cohesive theme: it is as if Kent recognized the beauty of nature but was unable to conceptualize what that beauty meant to him.[870]

After his apprenticeship with Thayer, Kent sought inspiration. An instructor at the New York School of Art, Robert Henri (of whom we will have much more to say later), had once suggested that he take a painting trip to Monhegan Island, a tiny island off of Maine, because it was possessed of a beautiful sparseness Henri thought Kent would appreciate. Kent decided to see it for himself. Monhegan was an isolated and lonely place consisting of under a hundred people, most of them temporary residents in the lobster trade. Kent found he loved the solitude. He led a simple existence on Monhegan split between painting and the back-breaking part-time jobs Kent had to take on to support himself.

With only a small social circle available, Kent had no lack of time for reading. In the books available to him on the island, he discovered another philosophy from well before his birth, one that shared his reverence for the beauty of nature. This was transcendentalism. Transcendentalism was a religious, philosophical, and literary movement, largely begun, as Paul Boller writes, "as a quest for new ways of conceiving the human condition to replace old ways that no longer carried conviction."[871] A

[870] Rockwell Kent, *Dublin Pond*, Oil on canvas, 1903.
[871] Paul F Boller, *American Transcendentalism, 1830-1860: An Intellectual Inquiry* (New York: Putnam, 1974), xix.

philosophical import from Europe that bore many marks of the French Revolution, transcendentalism entered the United States on the backs of German intellectuals such as Kant, Fichte, Jacobi, and Schelling.[872] The American brand of transcendentalism emerged when the ideas of those German thinkers was translated into the puritan consciousness of early 19th century New England, as European idealism joined with a reverence for "sincerity, purity, moral heroism, the noble and unselfish adherence to an ideal…"[873] The transcendentalists, who included important Kent influences Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, reached their apex of activity in the 1830s and 1840s in New England. Kent thought their ideas, however, were timeless.[874]

Transcendentalism taught "the unity of the world in God and immanence of God in the world."[875] Emerson, Thoreau, Fuller, Alcott, and others argued that each part of the world contained the essence of every other part. This meant that "the soul of each individual is identical with the soul of the world and contains all which it contains."[876] Everything worth knowing already existed within the human soul, and needed only to be discovered through reflection by the soul's human host.[877] The responsibility of humanity was to experience increasing parts of the world and thus discover an increasing amount about oneself. Transcendentalists thought that experiencing nature unmolested by human intervention was the purest means of experiencing the world, oneself, and God. Such an

[872] Octavius Brooks Frothingham, *Transcendentalism in New England, a History.* (New York: Harper, 1959), 115.
[873] Harold Clarke Goddard, *Studies in New England Transcendentalism.* (New York: Hillary House Publishers, 1960), 189.
[874] Kent, *It's Me, O Lord*.
[875] Goddard, *Studies in New England Transcendentalism.*, 4.
[876] Ibid.
[877] Ibid., 5.

activity was best done alone without the distraction of other people who could not help in determining the nature of one's self.[878]

Ralph Waldo Emerson was one of the most important of the Transcendentalists. He created the Transcendentalist Club which birthed the movement of the same name, spearheaded the movement's journal *The Dial*, and wrote many of its crucial works. His transcendentalist movement was the first in American history to assert the essential unity of nature, the soul, and God. Emerson's perspective was that far from improving the planet, humans and science could only detract from the natural paradise created by God. Whereas the traditional conception of God was of an entity separate from our plane of existence, Emerson posited that God lived in and through nature. This meant that nature itself was divine. Human activity that destroyed nature or removed humans from its influence, Emerson thought, was sacrilege: or at best a detriment to a person's spiritual development.[879]

Emerson made one of the more compelling cases for the benefits of nature upon the human psyche and the adverse effects of other people. Cities, he decried, did not give the senses enough space to breathe, much less grow. There was no divinity in them, as humanity has not the vision to match the beauty of the natural world. On the other hand, nature held "medicinal" enchantments that "sober and heal us."[880] Whereas empiricists

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[878] On transcendentalism as a movement, see Philip F Gura, *American Transcendentalism: A History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007); Barbara L Packer, *The Transcendentalists* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007).
[879] For a particularly strong Emerson biography, see Robert D Richardson, *Emerson: The Mind on Fire : A Biography*, 1995.
[880] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays. Second Series Second Series* ([Waiheke Island]: Floating Press, 2009), 165.

like John Stuart Mill and Gottlob Frege were insisting that truth could only be determined and value assessed based on evidence, Emerson was arguing that truth and value were to be evaluated based on personal reflection in nature and the contemplation of one's relationship with it. The soul needed nature "just as we need water in our bath."[881] Emerson believed humans needed to periodically recharge by finding themselves alone in nature, pondering its superiority over themselves and remembering that "the soul of the workman streams through us."[882]

The most famous of the transcendentalists, however, was Henry David Thoreau. Thoreau was a giant of American literature. His poetry and reflections on philosophy enjoyed "only moderate success" in his lifetime during the first half of the 19th century but have cast an enormous shadow on subsequent generations. His influence was particularly strong in the United States in the 1960s and 70s, when his "back to nature" message resonated strongly with New Left existentialists. His most well-known and treasured work was *Walden* (1854), in which Thoreau made a sustained argument for simple and independent living. In *Walden*, Thoreau explicated his guiding rules for a happy and meaningful life, including his beliefs that instinct equals truth and that the wild is as suitable a source for goodness and purity as is the developed world.[883]

Another important work was Thoreau's essay, *On Civil Disobedience* (1849). Here he argued not just the merits but the moral necessity of being left alone by one's

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[881] Ibid.
[882] Ibid., 186.
[883] Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (New York: Open Road Media, 2014). On Thoreau and his influence, see Rick Anthony Furtak, Jonathan Ellsworth, and James D Reid, *Thoreau's Importance for Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012); Robert D Richardson, *Henry Thoreau: A Life of the Mind* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

fellow citizens and government. Thoreau asserted that the best government had ever done is to get out of the way of the people. Given that Thoreau did not deem Americans fit for anarchy, however, he advocated for a more just government instead of its abolition altogether. Instead of teaching its citizens to respect the law, such a government would teach people to act according to what they think is right.[884] Thoreau suggested that every person was a law onto themselves and that their only allegiance was to their own conscience and the best a government could do is to get out of the way. Young Kent adored Thoreau, referring to him as "he who loves life and lives."[885]

It was from Thoreau and Emerson that Kent acquired his ideas about government and the individual's relationship to it. He interpreted from these writers that American success rested on a "spirit of democracy" which gave Americans sufficient parameters to examine and learn from themselves and nature without external intervention. Kent believed this spirit came from the impetus of the nation's founding. He loved the power of America's formative ideas, of the notion that "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness were unalienable rights of man." He believed those ideas, not any specific invocation of them, were the bedrock of American success. As he wrote in an autobiography in 1940, "The spirit of democracy is the spirit of America." This spirit was embedded throughout history from the Magna Carta, but found its best exponent in the Declaration of Independence. He called the Declaration of Independence a "covenant," a "gospel of our national faith," and a "proclamation of the high purposes for which our nation and its

[884] Ibid., 2.
[885] David Traxel, "Rockwell Kent: The Early Years" 1979, 70.

government were established and to which we will forever hold ourselves to be pledged."[886] He, indeed, argued that American citizens should have to take loyalty oaths to the values of the Declaration.[887] Kent did not, however, necessarily find value in American society or institutions. Even the Constitution, he thought, was negotiable. If it proved incompatible with "real" American values, we should "scape it and begin again."[888]

In Kent's day, there were two movements that shared his conception of a spirit of democracy. Whereas populism was a political movement of the working class, antimodernism was an intellectual and cultural movement of the middle and upper classes. Both, however, were, like transcendentalism, a reaction to the narrative of progress. Populism was largely a Midwestern movement comprised of farmers which coalesced in a series of alliances from the 1860s to the 1890s. Populism took the anti-progress ideas of the transcendentalists to new heights. It urged that American society and economy should be dedicated to improving the lot of the American people rather than corporations or institutions. As Lawrence Goodwyn writes, "the agrarian reformers attempted to overcome a concentrating system of finance capitalism that was rooted in Eastern banks and which radiated outward through trunk line railroad networks to link in a number of common purposes much of America's consolidating corporate community."[889] Fighting the alienation and dehumanization of the industrial economy,

[886] Rockwell Kent, *This Is My Own* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1940), 376.
[887] Ibid., 377.
[888] Ibid., 371.
[889] Lawrence Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), xvi.

the populists desired a "cooperative commonwealth," in which "individual human striving might be fairly respected," and all could attain "a sense of somebodiness" and control over their own lives.[890]

When Kent was growing up, the populist movement was on its last legs. While it made waves in 1892 and 1894, when its most powerful manifestation – the People's Party – managed to lure a not insignificant number of votes nationally, a disastrous 1896 presidential campaign led the movement to merge with the Democrats, who successfully coopted the populist message and in the process nullified the more radical tendencies of the populists. But populism had influenced a second movement that was just getting started: antimodernism. Antimodernism was less a political movement than an intellectual one: a search for authenticity, a yearning for legitimate authority in a nation where politics and economics alike were becoming increasingly and more obviously corrupt.[891] Antimodernists blamed the corruption on "overcivilization:" specifically, as TJ Lears writes, upon "its ethic of self-control and autonomous achievement, its cult of science and technical rationality, its worship of material progress."[892] Against such alienation and marginalization, antimodernists like Henry Adams, Ezra Pound, Georges Sorel, and Sigmund Freud sought truth in experience, "to experience real life in all its intensity."[893] Kent would grow to admire the populists, especially during the Great Depression, but the antimodernists were more clearly a steady influence on his thought.

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[890] Ibid., xv.
[891] T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 5.
[892] Ibid., 4.
[893] Ibid., 5.

One popular strain of antimodernism appealed to the puritan and agrarian republican tradition of the early 19th century, when New Englanders preached, as Lears writes, that "Wealth was a sign of God's blessing but also an agent of corruption… [containing] the seeds of moral failure."[894] Advocates had been "suspicious of wealth but impressed by the ability to acquire it" and accordingly "urged men of property to cultivate sober responsibility and public duty."[895] By the late 19th century, there was a full-fledged revival of this ethic. America, antimodernists said, had strayed from an emphasis on the individual, hard work, and simple virtues, and become overrun by decadence, waste, and conformity. As a pathologist in *North American Review* wrote in 1888, "Once let the human race be cut off from personal contact with the soil, once let the conventionalities and artificial restrictions of so-called civilization interfere with the healthful simplicity of nature, and decay is certain."[896] The spirit of democracy, these antimodernists asserted, was not to be found in the factories and cities but rather in the rural hamlets and townships, where humanity could feel a connection to the land and to their creator.

Whereas the populists were attempting to make room for their existing way of life within the modern political order, antimodernism was a dismissal of that modern political order altogether. In that dismissal, antimodernism, it should be noted, contained a dark core of elitism absent in populism. Implicit in the antimodernist critique was disapproval for the lifestyles and culture of most Americans. As Lears writes, "while the dominant

[894] Ibid., 26.
[895] Ibid., 27.
[896] Ibid., 28.

perception of the interdependent urban market was that man had broken free from preindustrial isolation and poverty, there was a paradoxical underside to official optimism: a sense that individual causal potency had diminished, a growing doubt that one could decisively influence one's personal destiny."[897] The interdependence of modern society led many antimodernists to conclude that "exceptional talent was hemmed in by mediocrity and even simple independence seemed an outmoded ideal."[898] If Americans were going to transcend the ugliness of modern life, the antimodernists suggested it would not be en masse. Such transcendence would, rather, be the purview of extraordinary individuals who could both understand and accept the superiority of the traditional over the modern.

How, one asks, did the back-to-basics perspective of transcendentalist-derived antimodernism interact with the socialism that Kent discovered at more or less the same time? Historian Norman Pollack's work, explicitly about populism but applying equally well to antimodernism, suggests that the two schools were not as far apart as they seemed. For both, after all, the industrial capitalism of 20th century America was abhorrent and for largely the same reason. As Pollack writes, for both populism and socialism, "industrial capitalism meant alienated man – man divorced from himself, his product, his humanity."[899] Both the antimodernist and socialist believed that capitalism crushed labor and placed humans at the mercy of arbitrary economic cycles. Both

[897] Ibid., 34.
[898] Ibid.
[899] Norman Pollack, *The Populist Response to Industrial America; Midwestern Populist Thought.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 68.

suggested that the "financial tyranny" of the monopolists had betrayed the people whose labor and virtue had made their wealth possible in the first place.

Indeed, antimodernism appeared in several socialist and proto-socialist movements in the 19th century. As Alan Dawley writes, a socialist conception of a kind of antimodern "craft" socialism goes back to Northeastern artisans in the 1830s. "Among the men and women who stitched and sewed leather or cloth, cut and shaped stone, poured and molded iron, or sawed and chiseled wood, nothing was more sacred than the principle, 'He who does not work, neither shall he eat…'", with the implication that "anyone who lived well off the labor of others who lived poorly was a vile social parasite whose privileged status derived not from moral right but from economic might."[900] Dawley calls this tradition "Equal Rights." The basic tenet of Equal Rights, he claims, was "if those who labored with hands, backs, and brains wished to break the power of monopoly, they had to organize economically and politically."[901] Equal Rights socialism was an agrarian, democratic, anti-monopoly, and anti-industrial ideology based around a fight against inequality.

Eugene Debs, too, had advocated craft socialism early in his career. In the 1880s, Debs developed a socialist ethos he called "producer theory." Debs summed up producer theory as follows: "Work – honest work – is not degrading. The man who by honest toil earns an honest living is a peer of the realm. He is not a mendicant. Equal to the richest and proudest before the law. Equal to any man in all rights and prerogatives of

[900] Alan Dawley, *Class and Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), 9.
[901] Ibid., 10.

citizenship, with every avenue of advancement open to him, he spurns the idea of 'upper' and 'lower' class, and says, 'we, the people.'"[902] Debs in those years was not an advocate of communal action but rather of individual citizens banding together to force corporations to stop limiting their personal liberty. He argued that personal liberty was an American (and only American) right, due to the United States' traditions that, as Nick Salvatore notes, "stressed economic mobility, political action, and industrious work habits as the foundation of individual dignity and manliness of character."[903] There was little overt class warfare rhetoric here and no sign of Marxist theory. Debs was not claiming that wealth should be redistributed equally but rather that wealth be tied explicitly to work and that *work* be redistributed equally. Like the advocates of Equal Rights fifty years before, Debs wanted a genuine American meritocracy. Wealth and status in such a system would come not from birth or one's position on a corporate hierarchy but rather from honest toil.[904]

Craft socialism resurfaced in the "craftsman ideal" movement. The craftsman ideal was the creation of an Englishman, John Rushkin, and his disciple William Morris. As an ideology, it fought against the capitalist world's redefinition of art from a skilled craft into a "a privileged domain of refinement, aesthetic sensibility, and higher learning."[905] Morris and Rushkin thought that abandoning the "art as labor" heritage of artistic endeavors was a capitulation to a corrupt and all-devouring capitalist order. They

[902] Nick Salvatore, *Eugene V. Debs: Citizen and Socialist* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 61.
[903] Ibid., 62.
[904] Salvatore, *Eugene V. Debs*.
[905] Eileen Boris, *Art and Labor: Ruskin, Morris, and the Craftsman Ideal in America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), xi.

accused capitalism of "degrading work, despoiling nature, and inhibiting creativity – alienating people from themselves, each other, and the natural world."[906] Modern civilization had, in short, "robbed work of pleasure" and sought to do the same to art.[907] Their craftsman ideal, on the other hand, positioned artists in opposition to "industrialization, urbanization, and modernization." It aimed to unite artists with labor and thereby allow art to remain a noble occupation.[908] Morris, in particular, thought himself part of an epic struggle, "believing that beauty could not truly be created," in art or in anything else, "until capitalism was destroyed."[909] This struggle would be fought by artists embracing a new aesthetic divorced from the desires and needs of the elite and allied with the common people. Art would not be made for intellectuals but rather for working people who would use art for inspiration and make it a part of their daily lives. In America, beginning in the 1890s, many artists began to see art as an oppositional force in society to the pervasive industrialism that threatened traditional attitudes about both art and labor.

We can see aspects of antimodernist and craftsman ideal thought in many of Kent's early influences. Chase, for instance, possessed an antimodernist aesthetic in his non-intellectual, even existential, view of art, in which the artist is to trust his own feelings and convey a sense of the lasting virtues of a setting in their work. Despite his taste in his private life, which veered toward the sophisticated and the elaborate, Chase's art agitated against modern themes. As Gallati writes, "Chase apparently found no visual

[906] Ibid., xiv.
[907] Ibid.
[908] Ibid., xi.
[909] Ibid., xv.

joy in the crush of urban crowds, the architectural wonders of a city… the clouds of steam rising from hot engines, or the weekend and evening leisure activities of the middle classes," preferring instead the naturalism of parks and wilderness.[910] Thayer, meanwhile, was a stanch antimodernist, both in his life and art. Thayer was a nervous man, uncomfortable in social company and contemptuous of the masses. He painted the majesty of nature because he could not find such perfection in man.[911] Thayer lived an austere existence with his family in rural New Hampshire, with a life full of hard work and simple virtue. This aesthetic was reflected in his art. As Kent wrote, "Distrusting virtuosity as inherently irresponsible, he emphasized the importance of 'achieving'… every passage of a work. This sounds laborious: it was."[912]

To summarize, then, we can categorize Rockwell Kent in 1905 as an antimodernist craft socialist. He was skeptical of the same narrative of progress with which Corliss Lamont was so enthralled. Under the influence of a diverse array of thinkers including political writers like Kropotkin, Emerson, and Thoreau, and artistic masters like Chase and Thayer, Kent believed that the greatness of America was best served by looking backward toward a United States of craftsmen and farmers. As had been the case with several groups of American and British craftsman radicals in the 19th century, Kent's antimodernism had a socialist component asserting the basic equality of all Americans due to the heritage of individual liberty and hard work of American craftsmen. He believed that this equality of value between all Americans justified a

[910] Gallati and Chase, *William Merritt Chase*, 71.
[911] White, *Abbott H. Thayer, Painter and Naturalist.*, 175.
[912] Kent, *It's Me, O Lord*, 110.

corresponding equality of opportunity in society. Like most socialists, Kent asserted the value of the people over the monopolists, of cutting apart the unfair advantages implemented by monopolists and placing them and the working masses on the same plane.

In his combining of antimodernism and socialism and the transportation of that combined ideology out of its original 19th century context and into the 20th, however, Kent was laying the groundwork for instability between his own perspective and that of other radicals. Kent's socialist position, based upon the idea that collective action should be taken to collectively advance one's rights as an individual, conflicted with the Marxian socialist belief that collective action should be taken to advance the position of the community as a whole. His American nationalist perspective, in which liberty was based upon individual self-actualization made possible through the American spirit of hard work and democracy, clashed with the Marxist assertion that liberty was predicated only on one's economic station and awareness of that station. A Marxist with a proper acquaintance with Kent's full belief system would have concluded him to be afflicted with nationalist prejudice and false consciousness: a mistaken identification of democratic values with the conditions of the yeomen farmers of the early American republic, and a failure to understand that class – not nationality – was the factor around which the world turned. Kent never studied Marxism and was unaware of these ideological differences. He believed throughout his life that he and the Marxian socialists, and later the communists, were aiming to further the same agenda. That they were not would have interesting implications for Kent's philosophy and career.

## Kent in 1905-1929: An Antimodernist in a Modernist World

With his antimodernist socialist outlook, it is little wonder that Kent was less than impressed with the American zeitgeist in which he found himself at adulthood. In one area after another, Kent found his point of view opposed by a powerful establishment which he sought to undermine at his peril. In the art world, Kent faced the influx of modernist European painters who began to dominate the field in the 1910s, despite their alienating aesthetic which Kent believed served only to privilege collectors and institutions. To Kent, this seemed to mirror the political environment, where European concerns engulfed the United States in a war in which Kent believed it did not belong: all for the sake of preserving elite benefits and profits at the expense of American workers. In both art and politics, Kent saw working people and their values increasingly marginalized. In response, Kent turned inward, even as he sought to succeed in a society he hated.[913]

Kent continued to go on artist retreats for seasons at a time, working the rest of the year to pay for them. Soon after returning from Monhegan in 1907, he received his first one-man show in New York, displaying fourteen of his paintings from Monhegan in William Clausen's gallery. This first display of his work to the public was said to be a revelation. James Huneker, art critic for the *New York Sun*, wrote that Kent "knocks you off your pins before you can sit down with these broad, realistic, powerful representations of weltering seas, men laboring in boats, rode rocky headlands, and snow-bound

[913] Kent, *It's Me, O Lord*.

landscapes…" The show was a critical success, enjoying universal praise. Despite a steady crowd, however, no pictures were sold.[914]

The star of the show was his painting *Winter, Monhegan Island* (1907), which later found a home in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In this work, Kent depicts a rocky, wintry landscape bordering the sea, with a single cabin constructed on a lonely pier. Two men, presumably the cabin's inhabitants, row a canoe in an inlet. Despite the harsh and bleak environment, the waters are tranquil and the scene is profoundly peaceful. A sunrise offers hope that the worst is behind the inhabitants who have carved a livelihood out of this barren land. Bold, wide brushstrokes provide a perspective that is both realistic and hazy, like a fond memory. Whereas his previous work had been about capturing the beauty of nature, Kent was now filling his work with social messages. Kent wants us to recognize ourselves in the men in the painting, the scale of their ordeal in establishing themselves on this shore, and the fact that, against this adversity, survival and progress are victory. These men, he seems to say, have won and so can we all in our own struggles. Kent was advocating through his art a return to nature, the harsher the better, and a corresponding abandonment of the decadence and monotony of the infant twentieth century. Kent had fired the opening shots of his career. He was to be a disruption of the narrative in which prosperity meant progress: a minor third creating doubt in the midst of modernism's major chord.[915]

[914] Ibid.
[915] Rockwell Kent, *Winter, Monhegan Island*, Oil on canvas, 1907.

Living most of the time in Tarrytown, Kent was several hours from the relatively flourishing New York socialist scene but he nevertheless took part in socialist politics as well. He joined a local socialist group in Tarrytown and was even appointed chairman. Kent explained his increasing interest in socialism in his autobiography: "My own realization of prevailing injustice had already become acute – through by the term injustice I refer to… the demonstrated failure of capitalism to implement the divine – or, if you like, romantic – concept of justice implicit in the postulate of the equality of man."[916] Kent had already lived and worked among the poor but had also – in the person of his great uncle, Banker – seen how the wealthy lived. The contrast, he felt, "was neither consistent with the concept of equality nor, unrelated as it clearly was to merit, with justice was to me quite evident."[917]

Out of a desire to be closer to both the artistic and political movements he believed in, Kent took the plunge and moved, first part time then full time, to New York City. Kent viewed this as a necessity because his personal life was beginning to demand more stability and resources. In 1908, he married Thayer's niece, Kathleen. Kent did not move to New York City full time until 1911, but spent increasing amounts of time there after his marriage, journeying there every day for more art study and to make connections in the art world. For the first time, he became deeply engrossed in the city's cultural life.[918]

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[916] Kent, *It's Me, O Lord*, 182.
[917] Ibid., 182–83.
[918] Kent, *It's Me, O Lord*.

When Kent fell into its orbit in the mid-1900s, the New York art scene was in the midst of a revolution. Since the Civil War, art had become increasingly professionalized and institutionalized. The huge expansion in the nation's wealth during that time led to an explosion in the art collector's market. Rich Americans used art as cultural capital, as a means of showing they possessed the taste to belong at the same table as European aristocrats. Accordingly, they purchased American paintings that were closest in style to those of the European artists and in the process sought to make an official canon of American art. Artists like James McNeill Whistler, Winslow Homer, and even Kent's former mentor William Merritt Chase made dynamic pictures far removed from the experiences of most Americans but very much in the tradition of European Romantic painters. Their paintings were purchased in droves by collectors and displayed in elaborate, spotless, neo-classical art museums operating with gigantic endowments provided by American industrialists. Art critics, meanwhile, reinforced the taste of the collectors through their reviews. By the turn of the century, art was, in America, becoming a province of the bourgeoisie.[919]

Many artists reacted to the professionalization of art through the already discussed craftsman ideal movement, an antimodernist tradition to which Kent was to a large degree indebted. Now in New York, he was presented with another response: social realism, an art style which promised to display American society as it was, not how a rich white man might wish it. Among the vanguard of the realists in America were the artists

[919] Erika Doss, *Twentieth-Century American Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); JoAnne Marie Mancini, *Pre-Modernism: Art-World Change and American Culture from the Civil War to the Armory Show* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005).

of the Ashcan School. The Ashcan School was an informal, indigenous American art movement seeking to document America's social injustice. The school is often connected to a group of artists called "the Eight," which consisted of Robert Henri, George Luks, Everett Shinn, William Glackens, John Sloan, Ernest Lawson, Arthur B. Davies, and Maurice Pendergrast, though only the first five painted in the typical Ashcan style. Their aim was to separate themselves and American art from the "slavish imitation" prevalent in European art and in the process create work that could be meaningful to Americans.[920]

Kent acquired many of his attitudes about art by way of these Eight, through his professional mentor, the artist Robert Henri. While Kent met Henri in 1901 when the latter was a teacher at the New York School of Art with Chase, Kent began to seriously study under Henri via night classes in 1908. Henri was an American artist trained in a French academy from which he dropped out in 1889. On his return to America he became a key part of the Ashcan School. The cosmology of Robert Henri was idiosyncratic, in some ways evoking an extreme version of Protestant formalism. He believed that the world should be viewed objectively, not in the relativistic way the pragmatists were advocating around the same time. He argued the universe possessed a certain "established order" that "stirs imagination and inspires one to reproduce this beautiful relationship existing in the universe as best one can."[921] This order, which we can view as an absolute or God-like force, is understood and reflected through different means around the world, but its indications, which Henri names "dignity," all points toward the same source. The

[920] William Innes Homer, "The Exhibition of 'The Eight': Its History and Significance," *American Art Journal* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1969): 59.
[921] Robert Henri, "Untitled," *The Conservator* 4 (June 1915).

obligation of the artist was to reveal the dignity of human beings to his fellow citizens, in a way that their national and ethnic culture allows them to understand. Artists could tap into the "vision of orderliness" that allowed the world to "hold together," thereby educating and inspiring others to understand the world and themselves.[922] In Henri's conception, then, the artist was an almost messianic figure, revealing truth from portrayals of ordinary life. This was quite close to where Kent's perspective lay already, as Henri's cosmology resembled nothing so much as a dialect of transcendentalism. Though neither Emerson or Thoreau had posited anything similar to the universal "pattern" claimed by Henri, all of them believed in an essential truth about the universe that was only waiting to be discovered in one's surroundings. Kent and Henri were a good intellectual fit despite some apparent personality conflicts.

Kent and Henri were both committed to an art of the people: one that could be meaningful to Americans in their daily lives. To promote their notion of art for the everyday American, Kent participated in organizing the second New York Exhibition of Independent Artists. The exhibition, the first of which had been held in 1910, was an effort spearheaded by Henri. It featured young realist painters, like Kent, John Sloan, William Glackens, George Bellows, and many others. Henri posited that the exhibition was "an opportunity for individuality, and opportunity for experimenters."[923] He intended the exhibition to "express the *spirit* of the people of today" and to provide Americans "…the means of expressing themselves in their own time and in their own land.[924] By

[922] Ibid.
[923] Robert Henri, "The New York Exhibition of Independent Artists," *The Craftsman*, May 1910, 160.
[924] Ibid., 161.

exhibiting young and novel protégés to a public who had never seen their work, Henri hoped to push his artists further into the American consciousness and perhaps in the process create a mainstream movement.

Kent had two pictures in the first exhibition but he was unable to attend due to a day job. He, however, had a substantial role in the second exhibition held at Grand Central Palace in New York in 1911. His motivation had a more political bent than had Henri. He thought that the National Academy of Arts was exercising an unfair monopoly on exhibition facilities and that this was a violation of freedom of speech. Kent complained that younger, less traditional artists were unable to attract notice from the public because the National Academy was not seeking them out, instead favoring shows by the old masters.[925] The second independent exhibition, for which Kent was the sole full time organizer, was meant to subvert the National Academy's influence on art. The exhibition lacked a jury, there were no prizes, and decisions about the details of the show were decided by the artists democratically. Kent argued in his autobiography that the "independent movement," as he called it, was always fated not to last because of the taste of wealthy patrons and the National Academy but "dominated the New York cultural arena" in the first few years of the 1910s.[926]

Kent's antimodernism meant that he could never completely fit in with the other artists of the New York art scene, however. Some of Kent's work aligned with the social realists: *Fishermen* (1909), for instance, could almost be mistaken for a Henri work, with

[925] Kent, *It's Me, O Lord*.
[926] Ibid.

its depiction of everyday workers without embellishment or romance.[927] But by 1910, it was clear that Kent had a different path in mind. His painting *Of Men and Mountains* (1909) was an indication that Kent was no longer satisfied either with the depiction of nature's beauty or the depiction of working-class existence. This work depicts craggy mountains surrounding a fertile valley in which nude humans of both genders frolic. Though the brush strokes remain wide and bold, his figures are classically-influenced ideal types, more at home wrestling in Sparta than toiling in a New York factory. The figures are foregrounded to the point that they appear to stand *amid* the mountains. They are not dwarfed by nature's majesty, but are *of* it. His landscape is as naked as his figures, and the feeling is one of newness, of rebirth. Kent was pioneering a different approach here, one that embraced the classical lineage of European art while suggesting that its narratives and themes could be discarded as easily as a pair of pants. Kent had integrated his influences and come into his own, allowing him to extol the beauty of nature like a transcendentalist but also producing a progressive message about humanity like a socialist. Through his new paintings, Kent was making an argument that humanity could become happier and better and an integral part of the natural world so long as it was willing to abandon the corruption of industrial capitalism for a simple and natural life.[928]

The new direction of his work was praised by New York art critics. Joseph Edgar Chamberlain wrote, "In looking at some of Mr. Kent's recent pictures, one does not know whether one is in a world of remote antiquity or one of ideal future, but that does not

[927] Rockwell Kent, *Fishermen*, Oil on canvas, 1909.
[928] Rockwell Kent, *Of Men and Mountains*, Oil on canvas, 1909.

matter; the pictures themselves are highly beautiful."[929] In fact, one was looking at both. But despite such reviews, Kent was moving against the tide of the art world. For Kent, the extent of his alienation came together with the 1913 Armory Show, an independent exhibition containing thirteen-hundred works by three-hundred artists. While the show included American social realists including Henri, the exhibition had been planned by Arthur B Davies and Walt Kuhn as a presentation of European modernism to the American audience. While the Americans portrayed a drab working-class realism, impressionist-derived landscapes, and other familiar styles, the Europeans were breaking past boundaries with paradigm-shattering abstract works like Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1912) and Picasso's unsettling *La Femme au Pot de Moutarde* (1910). Edward H Dwight describes the difference in presentation and perspectives between the Americans and Europeans: "When we see the work of the Americans alongside that of Europeans, it is painfully evident how isolated these Americans had been, so conservative by comparison is their work. The Americans were considered advanced in this country because they portrayed ordinary subjects, thought vulgar; in a vigorous manner, thought unrefined. Revolution for some of the Europeans, however, grew out of basic new concepts. Had the Europeans not been invited to show in the Armory, it is doubtful that anyone would have wanted to do the show again."[930]

Kent, however, had a much less positive impression of the European modernists. To him, their work was just a matter of the American industrialists using the Europeans

[929] Kent, *It's Me, O Lord*, 235.
[930] Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, N.Y.) Henry Street Settlement (New York, and N.Y.) Association of American Painters and Sculptors (New York, *1913 Armory Show; 50th Anniversary Exhibition, 1963.* ([Utica], 1963), 5.

as cultural capital again and in the process facilitating the creation of insincere elitist dreck. Art like Picasso's was of no use to the common man, he judged. He could not understand how anyone could use it in their lives in any fashion, much less take inspiration from it. It was an indulgence, with no beauty or truth. Kent later referred to Picasso's work as "silly, ivory-tower self-expressionism."[931] While he judged the Armory Show "sensational," he called the European art and the art the Europeans inspired in America, "the sterile, dead-end byways of abstractionism."[932]

Increasingly disenchanted with the art world and New York City, with seemingly another child to provide for every year (he ultimately had four), Kent decided to put art on the backburner once again and look for work in his alternative career, architecture. He took a job in Minnesota for a year designing houses, much to his initial joy: "Hurrah! We are to leave New York… At last and finally… we're free," he wrote.[933] But he could not make a career out of it. By 1913, he was out of money, necessitating a return. "…I and all of us, belonging with Labor, would be more properly and happily oriented among our own kind [in rural Minnesota] than… with my "bosses" and their mercantile and financial social circle!" he lamented. To expand his potential for sales, Kent tried his hand at graphic art for the business world, doing book illustrations and designing logos and advertising copy. His advertising work became popular but it brought him little happiness. As Kent wrote, "My heart, to sum it up, leapt up at outdoor life. In city streets

[931] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," Kent to New Masses, March 10, 1945; New Masses.
[932] Kent, *It's Me, O Lord*, 236.
[933] Ibid., 254.

it was more circumspect: it didn't leap…"[934] He decided he had to leave America altogether. Kent immigrated to Newfoundland in 1914, just as World War I was breaking out in Europe.

Kent was opposed to World War I, as were most socialists in 1914. To Kent, World War I was just more European nonsense. He thought that it was time for Americans to at last cut their ties with the United Kingdom and let Britain handle its own fight. A lifelong Anglophobe, Kent believed Britain to be a clubhouse for international capitalists and a think-tank for its ideas and practices. Accordingly, Kent was a "casual supporter" of the German cause in the First World War.[935] Kent chastised Americans who possessed an "insane hatred of the Germans" and who believed in the veracity of German atrocities, which Kent thought were a creation of the press. He loathed British rhetoric and propaganda, which he thought turned the concept of liberty into an empty slogan. In a letter to *New Republic* in 1914, he wrote: "The thought of the land [Newfoundland] is stupefied by dogma – the dogma of British virtue, British heroism, sea power, loyalty – all that pile of trash that seems to be a part of the pretensions of empire." Kent feared that America was turning to the same tired devices, championing a definition of liberty that allowed monopolies and governments to tread all over the common people. "I have come to love liberty less than I hate dogma and to see in our own proud new-world notions of liberty dogma enthroned and absolute. The tyranny of goodness is a real oppression, and one may question whether it is not more stifling to the free soul than a political despotism

[934] Ibid., 276.
[935] Kent, *It's Me, O Lord*.

that premises free thought by that annihilation of the moral dogma which is implicit in the principle that 'might makes right,'" he wrote.[936]

Kent was deported from Newfoundland in 1915, only a year after his arrival, because his outspoken opposition to World War I had led locals to suspect he was a German spy. Incredulous, he dusted himself off and moved back to New York, taking part in more independent exhibitions and marketing his paintings. He found that, politically and artistically, America continued to move away from his perspective. Kent was horrified when the United States declared war on Germany in April of 1917. He mocked Woodrow Wilson's idealistic rhetoric, in which the United States was fighting to make the world "safe for democracy." "Above all things, I hated war," Kent wrote in his autobiography. "The 'rights' that Wilson claimed were, in the circumstances, pure abstraction and, as such, no proper cause to shed the nation's blood," he argued.[937] In Wilson, Kent saw the same disregard for people in favor of the accumulation of wealth that he had perceived in Banker's household. He was not fooled by Wilson's idealism nor by the sudden outbursts of patriotism by the nation's businessmen. "Wilson loved words; I guess I just loved life. Perhaps, too, those who swayed our destines loved wealth; our 'rights,' insisted on, our rights to trade were bringing in such wealth as we had never known. Wealth meant prosperity. And thus by 1917 we were become, in a sense… the most rights-loving and self-righteous people in the world," he complained.[938]

[936] Ibid., 287–88.
[937] Ibid., 318.
[938] Ibid.

Frustrated with his fellow citizens and his nation, Rockwell Kent was starved for inspiration. Many of his fellow socialists had been locked up for sedition in World War I and the postwar witnessed a dramatic retrenchment of a political-legal apparatus determined to muffle dissent. Kent, like his transcendentalist forebears, decided to try to find meaning in himself. In 1918, he went to Alaska for two years with only his nine-year old son (also named Rockwell) for company. Ostensibly this was meant to be an artistic retreat with the intention of producing salable paintings, but what Kent was really looking for was meaning. "The Northern wilderness is terrible," he wrote. "The gloom of the long and lonely winter nights is appaling [sic] and yet inevitably one loves this misery and courts it."[939] With a Yukon stove, a trunk full of basic foodstuffs, and a single suitcase, Kent and his son took their own tiny motorboat from Seward Bay to unsettled Fox Island. Halfway there, the motor quit and they were forced to row their way to the island amid a harsh storm. "We reached the shelter of the island incredibly fast, it seemed, with the sea boiling in our wake, racing furiously as if to engulf us – and then bearing us so smoothly and swiftly upon its crest that if I had not been so terrible it would have been the most soothing and delightful motion in the world," he wrote.[940] On arrival, there's was an austere existence. He wrote, "It rains, not hard but almost constantly. Nothing is dry but the stove and the wall behind it; the vegetation is saturated, the deep moss floor of the woods is full as a sponge can be."[941] Their routine of hard manual labor for fuel and food

[939] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," Kent to Dr. Brinton, Winter 1919; Writings-- 1919.
[940] Kent, *Wilderness a Journal of Quiet Adventure in Alaska*, 28.
[941] Ibid., 31.

was broken by exploration of the surrounding mountains and occasional stints of painting.

It is apparent that Kent thought there was a kind of authenticity facilitated by nature that could not be found in human civilization. However, he did not think this authenticity existed among nature. It existed inside oneself:

> If little Rockwell and I can live in these vast silences beside the heartless ocean perched high up on the peak of the earth with the wind all about us, it is because the wealth of our own Souls warms the mountains and sea, and peoples the great desolate spaces. For the time we look into ourselves and are not afraid. We find here life, true life – life rich, respendent [sic] and full of love. We have learned not to fear destiny but to live for the Heaven that can be made of life.[942]

A human being, he reasoned, could only be truly happy and free by stripping away comfort and leisure, outside of the company of other human beings. Kent thought that through a brutal regimen of physical labor which directly provided for his own sustenance, he could discover the truth of who he was and what was his place in the universe. "We are simply instruments recording in different measure our particular portion of the infinite," Kent wrote.[943] He thought that, having encountered this essence, humans could grow in their insight as well as their capacity for expression.

That Kent's search in the wilderness was for the truth about himself is similarly clear in his writings about a still greater adventure: a 1922 expedition to Tierra del Fuego, an archipelago off the southern cost of Argentina. Tierra del Fuego is among the southernmost places on earth and was sparsely populated at the time. Kent had been fascinated with the idea of the place for years. By reputation, he believed it to be "stark,

[942] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," Kent to Dr. Brinton, Winter 1919; Writings – 1919.
[943] Ibid.

perilous and little known," with a population "in utter savagery." But, as he wrote, "Man deems the solitary treading of hard paths a virtue…"[944] and he hoped that by seeing "mankind in their most terrible, most raging, most appalling aspect," he could "somehow fashion a paradise" out of nothing but his own will.[945] In an impressive display of spontaneity and determination, Kent approached the captain of a steamship in New York and told him that he was willing to take on any job on the vessel if he could only accompany them to Punta Arenas, the South American staging area for journeys to Tierra del Fuego. Upon the captain's agreement, Kent put a hobo who he allowed to live on his property in charge of the Kent estate in his absence and departed for distant shores.[946]

Kent sailed with a friend as company around unsettled islands and tumultuous weather in Tierra del Fuego. After outrunning civilization, he wrote, "That night I sat a little while out on our deck and felt the wilderness about me and something of the terror and the wonder of that darkness there, of the huge pitiless quiescent might of those mountains, felt the vast loneliness of that whole land, was homesick and afraid – and proud that still I loved it."[947] His little boat, romantically named after his (first) wife whom he had declined to take with him, was constantly in danger of sinking. Kent helpfully responded to this danger by reciting literary prose about shipwrecks in dramatic fashion. It did sink partway through the trip, necessitating a hasty escape by raft. On land, he hiked through "the stimulating, thrilling splendour of the mountain country." "There a

[944] Ibid., "Tierra del Fuego Journal," 1922; Writings-- 1922.
[945] Ibid., "Tierra del Fuego Journal," 3–4, 1922; Writings – 1922.
[946] Kent, *Voyaging Southward from the Strait of Magellan*.
[947] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," "Tierra del Fuego Journal," page 40, 1922; Writings-- 1922.

great joy in new discovery," he exulted, "the faith you have that every height ascended will reveal a wonderland."[948] He tested himself against nature with the goal of proving that his will to succeed at his task was stronger than that of nature to destroy him. This, to Kent, was what real living of the sort he attributed to Thoreau was about. "True freedom lies in the cultivation of the imagination to that power that it can at will life the mind out of the sordid problems of life," he wrote.[949]

Kent at last came back to the United States and his family in 1924. He found to his chagrin that in American galleries modernism and professionalism reigned supreme. Historian Paul V Murphy explains the outlook of modernist artists in the 1920s:

> Modernists posed key questions about art: should it represent a recognizable figure? Need it be broadly appealing or readily understood? The answers produced the distinctive features of modernism: movements toward abstraction in visual art; atonality in music; and stream of consciousness, free association, and fractured narrative lines in literature. Modernism redefined aesthetic criteria in terms of the values and intensions of the artist. The art object would be judged on its own terms, free and independent of the audience's response. Individual autonomy and integrity, not traditional or communal responsibility, were the essential values. Modernist intellectuals crafted a highly individualistic redo, one that embraced the emerging bifurcation between the intellectuals and the public.[950]

Kent was not about to fit in with this perspective. As much as he trusted his singular vision, he was no modernist. The individual had value because of his contribution to the community, he thought, and did good by working for *its* good. Art for the sake of art, as the modernists proposed, was an indulgence to Kent, devoid of all of the moral purity that his own work possessed.

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[948] Ibid., "Tierra del Fuego journal," page 61, 1922; Writings-- 1922.
[949] Ibid., "Tierra del Fuego journal," page 69, 1922; Writings-- 1922.
[950] Paul V Murphy, *The New Era: American Thought and Culture in the 1920s* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2011), 5.

Kent now had dozens of paintings documenting his travels and any observer could tell that they had set a new standard for his work. Though Kent had been an original voice in the art world since at least 1909, his paintings of Alaska and Tierra del Fuego were masterful. *Sunglare* (1919), an Alaskan landscape painting, was pure simple and brutal elegance. A contemporary nature scene takes on a mythical quality, promising to facilitate the creation of legends.[951] But while his landscapes were a logical progression from his previous work, there was no precedent for his graphic art work and woodcuts he was now crafting, which had a simplistic and angular majesty. Stark humanoid figures tower over nature: almost human, but transformed into something more. These are not the giants of American folktales. They more resemble classical Greek statuary, only more alien. Their bodies are nude and perfect. Their skin is so clear as to seem luminescent. But their faces are harsher: all sharp angles, like shelves jutting out from a mountain not yet eroded by time. Kent's belief system had now birthed standard bearers and it was something to behold: superhumans whose greatness was symbolically represented through their enormous size and perfection.[952] These giants can be understood as Kent's conception of the spirit of American liberty rising from the ashes of the old European order. They, to a degree, allow us to track Kent's conception of the state of the American spirit he held so dear.

Similar to but more majestic than his people in *Of Men and Mountains*, the giants seem of nature rather than its better. They appear to be brand new additions to a world

[951] Rockwell Kent, *Sunglare*, Oil on canvas, 1919.
[952] Rockwell Kent, *Precipice*, Wood engraving, 1927.

they had no role in creating. They, and we, see signs of a civilization in occasional buildings, but Kent usually depicts these elements as distant and meaningless to his narrative. We are meant to understand the giants as outsiders: not so much tourists as explorers; perhaps conquerors of a declining realm. In *Twilight of Man* (1926), we are shown a depiction of American endurance in the face of European (and capitalist?) collapse. A city, Europe itself perhaps, enjoys its last moments as a hulking giant transitions in his nude slumber the promise of man into a new era: perhaps America's era.[953] *Precipice* (1927), meanwhile, displays Kent's superhuman entity in its full form for the first time. A female titan, chiseled and perfect, climbs a cliff as if to escape from rotting civilization into something new and better. These lithographs suggest that Kent viewed European-derived civilization to be doomed by war and capitalism. The spirit of American liberty, however, as represented by the giants, still had a role to play.

In the 1920s, Kent's paintings, lithographs, and woodcuts at last began to sell. There was, it seemed, a market for Kent's work. A big part of the reason why was the simultaneous publication of accounts of his travels in Alaska, Tierra del Fuego, and elsewhere, which provided a gripping narrative to Kent's visual art. The media seized upon this narrative and made Kent a celebrity. *The New York Times* enthused, "Man is forever measuring himself against nature, but there are some men who are not content to satisfy the impulse vicariously. It is not enough for them to take their pride in what we call our conquests of nature, to feel thrilled when they pick up Chicago on the radio; they must come to actual grips, even though there be no tangible gain in the contest save that

[953] Rockwell Kent, *Twilight of Man*, Wood engraving, 1926.

rebirth of pride through hardship…. If the moon were only slightly more accessible one could be sure that Rockwell Kent would some day go there and return."[954] A period of financial security began the like of which Kent "had hitherto not known."[955]

Increased stature brought the opportunity to write for numerous leftist journals on any number of subjects. It is clear from the subsequent pieces that Kent was trying find his footing in an America that was increasingly accepting of him. But the distaste of his countrymen's politics, developed during the war years, lingered. In 1924, he wrote that he blamed the international capitalist elite for the League of Nations and argued that the movement to support the institution in the United States was facilitated and motivated by a fifth column: American capitalists, the only party that truly benefited from constant wars he believed the League guaranteed for America. Those Americans who supported the capitalists, however unwittingly, by advocating for either the war or League of Nations, were fools and dupes. They were selecting war over peace and were as much to blame for war as the leaders who commanded them. After all, he argued, "if that overwhelming majority of men and women which today vociferously desires peace had enough personal intelligence to resist the insidious propaganda of the war makers, there would be no problem of peace."[956]

The common theme in Kent's written pieces is misanthropy. Kent argues that the citizens of a America are responsible for the wars the nation fights and he has no

[954] "Rockwell Kent to the Sailor's Graveyard," *The New York Times*, September 21, 1924.
[955] Kent, *It's Me, O Lord*, 351.
[956] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," "The Artist and World Friendship," from The World Tomorrow, included in the book Rockwellkentiana; February 1924; Writings – 1933.

confidence that these citizens have the willpower or intelligence to decide against the wishes of their leaders. This elitist antimodernist edge was always present in Kent's written work and explains the extent to which the superhumans of his work are depicted as alien. Most Americans, it becomes clear, would not be subject to the transformations he shows us in his giants. On the contrary, Americans and their capitalist order were the rotted cityscape in *Twilight of Man* and the bottom of the cliff in *Precipice* – too twisted and broken to even be worth depicting in the frame. While Kent would have despised a man like HL Mencken, who argued in 1926 that democracy was pathetic due to the mediocrity of the average American, Kent's conviction that Americans were basically rooted in consumption and allowed themselves to be deceived is not that far afield. When Mencken asserts that democratic government is "government by orgy, almost by orgasm," one imagines, even, a degree of concurrence with Kent.[957] For Kent, the 1910s and 1920s in America were an ordeal of swimming ever against the tide of an oppressive master class and its willing servants in the masses. He summed this trial up in his autobiography with one labyrinthine sentence:

> For, to get right down to hard tacks, our involvement in the European war in 1917, for the consequent, unprecedentedly vicious suppression of our civil liberties; for Mitchell Palmer and his acts; for Prohibition and the resultant drunkenness and crime and deaths; for the revival of the Ku Klux Klan, its bestial torturings and lynchings; for labor racketeers; for strikes and their repression by violence and injunction; for the weakening of organized labor, for Teapot Dome; for the ugliness of clothes and morals; for the whole weird nightmare of the Twenties and the cold gray dawn it was to lead to; for all of this, not the winds or waves, or sun or rain, not natural elements or God, but *people*, were responsible.[958]

[957] H. L Mencken, *Notes on Democracy* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1926).
[958] Kent, *It's Me, O Lord*, 412.

His frustration with America usually came out when he argued against the art establishment. Though he had become successful, this was for the most part due to the inclinations of a few patrons rather than the art world at large. His work, particularly lithographs, appeared in dozens of popular books but he lacked the name recognition and critical reputation of the most famous painters of his day. That his work was not known to the same extent as a Picasso or a Kandinsky, he reasoned, was because of the culture of the art world itself. He wrote several articles in the late 1920s asserting that institutions and critics were leading Americans astray. Kent wrote in 1929 that critics, through the oppression of their taste, "the fatuous worship of one for the most vapid sentimentalities" and "resentful snarling of another against all vigorous art," had become "a real hindrance to the natural development of people's intelligence and the normal flowering of their sensibilities." The vital artist, as Kent saw it, was in perpetual war in America against the establishment in politics, economy, and art – all of which, he judged, were made up of the same monopolists. Those who sought to do and make things, and in so doing show Americans the beauty of life and their own potential, were opposed by those who sought to the capitalists who sought to own another's personal expression and neuter its meanings by claiming them to be "personal inspiration." The latter would fight tooth and nail to keep Americans enslaved by denying the masses the knowledge of their own potential.[959]

[959] Rockwell Kent and Carl Zigrosser, *Rockwellkentiana; Few Words and Many Pictures by R.K. And,* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1933), "On Critics."

Kent claimed that by keeping European art en vogue critics and museums maintained their control over the culture and over the American ability to formulate new ideas. "European culture was our heritage. It has been maintained by fashion and by all the agencies that dictate, follow, pander to fashion: the dealer for profit, the decorator from uncreativeness, the architect from unintelligence, the rich from ostentation," he wrote. The elites were directly opposed to the impulse toward liberty which had created every great work and event in history. Kent described the latter perspective, that which could save society from itself:

> It is in the revolt of the individual against the tyranny of every dogma, that wild revolt which for a generation has been gathering strength, that has cultivated irreverence and made a boast of it, that has offended taste and shattered standards, that has burst the confines of tradition and poured down every avenue and back alley of expression, it is by the revolt and by that freedom to perform in art what one desires to or can that we may have at last an art as free and beautiful as all the joys and sorrows of our land shall need for their fulfillment.[960]

As the 1920s came to an end, Kent was at the end of his rope in the United States: contemptuous of the political and cultural elites who rigged American society against him and all but writing off the ability of ordinary Americans to jolt themselves from their elite-driven stupor. He clearly preferred to make an escape from modern civilization but was forced back to it time and again by the need to make a living. Even after his work began to sell, Kent lacked interest in and enthusiasm for American society, which he believed to be hopelessly compromised by the establishment. The establishment had only allowed him access to their circles in the hope of coopting him for their own purposes. Kent was not interested in the establishment's version of success, however. In his late

[960] Ibid., 30.

40s, with future sales seeming secure, Kent planned to spend the 1930s on the outside of an America with which he had little in common. Fate had other plans.

## Kent in the Popular Front Era: A Cultural and Political Port in the Storm

The 1930s brought new challenges for Kent but many more opportunities. Forced by the Great Depression to reintegrate into a society he had isolated himself from in the late 1920s, Kent found that his lifelong ideology, an antimodernist socialism, coming into vogue in the popular culture. The Popular Front, with its celebrations of Americanism and working-class culture, intrigued Kent as much as its opponent – fascism – repelled him. Accordingly, Kent again became invested in American society, entering into politics for the first time. Perhaps, he reasoned, American society could be saved after all.

Rockwell Kent missed out on the worst of the Great Depression. His writings of the late 1920s presaged another effort to disconnect himself from American civilization, leading to extended stays in Greenland between 1928 and 1935. His time in the United States, meanwhile, was far from high profile. In 1928, Kent applied much of his belated art profits toward a farm in Au Sable Forks, a tiny mountain hamlet in upstate New York (he named the farm "Asgaard," because of course he did). He spent an enormous amount of time and effort fighting to restore service to the long-neglected railway line between Albany and Au Sable Forks, which he judged to be a fight against "Big Business whose control embraced the shops, the homes, the jobs, the savings, the cars… the *lives* of virtually all the people of the region; and its alter ego, the Republican Party."[961] In his

[961] Kent, *It's Me, O Lord*, 446.

agrarian world, however, Kent was utterly isolated from the poverty Richard Morford and Corliss Lamont saw in New York every day. "I was little affected by the Depression; and living and working in the isolation of *Asgaard,* I had little realization of its impact on the nation."[962] Kent had a big enough name to be able to sell illustrations to advertisers even in these hard times.

In 1936, however, Kent was at last awoken from his slumber. This was in part because of the mounting costs of his lifestyle. Now divorced and remarried and with four children and a farm to provide for, money left Kent's hands easily. He began taking every job offered him and hence found himself in the orbit of the New York world once again. His prose became simultaneously more urgent, prolific, and cogent as he realized the extent of the Great Depression. Other radicals began to listen. Kent had been a semi-celebrity since the 1920s but, beginning with the Great Depression, he became an American public figure who advocated for social and political change.[963]

Even Kent's paintings display a shift. *Starlight* (1930), another work of graphic art, was indicative of his 1920s outlook in which it was the duty of the artist to triumph of the decadence of civilization. This work found one of Kent's superhumans having reached land after a time at sea. The entity stretches its limbs toward the stars, ready to end its trials and take on its interstellar inheritance.[964] It is easy to see a continuation of Kent's earlier themes here: the belief that the legacy of European past is a false panacea that Americans must discard. But with his growing absorption with the Great Depression

[962] Ibid., 472.
[963] Kent, *It's Me, O Lord*.
[964] Rockwell Kent, *Starlight*, Wood engraving, 1930.

and leftist causes, Kent's work became less escapist and more grounded in an understanding of the ways in which he is connected to civilization as it exists. *And Now Where* (1936) shows his superhumans clothed for the first time, in the garb of American workers. The female entity sits on top of a bag full, presumably, of everything the two own. Each giant looks into the distance: the male with an expression that can best be described as disappointed resolve. The superhumans have been integrated into society. They are no longer as isolated as they thought and now face society's concerns and anxieties as their own.[965]

Kent was not alone as an artist seeking political engagement. The deprivations of the Great Depression and the ensuing New Deal were bringing much of the art world to politics. The Popular Front, that informal alliance of liberal institutions, organizations, and cultural workers which dominated 1930s politics and culture, had its genesis with proletarian avant-garde clubs in the early 1930s. Groups of young artists and writers formed journals, "little magazines, alternative galleries, theaters, and art schools that offered training, support, and exposure for young working class artists."[966] Leftist artists made their mark with "The Social Viewpoint in Art," a show produced by the New York John Reed Club in 1933 that showcased the underground of American art. Hard times had made these artists unusually political. They participated in unemployed councils and relief demonstrations and formed the influential International Labor Defense organization, a legal aid group created with the Communist Party "to defend jailed

[965] Rockwell Kent, *And Now Where*, Lithograph, 1936.
[966] Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century*, 2010 ed. (London; Brooklyn: Verso, 2010), 64.

unionists, immigrants facing deportation, and African Americans facing southern terror."[967] These artists, often still dubbed social realists, were also more than a little antimodernist, dismissing European modern art and frequently invoking "the people" in their rhetoric. Their work was full of revolutionary symbolism but was also relatively straightforward, depicting real things with relatable themes.

When the avant-garde clubs devoured themselves over sectarian disagreements, they were succeeded by a larger, more inclusive, more organized movement: as Denning writes, "by a movement culture, a world of working-class education, recreation, and entertainment built by the Communist Party, the new industrial unions, and the fraternal benefit lodges, particularly those of the International Workers Order (IWO)."[968] Often building upon the "welfare capitalist" programs of corporations, the Committee of Industrial Organizations and IWO "forged links between the labor movement and the cultural organizations of artists and intellectuals."[969] Communist participation gave this Popular Front a sense of "working-class internationalism," which joined with the "ethnic nationalism" often present in the unions to form a formidable bulwark for "labor and anti-Fascist activism" that was "tied to the cultural life of the communities."[970]

An equally important component of the Popular Front, as far as artists were concerned, was the federal governments' relief projects, which gave work to struggling artists and in the process brought them into both the artistic and political mainstream for the first time. Young artists from Jackson Pollack to Jack Levine to Anton Refregier

[967] Ibid., 66.
[968] Ibid., 67.
[969] Ibid., 74.
[970] Ibid., 76.

painted murals in federal buildings for the Treasury Department and Federal Art Project. In addition to providing artists with a living, Denning argues that "the federal arts projects became a crucial site where alliances were formed between the plebeian radicals and the established artists and intellectuals who dominated the non-relief personnel."[971] Further, for the first time, the United States government was recognizing the importance of art in society. Gradually, the Left's "aesthetics of social significance" began to creep into public and private cultural industries alike through the work of a newly united artistic Left that organized to defend its rights and influence.

Unity was in the air for the Left. The formerly ostracized entered the mainstream. Along the way, the Popular Front's rhetoric acquired a populist bent. "The people," Denning writes, "became the central trope of left culture in this period, the imagined ground of political and cultural activity, the rhetorical stake in ideological battle."[972] Reform of America, it was now preached by liberals and radicals alike, would take place on American, not foreign, terms: William Z. Foster's "Toward Soviet America" was replaced by Browder's "Twentieth-Century Americanism." "The turn to a populist rhetoric," Denning writes, "was less a retreat from radicalism than an emblem of the shift from an embattled subculture to a significant mass social movement."[973] In the 1936 *Partisan Review and Anvil* symposium, Popular Frontists argued that "the figure of 'America' was embodied in the promise of the Lincoln republic." The real America, the one worth perpetuating in this time of crisis, was, as Newton Arvin wrote, that of "the old

[971] Ibid., 79.
[972] Ibid., 124.
[973] Ibid., 128.

democratic radicals – Paine, Samuel Adams, Freneau, and their like" who "had envisioned an individualistic, but quite classless, republican society."[974] Matthew Josephson asserted that this democratic tradition had been betrayed by the monopolists, the "robber barons."[975] To get America back on track, Americans need only continue in the tradition of their noble forebears, before their story was coopted by vicious elites.

The Popular Front, in other words, brought much of the radical Left to a similar position to that from which Kent was functioning most of his life. The Popular Front asserted that art was a social need, and redefining artists – much as had the craftsman ideal movement – as cultural *workers.* Further, the Popular Front argued for the superiority of American values over European, while asserting that socialism was the means to make those values viable against the whims of monopolists and their henchmen. While few artists took the same artistic approach in depicting these themes as Kent, social realist themes in which ordinary Americans and hard work were celebrated became pervasive in American art. Lithograph artists like Boris Gorelick began to focus on depictions of workers, which Helen Langa posits "conveyed the importance of ordinary workers' contributions to American survival during a period of economic crisis, thereby underlining liberal beliefs in their right to decent wages and working conditions" and "signaled an affirmation of proletarian jobs whose necessity was rarely acknowledged or celebrated by mainstream societies."[976] Thomas Hart Benton, Diego Rivera, and Philip Evergood painted highly stylized depictions of ordinary workers and their struggles

[974] "What Is Americanism?," *Partisan Review and Anvil* 3.3 (April 1936): 3–16.
[975] Denning, *The Cultural Front*, 130.
[976] Helen Langa, *Radical Art: Printmaking and the Left in 1930s New York* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 88.

which, according to Patricia Hills, "effectively expressed the revolutionary's aim to arouse and disturb."[977]

Kent was inspired by this symbolic bridging of his beliefs with those of the mainstream Left. For the first time since the Russian Revolution, the Left was arguing that progress could be attained *through* a championing of American values. Kent took to the cause with all of his energy, becoming a member and often officer of dozens of liberal organizations. David Caute describes Kent's political participation thusly: "Kent was an attorney general's list all on his own. He was a member of the American Artists' Congress… even Corliss Lamont would have to admit defeat when faced with that record."[978] Kent explored his now unified perspective in his 1936 article, "What is an American?" (the title itself a reference to the debate in *Partisan Review and Anvil).* Here, Kent ruled that capitalism conflicted with "the spirit" of the Declaration of Independence. Capitalism did not guarantee Americans life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, he said – it only guaranteed the possibility of those things. That, he said, was no longer good enough.[979] Kent thought it was past time to stop waiting for capitalism to deliver and recommended that Americans try something else. The true Americans, to Kent, were those who held more true to ideals of the founders than to those of business. "We only… who still keep alive the belief of our forefathers that here in the United States, there can

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[977] Patricia Hills, "Art and Politics in the Popular Front: The Union Work and Social Realism of Philip Evergood," in Alejandro Anreus, Diane L Linden, Jonathan Weinberg, eds., *The Social and the Real: Political Art of the 1930s in the Western Hemisphere* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006).
[978] David Caute, *The Fellow-Travellers: Intellectual Friends of Communism*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 148.
[979] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," "What is an American?," 1936.

be realized equality of man, are true Americans."[980] Americans, he asserted, should welcome the Socialists and Communists as innovators instead of heathens. "…if they take as their philosophers and guides not the Frenchman Rousseau and the Briton Locke or Thomas Jefferson but that still modern German, Marx, and the Russian, Lenin," he wrote, "it is less a reproach to their Americanism than to America itself for its own lack of leaders in the cause Americans are pledged to."[981]

Whereas Lamont thought socialism would naturally lead to cosmopolitan utopian and Morford imagined it could provoke spiritual renewal beyond nationalist boundaries, Kent saw socialism as a possible fulfillment of America's own manifest destiny. He believed that the founders of the United States had created something special and he was proud to be a part of it. He followed the thread of his lineage back to ancestors "…among the earliest settlers of America," and Kent had several ancestors who fought in the Revolutionary War. He wore this ancestry as a badge, believing that it gave him more legitimacy to speak on domestic American concerns than his rivals with immigration more recently in their ancestry. But he thought the American genealogy to be less important than the nation's spirit. This spirit, to Kent, was a devotion to abstract equality as embodied in the hearts of the founders. "Let the test of true Americanism be – not ancestry, not race nor creed, not loyalty to 'Democracy' nor to the Constitution, nor to the Supreme Court, nor to any established institution or order – but unswerving adherence to the letter and spirit of the Declaration."[982] The Declaration, he reasoned, was the purer

[980] Ibid.
[981] Ibid.
[982] Ibid.

work than "that afterthought of American Independence, the Constitution," which included far too much compromise between his idealized Yankees and the other factions in the Continental Congress. There was a "real" America, Kent argued, but it was not properly represented by what his contemporaries were doing with it.[983]

Artists before the 1930s were not represented by labor unions and were therefore particularly vulnerable to economic twists and turns. As a result, many artists become concerned about the future viability of art as a profession in the United States. They concluded that artists could no longer count on the existence of a market for their work in a society focused more upon the purchase of essential goods. They were thus now learning how "truly peripheral" was the artist's place in American society.[984] To combat this, the Artists Union was founded in 1934 by artists seeking government patronage for their work.[985] Most of the artists in the Union, like Kent, were "influenced by socialist ideology and inspired by the growing labor movement," and thought of themselves as "cultural workers."[986] The membership consisted of painters, sculptors, printmakers, and other artists. Most of the leadership work undertaken by Communist Party members who were more willing than most to do unpaid work.[987] The Union enjoyed a "relatively cordial" relationship with Works Project Administration arts project supervisor Audrey McMahon, who was sympathetic to the Union's goals, and as a result they had a higher

[983] Ibid.
[984] Robert C. Vitz, "Clubs, Congresses, and Unions: American Artists Confront the Thirties," *New York History* 54, no. 4 (October 1973): 425.
[985] Gerald M. Monroe, "The Artists Union of New York," *Art Journal* 32, no. 1 (Autumn 1972): 17–20.
[986] Gerald M. Monroe, "Artists as Militant Trade Union Workers During the Great Depression," *Archives of American Art Journal* 14, no. 1 (1974): 7.
[987] Ibid.

profile in the middle 1930s than their small membership would suggest. The Union was able to successfully lobby the state for high wages, "exceptional working conditions," and exceptions to requirements for participation in the WPA arts project over the course of its lifespan in the middle and late 1930s.[988]

Kent thought it imperative for artists to organize and protect their own rights of expression and employment. He joined the American Artists' Congress shortly after it was organized in 1935. In a statement to the Congress in 1936, he wrote, "We are at present one of the few unorganized classes of producers… we have no power of collective bargaining, almost no rights that are recognized in law, and we are… subject to every kind of exploitation that a world of organized interests can invent."[989] He lamented that the poverty of artists had become a societal expectation, angrily affirming that, "we have our Keats and Shuberts of all the arts living, struggling, starving, dying among us today."[990] The next year, he joined another union, the Artists Union, and was then made its president. When the two organizations merged in 1942 to create the Artists League of America, Kent was made the president of the new union.

After a lifetime of watching his culture and society abused by America's so-called elites, Kent wanted a promise that things would change for artists. He thought the time to take action was now. In his 1938 article, "Artists: Unite!," Kent presents artists as a political vanguard. "We are *people,* so richly endowed with human commonplaceness, frailty, and strength, so eager for happiness, so sensitive to pain, so finely equipped for

[988] Gerald M. Monroe, "The Artists Union of New York," 18.
[989] Ibid., Statement in letter to Miss Bourke–White, January 31, 1936; American Congress of Artists.
[990] Ibid., Statement in letter to Miss Bourke–White, January 31, 1936; American Congress of Artists.

perceiving sensory values and for participating in that sum of all of them called Life, that by our understanding of life and the overflowing of our hearts and minds into utterance we constitute ourselves the spokesmen for our human kind. Our fellow human beings' recognition of themselves in us makes our self-constitution valid," he wrote. Change in America, victory over the capitalists, would come if artists joined with workers, of whom Kent had long believed artists to be a part. "It is at last due that we artists, each safely armed with his 'unconquerable soul,' make common cause with our own kind: enlist in their ranks, claim a voice in their councils, and with every faculty we have assist to make more real than artists' dream that common hope of all of us: a decent world."[991]

For help in his cause, Kent turned to the communists, to whom he had been an occasional contributor of funds since the early 1930s. Unlike Lamont and, to a lesser extent, Morford, Kent had no aversion to the term "communism." He used "socialism" and "communism" interchangeably. The terms were historical markers for him revealing only the time period in which one was discussing collectivist ideas. They were not symbols denoting a different set of values. There was a simple reason for this: he never read political theory. He was a prolific reader of politics but found theory boring and obtuse. He was content to have, at best, a superficial understanding of ideology.

Kent was nevertheless quite committed to communism for a time. In 1936, Kent referred to communism as "the only political cause that was worth a damn."[992] This was because the Socialist Party was full of intellectuals whom Kent referred to as "parlour

[991] Rockwell Kent, "Artists: Unite!," *New Masses,* August 23, 1938, 9.
[992] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," Kent to New Masses, February 5, 1936.

socialists." In contrast, the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) was a "working man's party."[993] He often voted communist despite the fact that most of the communists themselves were voting for Roosevelt, in order to register his disapproval with the Republicans and Democrats.[994] In American politics, Kent thought this was the CPUSA's most important role: to show the mainstream parties that dissent existed. He produced drawings and logos for use in CPUSA brochures in the 1930s and began the 1940s as a member of the Free Earl Browder campaign.

For Kent, much of the attraction of the communists was a result of the rise of fascism. "Against the threatened revolt of the long-suffering European masses, Fascism had raised its head and hand and won to its support all those of every land who held that profits justified the means," he wrote.[995] The love of profit over life was precisely Kent's complaint toward America. That this perspective had been folded into a European ideology many times more potent than that of the American monopolists was something to which he had to pay attention. Kent was terrified that the new European menace would, like the war fever of 1914 or modern art, find a position from which to infect Americans as well. His anxiety began to peak with the onset of the Spanish Civil War in 1936. Kent belonged to a bewildering number of anti-fascist organizations, including the American League for Peace and Democracy and the Medical Bureau to Aid Spanish Democracy. He spent a great deal of time between 1936 and 1938 lobbying for assistance

[993] Ibid., Kent to PM Van Wicklen, Jr., October 19, 1936; Radical Groups-- Communism.
[994] Ibid., Kent to unknown, July 5, 1940.
[995] Kent, *It's Me, O Lord*, 487.

to the Spanish Republicans in Washington. He spoke on behalf of that cause around the country.

What was at stake in the struggle of fascism versus democracy, Kent believed, was whether or not society continued to hold that human happiness and self-expression had value. Kent, unusually, placed capitalism and democracy at opposite poles of the ideological spectrum. He argued that fascism was a natural evolutionary stage of capitalism, just as socialism was an evolutionary stage of democracy. Fascism was simply dictatorship by a capitalist oligarchy with the aim of "greater efficiency in the exploitation of the masses than can be reached by any government in which masses have a voice."[996] Fascists, he wrote, had a core set of beliefs that made them natural allies of capitalists and enemies of democrats: they held competition essential and always prepared for war, as war was good for business. Community and individual betterment and artistic expression; a trust that one's needs would be provided for; self-determination: these were to be neglected or forbidden in the fascist/capitalist dictatorship but would be encouraged in a true democratic state.[997] Notably absent in these requirements were the majority of civil liberties, governmental checks and balances, and an elected political apparatus. It was not that Kent did not care about these features of American democracy so much as that he thought them dramatically outweighed by the need for equality of opportunity for all citizens.

[996] Ibid., "Fascism Versus Civilization," 1938; Writings – 1938.
[997] Ibid., "Fascism Versus Civilization," 1938; Writings-- 1938.

Civil liberties – so essential to Corliss Lamont – were a privilege in Kent's reckoning. For instance, Kent's fear of fascism drove him to argue against giving American Nazis civil liberties. He criticized the leaders of the ACLU for making civil liberties a religion to be worshipped regardless of the context of a given situation. In a broadcast debate over radio with ACLU lawyer Arthur Garfield Hays in 1939, he asked, "Is Mr. Hays prepared to assert that unlimited right to free speech is consistent with an ordered human society dedicated to specific political and cultural ideals? Would he defend the right of any irresponsible demagogue publicly to advocate any cause or course of action, even though the cause involved the overthrow of democracy and its course of action be inevitably force?"[998] This was precisely what Mr. Hays was prepared to do. Kent, however, thought that the government needed to stop the spread of hate speech and violent revolution in order to "protect our citizens and save democracy." He was willing to go to significant lengths to do this so long as it served "to preserve the majority of the blessings of our people under democracy."[999]

The 1930s brought enormous changes to Kent's life and outlook. Once content to seek his own truth by skirting along the edges of a sick industrial society, the development of the Popular Front led Kent to have renewed hope in his countrymen and indeed in the future. For the first time since Henri and the realists, Kent was allied with a movement: one that echoed yearning for the "spirit" of the founders and a rediscovery of the "real" America. Simultaneously, the rise of fascism in Europe gave him a new sense

[998] Ibid., "Shall We Limit Free Speech?," March 1, 1939; Writings-- 1939.
[999] Ibid., "Shall We Limit Free Speech?," March 1, 1939; Writings – 1939.

of urgency due to the fear that the world was entering a new, horrifying phase in capitalist restructuring, with minority rights quashed and individual identity sacrificed at the altar of the state. Kent hoped to counteract fascist influence with his own participation in Popular Front organizations and causes, integrating himself into new social circles and a new set of ideas in the process.

## Kent and the American-Soviet Friendship Movement: Hating Communism – But Loving the Soviet Union

Just as Kent was becoming optimistic about American prospects by the late 1930s, the bottom fell out once again. Fascism was growing in strength in Europe and Kent assumed that the American establishment would force a similar government on the United States with the cooperation of a willing public proven to be always subservient to its elite. Meanwhile, the American left was split over the Moscow Trials and Stalinism, leading to the collapse of the Popular Front. It was in this world of diminishing possibilities that Kent found a distant light of hope: The Soviet Union. As he saw the optimism of the previous decade dim in America, Kent held to the Soviet Union as an encapsulation of the antimodernist and socialist values he had possessed for a lifetime. By the 1940s, this belief brought him to the American-Soviet friendship movement of which he became a key element in the 1950s and 60s.

Kent always suspected he and his compatriots were fighting a losing battle against fascism in the United States. Americans were focused, he feared, on preserving only the symptoms of democracy rather than its source. He believed that the value in American democracy was in the intentions of its founding and that Americans no longer treasured

the notions of equality and individual self-actualization they represented – just superficial civil liberties. His generation of American citizens, he declared, had become so philosophically removed from the spirt of the Declaration that this spirit was on the verge of departing the nation entirely. With that animating impulse gone, Kent worried that all that would be left was empty rhetoric and an oppressive and ignorant majority.[1000]

It is in the discussion of the true meaning of democracy that Kent first mentions the Soviet Union. In 1938, as the Moscow Trials raged, Kent suggested that the Soviet Union was an essential democratic counterweight to the increasingly fascist United States. Kent wrote a satirical piece for the *New Masses* in 1938, "Good Old Loyalty," in which he castigated Americans for the hypocrisy of claiming they stood for democracy and opposing the Soviets on that basis, while allowing corrupt politicians to stay in office in their own country and Hitler to swallow Czechoslovakia abroad.[1001] He called Americans out on the conservatism and conformity that led them to reject the lessons of Soviet economic success on the basis of their unfamiliar political and economic institutions. The Soviet Union, he noted, despite the kneejerk opposition of the Western democracies, stood by their treaty, "saying they'd fight for little Czechoslovakia, saying it was time to stop Hitler, standing up for Democracy, Freedom, and in the long run (who cares for what's in the long run!) peace…"[1002] He insinuated that the United States, Britain, and France refused to stand up for Czechoslovakia because it would have put

[1000] Kent, *This Is My Own*.
[1001] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," "Good Old Loyalty," October 3, 1938; Writings-- 1938.
[1002] Ibid., "Good Old Loyalty, October 3, 1938; Writings-- 1938.

them on the Soviet side of a war with Germany, which the capitalist nations found unacceptable.

Kent, in that piece, seemed to be already buying into the Soviet interpretation of events, despite dire reports from Westerners as to the brutal nature of Stalin's regime. He claimed that the Soviets "have brought socialism through the stages of experiment and established it upon a firm and lasting basis," and called their constitution "the most democratic and liberal in the world."[1003] This displays a lot of faith and shows even more confidence in the Soviet Union than statements by Lamont, who was at the peak of his own confidence in the Soviet Union in 1938. There is, after all, some distance between Lamont's assertion that the Soviet Union was working toward real socialism and Kent's belief that they were already there. This is a curious disparity, answerable with the fact that Kent had never been to the Soviet Union in 1938 and had little actual awareness of how and whether its policies worked. Another reason why Kent turned so dramatically toward the Soviets in 1938 was that he was afraid. The Spanish Civil War, wherein a seemingly tranquil foundational European nation was torn from the democratic fold without repercussion, joined with the increasing right-wing rhetoric of American cultural life to convince Kent that the United States had no internal solutions to the possibility of the political elite coopting the masses. Kent was afraid of war, afraid of the repression that would accompany a fascist United States, and afraid that there was already no escape from an inevitable fascist international order.[1004]

[1003] Ibid., "Good Old Loyalty," October 3, 1938; Writings-- 1938.
[1004] Kent, *This Is My Own*.

As the world sat at the precipice of World War II, Rockwell Kent viewed the fascist nations of Germany and Italy as morally and ideologically indistinguishable from the capitalist-controlled democracies Britain, France, and the United States. All, he judged, repressed the individual, celebrated inequality, and subordinated the needs of the great majority of citizens to those of the state. All of them appeared to prefer to put their countries (and those of others) into the hands of extremist monsters than allow for experiments in socialism. Kent believed that, just like Germany, the United States was censoring important information about Soviet progress from the American people in order to prevent the people from appreciating socialism's potential. Accordingly, there was little hope of Americans converting to the ideology en masse. The Soviet Union appeared to be the one international agent capable of halting or reversing the trend toward world fascism. In his 50s, as a result of his pessimism about the United States and Western democracy in general, Kent become a Sovietophile.[1005]

Kent moved with the Soviet Union through all of its twists and turns in the late 1930s, as it found itself increasingly at odds with the capitalist world. Kent was probably one of the few Americans who honestly felt satisfaction at the Nazi-Soviet Pact rather than justified it half-heartedly. He thought Britain to be a "perjured double-crossing" nation that had been "served right."[1006] Kent continued to employ selective pragmatism after the Soviet invasion of Poland in 1939, somehow perceiving the Soviet invasion and annexation to be a humanitarian gesture to save Polish Jews. He even excused the

[1005] Ibid.
[1006] Ibid., 384.

Finland invasion that had raised doubts in Lamont. Indeed, instead of lessening, Kent's faith in the Soviet Union as "the great experiment in a new way of life…" was reinforced by its various controversies with the Western world. After all, for Kent, making the establishment of the Western European nations angry was one way of knowing one was on the right side of history.[1007]

Once more, his artwork highlights his perspective. *Workers of the World Unite* (1937) depicts a pitched battle between one of Kent's superhumans (defending a complex of farms) and an unseen enemy.[1008] As in *And Now Where* (1936), the entity is dressed as a worker, grasping a shovel as his weapon. As the shovel (and farming implements raised as if weaponry in general) was a ubiquitous element in Soviet propaganda art, this was clearly an identification of Kent with the Soviet Union at a time when the Popular Front was suffering ruptures due to the Moscow Trials. Kent's superhuman entity faces a wall of bayonets, a reference, in Kent's ideological vocabulary, to Britain and the Old World from which America had escaped in 1783. Accompanying the enemy army is a wall of flames darkening the countryside with black smoke. In a contentious year, Kent was throwing in his lot with the Soviets, who in his mind were facing off European aggression and war. In so doing, Kent judged the Soviets were in alliance with the true Americans, the workers, who could see the Soviet struggle as their own.

As war threatened to pull America into an alliance with Britain against Germany in 1941, Kent at first contextualized the conflict as identical to World War I and opposed

[1007] Kent, *This Is My Own*.
[1008] Rockwell Kent, *Workers of the World, Unite*, Wood engraving, 1937.

it. France and the United Kingdom had, in Kent's mind, made their own mess and, as imperialists, those nations were morally equivalent to the Nazis anyway. Joining in their war could only help capitalists. He told anyone who would listen that Britain was just as responsible for World War II as was Germany and that the Tory government was accordingly just as bad as Hitler.[1009] He argued in a *New Masses* statement (ironically a response to a pro-British piece by Thomas Lamont, Corliss Lamont's father) that American aid to Britain was a cynical redistribution of wealth from the American people to the British elite and American arms manufacturers. In a letter to a friend a few months later, he asserted that "those who are for all out aid to Britain are for war," and that the war was about "…profits immediate and forever, and…the complete annihilation of true democracy and the final absolute enslavement of the workers of the world."[1010] In another letter to a friend he wrote:

> Now, beginning in 1940, and gathering force in 1941 America is under a leadership identical in character with the American leadership during the first world war, and backed by the identical financial interests. We have embarked upon an imperialist venture that is essentially the counter-part of that of a generation ago. I recognize the whole technique of its promotion: the same false pre-election promises, the same first steps, the same seductive propaganda of 'defense.'… I tell you, not as an opinion which I venture, but as fact, that this world war Number Two, is as deliberately contrived a commercial war as world war Number One…[1011]

Everything changed with Operation Barbarossa. As German troops poured into the USSR beginning on June 22, 1941, Kent deemed it the beginning of "a struggle between

[1009] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," Kent to Bryher, March 20, 1941; Statements.
[1010] Ibid., Kent to Norman Barr, March 17, 1941; Statements.
[1011] Ibid., Kent to Jack Radell, April 26, 1941; Statements.

opposing ideologies upon whose outcome rested mankind's future for long years to come."[1012]

The American-Soviet alliance during World War II was a high point for Kent: a union of his model country with his home country for the purpose of destroying fascism in Europe. Kent thought the alliance could help save America from its own internal fascism. But he felt a heavy and consistent feeling of guilt over the fact that the Soviet Union was taking on the brunt of the work in the battle against fascism. Kent was outspoken about the debt he felt that the Western Allies owed the Soviets, as exemplified in a radio broadcast he delivered in 1942:

> The valor of the people of the Soviet Union we have come, with deepest gratitude, to honor. Our gratitude inclines us toward friendship; and that friendship must be premised upon a greater tolerance toward our friends and a truer understanding of that life and those institutions of their Fatherland which have helped to make them what they are today, and aroused them, in their Fatherland's defense, to courage perhaps unparalleled in all of history and to such free-will sacrifices as no people in all of time may ever have endured. Their achievements in our common cause command our friendship.[1013]

Kent's above rhetoric signifies that he had reached exact alignment with the mission of the NCASF upon its foundation in 1943. Indeed, he was involved in the organization from the beginning. Kent knew the first director of the NCASF, Alice Barrows, socially and had always been kept informed of the organization's development. As the war progressed, Kent's participation increased. He accepted a vice-chairmanship on the NCASF Artists Committee in 1943 and lent the NCASF his Soviet posters for another exhibition. He also spoke at numerous NCASF events.

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[1012] Kent, *It's Me, O Lord*, 542.
[1013] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," Broadcast, 1942; USSR.

Such was Kent's enthusiasm for American-Soviet friendship that for Christmas in 1943, he invited a group of Soviet graduate students, then attending Columbia University, to his house for several days of festivities. These students were a twelve-person group between the ages of twenty-five and thirty. Kent's claim that he meant for their time at his house to be "the greatest Christmas of their lives" was undoubtedly honest but he also intended the visit to serve as a conduit of American-Soviet friendship. "We have it in our power to so dispose them to good will toward America that, on their return to the Soviet Union, they will have become a troop of ambassadors of good-will between our countries," he wrote a friend.[1014] Kent lobbied unions and progressive organizations for gifts for the students and took them on "educational trips" to mines, mills, and factories near his home in Au Sable Forks.[1015] He sent all of the students skiing, gave them a tour of his corner of the Adirondacks by horse-drawn sled, and took them to church on Sunday.

Kent was introducing the Soviet students to American life. Of course, he was not showing the students America as most people experienced it. Rather, he was advancing a particular narrative: an antimodernist narrative. He presented the students with an America of idyllic agrarian landscapes, rural manual labor, close-knit communities, simple pleasures, and folksy comforts. This was, not coincidentally, the parts of America Kent himself appreciated. Also, Kent was projecting a very specific narrative to Americans through his reporting on the event, largely through interviews with reporters

[1014] Ibid., Kent to Benjamin McLaurin, December 12, 1942; Soviet Students.
[1015] "12 Soviet Students Are Feted Up-State: The Rockwell Kents Are Hosts at Ausable Forks to Columbia University Group," *New York Times*, December 26, 1942.

and "Meet Our Guests," an article he wrote for the *New Masses.* The world he portrayed was one in which Americans and Russians had everything in common except for the oppressive influence of class. Americans, Kent suggested, had been wrong to listen to anti-Soviet propaganda, which, now that the United States and Soviet Union were allies, had clearly been lies. But he assured Americans that there was hope. Russians were a forgiving people and "they think only good of us."[1016] When Kent wrote that the experience was "a story of the general readiness of people, deeply misled and prejudiced, to see their error in the light of…the students' living refutation of it all," he was obviously framing the visit as a simulacrum of American and Soviet relations.[1017] American-Soviet friendship was not a complicated matter of governments and treaties, he asserted: it was as simple as Americans finding the bravery and love of humanity to take the initiative and invite the Soviets into their lives.

As Kent was moving toward the Soviet Union, he was, unexpectedly, moving away from the communists. While he agreed with the CPUSA on most of its positions – at least until the de-Stalinization campaigns of the 1950s – he gradually perceived their sectarian tendencies and saw their "boring from within" tactics reprehensible to the point that he could not in good conscience be a member. Once the United States intervened in World War II, Kent became annoyed at the communists' sudden conformity to the American mainstream. He compared the CPUSA's trumpeting of Roosevelt at the expense of his domestic critics, exemplified in AB Magil's 1943 article, "What About

[1016] Rockwell Kent, "Meet Our Guests," *New Masses*, February 9, 1943, 15–16.
[1017] Ibid.

Roosevelt?," to "the fury of a quarreling couple whose sacred right to beat each other up has been encroached upon by some well-meaning, sympathetic outsider."[1018] Even though he made scarcely a mention of the CPUSA in public, his personal files are full of scathing indictments. In 1946, he wrote, "…I am not a member of the Communist Party and hold myself in some important respects not fit for membership and in other respects not inclined to be a member…"[1019]

The tension increased in Kent's 1948 campaign for Congress, a part of Henry Wallace's Progressive campaign. The Progressive movement of 1948 was a watershed for the American left. The Progressive Party aimed to make enough noise so as to convince the Democrats that the American left still mattered and needed to be appeased.[1020] The Progressives claimed that the Democrats under Truman bore no resemblance to the party of Roosevelt, as Truman was abandoning one New Deal reform after another. The Democratic Party, they argued, had been captured by big business and had "no sympathy for the common man."[1021]

Progressive presidential candidate Henry Wallace's program was exciting to Rockwell Kent particularly for his ideas on foreign policy. Unlike Truman or Dewey, Wallace made peace a priority in his campaign. It was only through cooperation and communication with the Soviet Union that the United States could be free to use its

[1018] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," Kent to Boyesen, October 20, 1943; Boyesen.
[1019] Ibid., Kent to Joe North, May 6, 1946; New Masses.
[1020] Karl M. Schmidt, *Henry A. Wallace, Quixotic Crusade 1948*, Men and Movements Series (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1960), vii.
[1021] Allen Yarnell, *Democrats and Progressives; the 1948 Presidential Election as a Test of Postwar Liberalism.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 64–67.

resources to benefit Americans, rather than as grist for the armaments mill, Wallace claimed.[1022] Wallace thought that Soviet intentions had been misinterpreted by American leaders and that the Soviet Union had been intentionally incensed through hostile measures like the Marshall Plan and Truman Doctrine. Whereas Truman posited that the Russians only understood and respected displays of strength, Wallace countered that a Third World War posed such an existential threat that the United States and the world could not afford the risk of increasing tensions.[1023]

Few people were so committed to the Progressive cause as was Rockwell Kent. He thought Henry Wallace was America's great opportunity to escape the reach of its fascists. "His candidacy," he wrote, "is the one gleam of hope that we have; and I have the feeling that even without the backing of a great political party he has so endeared himself to the American people that he will pile up a tremendous vote."[1024] He called Wallace, "…a man of deep integrity, of unquestioned love and respect for the common man, of noble vision of a world at peace, of proven statesmanship and of absolutely dauntless courage…"[1025] Kent decided the best way to help the campaign was to himself run as a candidate for US Congress with the ALP: a close ally of the Progressives.

The Progressives managed only 1.1 million votes in the presidential election, a mere 2.5 percent of the vote for president (Eugene Debs, running as a Socialist, had almost reached this number in 1912). Where they had aimed to show the Democrats that

[1022] Schmidt, *Henry A. Wallace, Quixotic Crusade 1948*, 46.
[1023] Ibid., 16.
[1024] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," Kent to Gertrude Greenwald, January 12, 1948; Greenland Press.
[1025] Ibid., "We Hold These Truths," 1948; Writings-- 1948.

the Left was a force with which to be reckoned, they actually only demonstrated their own marginality.[1026] If anything, the Progressives proved to Truman that their constituency could be safely ignored, which President Truman proceeded to do. The reasons for the devastating results were simple: with the Cold War and anticommunism already entrenched in the United States, opponents of the Progressives found it easy to tar Wallace with accusations of radicalism and betrayal. The consequences of these tactics were severe. Truman's red-baiting of Wallace institutionalized the practice, such that the Left was all but criminalized during the early Cold War in a blitz of McCarthyism. Institutions all over the country cracked down on free speech and the socially acceptable range of political opinions grew ever tighter.[1027]

In his own campaign, Kent had seen for himself that American communists were becoming a liability for the Left. He thought they were so obsessed with a theory dictating that America was bound to become socialist that they were unable to see that it was precisely the adherence to theory that was making a socialist America impossible. He felt that his own intuition-based beliefs were more powerful and purer than those of dogmatic followers of ideologies and personalities. "There is one Communist practice in discussion and writing that I think ought to be abandoned," he wrote a friend in 1947. "It is the everlasting reference to Marxism…. The Communist has accepted the Marxian pronouncements on social evolution as the truth… Let's stop talking of Marxism as

[1026] Yarnell, *Democrats and Progressives; the 1948 Presidential Election as a Test of Postwar Liberalism.*, 108.
[1027] Schmidt, *Henry A. Wallace, Quixotic Crusade 1948*, 317.

though it's a cult."[1028] He called the communist reliance on Marx and science, "snooty."[1029] Kent admired Marx and Engels, but seemed to think of them as existing outside of his sphere and external to the life experiences of the "common man."

Kent also complained about communist tactics. He wrote to the CPUSA about intervention in his district by "such a group of irresponsibly fanatical young Communists as literally destroyed my whole campaign."[1030] Kent valued the Communist Party when it worked within American institutions and with awareness of American context. But he had nothing but contempt for the "Culture Caravan" aesthetic they practiced during his campaign, "organized absurdly with 'Commissars' for every department of their activities ('Laundry Commisars,' [sic] 'Food Commissars,' etc. etc.)"[1031] "They reduced the whole campaign to what would have been a laughing matter but for the violence, expressed at first in hoots and jeers and finally with rotten eggs and rocks," he wrote.[1032] Henceforth, Kent washed his hands of the communists.

Kent's faith in the American electoral process was almost gone. No one in the federal government came within a mile of matching his views. When a candidate had emerged who did, Wallace was red-baited into oblivion by the established parties. The communists who had seemed promising were out of touch with American attitudes. Perhaps the most telling part of Kent's abandonment of the notion of American reform in his last years is in the nature of his paintings of that period. His superhuman character,

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[1028] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," Kent to Barth, March 3, 1947; Barth.
[1029] Ibid., Kent to Wesley, July 12, 1956.
[1030] Ibid., Kent to Arnold Johnson, May 10, 1966; CPUSA.
[1031] Ibid.
[1032] Ibid.

that paragon of American potential which Kent used in his work, is nowhere to be seen after 1945. The giants had departed and so had Kent's faith in the American political process. His lithographs instead became consumed with heavy-handed satire of American ignorance and bellicosity. In *Heavy Heavy Hangs Over Thy Head* (1946), a baby in a crib representing Americans is watched over by a rat – America's elite, surely – on top of a rifle symbolizing the atom bomb. The creature cannot possibly hope to wield or understand the weapon it is using to defend the baby, and is more likely than not to hurt the baby itself in any attempt to do so.[1033] In *It's Later than You Think* (1945), another America stand-in, this time a foppish dandy, sleeps as an hourglass runs through its last grains of sand. The dandy rests against a beam with the initials of its builders written upon it: initials that happen to match up with the names of the founders of the United States. The beam supports a roof which has "1776" engraved upon one side. The founder's pillar, it is clear, will not withstand the weight Americans have encumbered it with. The dandy will be of little assistance when the structure collapses.[1034]

Kent's Sovietophile inclinations were not damaged by his rejection of the American communists or by his declining confidence in American institutions, however, because he had discovered something far more important to him there than any politics: Soviet art. Kent's road to American-Soviet friendship was heavily shaped by his study of Soviet art. The Soviet Union under Stalin had embarked on a program featuring an unprecedented level of support for artists in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Art,

[1033] Rockwell Kent, *Heavy Heavy Hangs Over Thy Head*, Lithograph, 1946.
[1034] Rockwell Kent, *"It's Later Than You Think" (Wake Up America)*, Lithograph, 1945.

considered by most people to be a spontaneous activity based on inspiration was transformed in the Soviet Union into a mass produced good. Soviet leaders viewed art as purely functional, much as did Kent, and believed that there were serious benefits to controlling the production of art and getting its messages to the people.[1035]

In the Soviet Union, state agencies directly offered artists contracts and provided studios in which to work. By making huge quantities of art available to the masses, the Soviets hoped to create a new audience for cultural products, and to provide millions of people with the experiences of visiting artistic exhibitions, lectures, and museums, as well as art collection: something that only the rich could do in the capitalist nations.[1036] Several cooperative organizations were established for the purpose of employing artists and aiding them in their work, including the All Russian Union of Artists' Cooperatives (*Soiuz khudozhnikov*), the Cooperative of Artists, and *Glaviskusstvo*. Together, they were providing 11.5 million rubles a year for the purchase of work by Soviet artists before World War II.[1037]

Kent's first contact with Soviet officialdom was facilitated by his work for artist unionization. As president of United American Artists, Kent began to correspond with Lydia Kislova, the chief of the Anglo-American Department of VOKS (the Soviet cultural agency founded in 1925) in 1941. In accordance with his long-held views on the

[1035] On Socialist realism and Soviet art, see C. V James, *Soviet Socialist Realism; Origins and Theory* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973). On posters, which were specifically important to Kent, see David King, *Russian Revolutionary Posters: From Civil War to Socialist Realism, From Bolshevism to the End of Stalinism* (Harry N. Abrams, 2015).
[1036] Galina Yankovskaya and Rebecca Mitchell, "The Economic Dimensions of Art in the Stalinist Era: Artists' Cooperatives in the Grip of Ideology and the Plan," *Slavic Review* 65, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 770.
[1037] Ibid., 774.

necessity of a "people's art," Kent was trying to attract more artists into his union and form something of a unified school. By teaching American artists about the living standards enjoyed by Soviet artists, Kent hoped he could show what could be accomplished in a society in which art was respected by the state and in which artists were organized. Kislova expressed interest in this project and in Kent's own work in turn. When he attempted to send paintings and books to VOKS in the Soviet Union, he was directed to the ARI in New York, apparently the only outlet in the United States willing to undertake the task of mailing packages to the Soviet Union in June of 1941.[1038]

As war broke out on the Eastern Front, Kent attempted to rally American support to the Soviet Union immediately. He issued a statement on behalf of United American Artists which asserted that "the Soviet Union is defending the rights and the hopes of the workers of the world," and told Soviet workers that "You stand for the truth and the truth shall prevail."[1039] Remarkably, considering the chaotic state of the Soviet Union at the time, a grateful Kislova sent Kent a portfolio of reproductions by Soviet artists in July along with more information about Soviet cultural institutions. Kent marveled at the Soviet policies that provided education, supplies, and travel funds for Soviet artists and the commitment to foster an indigenous artistic tradition in every Soviet republic. Even more so, however, he admired the tenets of the Soviet art form of *socialist* realism, in

[1038] Gleb Prokhorov, *Art under Socialist Realism: Soviet Painting, 1930-1950* (East Roseville, NSW, Australia: Craftsman House: G + B Arts Int., 1995); James, *Soviet Socialist Realism; Origins and Theory*; King, *Russian Revolutionary Posters*.
[1039] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," Telegram to the Union of Soviet Artists, July 3, 1941; USSR.

which artists sought to remove "academic sentimentality" from their work and make their paintings a "virile force" in the daily lives of the masses.[1040]

The stylistic qualities of socialist realism were highly appealing to Kent. Though he thought early socialist realism veered toward the crude side, he found its principles much in line with his own. Specifically, he appreciated the state's recognition that realist art was the natural expression of the Soviet state. Kent elucidated a narrative in which abstract artists were rejected by the Soviet public due to a newly awakened social consciousness. The Soviet people had decided, Kent judged, that "introversion, self-scrutiny, self-analysis, and even, in its more personal sense, self-expression" were no longer present in life, and thus had no place in art.[1041] In Kent's telling, the Soviet people replaced the effete snobbish futurists with the modus operandi of socialist realism, which dealt with "real, tangible, and of the moment" problems, and provided representations of "those realities of life with which they were concerned."[1042]

In reality, there were political reasons why the Soviet state championed socialist realism. Soviet leaders hoped to use the new art "to mold a new Soviet type of artist, a new artistic environment, and a new audience."[1043] By "importing into the sphere of workers and peasants the kind of everyday practices that had been typical for the privileged strata of prerevolutionary society," such as art, and by using industrial workers as the subject of art, Soviet leaders hoped to both eliminate the new Stalinist

[1040] Ibid., "Interview between Rockwell Kent and Andrei Melnikov," 1958; Writings-- Not Dated.
[1041] Ibid., "Article for Russian War Relief," 1944; Writings – 1944.
[1042] Ibid.
[1043] Galina Yankovskaya and Rebecca Mitchell, "The Economic Dimensions of Art in the Stalinist Era: Artists' Cooperatives in the Grip of Ideology and the Plan," 774.

constituency's ("newly promoted workers (*vydvizhentsy*), new urban dwellers, collective farm workers, and Stakhonovites…") reliance on rural crafts and "low" art (like *lubki*, Russian folk stories told through woodcuts and pictures) and instead make them feel like sophisticated members of a sophisticated society.[1044] In so doing, the Soviets could mold their people into the modern workforce the nation had never possessed.

In addition, while Kent had access to sufficient sources to understand and acquire an appreciation for the Soviet *plan* for artists, he was unaware of its failures in execution. It is likely that many artists who would have never have been able to make a living at art in the Soviet Union were aided by the new system which allowed those accepted into cooperatives, and who paid membership fees, "payments for illness or pregnancy, pensions, funeral expenses, and legal services." But the actual number of people allowed a place in the cooperatives was minimal.[1045] By 1936, only artists with specialized education who created works "of high quality," had paintings in museums, were considered "masters" of folk art, or who had published in the Soviet press were allowed to join the cooperatives.[1046] With such strict and subjective requirements, only 500 of Moscow's 8,000 artists qualified. Further, the cooperatives dictated content to a degree that most American artists would have found intolerable. Kent might well have approved of these elements of the system. But it is less likely that he would have thought well of the warehouses "glutted with unsold paintings" (worth 29 million rubles by 1949), or of the tiny quarters most artists were made to work in – quarters too small for so much as

[1044] Ibid., 778–79.
[1045] Ibid., 783.
[1046] Ibid.

the drying of canvases.[1047] Instead of solving the riddle of the artist's role in society, the Soviets had evaded one trap but fallen into another with its own set of disadvantages and complications.

Yet, not privy to information about the inner workings of the Soviet cultural apparatus, Kent was as enthusiastic about Soviet art and its implications for the artist in society as he had ever been about anything in his life. Kent had advocated the employment of artists to raise morale to the American government for a decade and was amazed at how the Soviet government was participating in this very practice in World War II. When sent a parcel full of Soviet graphic art posters, Kent told Kislova that he was "deeply impressed" by their quality and that he felt "a great thrill in the realization of what the artists of the Soviet Union are doing in this desperately trying time in the life of their country."[1048] He experienced corresponding depression when he thought about "the lack of accomplishment and the lack of national spirit in the United States."[1049] Kent complained that artists in the United States were "makers of an un-wanted commodity." They were always the first workers to feel the effects of economic downturns.[1050] Only the most popular (and not coincidentally, the least political) artists could survive such catastrophes as full time artists. He thought that this could be resolved by state interference, by making "every empty wall surface in America" covered with propagandistic artwork advocating American values.[1051]

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[1047] Ibid., 788.
[1048] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," Kent to Kislova, November 30, 1941; USSR.
[1049] Ibid.
[1050] Ibid.
[1051] Ibid.

Kent was worried about the lack of engagement of American artists and thought that they were perhaps becoming disenfranchised in the United States. He took his message on the importance of art to society to the larger American population in hopes of prompting a movement to urge the American government to institute policies similar to the Soviet. He explained in a radio address to Americans the disparity he perceived between American and Soviet art. In the United States, he claimed, "high art" such as opera and Broadway were inaccessible to the vast majority of Americans for reasons economic and geographic. Books were printed in small editions, newspapers and magazines were sensationalist distortions, and movies "trade on crime or sex for interest."[1052] The Soviet Union, which he characterized as a comparative "paradise," was " a land where the fostering of the creative forces of culture is the business of the people functioning through the state."[1053] Artists there were treated as gifted persons "through whom a person finds expression for its aspirations and its love of life."[1054] The masses in the USSR were cultured and educated in the arts since birth and therefore art was accessible to everyone. The government, he claimed, made sure that newspapers told the truth and built cultural institutions in all but the smallest towns. "Instruction and encouragement and money" were everywhere for the artistically inclined. The Soviets made movies under "a belief that [they] should make people better citizens and better husbands and wives and happier human beings…"[1055] Imagine, he suggested, what could be accomplished in the United States with a similar system.

[1052] Ibid., Broadcast, 1942; USSR.
[1053] Ibid.
[1054] Ibid.
[1055] Ibid.

Despite his Sovietophile credentials and his enthusiasm, Kent was not able to go to the USSR himself until 1950. First, he had been prevented from going by the war, then by his participation in the Progressive movement. When he finally went, after his thorough disillusionment regarding the prospects of American reform, Kent's trip was a life-changing experience. His reason for visiting the Soviet Union was a meeting of the World Committee of Peace Partisans, which was a part of the vast confluence of international peace groups in Europe that spring. Unlike Lamont in 1933, Kent was not seeing the Soviet Union in transition but rather more or less as Stalin had intended it. All of the key institutions were in place, people had become accustomed to the Soviet system, and overt dissent had been thoroughly erased.[1056]

Kent was impressed with the efficiency of the Soviet state and the seeming loyalty of its people to the Soviet project. "Our reception in Moscow was literally a mass demonstration," he wrote, with "Soviet deputies and members of the huge Russian peace organization" surrounding his party when they arrived at the airport.[1057] In the six days in which Kent and his organization were in Moscow, he was treated to the highest standards the Soviets had available. A modern hotel, interpreters, and means of travel were all readily available and he was allowed to go anywhere in the city so long as an interpreter accompanied him.

Kent was dazzled by the amount of cultural activity in the city and how accessible it was to the common citizen. "We saw the Opera, the ballet and previews of the latest

[1056] Ibid., "Autobiography continued."
[1057] Ibid., Kent to Martin, March 17, 1950; World Congress for Peace.

movies… Every night we were afforded a different entertainment."[1058] What he loved most, however, were the Russian people, who seemed genuinely excited about their country and its future. They impressed him through their apparent commitment to peace, especially when contrasted with Kent's sense that postwar Americans were apathetic about the peace movement. "We of the western European countries and of America want peace because – with full knowledge of the terrors of atomic warfare – we are afraid of death," while in the Soviet Union, Kent argued that "it is through love of life that they want peace."[1059] He believed the Soviets were allowing their citizens a kind of freedom Americans did not understand.

Whatever the rest of the world thought about Soviet communism, Kent returned to America fervently believing that the Soviet people were confident of its greatness. Kent was convinced that the people of the Soviet Union were synonymous with their government because government policy so resembled the rhetoric and ideals of Soviet citizens. He assumed there was no coercion because he did not see any. This was very different from how he perceived the United States, where there were overt indications of both dissent and oppression everywhere. He did not realize that it was possible for a lack of dissent to be more telling than its presence. That a mature totalitarian state could institutionalize its will into its people through systematic terror over decades was not something that this individualist product of the romantic era was able to consider, much less accept.[1060]

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[1058] Ibid., Kent to Martin, March 17, 1950; World Congress for Peace.
[1059] Ibid.
[1060] This is not to suggest that there were not genuine advocates of Stalin's policies among average citizens of the Soviet Union. By all accounts there were many. On late Stalinist society, see Juliane Furst, *Late*

Further, Kent's understanding of what exactly American society had become was warped. Now in his seventies, Kent no longer had the constitution or inclination to travel to New York. He quickly lost track of American culture. He stopped reading anything but the furthest left periodicals and saw America only through the eyes of the similarly aged friends with whom he corresponded, among them Corliss Lamont and Richard Morford, both of whom he met in the American-Soviet friendship movement in the early 1940s. His letters during the 1950s and beyond are for the most part filled with bitter denouncements of the Cold War. Kent struggled to understand why Americans apparently pointed their fingers at the rest of the world yet were blind to their own dire straits. Americans, he claimed, were hung up on civil liberties and their relative absence in the Soviet Union while millions of American lived in poverty that put their very survival in question: something which he judged made the matter of liberties moot. The Soviet system, meanwhile, kept all of the Soviet citizens both happy and prosperous.[1061]

He knew all about how the Soviet Union was portrayed by other Americans, of course. He knew the vast majority of the American Left was opposed to the Soviet Union, especially after 1956. But he found a fantastic assortment of reasons why he could not be bothered with it. Before the Khrushchev revelations, Kent thrived on the fact that so many Soviet actions could be interpreted ambiguously in the absence of definitive sources and explanations. Since he did not trust the establishment media in the United States, he latched onto the few fringe sources he could find that championed the Soviet

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*Stalinist Russia Society between Reconstruction and Reinvention* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006); Donald A Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism Labour and the Restoration of the Stalinist System after World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[1061] Kent, *It's Me, O Lord*.

narrative, such as former Ambassador Joseph E Davies' 1942 whitewashing of the Moscow Trials. Kent concluded in a letter to a friend, "Our controlled press and radio were deterred by no sense of honor, decency or truth, in lying about the Soviet Republics. But now the truth comes out!"[1062] After 1956, he asserted that Soviet atrocities were not worth talking about because the United States was at least as bad. "I wonder if there is any branch of government, from the government of little townships like that in which we live on up through county, state and Federal government that isn't shot through with crooks and grafters. Though we may boast proudly that we have never had a dictatorship remotely approaching that revealed as having been in Russia, our public officials, whose villainy is comparable to that of Stalin, I can't believe that our malefactors will ever make confession of their sins or, except in rare cases, ever be brought to punishment," he wrote after the Khrushchev speech.[1063]

His bias was not alleviated by his landmark passport case, which began upon his return from (and was a result of his trip to) the Soviet Union. When the American government refused to give Kent a passport for seven years, his response was a lengthy court battle against the State Department. The passport case received substantial press coverage. Perhaps surprising to Kent, the coverage was for the most part supportive of his right to travel. The State Department's increasingly authoritarian and esoteric rules struck a nerve with the growing movement for civil liberties among liberals. Federal District Judge Luther Youngdahl received coverage in the *National Guardian* when he spoke out

[1062] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," Letter, January 10, 1942.
[1063] Ibid., Letter, July 23 1956.

in 1955 on the absurd secrecy allowed the State Department in passport trials, asking, "How can an applicant refute charges which arise from sources, or are based upon evidence, which is closed to him?"[1064] Dorothy Fosdick wrote a feature story in *The New York Times Magazine* that same year, arguing that the State Department had somehow found the unilateral power to abridge American liberties. "The whole atmosphere of the Passport Office," she wrote, "contributes to confusion and overcaution." The need for reform in this "archaic" system "seems inescapable," she claimed.[1065] In 1957, a *Washington Post* editorial expressed the belief that "…freedom to travel is a basic human right," and offered serious doubt about the right of the State Department to "control all the acts of Americans which may affect foreign relations."[1066] Kent's dogged perseverance resulted in a key victory in 1958, which allowed hundreds of leftists to travel outside the United States for the first time in years.[1067]

Given that a blatant (and likely purposeful) misreading of the law was allowed to disrupt Kent's life for eight years, at a time in his life when he thought he had few enough of those left, his perception that the American system was broken is understandable. One can see how American indignation over, for instance, the possible prohibition of Soviet Jews from immigration to Israel might seem hollow to Kent. Unable to visit Russia at the height of his interest or attend and speak for causes like the

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[1064] Ibid., National Guardian, "State Dept. Must Reveal All Evidence in Passport Denials," 1955; Passport Case.
[1065] Dorothy Fosdick, "The Passport -- And the Right to Travel," *The New York Times Magazine*, July 7, 1955.
[1066] "Freedom to Travel: A Basic Human Right," *The Washington Post*, June 10, 1957.
[1067] Ken Lawless has written on the Kent passport controversy and its influence. See Ken Lawless, "'Continental Imprisonment': Rockwell Kent and the Passport Controversy," *The Antioch Review* 38, no. 3 (Summer 1980): 304–12.

American Peace Crusade abroad, Kent was left with little to do but stew in his anger in Au Sable Forks. His earning power was "seriously diminished, if not destroyed" by the State Department's accusations of communist sympathies.[1068] He had to beg money from his only two remaining benefactors (Jim Ryan, grandson of tobacco magnate Thomas Fortune Ryan, and Corliss Lamont) and live frugally during years he had planned to dedicate to relaxed retirement.

Kent had long posited that the problem with the United States – what made something like the passport case possible – was that American society was controlled by the capitalist elite, who were brainwashing the masses through movies and books that glorified base vices, gave short shrift to communalistic values, and made Americans associate consumerism with freedom. In the 50s, his ideology hardened further into a kind of benevolent elitism that he had previously hinted at but never embraced so completely. Perhaps, he posited to a friend, Americans were not worthy of liberty. These "essentially conservative" people "count their blessings in security – security of employment, security in old age, security of life through peace, security in the knowledge that whatever they produce will in just share return to them."[1069] The difference between Americans and Russians, Kent insisted, was that the Russians had a government willing to provide for those things whereas the American government provided only for wealthy capitalists and their corporations. He went on to argue that only an "infinitesimal minority" of people "need and want to exercise full freedom of expression."[1070] Besides,

[1068] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," Kent to Fred Fuges, January 12, 1957; Passport Case.
[1069] Ibid., Kent to Carl Zigrosser, August 23, 1950; Carl Zigrosser.
[1070] Ibid., Kent to Carl Zigrosser, August 23, 1950; Carl Zigrosser.

if the vast majority of the population were so impressionable as to be incapable of thinking their own thoughts, he reasoned that maybe government censorship was not such a bad idea, so long as that censorship was a tool wielded by the right hands. "It might imply in time a curtailment of some rights, a restriction of cultural freedom comparable to the restriction of the Food and Drug Act in the interest of the physical health of our people. Maybe the reading of books, of good books, is a necessary premise to that proper working of the democratic system which is essential to our salvation," he wrote.[1071]

With his passport back in hand, Kent returned to the Soviet Union with regularity. Kent's second trip to the Soviet Union, in 1958 was marked by a special occasion: an exhibition of his work in Moscow, which had begun in December of 1957. The idea for a Kent exhibition was that of VOKS' Tamara Mamedova, who in turn was inspired to it by Kent's friend, liberal activist Albert Kahn. Kent's work, which was assembled from Kent's own personal collection and supplemented with borrowed paintings from galleries and friends, was shown in Moscow (at the Pushkin Museum, no less), Leningrad, Kiev, and several other Soviet cities. The exhibition was the first time an American artist had been presented with such an opportunity but also, remarkably, the first time Kent had been granted a comprehensive exhibition of his work *anywhere.* The combination of the novelty of an American artist, the fact that Kent's work had presaged socialist realism, and the generally high attendance at Soviet galleries meant that the exhibition was

[1071] Ibid.

extremely popular with Soviet citizens. At least 300,000 people saw his paintings in Moscow and Leningrad alone.[1072]

The exhibition lasted months and featured fifty canvases and twenty drawings. The Soviet press characterized Kent as a "bold traveler" and "outstanding peace champion."[1073] Kent tested the American press for interest about the exhibition but he was ignored, suggesting that Americans had little interest in Kent or what he did with his work.[1074] Yet, on the other hand, several American galleries refused to lend Kent his own pictures for the event, some going so far as to claim they could not lend the pictures because they had planned on their own Rockwell Kent exhibitions (none of which ever took place). To Kent, it looked like another example of an informal but powerful fascist alliance in the United States dedicated to destroying evidence of dissent. Therefore, when Kent was granted a mass audience of the Soviet people over television (his first appearance on that medium), he probably meant it when he said he had never felt so welcome anywhere and at any time in his life. He argued that "…no American artist in his own country has ever been shown such honor as has been shown me here…"[1075]

Soviet critics were generous with their praise of Kent's oeuvre. People's Artist Dementi Shmarinov, a Soviet painter of the socialist realist school, credited Kent with an "extremely varied and multifaceted" portfolio that was "near and understandable to

[1072] Ibid., Kent to Wesley, May 10, 1958; David Wesley.
[1073] "Выставка Произведений Современного Американского Художника Рокуэлла Кента," *Правда*, December 13, 1957.
[1074] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," Kent to Terman, December 20, 1957; Mandel Terman.
[1075] Ibid., "Address by Rockwell Kent, Kiev TV," August 28, 1958; USSR Trip.

Soviet viewers."[1076] Shmarinov characterized Kent's themes as "grim and beautiful nature" and "heroic labor." He wrote that Kent was, "…the most outstanding black-and-white artist in the history of American art… distinguished by the clarity and accuracy of his plastic sense of form."[1077] Though some Soviet artists expressed disappointment at his simplistic style, the uniformity of his approach, and "the influence…of modernism" (!), most treated his work as exciting and of the moment, rather than judge it antique and outmoded as many Americans would have by the 1950s.[1078] Soviet art critic Igor Golomshtok referred to Kent ("fatuously," in the opinion of David Caute) as "the most important contemporary American artist."[1079] Soviet graphic artist Evgeny Kibrik summed up the general impression at a 1953 meeting of the creative arts section of VOKS, wherein prominent Soviet artists discussed their feelings on Kent's work:

> In a way I would call it [i.e., Kent's work] anti-impressionist. It is characterized by the desire to understand the meaning of what is depicted, its beauty and harmony. He uses rhythm as an expression of the essence of the object. I have never met that in any other foreign artist. One also feels in his work the militant artist, the optimistic fighter, the man who marches courageously through life. One feels that the artist is a strong, brave, optimistic man, who portrays the world as a place of beauty, full of variety and interest. I feel all these qualities in the work of Rockwell Kent, and they do my heart good.[1080]

Kibrik's thoughts on Kent were remarkably similar to those that Kent held about himself. Such opinions were thousands of miles away both geographically and figuratively from

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[1076] Д. Шмаринов, "Художник Большого Таланта," *Правда*, December 23, 1957.
[1077] Ibid.
[1078] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," Stenographic Record of a Meeting of the VOKS Section of Fine Arts," June 5, 1953; Writings – 1953.
[1079] Caute, *The Dancer Defects*, 563.
[1080] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," "Stenographic Record of a Meeting of the VOKS Section of Fine Arts," June 5, 1953; Writings – 1953.

the consensus in America. The only descriptions of Kent in America during the Cold War were similar to the *New York Times* portrayal of him as a "naively idealistic political radical."[1081]

After the success of the 1958 exhibition and a subsequent exhibition in 1960 in which 500,000 Soviet citizens saw Kent's work in a matter of months (more viewers, he imagined, than had seen his work in America over his entire career), Kent decided to gift his entire personal collection of his own paintings to the people of the Soviet Union in late 1960.[1082] He claimed this unprecedented gesture was an easy decision. After all, "For years I have even refrained from exhibiting pictures [in the United States], feeling that it was as foolish to enter them in shows with abstract trash as art as it would be to exhibit a Thoroughbred horse in a cattle show," he wrote to Mamedov.[1083] He was deeply touched by the expressions of gratitude this gift evoked from the Soviets, from ordinary citizens to Nikita Khrushchev, who personally endowed Kent's gift with the status of "a step along the road of strengthening friendship and understanding between the peoples of the USSR and USA."[1084] Soviet press coverage was outstanding: A torrent of articles about Kent flooded Soviet periodicals for months.

For the rest of his life, Kent enjoyed enormous stature in the USSR and became for Russians perhaps the most widely known American artist. This was a level of stardom

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[1081] Orville Prescott, "Books of the Times," *New York Times*, May 13, 1955.
[1082] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," SSOD to Kent, no date; USSR Trip.
[1083] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Kent to Mamedov, May 7, 1958; Box 2; Folder 54.
[1084] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," Khrushchev to Kent, November 19, 1960; USSR Trip.

Kent had never come close to achieving in the United States, where despite his celebrity he had only ever made an adequate living as an artist. He was certain that the reception he received in the Soviet Union was a reflection of basic Soviet goodness and love. When he arrived in the Soviet Union for his third trip in 1962, he told an interviewer that, "…I had the feeling as though I had been suddenly transplanted from a stuffy and smoky room to the top of the mountain. I think of the Soviet Union as just such a summit where one breathes so easily and from which one sees its boundless vistas."[1085]

Approaching his eightieth year on earth, Kent believed he had finally found the place in which he belonged. The Soviet state understood the importance of the role of artists in society and made efforts to support them and facilitate their work to a degree the United States had not even approached in the New Deal. Moreover, the *kind* of art appreciated in the Soviet Union was of the same basic genre as that which Kent and Henri had championed in the independent exhibitions fifty years before: realistic pictures with comprehensible, socially responsible messages that could inspire people with the beauty of the world as it was, *and as it should be.* Further, Kent was warming up to the idea of a state with a certain measure of authority and the Soviet state took a paternalistic attitude toward its people. He viewed such authority as necessary in America as well, because the people, he reasoned, for all their simple virtues, were no match for the cultural heavyweights which sought to corrupt them in the United States. A government of caring, competent, cultured, but populist individuals, as Kent believed existed in the

[1085] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution."

Soviet Union, could guarantee that people could access and understand the glories of the world with which they had been presented and prevent that world and its people from exploitation.

## Epilogue and Conclusion

Until the thaw of the Khrushchev years, Kent had little contact with the nucleus of the NCASF, instead focusing on his legal battles and searching in vain for a wider peace movement. In 1957, however, Kent returned to the fold of the NCASF: this time as chairman. John Kingsbury, who had gamely served as the face of the NCASF after William Melish's abdication in 1947, scarcely outlived Stalin and died in late 1956, leaving the organization without a connected and charismatic head at a time of great danger and opportunity. After attempting to give the chairmanship to academic and social activist Mary van Kleeck (who declined), the NCASF board offered the position to the seventy-five-year-old Kent, who was in the news for his Soviet exhibition but lived hours away from New York City. It appears, in retrospect, an act of desperation: a crippled and unpopular organization seeking any public figure it could get. The decision, however, turned out to be fortuitous. Rockwell Kent's cultural cache and relationship with SSOD (the Soviet cultural agency that succeeded VOKS in 1959) gave the NCASF enough space and resources to recover from the beating it took in the early 1950s and earned the organization a second wind that lasted through the 1970s.

Kent's leadership style of the NCASF was laissez-faire. This was, on the surface, exactly the wrong approach for a small organization in crisis. It would seem far more

useful for a small group of people to collaborate closely than to be allowed to withdraw into their own spheres. Yet, his approach worked in this case to a rather inarguable degree. There were, in the late 1950s, too few workers in American-Soviet friendship to justify national campaigns. Rather than set goals their members could not possibly meet, it was more useful for the leadership to allow the scattered supporters of the NCASF to find and cultivate their own circles of Sovietophiles at their own pace, with the central organization serving as little more than a source of information on Soviet affairs. Kent's relaxed (by necessity, living as he did many hours away) leadership served as a popular counterpoint to Morford's workmanlike approach to the organization. Further, Kent's enthusiasm was contagious among the NCASF leadership. His speaking engagements, wherein he emphasized Soviet humanitarian and cultural values, were also a welcome shift from the dry quoting of Soviet propaganda production figures that was still somehow so common in NCASF literature and speakers.

Yet, Rockwell Kent's leadership was, from an internal organizational perspective, not smooth-going. Kent struggled to get along with the NCASF's other leaders, particularly Richard Morford. In his time as chairman, Kent was often irascible. He lashed out at everyone from time to time for any number of actual or imagined slights. Even his good friend and fellow board member Jessica Smith admonished Kent in a letter by declaring, "what an angry man you are!"[1086] But Kent and Morford were, in particular, oil and water. Kent respected Morford's commitment and energy but found the churchman dull and unmannered. "I wouldn't trust the Lord's Prayer in his [Morford's]

[1086] Ibid., Jessica Smith to Kent, November 21, 1961; New World Review.

hands lest he try to make it conform to the invariable dullness of his own style," Kent wrote a friend.[1087] Kent's middle class values rebelled at the fact that the NCASF was functioning on borrowed money. He seemed to hold Morford responsible for failures in fundraising, sarcastically lamenting, "I am afraid I am too conditioned to what my leftist friends of years ago would scornfully call 'bourgeois morality' to acquiesce in a policy of deficit spending by an organization lacking all financial assets."[1088] For his part, Morford was unaware of Kent's animosity toward him, though he acknowledged they enjoyed a different social standing. Morford allowed that "I didn't belong in his kind of social company."[1089]

Rockwell Kent's archive at the American Institute of Art shows that Morford kept Kent informed of every development in the NCASF, yet Kent frequently complained to friends that he felt superfluous and taken for granted by the organization. Unfailing in his praise of the NCASF affiliates in San Francisco and Chicago, which had a fraction of the reach and program of the New York organization, Kent could not understand why New York could not accomplish more than it did. He threatened several times to quit his chairmanship but each time was talked down by Jessica Smith, who soothed Kent's anger with long, impassioned letters about how important he was to the cause. In 1962, Smith assured, "Your active participation is greatly to be desired… the mere fact that you are our chairman is the greatest asset the Council has… And I do not have to tell you how

[1087] Ibid., Kent to Jessica Smith, February 28, 1963; New World Review.
[1088] Ibid., Kent to Jessica Smith, January 5, 1962; New World Review.
[1089] Morford also suggests Kent may have been an alcoholic, an idea we do not find elsewhere. Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 351.

much it means to our Russian friends to have a person of your stature at the head of the organization."[1090]

When Kent, in the last several years of his life in the late 1960s, looked back upon his experience in the NCASF, his memories were not positive. He complained in an unpublished extension of his (second!) autobiography that the Council refused to employ him as anything more than a figurehead, to chair meetings and introduce other speakers at rallies.[1091] "Had I realized, on accepting the Chairmanship of the National Council," he wrote, "that my duties… would be strictly confined to the chairing of such public meetings or rallies as the Council might stage and strictly exclude my participation in them as a speaker I might have been reluctant to accept the proferred [sic] honor."[1092] It is unclear if this interpretation was the truth, however. His correspondence with the NCASF is full of offers to speak for the Council which he almost always declined. Failing health and/or declining interest seem a more reasonable explanation for Kent's scaling back of activity than an indifferent Council which could have surely used his help.

Regardless of whether it was the NCASF or Kent that limited his participation, though, the last straw for both was the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, an action Kent believed "too long deferred."[1093] Perceiving the Soviet invasion to be a response to an attempt at revolution in Czechoslovakia by West German fascists (just as the Soviets claimed), Kent had expected the NCASF to back Brezhnev without

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[1090] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," Jessica Smith to Rockwell Kent, December 3, 1962; New World Review.
[1091] Ibid., Autobiography continued; Writings-- Undated.
[1092] Ibid.
[1093] Ibid., Kent to Corliss Lamont, January 18, 1969; Corliss Lamont.

reservation. Yet, no one on the board save Holland Roberts in San Francisco did. As he realized the extent of his isolation, Kent's interpretations of events abroad became increasingly bizarre. He asserted that time would prove him right: The Soviets had done the right thing. He crowed to several liberal friends that a November, 1968 piece in *Fortune* magazine by Herman Kahn contained a "confession" about American machinations forcing the Soviet invasion. However, the article contains nothing of the sort, consisting only of a fairly typical recitation of the Prague Spring. It seems as if, by the end of his life, Kent had little use for a reality that contradicted his faith. He decided not to resign from the NCASF because he feared it would make the organization look divided. But he no longer took part in its activities after 1968. Kent claimed that, after his explosion over Czechoslovakia, the NCASF simply stopped asking him to. This was probably true.

Kent died in 1971. In retrospect, the life of Rockwell Kent he is so fascinating because he was so consistently opposed to his own era. He was firmly enmeshed in the perspective of a 19th century thinker, whether in his practice of art in the manner of the craftsman ideal, his continued reverence for the transcendentalists, or his brand of pre-Marxian socialism that never managed to incorporate the theoretical developments of Marx, Engels, or Lenin – much less Stalin. Kent opposed most of the major trends of the 20th century, from capitalism to modernism to imperialism to internationalism. He sought to transform the present to look more like an idealized past, amid a society obsessed with forward motion.

He is also interesting for his specific combination of transcendentalism and socialism, which produced an unusual populist *and* elitist perspective. The idealization of the people inherent in both philosophies, mixed with the independent search for truth of the latter and the revolutionary rejection of norms of the former, would make for a disciple who identified with the working class yet was distrustful of the competence and agency of a working class which did not seek to overturn society. Kent became a man who wanted to transform the world for the people through his art, yet had no confidence in the willingness of the people to join him in his quest or of their ability to appreciate what he had done for them. It is the perspective of a bitter martyr who simultaneously loved and hated the people for whom he ostensibly worked in vain.

Lastly, Kent remains intriguing because of his love of the Soviet Union, which developed independent of the standard motivations. After the collapse of his hopes for a reformed United States via the Popular Front, Kent found the USSR and saw it as representing the same antimodernist perspective he had possessed his whole life. Kent believed the USSR was the successor of American democracy as it was supposed to be. His fixation on the Soviets was not entirely unique in its nature, however. Like Corliss Lamont, Kent's perception of the Soviet Union's virtues made him too ready to shrug off its deficiencies. Enamored of a state that held the working people as high as any, he minimized the essential fact that everyone except the communist elite was lacking in freedoms Americans saw as basic. Enchanted by the notion that the search for truth was institutionalized rather than the search for pleasure or profits, Kent could not see that the Soviet program was compromised by a refusal to allow the interpretation, and expression,

of *one's own* truth. Enthusiastic about the Soviet state's authority to crush dangerous sentiments like fascism in its people, he ignored that such a system facilitated the obliteration of dissent in general and the building of an entire new elite dedicated to the purpose. In his identification with the USSR, Kent let his lifelong outsider status get the best of him: he mistook a fair game for one that simply rearranged the pieces to his benefit.

## Chapter 6: Harry Steinmetz: Collectivist Seeks Collective

Harry Steinmetz was a popular psychology professor in San Diego, California, whose career as an educator and psychologist stretched from the 1930s to the 1970s. His interests evolved in his field, from applied and experimental psychology in the 1930s, to industrial psychology in the 1940s, and ultimately the study of ideology in the 1960s. Steinmetz authored numerous scholarly articles, many involving the use of psychology to make schools and industries more effective or efficient. His best known work is *The Orientation Test Concerning Fundamental Aims of Education*, a collaboration with AS Lewerenz, in which the two psychologists sought to uncover a teacher's suitability for their job through a test that uncovered their underlying biases. A respected and outstanding educator, Steinmetz taught at San Diego State College (now San Diego State University) for over twenty years, reaching the title of associate professor, before being fired for political reasons. He later taught as a lecturer at Kalamazoo College, Morehouse College, and Royal Alexandria Hospital.

Steinmetz was also a political player in the burgeoning city of San Diego. He became an important figure in the teacher's union in the San Diego branch of the AFL during the Great Depression. His organizational acumen and fiery rhetoric earned him a leadership position in the Labor Council: a coalition of AFL-affiliated unions. His dual status as an educator and labor leader made him a minor celebrity in his adopted home of San Diego after his arrival in 1930. Steinmetz tried to combine the two roles – educator and advocate for the downtrodden -- whenever possible, sponsoring and participating in

countless events to educate the public on political developments that affected the lives of ordinary people. He ran for mayor of San Diego in 1935 and for Congress in 1948, both times attempting to fuse a pro-working-class agenda with a tone and program amicable and welcoming to the American political mainstream. Characterizing himself as "a united fronter," Steinmetz's primary agenda during his tenure at San Diego State was to create and maintain a left-liberal coalition that was simultaneously capable of halting the encroachments of management into the lives of workers as well as appeal to a majority of Americans.[1094] He avoided political parties throughout the 1930s and 1940s but championed reformist movements he thought were capable of building, rather than tearing down, bridges, such as technocracy and Upton Sinclair's Eliminate Poverty in California plan (EPIC).

Yet, during the Cold War, this consensus-building reformer was a major part of the American-Soviet friendship movement: one of the more polarizing movements one can imagine. Steinmetz was, next to Richard Morford and Rockwell Kent, the most important member of the American-Soviet friendship movement in the middle-50s until the early 1970s. He led the Los Angeles branch (then the ARI of Los Angeles) in 1957 and the successor of that group – Americans for Cultural Relations with the USSR – from 1971 to 1973. He was the primary exponent on the West Coast of a renewed cultural approach to American-Soviet friendship. He held large events structured around films, performances, and educational lectures in Los Angeles that were often attended by the

[1094] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University," Interview from October 2, 1980.

city's mayor and other public officials. Steinmetz saw the LA council through a sectarian crisis in 1970. He also created a San Diego friendship group after no such branch had existed since the 1940s, called the San Diego Society for Cultural Relations with the Soviet Union, in 1973. All the while, he espoused an increasingly radicalized perspective on American-Soviet relations during the Cold War, blaming the United States for global tensions, and citing the Soviet Union as the pinnacle of a new sort of ideal civilization: "established socialism."

I argue that Steinmetz's abrupt entrance into the American-Soviet friendship movement during the Cold War was in large part due to a narrowing of options forced by state, institutional, and cultural oppression which culminated in his firing from San Diego State for suspected ties to the Communist Party. It was only at the point that he had no other coalitions through which to work that he began to participate in the American-Soviet friendship movement and the NCASF specifically. While many NCASF members supported the Soviet narrative during the Cold War – and indeed, Steinmetz came to champion that perspective as well by the late 1950s – the organization was avowedly non-partisan. It allowed Steinmetz to advance a culture-centered program intended to urge Americans to see value in the Soviet people and their achievements without making them accept the Soviet Union as an unreservedly benevolent power to do so.

This chapter explores the intellectual and political life of Harry Charles Steinmetz from the 1910s to the 1950s and its relation to his discovery of the USSR as a champion of his ideals by the end of the latter decade. First, I discuss his professional trajectory and influences, arguing that Steinmetz's long-term preoccupation was American injustice and

inequality caused by capitalism, which he believed could be resolved through collectivist policies that payed attention to the ways in which individuals were indebted to, and responsible for, society as a whole. Like many educators in the 1920s and 30s, he reasoned that the best way to make a collectivist ethos appealing to individualist America was through mass education in socially responsible values. Next, I engage with Steinmetz's political influences and his actions in the political sphere, showing that Steinmetz's preferred approach to change in the American system was reform through consensus, facilitated by diverse movements and programs. Finally, I detail the inability of the American media and public to categorize Steinmetz's socialist, but flexible and reformist, ideology (an ideology I term "postcapitalist"), both before and during the Cold War and his resulting exile from the mainstream of American political life. It was at this point, when the United States deprived him of opportunities to work toward solutions to American problems, that he began to look toward the Soviet Union as the protagonist in a worldwide ideological battle, rather than just an inspiration for his work in reforming the United States.

## On the Need for Social Control

Harry Steinmetz was born in Seattle to Baptist missionaries in 1898. His maternal grandparents were wealthy but (as had happened with Kent's mother) they disinherited his mother when she had the temerity to marry the son of German immigrants. Steinmetz's grandfather considered this marriage to be beneath her class. Nevertheless, Steinmetz and his mother often lived with these grandparents in Cincinnati in his

childhood, while his father worked for the YMCA in Seattle. Steinmetz was therefore aware of class from an early age, constantly reminded that his grandparents were rich and that he and his parents were poor. When his parents decided to go to the Philippines "to save souls abroad," they left a seven-year old Steinmetz at a missionary children's home in Illinois for years. He was "treated like an orphan" in school and felt like one. As he grew into young adulthood, Steinmetz self-identified as an oddball outsider.[1095]

He felt even more the outcast when he joined his parents in the Philippines as a teenager.[1096] The Philippines was, in the 1900s and 1910s, an infant American colony, having been taken from Spain in August of 1898. Its population had been subdued through bloody counterinsurgency operations between 1899 and 1902. The yearning for independence was strong among Filipinos when Steinmetz and his parents lived there. This was not lost upon Steinmetz, who sympathized with the Filipinos and pitied them for "nearly four-hundred years of arrogant Spanish colonial rule and somewhat theocratic superstition." Steinmetz hated American imperialism in Asia and was repelled by arguments about "the white mans' burden" and American exceptionalism. Socialism, which he heard about in the news from time to time as a child, made intuitive sense to him: much more so than the inequality inherent in capitalism, or the hypocrisy he saw in his parents' religion. The combination of anti-imperialism, socialism, and his contempt for religion was potent. As a child, he declared to his mother, "man had made all gods in his own image from ignorant conceit and only a socialist society could be moral."[1097]

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[1095] Ibid., "Autobiography," 1976; Box 1, Folder 15.
[1096] Ibid., "San Diego as I Have Lived It;" 1977–78; Box 1, Folder 44.
[1097] Ibid., "Footnotes to San Diego History," September 28, 1975; Box 7, Folder 26.

Steinmetz was brought back to the United States, "against his will," by his parents from the Philippines in 1916.[1098] His parents, perhaps due to their son's atheism, had decided that he needed a Baptist education. The America he returned to, he said, seemed "rustic, incredible, unpalatable." He deemed it a poor substitute for the exciting intersection of cultures in the American-occupied Philippines. The schools of his Washington small town were too easy and provincial. He found the disparity between the way the town's Christians talked and how they actually treated people different from them to be repellant.[1099] When he graduated from high school (he was first in his class but declined the honor of class valedictorian in favor of a girl who wanted it more), Steinmetz was past ready for a change of scenery. He enrolled at McMinnville College in Oregon (it was the cheapest school he could find) while living with his uncle Harry but spent much of his time in Seattle because of that city's wider cultural milieu.

Steinmetz found groups in Seattle who shared his concern for injustice and inequality and was particularly drawn to labor organizations due to their efforts for their working-class members. Soon enough, Steinmetz was working as a dock worker affiliated with the International World of Workers in Seattle in 1917. IWW laborers were among the most radical workers in the nation. The collectivist climate could not have been more different from the narrow-minded xenophobia Steinmetz experienced in high school. An important experience in his realization that his views were not so strange after all was when, in 1917, Russian ships brought in news and perspectives on the Russian

[1098] Ibid., "Autobiography," 1976; Box 1, Folder 15.
[1099] Ibid., "Autobiography," 1976; Box 1, Folder 15.

Revolution, of which Steinmetz had been previously unfamiliar. In December of that year, the SS *Shilka*, a Russian freighter, docked in Seattle harbor for a month. The ship's crew had mutinied in Vladivostok, formed a Soviet, and taken over the vessel. Though many Americans were frightened of the Bolsheviks and their agenda and hence the *Shilka's* arrival as well, the unions were happy to see the Russians, as was Seattle's small but tight-knit Russian émigré community. Despite rumors that the Bolsheviks intended *Shilka* to ferment rebellion in the United States, it is more likely that the *Shilka*, whose crew was comprised of Russians sympathetic to the Bolsheviks, brought their ship from Vladivostok to provide Americans with "reliable information about their revolution, about their new state, and its new laws."[1100]

The prospects of a community-oriented society centered on social justice and equality excited Steinmetz and he seized upon every article he could find about the Russians in the local radical press. Anna Louise Strong was one such source. Strong, then a young journalist working for *The Seattle Daily Call,* a socialist newspaper, noted that while the Russian crewmen were ill-informed (they "had never heard of Kerensky, and hardly of Lenin"), they held enormous emotional appeal for the IWW workers struggling against management.[1101] When the *Shilka* departed, Steinmetz's union sent them a statement, expressing hope that Americans could "reach across the Pacific and grasp the hands of our Progressive Fellow Workers in Russia…"[1102]

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[1100] Ibid., "Lenin in Relation to Americans and the United States, Grass Roots Forum," October 22, 1970; Box 1, Folder 34.
[1101] Charles P. LeWarne, "The Bolsheviks Land in Seattle: The 'Shilka' Incident of 1917," *Arizona and the West* 20, no. 2 (Summer 1978): 118.
[1102] Philip Sheldon Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States...* (New York: International Publishers, 1947), 56.

Steinmetz claimed the arrival of the Russians had made for "thrilling days."[1103] Yet there was a dark side to the episode as well. Fearing subversion, the US government tried to make life difficult for the visiting Russians. Steinmetz observed this pushback of the government against the Russians' presence, which resulted in arrests of crewmembers and obsessive investigations of the *Shilka's* holdings (nothing incriminating was found). Steinmetz, already skeptical of American bias due to his time in the Philippines, concluded that "Americans prefer to receive political opinions unconfused by facts, to let an elite guide their international relations…"[1104] It was an opinion that would stick with him throughout his life.

His wariness of the motives of American big business increased in 1919, as tensions between workers and authorities threatened to take the city past the boiling point.[1105] The AFL, to which these dockworkers belonged, had been producing most of its goods and performing most of its services for the government during the First World War. Raises and benefits had been withheld for a number of years amid demands for "loyalty" in wartime.[1106] The AFL, which had won high wages and closed-shop conditions for its workers through substantial fights with management over the years, worried that management was preparing to gradually strip them of their gains.[1107] Further, labor of all stripes was fed up with repression of dissent. The city government prohibited the IWW from holding open meetings until July 1919, due to random police raids and

[1103] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University," Interview from October 2, 1980.
[1104] Ibid., "Autobiography," 1976; Box 1, Folder 15.
[1105] Robert L Friedheim, *The Seattle General Strike*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964), 9.
[1106] Ibid., 14.
[1107] Ibid., 15.

insincere claims that the IWW Hall was a health hazard, for instance.[1108] On January 21st, thirty-five thousand dock workers went on strike.

Within days, the city's other unions were contemplating a wider sympathy strike: a general work stoppage of all union workers in Seattle. AE Miller of the Metal Trades Council claimed that a general strike was needed for there a "demonstration of power," which, as Joseph L Friedheim writes, "would convince Northwest management of labor's will to survive."[1109] Union leaders feared that if the dock workers were abandoned, management would slowly strangle one union after another by introducing open-shop drives. A general strike was called on February 6, leading to thirty-thousand more workers walking away from their jobs. While the strikers managed to run much of the city for five days in the absence of vital industries, internal divisions among the workers doomed the effort. Liberal workers made up the greater part of union leadership but they had little immediate agenda besides showing support for the dock workers, which led to the strike becoming controlled by radicals with "grandiose expectations."[1110] The conservative workers, meanwhile, were against the strike entirely and refused to help the liberals promote a realistic set of goals. Without a coherent plan, the strike collapsed on February 11.

Steinmetz witnessed the Seattle General Strike first hand. When he was discharged from a tour in the officer's corps in World War I, he found employment in the IWW's Private Soldiers and Sailors Legion. His main duty in that position was keeping

[1108] Ibid., 9.
[1109] Ibid., 83.
[1110] Ibid., 89.

the peace during the General Strike.[1111] The IWW organized the Private Soldiers and Sailors Legion to counter the presence of the American Legion, a reactionary community organization that IWW leaders expected to react violently to the strike.[1112] As a self-described "tough customer," Steinmetz was well chosen to play the part of a union bodyguard. He claimed to have never needed to break up a fight, such was the degree of control the union leaders displayed over the proceedings. To Steinmetz, the cooperation and humanity of the enterprise – the strikers made sure everyone had enough to eat – was inspiring and character-forming.

Yet, Steinmetz lost his way in the depression that immediately followed the war. Steinmetz found the reaction against the Seattle Strike as disheartening as he had found the Strike inspiring. The optimism from the temporary success of the Strike was gone, as Steinmetz could find no way to make a living in Seattle on his own merits. "I could find no job, and lost interest in law and order," he wrote later.[1113] Steinmetz for several months ran with a gang of criminal veterans who targeted women and homosexuals for robbery around Seattle's dock (both because of their perceived vulnerability). He carried a gun at all times, police fired on him on several occasions, and he stole cars. As he approached the age of 21 (then the age of majority in the United States), he began to

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[1111] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University," "Lenin in Relation to Americans and the United States," Grass Roots Forum, October 22, 1970; Box 1, Folder 34.

[1112] Confrontations between the IWW and American Legion would, later that year, lead to a bloody encounter in a Centralia, Washington Armistice Day march. See: John M McClelland, *Wobbly War: The Centralia Story* (Tacoma, Wash.: Washington State Historical Society, 1987); Tom Copeland and Mazal Holocaust Collection, *The Centralia Tragedy of 1919: Elmer Smith and the Wobblies* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993).

[1113] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University, "Autobiography," 1976; Box 1, Folder 15.

belatedly realize that such criminal acts in the future would have serious consequences on his life. Having "no taste for this game" after a near arrest, he decided to grow up.

After his brief descent into crime in Seattle, Steinmetz went to the Philippines with his father in 1919, now a medical doctor for the Red Cross, and stumbled upon the opportunity to report for and edit the *Philippine Weekly* magazine. He did so for almost two years, learning the complexities of the local political environment. One important contact he made was US Colonel Raymond Robins. Robins had been the head of the Red Cross Mission to Russia between 1917 and 1918 and was one of the few Americans to that point with direct experience with Lenin and the Russian Revolution. Robins told Steinmetz about "his admiration for Lenin, horror at the wholesale massacre of Jews by the troops of White Russian General Denikin, and the futility and stupidity of the intervention and the remaining animosity [in America] to the new USSR."[1114] Robins was not himself a leftist but he respected that the Bolsheviks had given the Russian people leadership of the Revolution. He suggested that the Soviets had created a society that took care of its members as themselves and that it was working.[1115]

Why, then, wondered Steinmetz, did the Western democracies almost universally condemn the Soviet Union and even send their armies to fight against it? Robins blamed

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[1114] Ibid., "Lenin in Relation to Americans and the United States," Grass Roots Forum, October 22, 1970; Box 1, Folder 34.

[1115] On Raymond Robins, the most complete secondary source is Neil V Salzman, *Reform and Revolution the Life and Times of Raymond Robins* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1991). William Hard wrote an early biography: see William Hard, *Raymond Robins' Own Story* (New York; London: Harper & Bros., 1920). There have been strong dissertations on Robins' impact on foreign policy, as well. See: Joan Doverspike Davison, *Raymond Robins and United States Foreign Policy toward Revolutionary Russia*, (University of Notre Dame, 1984); Anne Vincent Meiburger, *Efforts of Raymond Robins toward the Recognition of Soviet Russia and the Outlawry of War, 1917-1933*" (Catholic University of America Press, 1958).

the West's opposition to the Russian Revolution on three factors. First, he wrote, "British and French Intelligence Services, which steadily held true to their alliance with czarist Russia," had been instrumental in convincing the US State Department of the nefarious nature of Bolshevism. Second, the Roman Catholic Church, he said, saw a "powerful anti-authoritarian church influence" in the Bolsheviks, and could not abide their existence. Third, Robins argued that capitalists were justifiably nervous that a successful, communist "Producers Republic" "would destroy" the capitalists' "power for the exploitation of labor and raw materials for private profit."[1116] For Steinmetz, this last argument was decisive. If the Russians were destroying the wealthy as a class, they must be on the side of the angels. Steinmetz was "moved" by meeting Robins, as Robins seemed to confirm the impression of the Russian Revolution that he had acquired in Seattle from the Russians on the *Shilka*: it was rough around the edges but virtuous and humanitarian in intent. The United States, he learned from its reaction to the Revolution as explained by Robins, was correspondingly in the pocket of imperialists, religion, and business. They would fight opponents of capitalism anytime and anywhere in order to protect their ridiculous way of life.[1117]

After nearly a year working in the Philippines and living with his father, Steinmetz came back to the United States again and enrolled in the University of California Berkeley in 1921. Steinmetz was a born leader with experience writing for

[1116] Neil V Salzman, *Reform and Revolution the Life and Times of Raymond Robins.* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1991), 375.
[1117] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University," "Lenin in Relation to Americans and the United States," Grass Roots Forum, October 22, 1970; Box 1, Folder 34.

local and school newspapers and reasoned he had a talent for communicating ideas in print and in person. He decided during his undergraduate education on a career in academia. Though Steinmetz received a Bachelor's of Arts degree in English Literature in 1924, he switched to educational psychology for his master's degree at the University of Southern California because of the exciting work done in that field during the previous generation by such luminaries as Jean Piaget, Edward Thorndike, and John Dewey. In studying educational psychology, Steinmetz learned about the notion of social control: "the process by which an individual… is led to develop actual behavior which is confined to the narrower range of what is acceptable for him by the group standards."[1118] It became the focus of his research.[1119]

Part of the reason why social control was an appealing idea to Steinmetz was because he was dissatisfied with American popular culture, and had been for some time. As he later said, it was "a culture rooted in religious superstition and greed."[1120] In a letter, he continued: "Americans are the most literate and gullible people in the world. We may be the last to see the insanity of our system of monopoly control in the name of democracy, corruption and exploitation in the name of free enterprise, cultism and credulity in the name of religion, and social decay and personal degeneracy in the name of freedom in style of life."[1121] Much of this dissatisfaction came from the disparity

[1118] Gardner Lindzey and Elliot Aronson, *The Handbook of Social Psychology.* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1968), xx.
[1119] For an overview on educational psychology, see Anita Woolfolk Hoy, *Educational Psychology* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1993).
[1120] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University," "On Ideology," not dated [1968-73 probable]; Box 3; Folder 16.
[1121] Ibid., Unaddressed letter, 1970s; Box 1, Folder 34.

between his experiences in the IWW in Seattle in 1919 and his life as a directionless criminal in 1920. People without proper guidance, he learned, were aimless (as he himself had been after the Seattle General Strike), superstitious, and could easily veer into villainy. People, he reasoned, needed help to become good citizens. He certainly had. As the labor strife of the last decade had shown him, big business was too powerful, too influential, on the perceptions of the public to leave it to its own devices. Police and regulatory agencies were, further, all too willing to cooperate with business leaders to preserve the status quo under the guise of protecting the public.

Steinmetz decided, as had many Americans of his age, that "decline in American cultural standards should stop somewhere and nowhere more appropriately than in the schools."[1122] His thinking was that schools were not providing instruction and example to children for how to live in a modern democracy and business was filling the void with consumerist rhetoric that neglected socially responsible values. As Steinmetz wrote:

> Education has long been conceived in terms of information and ideas, and training in terms of skills and habits. As a consequence, in educating for democracy it appears we suffer from, as in some schizoid conditions, a vast contradiction between theory and practice, ideas and habits, words and deeds. The local utility monopoly is indifferent to the individual grumblings of busy consumers; likewise, and for the same reason, an arbitrary and ruthless nationalism dominated by a financial oligarchy cannot be forestalled exclusively by redundant lip service to democracy in the schools.[1123]

If there was going to be change, it would require students to be educated as citizens, not consumers. Teachers should give students more responsibility over, and opportunities to learn about and experiment with, their future as the inheritors of a democracy.

[1122] Ibid., "Let the Schools Educate," not dated [early 1960s probable]; Box 1, Folder 39.
[1123] Ibid., "Academic Democracy," undated [1938 probable]; Box 1, Folder 44.

Steinmetz came to these conclusions about American education at a fortuitous time. In the early 20th century, the American education establishment was subject to an unprecedented amount of revision. Educators of the 19th century had argued that education was "a moral and philosophical endeavor" unsuited to reform based on empirical methods. Teachers had lacked serious training and taught most lessons to children via recitation from textbooks. Educational theorists from universities – who became known as educational progressives – at the turn of the century argued, however, that students in the primary schools spent far too much time learning "useless" knowledge by rote. Teachers were not teaching them either how to perform and behave in the institutional settings in which they would work, or how to function as citizens in a democracy.[1124]

Reform efforts began as teachers became more aware of empirical research methods. One inspiration was New York journalist Joseph Mayer Rice. In the 1890s, Rice claimed that a school he visited was "the most dehumanizing institution" he had ever seen, with "each child being treated as if he possessed a memory and the faculty of speech, but no individuality, no sensibilities, no soul."[1125] The new reformers "sought to commit the schools more to social welfare than to Academic studies."[1126] Instead of forcing students to learn dead languages, history, and abstract math, the progressives meant for education to prepare students for their future careers. Only a minority of

[1124] On the history of school reforms, see Diane Ravitch, *Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reforms* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).
[1125] Ibid., 21.
[1126] Ibid., 54, 57.

children, reformers reasoned, needed a genuinely academic education. Most would benefit more from "vocational or industrial training."[1127]

Steinmetz was, in general, a proponent of the progressive education movement. Specifically, he was in favor of the curriculum movement, which swept American schools and educational journals between 1920 and 1930. He had a great deal of confidence in regulating American education through standardized tests and vocational training, as these measures would give Americans the knowledge they needed to prepare for life in a modern democracy that had no room for the superstition and prejudice that other influences might allow or endorse. He believed, further, that lessons in the schools were antiquated and educators needed to update them for the 20th century. In this and in his attitudes about progressive education overall, Steinmetz followed John Dewey. Since 1896, Dewey's experimental Laboratory School had "created projects and activities to enliven the studies that were taught by rote in more traditional schools." Even traditional subjects "could be turned into exciting learning experiences," while balancing "individual growth, social goals," and the accumulation of knowledge.[1128]

Dewey's writing on education especially influenced Steinmetz. He appears to have read Dewey's work in 1924 at university. In 1916's *Democracy and Education*, Dewey posited that strong social control was needed to create responsible citizens in a democracy. People, he wrote, are born "immature, helpless, without language, beliefs, ideas, or social standards." [1129] To perpetuate the knowledge and capabilities of a society,

[1127] Ibid., 57.
[1128] Ibid., 171, 174.
[1129] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2004), 2.

"deliberate effort and the taking of thoughtful pains are required." [1130] Dewey believed society existed only "by transmission, by communication."[1131] If we had ideas worth communicating to future generations, such as equality and democracy, Dewey reasoned that schools would have to teach their content and value to students at a relatively early age.

Dewey thought that Americans were leaving too much of education to the social environments in which their children were raised, rather than purposeful inculcation of beliefs. He argued this was dangerous because it left too much to chance. "A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience," he wrote. Hence, democracy was dependent on an informed, inclusive, broadly minded citizenry free of inherited bias as poor logic.[1132] A badly educated citizenry could halt social, economic, and moral progress in the United States. Schools, therefore, needed a new, inclusive mission that was more about preparation for life and less about paying one's dues.

Steinmetz found a second key intellectual influence in Joseph Jastrow, a Polish-born American psychologist who specialized in the study of belief formation and credulity. Jastrow argued throughout his life that unfounded beliefs were not merely the purview of the gullible but were rather a result of human nature. One needed to be vigilant to avoid inadvertently picking them up. He was one of America's first "myth-busters," dedicating thousands of words in print to debunking the pseudoscience of

[1130] Ibid.
[1131] Ibid.
[1132] Ibid.

parapsychology, which studied and championed fringe ideas such as telepathy and clairvoyance. He even acquired considerable, if fleeting, fame in the 1920s, when he took it upon himself to counter *Sherlock Holmes* author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's claims of the legitimacy of the so-called "Cottingley Fairies" photograph.[1133] Jastrow was a pioneering psychologist in the study of belief and a "sermonizing crusader" against superstition and spirituality.[1134]

Steinmetz read Jastrow's *The Psychology of Conviction* (1918) during the 1920s. This book consisted of lengthy ruminations on the origins of beliefs and their key features, as well as psychological case studies of some of his patients. Jastrow stressed that, contrary to behaviorist theories of his day, beliefs were not internal narratives with no wider significance: "what men do depends upon what they believe, how they feel; their thoughts and feelings are important because these affect their actions," he insisted.[1135] Jastrow advanced his thesis that social processes form beliefs (or "convictions"), which are primarily emotional. Humans, he argued, desired conclusions, "for they bear upon our conduct, our comfort, and our emotional security." Unfortunately, humans were also not particular about the logic of these conclusions so long as they served another psychological purpose.[1136] "Tradition and convention," he

[1133] See "Conan Doyle's Witnesses: Their Prestige Cannot Be Accepted as Final Proof of His Spiritualistic Theories Says Professor Jastrow," New York Times, September 9, 1923.
[1134] Gregory A Kimble et al., *Portraits of Pioneers in Psychology* (Washington, DC; Hillsdale, N.J.: American Psychological Association; L. Erlbaum Associates, 1991), "The Intrepid Joseph Jastrow," by Arthur L. Blumenthal, 86.
[1135] Joseph Jastrow, *The Psychology of Conviction.* (Gardners Books, 2007), 7.
[1136] Joseph Jastrow, *The Psychology of Conviction* (Gardners Books, 2007), vii-viii.

wrote, "bear heavily upon us, and determine what we believe almost as rigidly as what we eat or what we wear."[1137]

Steinmetz made his own small contribution to the study of belief in his 1927 master's thesis, "A Study of the Unproved Beliefs of High School Students." Here, in an attempt "to learn to what extent a fairly typical group of high school students believe, disbelieve, or have doubt about…" Steinmetz surveyed 248 students.[1138] He asked them to agree or disagree (with several other options of degree) with a series of sixty questions prepared by the University of Washington. The statements varied from superstitious folkways ("Thunder may cause milk to go sour"), to vulgar prejudice ("Beautiful women are apt to be less intelligent than homely ones"), to pseudoscience ("thought waves exist, and telepathy has been accomplished"), to ignorance ("Upon Germany alone rests responsibility for the World War"). All were false. The study resulted in three important findings: 1) there appeared little or no difference in the responses of students based on the gender or age of the subject; 2) grades and intelligence were a decisive determinant in whether the statements were believed; and 3) the number of students possessing false beliefs was, overall, "subjectively appalling."[1139]

Beyond his sobering conclusion, Steinmetz revealed the state of his thinking about education and beliefs in 1927 in his thesis. Heavily influenced by Jastrow, he defined belief as a "psychological compromise with logic due to human insufficiency of understanding…"[1140] Which beliefs are acquired and which show longevity is of vital

[1137] Ibid.
[1138] Harry C. Steinmetz, "A Study of the Unproved Beliefs of High School Students" 1927, 22.
[1139] Ibid., 75.
[1140] Ibid., 10.

importance, he claimed, because "it appears that nothing determines attitude and the direction of behavior so strongly as belief."[1141] He argued that we "socially inherit" beliefs, that childhood was the crucial period of belief acquisition, and that beliefs can arise in an individual in a half dozen different ways: including through force, chance, and especially education.[1142] What struck Steinmetz was the strength and endurance of belief. He wrote, "Conviction, possibly because mysterious, remains personal and unassailable. We cling, as to a last straw, to the right to believe what we will. Individually and collectively, we frequently repell [sic] opposition and disagreement; even investigation is often unwelcome, for it comes as a more or less audacious intrusion upon settled ground, disturbing."[1143] Showing his Deweyian stripes, Steinmetz concluded: "If belief is even partly as important as it seems," society should endeavor to do a better job of controlling what beliefs are assimilated by children.[1144]

When Steinmetz received his master's degree in 1927 and began teaching at San Diego State College in 1930, educational psychology was going in a contrary direction to his interests. Behaviorism began to dominate the discipline of psychology. This was in great part due to James B. Watson, who encapsulated what was known, derisively, as the "cult of empiricism" in psychology. Watson began his career in animal psychology and took his methodology with him as he redirected his efforts at humans: despite the fact that humans possessed an internal world that other animals did not. As Stephen Toulmin and David E. Leary write, "His resolution was to make psychology as close to

[1141] Ibid., 18.
[1142] Ibid., 5, 34.
[1143] Ibid., 1–2.
[1144] Ibid., 12.

experimental physics as he knew how, banishing all subjective appeals to introspectable data and focusing exclusively on public, observable reactions to arbitrary stimuli."[1145] Watson believed only in the legitimacy of the adaptation of the organism to its environment as a causative factor of behavior. He was not concerned about how social interaction affected the subject.

In the 1930s, psychologist BF Skinner solidified the dominance of the cult further still. Per Toulmin and Leary, Skinner was "trying to banish not only metaphysics but also theory from his psychology" and accordingly "Skinner relied on the most naïve form of empiricism imaginable, assuming that the facts will speak for themselves."[1146] This "faith in data," they argue, was "the ultimate expression of the cult of empiricism."[1147] The behaviorists became an "orthodoxy" by the 1930s and, until the mid-1950s, the field of psychology was overflowing with studies arguing that "…all terms could be defined by reference to intersubjectively observable, physical objects and events."[1148] Increasingly, even Steinmetz's field of educational psychology was viewing culture as irrelevant. The founding father of educational psychology, EL Thorndike, "refused to take seriously the world of schooling and the importance of the social lives of the students, teachers, and others who spend considerable amounts of time in that setting."[1149]

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[1145] Sigmund Koch and David E Leary, *A Century of Psychology as Science* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1992), chap. "The Cult of Empiricism in Psychology, and Beyond," by Stephen Toulmin and David E. Leary, 601.
[1146] Ibid., "The Cult of Empiricism in Psychology, and Beyond," by Stephen Toulmin and David E. Leary, 606.
[1147] Ibid.
[1148] Ibid., "The Cult of Empiricism in Psychology, and Beyond," by Stephen Toulmin and David E. Leary, 604.
[1149] Berliner, David C., "The 100-Year Journey of Educational Psychology: From Interest, to Disdain, to Respect for Practice," in *Exploring Applied Psychology: Origins and Critical Analyses*, Master Lectures in Psychology (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1993), 37–78.

Steinmetz had chosen psychology as a field of study because it allowed for scientific study of the formation of thought. But he found the cult of empiricism far too rigid in its determinism. He believed that faith and belief were important factors in how people act as they do and noted that behaviorism did not incorporate such unobservable elements. "Western psychology, seeking the great success of the physical sciences, has analyzed the elements of experience – sensations, perception, memory, and consciousness – but has never yet caught up with the products of experience in consciousness, the ideological composition that social experience produces in everybody," he wrote.[1150] "…Consciousness," he went on, "is always a consciousness of something and this is determined not by outside stimulation but by inside ideology."[1151]

However, some of the most important leaders in the progressive education movement in this period shared Steinmetz's emphasis on social experience and ideology. These intellectuals believed that an effective education must recognize that ideals are socially transmitted and therefore educators must integrate the curriculum with society. In 1927, a small group of progressive educators at Teachers College, including Dewey, Goodwin Watson, George S. Counts, R Bruce Raup, Jesse Newton, and Harold Rugg formed a group Rugg called the "frontier thinkers." They concluded that "the ideal society… would function like the ideal progressive school, without competition, rewards, or individuals striving for recognition."[1152] Their perfect society would be the antithesis to the "rugged individualist" ideal touted by Herbert Hoover in 1928. Whereas Hoover

[1150] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University," "Socialist Utopia and Scientific Marxism," Box 2, Folder 44.
[1151] Ibid.
[1152] Ravitch, *Left Back*, 204.

wanted Americans to pull themselves up by their bootstraps without help from institutions, the frontier thinkers thought schools should promote equality and democracy, encouraging people to work together toward common goals they all understood and held dear. The frontier thinkers wanted schools to teach these collectivist ideals expressly for the purpose of getting Americans used to the new social order that the frontier thinkers assumed would supplant capitalism.[1153]

The frontier thinkers kept abreast of Soviet affairs and were well aware that transformations in Soviet education were occurring in the late 1920s under the guidance of Lunachrasky, Pinkevich, and others. Dewey and his compatriots saw that the Soviets were making ideas of social control into state policy.[1154] To see how the Soviet Union integrated education and society, members of the discussion group visited the USSR in the late 1920s. Most of the frontier thinkers were deeply impressed with the Soviet system. As Dewey wrote, the Soviets were committed to the task of enabling "every human being to obtain personal cultivation… to share to the full in all the things that give virtue to human life" and had figured out how to integrate school and society "to foster a collective ideology."[1155]

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[1153] Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy*.

[1154] There are now many monographs on Soviet education. The best of the early books really was Elizabeth Moos, *The Educational System of the Soviet Union* (New York: National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, 1950). It remains an effective overview. For the post-Stalin period, see: Mervyn Matthews, *Education in the Soviet Union: Policies and Institutions since Stalin* (London; Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1982). For discussions on higher education, see: Benjamin Tromly, *Making the Soviet Intelligentsia: Universities and Intellectual Life under Stalin and Khrushchev*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014). Sheila Fitzpatrick wrote the best work on connections between education and Soviet society. See Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921-1934* (Cambridge, Eng.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

[1155] Jay Martin, *The Education of John Dewey a Biography* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 355.

George Counts, a pupil of Dewey's, was even more impressed than was his mentor. He wrote a book about Soviet education and its applications in America in 1931, *The Soviet Challenge to America,* and even presented the idea of an ideologically socialist, socially-conscious school to the National Education Association. Counts argued that lessons in the Soviet-style schools he envisioned could turn Americans against capitalism and that every school activity should therefore be related to teaching Marxist values.[1156] These ideas were surprisingly popular among progressive educators but made it no further, as local communities (invariably conservative) influenced curriculum more than radical academic theorists. Despite founding a journal, *The Social Frontier,* in 1933, which advocated Soviet education in America to an audience of roughly ten-thousand subscribers, Dewey and Counts were unable to provide their ideas about using the schools to foster collectivism a significant shelf life. After the Hearst press attacked "red" influence in schools and twenty-two states reacted by demanding loyalty oaths of their personnel in 1935, Soviet influence began to disappear from educational discourse and the moment was lost.[1157]

There is no indication that Steinmetz advocated for using Soviet education as a model in the 1930s, though he must have been aware of the brief trend. All of Steinmetz's work in the 1930s continued to revolve around American progressive education, advocating a more ideologically controlled school but without overt Soviet influences. In 1931, he (with Alfred Lewerenz) produced his influential standardized test

[1156] George S Counts, *The Soviet Challenge to America,* (New York: John Day Co., 1931).
[1157] Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy*, 506–7.

for determining the qualifications of teachers called *The Orientation Test Concerning Fundamental Aims of Education.* Continuing his crusade against nonsense and discrimination in the classroom, this test presented prospective teachers with 435 statements. Mixed in with a list of true statements are various false statements that appeal to a person's bias. Steinmetz intended for superstitious and prejudiced individuals to score low on the test and open-minded and educated instructors to score high. While every study of teaching qualifications for a decade referenced the test, the consensus was that it was too difficult for general use.[1158]

In 1935, Steinmetz attacked traditional education directly in an article, protesting the lack of socially-conscious influence in both education and science and arguing against Professor Frederick Breed's criticism of progressive education and advocating of a traditional curriculum. In this piece, Steinmetz advocated for the "conditioning of motives … and the social end of teaching."[1159] He urged educators to address the social lives of students and blasted Breed for a "myopic vision" concerned only with "what is immediately observable."[1160] Meanwhile, Steinmetz attacked the media for its role in the purported decline in American schools, highlighting the mass media's use of sensationalism and its detrimental effect upon Americans' critical thinking skills. The cynicism of journalists, he said, "masks a profound credulity, for to every situation they apply a tailor-made coat of belief, an explanatory formula. They survive because of the

[1158] LE Rostker, "The Measurement of Teaching Ability: Study Number One," *The Journal of Experimental Education* 14, no. 1 (September 1945): 6–51.
[1159] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University," The A.A.A.S.'s Scientific Monthly, not dated [1938 probable]; Box 1, Folder 44.
[1160] Ibid., The A.A.A.S.'s Scientific Monthly, not dated [1938 probable]; Box 1, Folder 44.

simplicity of the average situation and reader… connoisseurs of the transient, they respond with gusto to every change… delayed response is impossible; with childish eagerness they revel in the meaningless movements of the inconsequential."[1161]

While progressive education did take hold of America's schools beginning in the late 30s, Steinmetz judged it a pyrrhic victory. The more recent ideas of the progressives began to fall out of line with Steinmetz's vision of collectivist-oriented schools. The "project method" had supplanted the curriculum movement around 1930. Instead of teaching to a standardized curriculum, educators would eliminate lessons and allow children to engage in pursuits they found interesting. The movement was based on the theories of William Heard Kilpatrick, who had argued that an activity-centered school better prepared children for life. Kilpatrick's method presented children with projects, not lessons. "The presence of interest or purpose constitutes a favorable condition for leaning. Interest and felt purpose mean that the learner faces a situation in which he is concerned. The purpose as aim guides his thought and effort. Because of his interest and concern he gets more wholeheartedly into action; he puts forth more effort; what he learns has accordingly more importance to him and probably more meaningful connections," Kilpatrick claimed.[1162] This, in turn, led into the "creative education" concept, developed by Hughes Mearns, in which readings in elementary school no longer consisted of work from the literary canon that taught American children a core set of knowledge and values. In Mearns' program, "Pupils were required to read – but what

[1161] Ibid., "Psychological Damnation of Newspapermen," not dated [1939 probable]; Box 1; Folder 44.
[1162] Adolphe Erich Meyer, *The Development of Education in the Twentieth Century.* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1949), 77–78.

they read was entirely up to them."[1163] Creative education acquired the support of the National Education Association and the reforms went mainstream. Progressive education ideas began to appear in actual schools.

Many educators could not stomach the new reforms and dropped out of the progressive education movement. In 1938's *Experience and Education,* Dewey argued that the activity movement was so chaotic that it was setting schools up to be outflanked by reactionaries, who would be able to strawman progressive education as anarchy. He saw little value in schools that had no lesson plans, curriculum, or discipline.[1164] Boyd H. Bode, a progressive education theorists and educator, argued in his *Progressive Education at the Crossroads* that the movement was adrift. New reforms suggested a naïve, "superstitious reverence for childhood," and had become blatantly anti-intellectual.[1165] Boyd decried "an attitude which suggests that there is no such thing as a normal child, and that we must be everlastingly exploring his insides."[1166] Steinmetz was no more accepting of the new ideas than Dewey or Bode. An advocate of fact-based teaching and standardized tests that taught universal standards of knowledge, he judged that the new reforms were too subjective. His agenda, after all, was to impart consistent beliefs to students, not to teach them to celebrate the beliefs they already had. Steinmetz echoed Dewey when he summed up, "…little learning and little character are produced

[1163] Ibid., 80.
[1164] John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1938).
[1165] Boyd Henry Bode, *Progressive Education at the Crossroads* (New York; Chicago: Newson & Co., 1938), 70.
[1166] Ibid., 71.

by social structurelessness in home or school or community life… Self control and constructive social cooperativeness are not learned without help."[1167]

Steinmetz ultimately reacted to the shift in progressive education by abandoning educational psychology altogether. Instead, he directed his PhD research, which he began in the early 1940s, at a new field: industrial psychology. While he had to abandon his study of the influence of beliefs on development, he continued to study the effect of social influences and perspectives on performance, which his work had flirted with in the early 1930s. The culmination of this direction in his research was 1943's *Manual of Industrial Efficiency*, which attempted to allow managers to rate industrial workers based on tests taken by the worker, their peers, and by the managers themselves. A 1947 article, "Selecting Personnel Workers," was a related expansion, an effort at finding suitable workers for office work via standardized testing. Both showed Steinmetz's continued belief that a just society rested on objective standards of conduct.

When Harry Steinmetz was a boy, hatred of inequality and injustice dominated his perspective. This was in large part because of his upbringing in the Philippines, where he learned that millions of people were given a lower, "other" status for no reason besides the arbitrary circumstances of their birth. Similar to the way Corliss Lamont discovered the extent of everyday inequality at Harvard, Steinmetz was shown that the things that prop up the American elite's way of life – in this case, imperialism – had a real cost for those unlucky enough to find themselves vulnerable. Meanwhile, like Morford in the

[1167] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University," not dated [1960s probable]; Box 1, Folder 44.

Great Depression, Steinmetz – both in the Philippines and America – noted the failure of existing institutions to correct the capitalist/imperialist system's flaws. A child of missionaries, Steinmetz could not ignore the disparity between the mission the Christian churches claimed for themselves and the way their followers were complicit in evil: an evil that was deeply ingrained in the heart of American society.

While Steinmetz spent almost the entirety of the 1920s in university programs, his most important education took place a few years before, in Seattle. There, as a dockworker, part-time student, and sometimes hoodlum, Steinmetz got caught up in the excitement of the progressive hopes of the late-1910s. From the buzz around the Russian Revolution and *SS Shilka*, he discovered the possibility for a socialist alternative to the racist imperialism and exploitative capitalism he hated: a society that believed people could become better than what they are. In the suppression of the Russian and IWW gospel, Steinmetz also saw the pushback an alternative society would face from the American establishment. These and the Seattle General Strike hammered home three basic points: that a cooperative, communitarian society was possible; that moneyed American interests would fight tooth and nail to prevent it to save their profits and status; and that sectarianism and division in a movement was a cancer that only served to preserve the status quo. In his graduate work, meanwhile, through writers like Jastrow, Steinmetz learned that belief was so powerful that one must be careful to avoid too much reliance on one perspective. If an end were worth achieving, as social justice through the defeat of capitalism surely was, he came to reason that one should be flexible about the means. Context mattered.

Steinmetz decided at university that the path to correcting this was for society to educate Americans in socially responsible values. Like many other progressive educators in the late 1920s and early 1930s, he thought that beliefs, regardless of source, were deeply powerful and their inculcation should be controlled by experts. Gradually, however, Steinmetz's line of thinking fell out of favor and progressive education itself became oriented around servicing the individual student rather than society. At this point, in the late 1930s, Steinmetz dropped out of the movement and focused instead on attempts to bring social control into industry and, as we shall discuss, politics.

## A Postcapitalist in the Crib of the Military-Industrial Complex

To discuss Steinmetz's political career, we must turn back the calendar to his arrival in San Diego in 1930. That he was going to orient toward the Left had been rather clear since his young adulthood, from both his participation in union activity and interest in equality. It is difficult to determine the degree to which he understood or studied politics in his youth, however. During the 1920s, most of his few political thoughts had revolved around collectivism, inspired by the Soviet example. He claimed to have read Anna Louise Strong during this period, which encouraged the belief that the Soviet Union represented a new kind of civilization. In her 1924 book, *The First Time in History: Two Years of Russia's New Life*, Strong extolled the "heroism, sacrifice, comradeship, and the joy" that was present in the new Russia. She claimed "there will be many mistakes" made in the Soviet experiment but they would be mostly due to "old habits of bribery and laziness in office." She said these errors were not indicative of defects in the Soviet

system.[1168] This system, Strong argued, was dedicated to improving the lives and education of workers based on a system of "order and organization and efficiency."[1169] Steinmetz later claimed he idealized the Soviet Union from his formative years, and thought that "No society on earth better exemplifies 'what is good for the majority is good for me,' 'one for all and all for one,' and 'the ethical is that which serves the welfare of those who will succeed us,'" than the Soviet Union.[1170]

However, despite his interest in the Soviet Union, Steinmetz did not advocate carrying the Soviet example over to the United States, as the communists did. Steinmetz was not a naïve idealist who thought he could win America to the Soviet system with a good enough argument or a vanguard-led revolution. He had no illusions about the ability of the radicals to make their will felt upon the rest of the country. A pacifist since he was a teenager, Steinmetz neither believed in the use of force, nor believed that social change was impossible without it. He wanted to "replace a social life in which division, falsehood, and violence are all-powerful," not to perpetuate it.[1171] Like Eugene Debs, whose work Steinmetz read in Seattle with the IWW, Steinmetz was cognizant of how change worked in the United States – slowly, and through elections. He knew that if he wanted a new America, he needed to be patient, he needed to measure expectations, and most of all, he had to assemble and work with a strong and varied coalition of supporters.

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[1168] Anna Louise Strong, *The First Time in History; Two Years of Russia's New Life (August, 1921, to December, 1923)* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1924), 24.
[1169] Ibid., 29.
[1170] Ibid., "On Policy;" 1973-77; Box 7, Folder 20.
[1171] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University," Past is Prelude," not dated [1960s probable]; Box 1, Folder 44.

While Steinmetz spent several terms in other states due to temporary academic appointments, he was in San Diego for the vast majority of the next thirty years of his life. That conservative milieu guided his approach to politics. San Diego, prior to World War II, was an idyllic community with a fantastic climate and a bay that suggested a natural harbor. But it had numerous natural obstacles. The bay was full of silt and the city lay on the edge of a vast, waterless desert.[1172] As Abraham Shragge explains, "Only by capturing the superior resources of the national state" was the city able to overcome its problems.[1173] San Diego came to depend on the federal government for its resources and then for its employment. San Diegans lobbied the federal government successfully for naval and army bases that could attract more people to the city.[1174] The city government was largely in the hands of business and military interests for this reason. By World War I, the city and navy were essentially one concern. The city was hardly a hotbed of radical activity and anyone who hoped to prompt change from its environs had to measure their expectations to a degree perhaps unnecessary in New York.

Steinmetz recognized that San Diego was not suited to revolutionary activity. He also noted the difference between American and Soviet social contexts. Whereas the Soviet Union was reliant on workers and farmers, Steinmetz saw promise in the American middle class experts – the managers, engineers, and professionals – even preferring the prospect of its leadership to that of the proletariat. "…I am inclined to see leadership for socialism emerge from the nearly dispossessed, frustrated, and maybe only

[1172] Abraham Shragge, "'A New Federal City': San Diego during World War II," *Pacific Historical Review Pacific Historical Review* 63, no. 3 (1994): 335.
[1173] Ibid.
[1174] Ibid., 340.

moderately impoverished, those who discover the stupidity of limitations and menace to themselves as well as the world," he later wrote.[1175] Neither Debs nor Haywood had paid these Americans mind, probably because Marx had not either. Steinmetz, however, was always alert to the potential of ideas that acknowledged the important role his cohort could play. His willingness to embrace solutions dependent on middle class experts is both a testament to his political flexibility and his seeming indifference to the wishes of leaders on the radical Left.

Scholar David Stabile calls the middle class experts of the early 20th century "the New Class." He claims they had features of both the upper and lower classes. "Like workers, those members of the New Class employed in industrial production… are paid a wage for their services; but like capitalists they also exercise effective control over the component of production where they serve, and part of their pay can be construed as a return to the human capital they have accumulated," Stabile writes.[1176] Politics during the experimental days of the Great Depression were filled with "experts who had in common the desire to sell society on their expertise by providing plans for systematically organized devices for the transmission of power in production and in politics."[1177]

Steinmetz's favorite thinker on the topic of the New Class was Thorstein Veblen. Veblen was an American economist who argued against the inefficiencies of American capitalism between the turn of the century and the Great Depression. Veblen came less

[1175] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University," "A Psychologist's Intro to Socialist Utopia and Scientific Marxism," 1970s; Box 2, Folder 44.
[1176] Donald Stabile, *Prophets of Order* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1984), 7.
[1177] Ibid., 2.

from a heritage of Marx and more from a distinctly populist disdain for privilege and bureaucracy. Much as Jacksonians had distinguished "the real people" who produced goods "from the unreal who, supported by special privilege, lived off the productive labor of the common man," Veblen separated businesspersons, who he deemed to be a predatory "leisure class," from the industrial economy they directed – and from the experts of that economy. The experts, Veblen argued, could be a force for good under the right leadership. They were, he thought, America's best hope for overcoming the ills of capitalism.

Veblen had crucial differences with Marx. While Marx condemned work in industry as demeaning and miserable, Veblen contended that it was only the present operating methods of industry (which he defined as "all effort directed to enhance human life by taking advantage of the non-human environment") that made the lives of workers so terrible.[1178] Veblen, meanwhile, wrote with enthusiasm about the potential accomplishments of industry. Similar to HG Wells, he saw the growth of industry as a positive (rather than, as Marx saw it, negative) catalyst for a new utopian society. As historian Henry Elsner, Jr., argues, "instead of generating exploitation and alienation which lead to rebellion, as Marx predicted, Veblen saw the dynamic of change arising from a contradiction between a new, scientific rationality... and physically irrelevant notions of value, price, and profit derived from obsolete ideas of ownership."[1179] Historian William Akin posits that Veblen's writings were presenting "the future in a

[1178] Thorstein Veblen and Stuart Chase, *The Theory of the Leisure Class; an Economic Study of Institutions,* (New York: Modern library, 1934), 10.
[1179] Henry Elsner, *The Technocrats; Prophets of Automation.* ([Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1967), 18.

rationally and efficiently functioning industrial society" that was between (and free of) the "plutocracy of capitalism and the dictatorship of the proletariat."[1180]

When Veblen died in 1929, an obscure engineer named Howard Scott supplemented and popularized his ideas. Despite the fact that no one to this day can figure out where he came from before 1918 (when Scott appeared in New York at the age of 28), he would, in the 1930s, "become the dominant figure in the technocracy movement, articulating a radical criticism of existing society and urging the creation of his version of the technological utopia."[1181] His initial interest in social engineering came from his acquaintance with Veblen between 1918 and 1921. The two formed an organization called the Technical Alliance in 1919, which aimed to facilitate a study by engineers of industry nationwide, with the purpose of documenting inefficiency and theorizing on how to combat it.[1182] Though this organization fell apart without accomplishing direct political or economic change, the combination of Veblen's sophisticated theory and Scott's dynamism created a potent message, which Scott introduced to the world in 1932.

Scott called the resulting program technocracy. Technocracy was the rare, pre-Popular Front movement that was not explicitly or implicitly oppositional to other political creeds. While Veblen's work contained critiques of Marxism, subscribing to his theories did not require a confrontation with Marxism or Marxists. Indeed, technocracy was a synthesizing system, which brought together Marxism, capitalism, and Bellamy-

[1180] William E. Akin, *Technocracy and the American Dream: The Technocrat Movement, 1900-1941* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 14.
[1181] Ibid., 27.
[1182] Ibid., 33.

style utopianism into something new. Technocracy involved reorienting production for use and creating a new monetary system based on energy. Scott asserted that the New Class would have a chief role in the system's development. As the Great Depression settled upon the United States, Steinmetz became a supporter of technocracy, lecturing on the virtues of the ideology all over the San Diego area. Steinmetz was also impressed with Scott's intellectual acumen. When sponsoring him at a speaking engagement in San Diego in March of 1934, he warned the audience they would "have to climb on intellectual stools to grasp what the speaker has to say."[1183]

Nevertheless, there was one question that technocrats could not, or would not, answer to Steinmetz's satisfaction: were knowledge experts, like professors and physicians, part of the New Class? Steinmetz was sure they were. Steinmetz argued that physicians, for instance, were in the same economic position as engineers, from the perspective of class. Both were specialists who were uniquely skilled but also uniquely politically vulnerable. "Like the engineer, the physician tends to be economically and socially extremely naïve, and to a large extent for the same reasons," Steinmetz asserted. [1184] "He must assimilate an enormous amount of detailed technical information… thus professional competence precludes broader education." [1185] Steinmetz thought that physicians erred toward conservatism but that this was a mistake. He wrote, "Like all technically trained workers with a tradition of private practice, the physician is oriented

[1183] "Need 10,000,000 For Technocracy, Scott Declares," *San Diego Union*, March 31, 1934.
[1184] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University, "Special Values to Physicians," not dated [1960s probable]; Box 1, Folder 51.
[1185] Ibid.

toward the source of his income, those who can pay. Thus he shares in degree the social narrowness of the engineer who notoriously identifies his interest with his employer rather than with the others who are employed by him."[1186] He believed that it was far more sensible for the physicians to side with the workers than with the owners. "…in a very real sense all professionals are social workers who should accept social welfare as their own," he thought. "Their common failure to do so indicates ignorance rather than malice, confusion of means with end, of status with function."[1187]

Long sympathetic to socialism but not tied down to a literal reading of Marxism; an admirer of the Soviet Union but not a communist. What, then, *was* Steinmetz, politically, in the 1930s? Perhaps it is suitable to consider him a "postcapitalist," a term employed by Howard Brick. Brick argues that the ideology of postcapitalists was forged in the turmoil of the 1910s, and consisted of a "fusion of liberal and social-democratic disposition…"[1188] The postcapitalist vision "was primarily the province of left-liberal intellectuals and some of their more radical critics," and it "dominated" the social sciences after the decline of the progressive political movement in 1920.[1189] Brick claims that the postcapitalists were primarily concerned with the inadequacy of capitalism to cope with modern society but were open to more ideas about what would come next than were the socialists. Postcapitalists worked within causes "regarding the changing nature of economic organization and of property, so-called silent revolutions that were

[1186] Ibid., "Special Values to Physicians," not dated [1960s probable]; Box 1, Folder 51.
[1187] Ibid., "Special Values to Physicians," not dated [1960s probable]; Box 1, Folder 51.
[1188] Howard Brick, *Transcending Capitalism: Visions of a New Society in Modern American Thought* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 3–4.
[1189] Ibid., 8.

transforming the old order; the cultural malady of competitive individualism and the expanding scope of social solidarity that might check or reverse it; the decay of the old ruling classes… and the coming centrality of social rights in the definition of citizenship." These were all interests Steinmetz shared.

With an ideology that touched on so many others, Steinmetz's perspective lent itself well to coalition work, of which there was no shortage during the Great Depression years. Rossinow argues that there were two interwar alliances between radicals and liberals. Steinmetz participated in the second great radical-liberal alliance, the Popular Front of 1935 to1948.[1190] The peak of Steinmetz's participation in left-liberal reformist movements was during the EPIC campaign. Upton Sinclair created EPIC as a broad political movement to accompany his candidacy for governor in 1934. Sinclair was an extremely popular novelist and playwright, best known for his 1906 novel, *The Jungle.* He had previously run for Congress on a Socialist ticket but had since decided to try to move the Democratic Party left from the inside. He was perhaps the best known member of the non-communist radical Left in pre-World War II America. He took part in many coalition-based movements. Sinclair supported technocracy, for instance, calling it "the most important movement which has shown its head in our time."[1191]

Sinclair's EPIC campaign of 1934 was perhaps the most radical mainstream political campaign in American history. He took advantage of the California primary system, which allowed anyone to run for a party's nomination, and succeeded in winning

[1190] Douglas C. Rossinow, *Visions of Progress: The Left-Liberal Tradition in America*, Politics and Culture in Modern America (Philadelphia, Pa.: [Bristol: University of Pennsylvania Press; University Presses, Marketing, distributor], 2008).
[1191] Arthur M Schlesinger, *The Crisis of the Old Order, 1919-1933* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), 463.

the Democratic nomination despite his program bearing little relation to the New Deal.[1192] Sinclair "built up a political organization the likes of which California had never seen," with a weekly newspaper, fifty district organizations, and a staggering eight-hundred EPIC clubs.[1193] Sinclair argued that Roosevelt and the New Deal were addressing the Great Depression as if "it were the old fashioned one of scarcity."[1194] The real problem, he wrote, was that "modern industry is able to produce more than the people have means to buy."[1195] This was an argument called "technological unemployment" and it was a core feature of technocracy as well. The idea was that labor saving innovations naturally lead to unemployment. If one accepts this idea, a modern economy needs state intervention to provide enough jobs for workers because the free market will not.

Support for EPIC was "overwhelmingly working class" and the organization included many former socialists.[1196] Communist Party opposition, however, was vicious. The *New Masses,* ideologically aligned with the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) in 1934, claimed that EPIC was but a "feint," distracting Californians from the fact that California was already fascist. The journal asserted, "if he is elected and the idle land and factories that he speaks of are bought by the state, it will mean that the million and a quarter unemployed Californians will be put to forced labor for a bare

[1192] Upton Sinclair, *I, Candidate for Governor and How I Got Licked* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), vii.
[1193] Ibid., viii.
[1194] Upton Sinclair, *Immediate EPIC; the Final Statement of the Plan,* (Los Angeles, Calif.: End Poverty League, 1934), 3.
[1195] Ibid.
[1196] Sinclair, *I, Candidate for Governor and How I Got Licked*, viii–ix.

subsistence."[1197] Communist Party secretary Earl Browder said that the attacks on Sinclair were "an essential feature of our struggle against social-fascism."[1198] The reasoning for the communist position on EPIC was a matter of placing ideology before pragmatism: the result of a misguided effort to apply policy appropriate to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union's agenda to the United States.[1199] For the American party, with tiny membership and influence, rejecting cooperation based on ideological purity was ridiculous.

Steinmetz, therefore, ignored the communist attacks. He spread the message of Sinclair's movement in San Diego, lecturing audiences on its importance.[1200] Meanwhile, his Federated Trades and Labor Council, a union body upon which Steinmetz was influential and of which he would become president of the next year, supported EPIC despite the CPUSA's opposition. Steinmetz's "radical" faction in the Labor Council tied itself strongly to EPIC. They forced the council to endorse Sinclair's candidacy and made the conservative members listen as they read Sinclair's EPIC program at meetings.[1201] Steinmetz's statements from the time match up almost exactly with Sinclair's. In 1935, for instance, Steinmetz said, "We [workers] must be welders of a new and better social order, even of a new civilization based upon production for use, competition of ideas,

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[1197] "Upton Sinclair's Threat," *New Masses*, September 11, 1934, 6.
[1198] Larry Ceplair, *Anti-Communism in Twentieth-Century America a Critical History* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger, 2011), 50.
[1199] Judy Kutulas, *The Long War: The Intellectual People's Front and Anti-Stalinism, 1930-1940* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995), 87–88.
[1200] "Steinmetz to Speak," *San Diego Union*, July 25, 1935.
[1201] Frederick Lynne Ryan, *The Labor Movement in San Diego: Problems and Development from 1887-1957* (San Diego, Calif.: Bureau of Business and Economic Research, Division of Business Administration, San Diego State College, 1959), 63–65.

devotion to a classless society, peace."[1202] He spoke at several meetings in San Diego in support of Sinclair's candidacy but it was not to be. Sinclair lost by ten percentage points and two-hundred-thousand votes.

Steinmetz was just getting started with politics. In 1935, he decided to run for mayor of San Diego. His party, the Progressive Fusion Party, was an alliance between "members of the EPIC organization, Utopians, Technocrats, and other groups." It was created in emulation of Fiorello H. La Guardia's broad front mayoral campaign of 1933.[1203] Republicans had controlled the San Diegan mayoral office since 1917. Liberals attempted to put together unconventional coalitions to defeat Republican Percy J. Benbough, the Republicans' choice for mayor after two consecutive Republican mayors had resigned because of scandals. Per Steinmetz, "they [Progressive Fusion] picked me to try to become the little La Guardia of San Diego…" Presenting his program as a "humanitarian philosophy," Steinmetz advocated for consumer ownership of utilities in the city.[1204] "With public ownership San Diego could flourish," he said.[1205] He presented the matter as one of efficiency: "the city would save one third of a million dollars through ownership of its own gas and light plant."[1206] He did not argue that this was a class issue (though he admitted, "my main strength now lays among the unfortunate") but rather one of supporting local businesses over national corporations. "We can free ourselves from

[1202] Ibid., 69.
[1203] "Back Compton for Mayor on Fusion Ticket," *The Evening Tribune*, January 16, 1935. Initially, Wayne Compton was chosen by the Progressive Fusion League voters for the mayoral candidacy. Steinmetz was chosen instead on February 6 when Compton could not run for unknown reasons.
[1204] "Steinmetz Tells Aims If Elected to Job of Mayor," *San Diego Union*, February 7, 1935.
[1205] Ibid.
[1206] "Steinmetz Urges City Light Plant," *San Diego Union*, February 21, 1935.

the political domination of a Chicago holding company," he wrote, and "professionalize city administration and improve our self-respect and reputation."[1207] The ideas employed in Steinmetz's campaign reflected the belief that Americans could reform capitalism rather than replace it. He emphasized efficiency, not class war.

This program was popular and enjoyed consistent coverage from the San Diego newspapers. Steinmetz had a chance at securing a first place position in the mayoral primary, which would have guaranteed him a chance to face the Republican candidate in a general election. Then, near the eve of the election, his primary opponent, an undertaker named A Ray Sauer, Jr., endorsed the Townsend Plan. Designed by a physician, Dr. Francis Townsend, the Townsend Plan was an attempt to present a comprehensive economic reform plan to Congress that would alleviate the effects of the Depression. Townsend's plan proposed that each American retiree should receive $200 a month as pension, on the condition that they spend the money in full in the short term. Townsend claimed that each pensioner, by spending the money over the course of a year, would in effect create one job. On a national scale, Townsend posited that this would solve the unemployment crisis by providing eight-million jobs for Americans.[1208] Townsend argued that a mere two percent transaction tax the nation could provide the roughly 24 billion dollars a year his plan would require.[1209]

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[1207] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University," Letter to businessmen, 1933; Box 1, Folder 33.
[1208] Abraham Holtzman, *The Townsend Movement, a Political Study.* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1963), 17.
[1209] Ibid., 44.

Steinmetz never subscribed to the Townsend Plan. For one, he reasoned the Townsend movement was not realistic. It relied on a sweeping proposal. As Holtzman writes, "Without the enactment and operation of all its features… the plan could not operate, recovery was impossible, and the aged were precluded from securing any meaningful protection."[1210] Further, despite Townsend's attempts to appeal to the technocracy crowd via rhetoric that often referenced efficiency and economic data, his plan was not good science. Townsend errored in his facts badly and often revised his literature to fix mistakes in math or representation. He based his belief that a two percent transaction task could cover the cost of the pensions, for instance, on pre-Depression data from 1929, when transactions were considerably greater than in 1935.[1211] Perhaps more importantly, though, the Townsend movement was divisive. "For once, Liberty Leaguers, Socialists and communists, the National Association of Manufacturers, and the American Federation of Labor" agreed on an issue, Holtzman writes: they all opposed the plan, perceiving it as a "utopian pipe dream" or "the epitome of naiveté."[1212]

Endorsing the plan would have nevertheless conferred serious advantages (or, at least, neutralized seriously disadvantages) on Steinmetz's mayoral campaign. Due to the huge number of retirees in San Diego, the Townsend Plan ("better organized" than technocracy, per Steinmetz) was extremely popular. Most of its supporters fell in line behind Sauer, Jr. The leaders of the Progressive Fusion League "begged" Steinmetz to

[1210] Ibid., 201.
[1211] Ibid., 40.
[1212] Ibid., 28.

endorse the plan and thereby gain access to the movement's thousands of followers.[1213] Steinmetz tried to write "all sorts of principled and sympathetic statements" but finally concluded that he could not endorse the plan because it was just too far-fetched and "irrelevant" to the actual causes of inequality.[1214] His third place finish in the primary might well have been improved upon with an endorsement, as his undertaker rival gained the nomination (and the privilege of losing to Republican candidate Percy J. Benbough), but he was just too committed to empirically sound reform, and dependent upon left-liberal coalitions, to support it.

Before he could catch his breath from the lost mayoral campaign, Steinmetz got another chance to put his vision of postcapitalist reform into practice. Radical labor leaders picked him for leadership of his union in 1935 because of his notoriety from the mayoral run. Steinmetz, an advocate of working-class welfare, had been heavily involved in the San Diego labor movement throughout the early 1930s, but now jumped in completely. Considering the extent of the city's ties to the federal government and the military, San Diego's labor movement was unusually active. The more radical unions had formed an affiliation called the San Diego Federated Trades and Labor Council as early as 1891, which "looked forward to the establishment of a political and economic system on socialistic principles."[1215] The council was technically under the umbrella of the AFL. Like the AFL, the Labor Council cooperated completely with business and government interests in World War I, refusing to oppose the entry of the US into the war despite

[1213] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University," "Speech to Beth El," September 28, 1975; Box 7, Folder 26.
[1214] Ibid.
[1215] Ryan, *The Labor Movement in San Diego*, 10.

rampant dissatisfaction among the delegates. The fact that neither the federal nor California state government displayed any appreciation for labor's sacrifice needled the laborers. Court decisions stripped San Diego labor of most of its legal defenses and the 1918 California Criminal Syndicalism law mandated arrests, high bail, and severe sentences for dissent.[1216] In response, the Labor Council struggled to find outlets in which to express their dissatisfaction. Some members joined the single-tax movement in 1920, others the Socialist Labor Party in 1921. Still more tried to form a farmer-labor party.[1217]

In 1929, with the Depression, the fortunes of labor got a lot worse. The leadership of the Labor Council at this point, a group Frederick Ryan calls "the Regulars," reflected the feelings of the membership during World War I, when times were good, and few changes had been necessary. In this time of national crisis, the Regulars deemed it wise to prohibit strikes and boycotts: in short, to abandon the entire means of influencing labor conditions.[1218] Amid skyrocketing unemployment that drove many unions into the ground, another group began to coalesce in the Labor Council, whom Ryan calls "the Radicals." The Radicals were not indebted to any political party despite a resurgence of both the Communist and Socialist parties in San Diego. Instead, the Radicals were a loose left-liberal coalition. This was Steinmetz's natural constituency.

Beginning in 1935, Steinmetz took on the task of building a support base of members that could facilitate a takeover of the Labor Council from the Regulars. Steinmetz and his ally, Daisy Lee Worchester of the Unemployed Council, were

[1216] Ibid., 46.
[1217] Ibid., 47.
[1218] Ibid., 52.

"excellent organizers and vocal."[1219] In July of 1935, Steinmetz's organizational work with both teachers and the unemployed paid off and he helped bring the Radicals into a dominant position on the council. Accordingly, the Radicals made Steinmetz president of the Labor Council when they had the votes. Upon election, Steinmetz expressed his wish "only to be a good tool of the rank and file, among whom I am happy to have a voice," while urging the Radicals to continue to take the Regulars' advice into account, generously asserting "the labor movement has prospered recently under the old officers."[1220]

Steinmetz offered an ambitious goal to the membership of the Labor Council that reflected his interest in institutional social control. He wrote, "It [our goal] must lie beyond bread and butter; the goal must be social. We must be welders of a new and better social order, even of a new civilization based upon production for use, competition of ideas, devotion to a classless society, peace."[1221] Steinmetz turned the Labor Council into "a sort of forum for the labor movement," where all ideas were welcome.[1222] He made meetings, previously closed, into open affairs. He even invited non-members to express opinions on San Diego labor conditions and the operation of the unions. Ryan writes that Steinmetz and the Radicals created "the avant-garde of a new type of union organization," a radical institution for modern workers' rights that presaged the CIO.[1223] They discarded the old craft structure of the Labor Council and allowed a more modern

[1219] Ibid., 66.
[1220] "Steinmetz Urges Public's Support of Labor Effort," *San Diego Union*, August 2, 1935.
[1221] Ryan, *The Labor Movement in San Diego*, 69.
[1222] Ibid.
[1223] Ibid., 72.

form, which acknowledged the fact that most workers were part of large industries, not small shops, and were from a multitude of occupations. The Labor Council under Steinmetz fought for worker's rights against capitalists and managers. It supported strikes and urged the creation of unemployed workers' unions around San Diego and took on the Works Project Administration over the small wages it paid workers.

A progressive union was not to last in San Diego, however. Steinmetz's opponents, regardless of the way in which he presented his political opinions, attacked him as a "red" almost immediately. This was dangerous for him, as socialism was even more of a niche cause in San Diego than New York and because his parent union organization, the AFL, had begun to define itself in 1935 as an opponent of socialism. The state AFL leaders became alarmed at the extent of "radical" influence in the Labor Council, which they labeled "communistic."[1224] As something of an opening act for McCarthyism, AFL leader Joseph Casey resolved to destroy Steinmetz's faction via guilt by association. He accused Steinmetz and his colleagues of belonging to communist front groups, such as the American Youth Congress, the League Against War and Fascism, and unions for the unemployed.[1225] Steinmetz, Casey said, was trying to create "one big union and a united front," which was almost certainly true, as well as to undermine San Diegan businesses and the community, which almost certainly was not.[1226] Within several months, Steinmetz and much of the other Radicals leadership were barred entry to the

[1224] Ibid., 70–71.
[1225] Ibid., 74.
[1226] Ibid.

council meetings despite Steinmetz's membership on the executive committee. Their exclusion was presumably on the orders of William Green, president of the AFL.[1227]

The "purge" of the Radicals from the Labor Council is considered by Ryan to be the "end of 'radicalism' in San Diego..."[1228] While New York was full of Popular Front organizations, progressives were so drained by the red-baiting of 1936 that an anti-fascist, pro-New Deal coalition never built up a great deal of strength in San Diego. Yet the AFL attacks of 1936 were just the beginning of the San Diego establishment's drive to destroy Harry Steinmetz. His preaching of radical ideas combined with his status as a professor had become too much for conservative community leaders. Several days after the AFL stripped Steinmetz of his Labor Council presidency, representatives from thirty-one American Legion posts voted to make a request to the state Board of Education to investigate Steinmetz's "communistic leanings" and whether they belonged in education.[1229] The Legion attempted to use Steinmetz's removal from the Labor Council on grounds of subversion as evidence of wrongdoing, to prove that "activities of Harry Steinmetz have seriously reflected upon the San Diego State college…"[1230]

Building a house of cards out of guilt by association was a typical anticommunist tactic in the Cold War. It was a new one in 1936. There was no crime alleged but the American Legion requested that the Board of Education dismiss Steinmetz as punishment. They also attempted a public shaming of Steinmetz by urging that the Board of Education make its findings public regardless of result. Remarkably, Governor Frank

[1227] Ibid., 79.
[1228] Ibid.
[1229] "Legion Asks State Board Probe of Steinmetz in Labor Ouster," *San Diego Union*, January 18, 1936.
[1230] "Steinmetz Probe Sought; Radical Actions Alleged," *San Diego Union*, January 21, 1936.

Merriam agreed to the investigation and a release of the findings (though the latter never ended up happening), even before the Legion had shown the board any data on Steinmetz whatsoever. Within a month, a special committee announced that they could not find any evidence that Steinmetz employed "communistic teachings in the classroom" after all.[1231] However, the damage was done. The Board of Education and American Legion tarred Steinmetz as a communist in the San Diego community.

His exile from labor marked the end of any chance of success Steinmetz's might have had in politics. The Board of Education and American Legion had branded him with a scarlet "C" and the political climate was changing in a way that made Steinmetz's dreams of a broad left-liberal front an impossibility. This was in large part due to the Moscow Trials in 1937, which went some distance toward discrediting the Soviet Union as a counterweight to Nazi Germany. The Nazi-Soviet Pact in 1939 then eviscerated the notion of a benevolent Soviet regime. Without an ally around which to coalesce, the Popular Front fell apart. We do not know how Steinmetz reacted to the Trials and Pact (his later writings suggest he had been willing to see how the Soviet actions panned out before making judgments) but he found the supposed rightward slant of both American and international politics in the late 30s to be distressing. He raised funds for the Joint Anti-Fascist Committee and belonged to "everything anti-Nazi…" throughout the late 30s.[1232] After France fell in 1940, Steinmetz urged a new united front against the Nazis in a magazine article. He described what life under a fascist regime would be like: "Blind

[1231] "Board Inquiry Clears Teacher of Red Charge," *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 14, 1936.
[1232] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University," Letter to Ben Harris, 1980; Box 5, Folder 9. There is unfortunately little information in his papers, or elsewhere, about the exact nature of these activities.

obedience takes the place of independent thought… the 'Fuehrer-principle' reduces the individual to a small cog in a huge machine. Life is mechanical; spirit is dead."[1233] He argued that "the whole of Germany is a concentration camp," and, pitifully, "a large part of the population does not realize this."[1234]

Like Rockwell Kent, Steinmetz was terrified of Nazis. He put a lot of effort into trying to understand the appeal of fascism in Europe. How could Adolf Hitler, a seemingly ordinary sort of man, become such an abomination of, as Steinmetz later put it, "jingoism," tyranny, and anti-Semitic "excesses"?[1235] People were born neither bad nor good, Steinmetz thought, but they learn to be so from their environment. Steinmetz emphasized the environment as a causative factor of fascism when the San Diego press searched out his opinion. He explained that people living in harsh conditions "take refuge in delusions" such as nationalism, "in 'rationalizations' or excuse making" such as anti-Semitism," or in "'defense mechanisms'" like the denial of personal responsibility for the direction their country was going.[1236] In other words, Steinmetz thought fascism was a socially transmitted belief and due to the poverty of the Great Depression, it was able to "infect" millions. A single lunatic had not misled Germans into fascism: the public had chosen to latch onto his madness because he was the only person offering a compelling narrative within which to frame their misfortune.

[1233] Harry C. Steinmetz, *Philippine Magazine* 37, no. 4 (June 1940).
[1234] Ibid.
[1235] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University," "Introduction to Glen Tayler," San Diego, March 30, 1948; Box 1, Folder 44.
[1236] "Professor Repeats Story Hitler Is Under Care of Alienist," *Evening Star*, September 6, 1939.

If fascists could take over Germany, there was no reason why it could not come to dominate the Depression-ravaged United States as well. Steinmetz entered the World War II years, therefore, in an intense state of alert. He was under the impression that Nazi spies were infiltrating the United States, aided by Nazi sympathizers: a conspiratorial narrative remarkably similar to that espoused by the anticommunists about the American left. He thought that much of American business secretly championed the fascists of Italy, Germany, and Japan. Steinmetz saw evidence of this conspiracy everywhere in San Diego, which had a sizable military presence but comparatively few Popular Front organizations of the sort Rockwell Kent joined in New York as a balance. Steinmetz saw corporations shipping scrap iron, which Steinmetz believed might as well be a war material, to Japan in 1939, when the United States was supposedly neutral. He protested to the city and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and warned of the possibility of the iron "some day coming back to us" in the form of armaments used by Japan against the United States to no avail.[1237]

Steinmetz was still more concerned about Nazi influence in the American air force. In 1939, Steinmetz reported to the FBI that something strange was going on with Consolidated Aircraft's new factory in San Diego. Consolidated Aircraft was an aircraft company that produced many designs of fighters and bombers, including the B-24 Liberator, for the US Army. It employed as many as forty-five thousand people in San Diego by 1942, in its mammoth 295,000 square foot factory. Steinmetz was skeptical of the company, which appeared under the impression that "mechanical aptitude was

[1237] "Scrap Shipment Protested Here," *San Diego Union*, September 18, 1939.

guaranteed by a thick German accent."[1238] Fleet hired a giant influx of German immigrants, who Steinmetz claimed distributed pro-Nazi propaganda in San Diego, including in Steinmetz's university. These German employees badmouthed local communists all over town and complained about Steinmetz's politics to the president of San Diego State University, he said.[1239]

Steinmetz argued to the FBI, US House of Representatives, and Senate, that experimental planes at San Diego's Consolidated Aircraft had not coincidentally started to crash "at the rate of at least one a month for 14 months."[1240] His insinuation was that the German immigrants, with or without Fleet's knowledge, were sabotaging American experimental flights on behalf of the German government, with the agenda of preventing the American air force from catching up with German aviation. This was a serious and incendiary accusation. Consolidated Aircraft had become the largest employer in San Diego. It is unknown how much stock the FBI put into Steinmetz's report or what his role was in uncovering espionage at Consolidated Aircraft. Steinmetz later credited himself with management changes at the company, arguing that it was his revealing of information about the sabotage that did it.

There was indeed an actual German sabotage plot at Consolidated Aircraft: just not the one Steinmetz thought there was. In 1939, the German army recruited a

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[1238] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University," Speech to Beth El," September 28, 1975; Box 7, Folder 26. Steinmetz was appealing to the FBI, ionically, at the same time the FBI was looking for connections between Steinmetz and the Japanese. See Gerald Horne, *Class Struggle in Hollywood, 1930-1950: Moguls, Mobsters, Stars, Reds, and Trade Unionists* (University of Texas Press, 2013), p. 42.
[1239] Ibid., "Speech to Beth El," September 28, 1975; Box 7, Folder 26.
[1240] Ibid., Speech to Beth El; Box 7, Folder 26.

Consolidated Aircraft employee named William Sebold when he visited his homeland. The Gestapo, attracted to Sebold by his listing of "aircraft mechanic" in his travel documents, threatened to expose his twenty-year old record of smuggling and other felonies to the Americans. That would surely quash any attempt by Sebold to obtain American citizenship.[1241] Sebold supposedly refused to help the Gestapo at first but changed his mind when they began hounding and threatening his German relatives.[1242] The Germans told Sebold to find information about American secret weapons and to communicate his findings via a shortwave radio he constructed at his office in New York. Sebold agreed, however he instead visited the FBI immediately upon his return from Germany and turned double agent for the Americans. The information he was sending the Germans was fake or useless. Meanwhile, he managed to help in the capture of thirty-three German spies of the infamous Duquesne ring.[1243] In a sense, then, Steinmetz's suspicions were right. The Nazis sending agents to America for espionage, and Consolidated Aircraft had been, in a very oblique way, a recruiting ground. However, he had been wrong about everything else. In an ironic reverse, anti-Nazi propaganda had compromised Steinmetz's perspective and he accordingly perceived the Nazi cause in America as significantly more pervasive and dangerous than it was.

After World War II, during which Steinmetz served as a naval instructor for the military, Steinmetz had high hopes for the postwar world. However, if anything, Steinmetz's environment had become much more hostile to his political views since

[1241] G. J. A. O'Toole, *Honorable Treachery: A History of U. S. Intelligence, Espionage, and Covert Action from the American Revolution to the CIA* (Grove/Atlantic, Inc., 2014).
[1242] Lloyd Wendt, "Spy, Counterspy!" *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, February 8, 1942.
[1243] Ibid.

1941. For a person suspecting that corporations and the government were in an alliance to restructure society along authoritarian lines, the development of San Diego during World War II would have appeared strong evidence. The city had long relied upon the military to fuel growth. The military injected far more money into the San Diegan economy in the 1930s than had the New Deal.[1244] However, World War II "appeared to have turned San Diego into a real metropolis, something three generations of boosters had failed to do."[1245] Military bases expanded radically and tens of thousands of newcomers flooded the city in search of jobs in the defense industries.[1246] Ranked the 79th largest industrial center in the United States in 1939, by 1943 San Diego had climbed to 28th.[1247]

The accommodations made for the military, however, came at the expense of civilians. The city's utilities were over-burdened, the housing shortage was endemic, and "…a high level of discomfort persisted for years."[1248] Transportation within San Diego was a nightmare, as the infrastructure could not withstand the influx of people. In November of 1942, the military and Chamber of Commerce discussed unilaterally relocating citizens unconnected with the defense industry from their homes to provide space for new workers.[1249] San Diego was no longer a quiet college town but the archetypical "federal city," in which citizens relied on the government for employment and policy. This template would become prevalent in California during the Cold War. As Shragge writes, "With regard to housing, labor relations, road-building, and an expanded

[1244] Shragge, "A New Federal City," 342.
[1245] Ibid., 333.
[1246] Ibid.
[1247] Ibid., 355.
[1248] Ibid., 346.
[1249] Ibid., 342.

water and sewer system, the local politicians and businessmen's influence had been almost wholly subordinated to the federal government."[1250]

It was clear to Steinmetz by 1945 that the government of the United States aimed to remain in a state of permanent war preparedness for the sake of securing capitalist profits no matter how much it might hurt the working and middle classes. "At home, with nothing fundamental being done about prices and housing, we are threatened with militarization of our youth and pestered with paranoid political Peeping-Toms who pursue the tactics pioneered by Hitler," he lamented.[1251] "History is moving fast today," Steinmetz said in 1948. "The twenty-nine bankers and militarists occupying supreme policy forming positions in our bipartisan government are taking us down the road of imperialism and war at a horrible rate."[1252] This strategy he thought, could lead to a devastating war with the Soviet Union, a nation he viewed as progressive. In preparing for this war, the only harvest for most Americans would be more inequality. As he later explained, the financing of the Cold War was at "the expense of the working class, of small farmers and consumers, and especially of colored minorities."[1253] The Cold War was not only a matter of life or death, peace or war to Steinmetz. It was also variegated with issues of class, race, and ultimately capitalism versus socialism. The United States of 1948, Steinmetz reasoned, was on the wrong end of every one of these issues and he was terrified of what might happen before Americans could see their own mistakes.

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[1250] Ibid., 359.
[1251] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University," "Steinmetz introduction for Glenn Taylor," 1948; Box 1, Folder 44.
[1252] Ibid.
[1253] Ibid., "Resolution for all Organizations;" not dated [1973 probable]; Box 1, Folder 50.

Steinmetz ran for Congress in 1948, in alliance with the Wallace Progressive Party campaign, in an attempt to resuscitate the left-liberal coalition of the Popular Front. "…I am concerned with the plight of liberal Americans who have not yet been weaned from the two old parties, and I suggest that they finally will either come out for us or else lose their principles," he said.[1254] His platform was pro-UN, pro-Soviet, and anti-establishment politics. "I deny that there is any emergency not of our own creation or one in which we do not hold the whip hand. I feel… that neither of the old parties is clear on international issues, but that both have been captured by Wall Street and the Pentagon building in a desperate bipartisan war policy," he said at an appearance.[1255] Steinmetz thought Wallace, "…the greatest living American," was America's best chance to escape a nightmare scenario. Steinmetz comes off as frustrated and desperate in the campaign rhetoric, however, which suggests he (unlike Rockwell Kent) had little faith in Wallace's chances. Steinmetz publicly compared the United States to Nazi Germany in an attempt to rouse attention. "The Germans, too, used to think of themselves as liberals, laughing at Hitler's jingoism… Today, they are dead."[1256] Steinmetz dropped out of the campaign by October in favor of the Democratic candidate Clinton D. McKinnon, and spent the remainder of the election season advocating for McKinnon and Wallace in radio spots.

The degree to which Truman and his Republican opponent both thrashed Wallace in the presidential election of 1948 left no doubt as to the state of a left-liberal alliance: there clearly no longer was one. During the Popular Front era, Steinmetz could count on

[1254] Ibid., "Steinmetz introduction for Glenn Taylor," 1948; Box 1, Folder 44.
[1255] Ibid., Interview, Oct 16, 1948, Box 1, Folder 47.
[1256] Ibid., Address of HC Steinmetz, March 30, 1948, Box 1, Folder 47.

the existence of a significant number of reformers willing to entertain radical ideas, and even cooperate with radicals in coalitions for common, if limited, goals. As Rossinow explains, however, the last ten years had changed liberalism. The conflicts between liberals and communists during the last few years of the Popular Front, in addition to those "pragmatic" communist shifts in policy during the late 1930s and early 40s, had left a mark, as had the incredible surge of patriotism during the war. "Liberals in the 1940s shelved longtime dreams of reshaping America's political economy through direct political action and began to strengthen their belief in the vitality and social promise of American capitalism," Rossinow writes.[1257] For Steinmetz, this would prove disastrous. He would soon realize that 1948 was no 1935 and there was no constituency for his postcapitalist agenda. Steinmetz ended the 1940s in a similar state to Lamont, Morford, and Kent: shell-shocked and disappointed, yet with no idea just how bad it was going to get for him.

Whereas Steinmetz had established a foundation of anti-imperialism, social justice, and socialism in the 1920s and before, the 1930s and 40s provided depth for his perspective. Throughout the 1929 to 1948 period, he projected a uniquely pragmatic vision which allowed for a merging of capitalism and socialism in one form or another. I have been characterizing this ideology as postcapitalist, as Steinmetz matches Brick's characterization of a perspective which noted how "the capitalist form of contemporary Western society had itself grown indistinct, blurred both by the advent of "mixed systems in the West and by the possibility of a worldwide 'convergence' of capitalist and non-

[1257] Rossinow, *Visions of Progress*, 8.

capitalist orders."[1258] Steinmetz envisioned America's future as the Soviet NEP in reverse. He thought a more socially and economically equitable system could be arrived at through the introduction of socialist ideas, which, over time, could "replace a social life in which division, falsehood, and violence are all-powerful with a new order in which humanity, truth, and brotherhood will reign."[1259]

Having learned the value of coalitions through the Seattle Strike and of ideological adaptability by Jastrow and others, Steinmetz was determined not to repeat the sectarianism that had destroyed earlier radical movements: if capitalism were, as he later wrote, "doomed," then it was worth compromising to speed the United States away from it.[1260] Such a perspective made Steinmetz a natural for coalition work, as he was willing to work with anybody who might inch his ideal society into being, including the technocrats and EPIC. In this, he was the opposite of the pre-Popular Front American communists. He presaged to a significant degree the emergence of the 1948 Progressive movement. Despite the absence of a large Popular Front in San Diego, Steinmetz's openness to ideas led to a brief takeover of the labor movement in San Diego, creating an unusually radical and effective labor apparatus for such a conservative milieu. Steinmetz soon discovered the flipside of a flexible ideology, however: Americans who were not picky about the ideological company they kept were especially vulnerable to the guilt by association rhetoric employed by reactionaries – as Steinmetz found in 1936 and would again in the 1950s.

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[1258] Brick, *Transcending Capitalism*, 6.
[1259] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University," "Past as Prelude," no date [1977–78 probable]; Box 1, Folder 47.
[1260] Ibid., "Past as Prelude," no date [1977-78 probable]; Box 1, Folder 47.

Figuring in none of this was Steinmetz's 1917-vintage Soviet sympathies. He claimed to have joined an FSU subsidiary in San Diego in 1932, an organization that was tiny and disappeared without notice. He focused upon concerns closer to home. Between 1929 and 1948, Steinmetz's behavior and sentiments, whether in his participation in technocracy, EPIC, or the labor movement, suggest that he was actively trying to create change in the United States in a pragmatic manner: far more than Corliss Lamont, Rockwell Kent, or Richard Morford had in the same period. He supported movements that balanced popularity with the degree to which they resembled his own beliefs. The Soviet Union had no place in the agenda of such a person.

## Exile, and the Search for a New Collective

No sooner had the Cold War began than a repressive wave animated California. This occurred in much the same fashion as the rest of the United States during the Cold War, only more intensely and dramatically. Historian MJ Heale posits that this Second Great Red Scare was a convergence of pressures "both from above and from below" driven by popular fear, hatred of communism, and pressure from the state alike.[1261] As the Cold War began, Democrats, irked by radicals due to their undermining of mainstream Democratic campaigns during the 1930s (for instance, in the EPIC campaign of 1934), joined with conservatives in opposition to dissent. This teamed with the nativist fear of foreign ideologies that had been instrumental in Steinmetz's removal from the

[1261] M. J Heale, "Red Scare Politics: California's Campaign against Un-American Activities, 1940-1970," *Jamerstud Journal of American Studies* 20, no. 1 (1986): 6.

Labor Council. Earl Warren, Attorney General of California between 1939 and 1943, "repeatedly warned of the dangers inherent in a state where water and power supplies had to be carried great distances," alerting Californians to the possibility that "fifth columnists" "could bring the state to its knees."[1262] In 1947, President Truman introduced a loyalty-security program for federal employees, prompting Californians to create their own measures to fight subversives.

By the end of the 1940s, legislative measures seeking to ensure the loyalty of citizens proliferated in California. Senator Jack Tenney introduced local loyalty proposals as part of a "comprehensive antisubversive program," including loyalty oaths for all public officials, public employees (including teachers), and lawyers in 1949.[1263] In 1950, the California state legislature passed a piece of legislation essentially criminalizing "subversive" ideology. The Levering Act, as it was called, required two oaths for all public employees: "an oath of allegiance, whereby a person swore to 'support and defend' the government; and a disclaimer stipulating that employees disavow having advocated for or having been members of organizations that advocated the overthrow of the government by 'force or violence or other unlawful means' within the past five years."[1264] It also redefined public employees (again, including teachers) as "civil defense workers" who could be conscripted into a "civil defense system" in an emergency,

[1262] Ibid., 12.
[1263] Edward Robert Long, "Loyalty Oaths in California, 1947-1952: The Politics of Anti-Communism." (Ph.D. dissertation, San Diego: University of California, San Diego, 1982), 17.
[1264] Ibid., 4.

meaning that the government was allocating to itself the power to redefine teachers' contracts and duties.[1265]

There were many reasons not to sign the Levering Oath. For some professors, it was a civil rights matter: signing the bill was a de facto acceptance of the expanded powers the state of California had granted itself. However, there were many consequences for taking a stand. "In nearly every case where the act or policy was ambiguous," failure to sign the oath resulted in punitive dismissal, often for "gross and unprofessional conduct": a resume eyesore if there ever was one.[1266] The peripheral consequences of the Levering Oath were also momentous. The oath made those who would not sign it into pariahs, with whom it was political and social suicide to associate. Yet, the California universities bought into the oaths wholesale. For instance, the University of California ultimately fired thirty-one professors for their refusal to sign the oath.[1267]

Harry Steinmetz had signed the Levering Oath in 1950, albeit "with emphatic protest."[1268] He had intended to fight it but his colleagues at San Diego State University told him that he was "the wrong person to resist it." [1269] The implication was that Steinmetz was too left to make a significant impact: people would interpret his refusal to sign as a subversive "taking of the fifth" of the sort employed by communists. His

[1265] Ibid., 200.
[1266] Ibid., 203–4.
[1267] Ellen Schrecker describes McCarthyism's effect on academia. Ellen Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).
[1268] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University, "Justice in the Daze of Democracy," 1970-71; Box 1, Folder 46.
[1269] Ibid.

colleagues had found a conservative faculty member to refuse to sign, which they thought would be far more dramatic, but that member ultimately reneged and Steinmetz could not forsake the oath retroactively. In 1953, however, Steinmetz was presented with another opportunity to make known his opposition to these repressive measures. Senator Nelson Dilworth introduced the Dilworth Act, and Steinmetz's congressional representative Frank Luckel introduced a bill which became known as the Luckel Act. The California legislature passed both. The Luckel Act required state employees to appear in front of a legislative committee and answer any and all questions concerning their connections to the Communist Party. The Dilworth Act provided the means for the state to dismiss public employees who were less than forthcoming with their responses.[1270]

According to Steinmetz, the Luckel Act was an attempt to target him personally. If so, it was not the first time the California legislature had attempted to destroy him (to paraphrase Woody Allen, it is not paranoia if your opponents really are out to get you). After Steinmetz's appearance at a San Diego Peace Forum meeting, Senator Fred Kraft of San Diego created a piece of legislation in 1951 which would have "provided for the 'dismissal of employees of state colleges' by expanding 'unprofessional conduct' to include 'persistent active participation in public meetings conducted or sponsored by a communist front organization,' and 'willful advocacy of communism, either on or off campus.'"[1271] Governor Warren vetoed the bill, judging it a bill of attainder meant, "to fire a particular professor at San Diego College": meaning Steinmetz.[1272] If the Luckel

[1270] Paul J. Eisloeffel, "The Cold War and Harry Steinmetz: A Case of Loyalty and Legislation," *The Journal of San Diego History* 35, no. 4 (Fall 1989).
[1271] Ibid.
[1272] Ibid.

Act was the same kind of bill as the aborted Kraft Act, one could reason that the legislature intended Steinmetz to sign the loyalty oath, as he had signed Levering, and get caught in a lie about his sympathies. Steinmetz decided to elude the trap and refused to sign the Luckel Oath. Based on the preceding episode with Kraft, he thought he had a decent shot at getting away with it. By 1953, however, Warren had moved up to the United States Supreme Court and Steinmetz was vulnerable to state action to a degree he perhaps did not grasp.

California's HUAC called in Steinmetz on March 26, 1953, because of his refusal to sign the Luckel Oath. After preliminary questions, HUAC counsel Frank S. Tavenner began to probe Steinmetz's membership of the American Federation of Teachers in the 1930s. Steinmetz clearly meant to be uncooperative from the onset. He displayed no interest in making Tavenner's job easier or his own reception with the committee less confrontational. He consistently asserted that he was unable to remember dates (which would have allowed the committee to pin down whether or not he was involved with "subversive organizations" during the timeline mandated by the acts) and claimed to the congressmen that he was "proud to say" he gave the HUAC meeting no preparation.[1273] Steinmetz challenged Tavenner on semantics, disputing the meanings of tricky words like "active" and pleading confusion as to the parameters of the questions.

Steinmetz had never intended to cooperate with California's HUAC. He had talked over his decision not to sign any more loyalty oaths or cooperate with any more

[1273] United States., *Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States: Hearings before a Special Committee on Un-American Activities, House of Representatives, Seventy-Fifth Congress, Third Session-Seventy-Eighth Congress, Second Session, on H. Res. 282* (Washington: U. S. Govt. Print. Off., 1938), 720.

repressive legislation with his family beforehand and they supported his decision. He had also consulted the ACLU. His ACLU-provided attorney thought his case would be a "clear-cut decision on the First Amendment."[1274] Steinmetz had reason to think the HUAC "trial" was a formality with little downside. After all, only the Board of Education could fire Steinmetz. HUAC itself could only make a recommendation.

Steinmetz, however, underestimated how much the climate had changed since the 1930s. The committee interpreted his silence and stubbornness as "guilt" and pressured the Board of Education to do something. The Board of Education fired him in February, 1954. An attempt by the San Diego State University president failed to save Steinmetz's job. Appeals (all the way to the US Supreme Court) were not successful, either: partially because US Supreme Court Earl Warren, who Steinmetz expected to be the decisive vote in his favor, recused himself from the Supreme Court case due to his previous involvement in vetoing Kraft's bill. This was either a quirk of fate or a case of a legal deck having been stacked against Steinmetz. Regardless, Steinmetz was out of work and out of luck. He was, in his own words, "through, due process aborted morally and perhaps legally."[1275]

The consequences of his firing because of the Luckel Act should not be underestimated. Steinmetz's career had been promising up that point. He was on the verge of a full professorship and had numerous publications. But that was all over. The HUAC trial, and the subsequent Board of Education executive session which resulted in

[1274] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University," "Justice in the Daze of McCarthyism," 1977-78; Box 1, Folder 47.
[1275] Ibid.

Steinmetz's trial, were big news in San Diego and in California in general. The case even received national coverage in most of the larger papers. Cornell University hired Steinmetz for the summer of 1954, while his trial was in progress. As soon as Cornell's administration connected the dots and learned that this was the same Steinmetz that was in their newspapers, however, the appointment was withdrawn. "In view of all the circumstances involved in the situation of Professor Steinmetz, who has associated Cornell University with a personal situation, of which we had no knowledge and in which we were not consulted, Cornell has withdrawn the invitation extended to him for the summer of 1954," said Lloyd Elliott, director of Cornell's summer session.[1276]

New appointments were hard to come by. There were no jobs in California for Steinmetz. "When I made innumerable applications" for work, "[I] met only discrimination against me due to the State's action."[1277] He attempted to go into private practice as a psychologist but encountered a "very limited" number of patients "due to the same public suspicion and prejudice experienced with institutions."[1278] He eventually found work, after half a decade, in Kalamazoo College in Michigan and Morehouse College in Atlanta. Schools rarely renewed his contracts, however. He was forced to move across the country every few years.

Steinmetz later estimated his monetary losses from the firing at over $200,000 but that is only a small portion of the damage done. He was also "gravely depressed" by the

[1276] "Professor's Appointment Withdrawn," *Seattle Times*, May 21, 1954.
[1277] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University," Letter to Melvin Levine, June 14, 1979; Box 2, Folder 20.
[1278] Ibid.

experience and disillusioned.[1279] That the Bill of Rights was insufficient to protect his job from a reactionary state government seriously undermined his confidence in American commitment to liberty, which had been suspect in the best of times. He now thought American civil liberties were nothing but a propaganda trick. "Our constitutional rights, which some of our founding politicians sought to keep from us so they appear as amendments, have been under attack by reactionaries and nitwits for so long that it appears that since World War II… they have been preserved mainly to save face abroad…," he wrote.[1280] The experience definitely appears to have changed him. After 1954, Steinmetz's rhetoric becomes much less compromising and far more critical of the American status quo. He became more cynical and irascible. "The sudden experience of rejection by a society the welfare of which was my supreme value – and the revelation of weakness, ignorance, and social indifference among most academic colleagues – quite turned me around," he wrote.[1281] Steinmetz must have felt not dissimilar to his teenage years: isolated, unwanted, and without stakes in society, whether politically, professionally, or intellectually.

The way forward for Steinmetz was not immediately clear. Being a part of a group fighting for progress had always been important to him, however, and he searched for several years for an appropriate outlet after his firing. At first, he attempted to hit back against the state with a series of publications asserting his innocence to the public. The most substantial of these was a pamphlet quizzically titled *Freedom in California? Not*

[1279] Ibid.
[1280] Ibid., Letter to Howard Zinn, January 1, 1973; Box 3, Folder 43.
[1281] Ibid., Letter to the US Farm News, August 1979; Box 1, Folder 45.

*for Employees?* Here, Steinmetz argued that the Board of Education had forced him to choose between "either loss of civil rights or loss of property rights" and he had chosen the latter.[1282] He expressed his frustration with being, essentially, a test case against loyalty oaths, claiming that he met "surprising difficulty in securing understanding of the issues at stake" from the public.[1283] Steinmetz tried to make it clear that he was really fighting for everyone's rights, not just his own, as "to bar minority politicians is to restrict the range for public judgment."[1284] He attracted little sympathy. Letter writers in the *San Diego Union* accused him of paranoia and asked him why he could not just have told the truth. As Corliss Lamont and Richard Morford had found, one was not likely to get anywhere with the American public in the 1950s by pushing a civil liberties angle. It was especially odd, then, that Steinmetz ran for state superintendent three months after his dismissal. Given the fact that he was doing so specifically to run against the superintendent who fired him, it seems in retrospect more like an expensive effort at gallows humor than anything else: a recognition and mockery of his own irrelevance in American politics.

Steinmetz ultimately found his new calling, American-Soviet friendship, by looking into his past. The groundwork had always been there. Steinmetz had idealized the Soviet Union since 1917. His ideas about socialism, psychology, and education were all much more in line with those of the Soviets than with Americans. The Russian Revolution had been a formative influence, for certain, and he had joined an American-

[1282] *Freedom in California?: Not for Public Employees?* (San Diego, Calif.: Committee for Social Action, Community Unitarian Fellowship, 1954), 3.
[1283] Ibid., 4.
[1284] Ibid., 6.

Soviet friendship group in the early 1930s. However, he had been committed to American reform, for which he found the Soviet example unhelpful – at least publicly. However, in 1954, Stalin – who Steinmetz claimed to have never cared for due to his Russification policies – was dead, socialism seemed to be thriving in the countries that practiced it, and American-Soviet friendship organizations began to resurface in Southern California within a couple years of his firing. Steinmetz was, quite simply, in the right place at the right time for the American-Soviet friendship revival that occurred with the signing of the Lacy-Zarubin Agreement of 1958.

Yet, he still might never have found his new path if not for the example of Anna Louise Strong. To see how Strong came to influence Steinmetz again, we must look back to 1948, when Steinmetz brought together a small group of Southern California Unitarian radicals into a discussion group on socialism and reform in the United States. This group, called the Community Unitarian Fellowship, looked for guidance from Stephen Fritchman, who arrived in Los Angeles to lead the First Unitarian Church of Los Angeles in 1948. Steinmetz and Fritchman, for a time in the late 1940s, served as a "focal point for the discussion of progressive issues in Los Angeles."[1285] Arriving shortly after Fritchman was his friend Anna Louise Strong, fresh from her deportation from the Soviet Union. Tired of attempting to ingratiate herself with communists who continued to attack her in print over her eviction from the USSR, Strong determined to make her own way as

[1285] Tracy B. Strong and Helene Keyssar, *Right in Her Soul: The Life of Anna Louise Strong* (New York: Random House, 1983), 267.

an American advocate of the Soviet Union. In 1951, she explained her new mission in a newsletter:

> …the best use anyone can make of a life is to spread friendly understanding of the new socialist lands among people in America, so that whatever changes may lie ahead can be made with the maximum of knowledge and a minimum of blind strife… the immediate job today – for an American – is not the promotion of revolutionary change, but the promotion of world peace, so that those lands that already have made revolutionary change can show the world what they can do with it.[1286]

Strong was devoting herself to becoming an independent anti-Cold War evangelist, bringing information about the Soviet Union and other socialist nations to Americans who had no other source but their biased newspapers. She was creating a new model for friendship groups, advocating a pro-Soviet perspective to the American public, rallying disparate leftists and pacifists against the Cold War, and increasing the morale of the scattered Sovietophiles of America. Strong lacked ties (anymore) to the very compromised American communists, which allowed for a degree of freedom the communist-driven friendship groups had never had. Strong was as good as her word, too, touring the country for years and meeting thousands of American progressives before the death of Stalin allowed for her rehabilitation in Soviet and communist circles.

Steinmetz, discarded by the American establishment, was not only thrilled to be in such proximity to the woman who "had been a great influence, especially in my life, and… [was] the best political reporter on the left" but was also energized by her example.[1287] The similarity between the style and content of Strong's approach in 1951 and Steinmetz's for the rest of his life is striking. Compare, for instance, Strong's

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[1286] Ibid., 273.

[1287] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University, "In Memory of Anna Louise Strong," July 19, 1970; Box 5, Folder 9.

statement above with Steinmetz's here: "We seek to fortify and to popularize a multi-lateral policy of peaceful coexistence between capitalist and socialist countries……we want to exercise initiative in international ways outside of official channels. This may strike some socialists as anarchistic but in our situation it appears necessary. We are not sure if we would see a duty and right to be so spontaneous if we lived in a socialist state, nor are we concerned with the question."[1288] Strong showed him there was still work to be done, even by people who had to work on the margins.

As Steinmetz spent more time in Los Angeles, he began to find enough other Sovietophiles to resemble a genuine community. Steinmetz joined the Los Angeles ARI in 1955, a year after his firing and two before he lost his final appeal. While the Institute had been moribund since World War II, Rosemary Haskell, the organization's executive secretary and primary administrator until the 60s, revived it in the early 1950s. Steinmetz's formidable reputation among Southern California radicals and excellent organizational skills quickly brought him into a leadership role and he served as the organization's president in 1957 and 1958. His chief task was in appealing to a broader constituency: "Insofar as we fail to interest average native Americans, the professions and labor and schools and other national institutions, the press, churches, and political parties, we fail," he wrote.[1289] Steinmetz also favored the organization's educational approach, which had largely been absent in the groups of the 1930s. He thought that the political systems and aims of the United States and Soviet Union were sufficiently

[1288] Ibid., unknown statement, August 1973; Box 1, Folder 52.
[1289] Ibid., Message from president of AFCR, not dated [1969 probable]; Box 3, Folder 5.

different that "competition is inevitable" but that this competition did not have to be violent.[1290] The way to avoid it becoming so was through education: especially the cultivation of empathy toward those on the other side of the ideological fence. "…the only way to keep it short of conflict is through increasing the acquaintance of citizens on both sides with the ways and values and methods of each other," he wrote.[1291]

For Americans and Soviets to step back from their war footing, they would need to shed their mutual, socially transmitted suspicions. The American-Soviet friendship movement was to Steinmetz, in the 1950s, a possible means of preparing Americans to bridge the gap, presenting educational material to Americans about the Soviet Union and, in grassroots fashion, gradually change their media-learned beliefs. "Prolonged attention," he argued, "frequently dispels first impression, or belief, or dispels its unity, leaving one with more or less consistent date for the understanding to harmonize as best it is able."[1292]

Steinmetz must have been a memorable presence as president, as he quickly established relationships and even friendships with other key figures like Rockwell Kent, Richard Morford, and Corliss Lamont. However, before he could assist Haskell in getting the Los Angeles society back off the ground, he ran out of money and could no longer afford to live in Southern California, where he was unemployable. Using all of the connections he had assembled in a lifetime of extroversion, Steinmetz and his wife bummed around Europe for two years, at last free of the constraints imposed by

[1290] Ibid., "Let Us Survive and Compete," 1977-78; Box 1, Folder 47.
[1291] Ibid., "Let Us Survive and Compete," 1977-78; Box 1, Folder 47.
[1292] Ibid., "Psychological Damnation of Newspapermen," not dated [1939 probable]; Box 1, Folder 44.

American culture. It was at this point, in 1960 – years later than even Richard Morford – that Steinmetz made his first trip to the Soviet Union. The trip had a profound effect upon him. After he went to the Soviet Union, we began to see the same sort of "Soviet Union as a new civilization" rhetoric that more committed "friends" in the past had espoused (such as Corliss Lamont in 1932), in his writing. Steinmetz asserted that the Soviet Union was a continuation of the more humanistic traditions in Western civilization, which the Industrial Revolution had destroyed in the West. "The new Soviet world is reminiscent of the glories of classical antiquity far more to me than are the Western traditions [in which] I have been reared," he wrote. [1293] "Here are democratized realizations of the best that classical intellectuals and nostalgic classicists have idealized." [1294] He argued that, accordingly, it was time to stop thinking of the Soviet Union as a work in progress. The work was done and the contribution made. The Soviet Union, he wrote, was now an "established socialist" state.[1295]

In his admiration of "established" socialism, the supposed Soviet transformation of human nature was key. Extending the line of argument he had initially advanced in the 1920s, Steinmetz insisted that human nature was a process rather than a structure. Guiding this process are the institutions of the nation. A nation could either allow human nature to develop by chance, manipulated by tradition, superstition, and self-interest, or direct it according to ideas that would allow as many people to live up to their potential as possible. Human nature could, in other words, be *planned*, and this was exactly what

[1293] Ibid., "New Soviet Impressions," 1970s [1974 probable]; Box 1, Folder 34.
[1294] Ibid.
[1295] Ibid.

he said was happening in the Soviet Union. Lenin and Stalin instituted "the policy of cohesion for the sake of adhesion," encouraging native arts while associating them with the basic messages of the Soviet state, such as equality.[1296] Americans, Steinmetz asserted, had "avoided planning and been suspicious of ideology to the point of letting a free market ideology drive us into individual, social, and national anarchy and imperialism or isolation." [1297] The Soviets, meanwhile, embraced ideology while discarding the harmful aspects of nationality. They recognized that "a nation is an overall institution…, and it has tended to condition the ways and motives of citizens." [1298] There, through the kind of integration between society and education that he had always advocated, was the way to escape the clutches of the profit motive that governed leaders in the United States and the unthinking reactionaries who supported their reign.

Such was the reverence Steinmetz had cultivated for the Soviet regime that he soon began to denounce those he perceived as its traitors. He was particularly disappointed in socialist states, which, unlike the Soviet Union, embraced only the economic characteristics of socialism, while appealing to superstition, tradition, and nationalism instead of reason. Steinmetz had always judged class more important than nation but, in the past, had thought that ideology should conform to the national context (as in his ideas about reforming the United States in the 1930s). Now, however he disapproved of socialists who thought a socialist state could be revamped along the lines of contextual factors, such as Alexander Dubcek in Czechoslovakia, Imre Nagy in

[1296] Ibid., "Soviet Russian National Character," 1970s; Box 1, Folder 34.
[1297] Ibid.
[1298] Ibid.

Hungary, and even the memory of Earl Browder in the United States. He wrote that "…true Marxists make and remake history; they do not cling to nationalism as fate and to its narrow perspectives." [1299] Those things were "inhibitive of international socialism." Steinmetz claimed, "Modern man is fed up with the cult of the individual and the culture of nationalism."[1300] In writing about Romania, he passed judgment on many of the Eastern bloc nations: "It is thus the fate of many old societies to attain nationality as their most reliable friends abroad reject nationalism, and it is the simultaneous fate of many peoples to have a socialist economy which they did not earn through internal struggle and ideological composition."[1301] He accused the Czechs in the Prague Spring of 1968 of wanting "to have their cake and eat it too" and was "convinced" that Yugoslavia and Romania were "drifting toward nationalistic crises."[1302]

His interest in the USSR during the Cold War developed a hard, faith-based core that had been entirely absent before his persecution. He seemed unconcerned by the Soviet Union's interventions in other nations, as well as its own domestic repression. He argued that "freedom is always for internal national definition and usually beyond the grasp of foreigners, especially of those in a country who for two generations have been brainwashed…" His faith was, he asserted, implacable. "I have been a friend of the USSR since its establishment," he wrote, "and have nearly always – in fact, always except in the instance of Stalin's paranoia in late years – found that, if I withheld

[1299] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University, "Rumanian Nationalism," not dated [1960s probable]; Box 1, Folder 45.
[1300] Ibid.
[1301] Ibid., "1971 Romania,"1971; Box 1, Folder 38.
[1302] Ibid., Letter to Lola and Dan Campbell, November 15, 1970; Box 5, Folder 16.

judgment, later events justified or clearly tended to justify the Soviet position."[1303] This was ends-justify-the-means thinking, echoing the cultish narrative of progress-worship. "…are there not such solid grounds for appreciating established socialism that faith in its development can be immune and unshaken by tactical pacts, the curbing of reckless Bohemians, the lingering survival of ethnic ways and some manifestation of impatience with domestic enemies who are naïve in regard to foreign inspiration?" he asked.[1304]

The only people who advocated as pro-Soviet a line as Steinmetz did in the 60s and early 70s were American communists, as well as independent socialists in the NCASF like Rockwell Kent. Socialist Party stalwarts had either opposed the Soviet Union since the 1920s or (in Upton Sinclair's case) since the opening of the Cold War. The Christian socialists were no longer giving the Soviet Union the benefit of the doubt in the sectarian quarrels between socialist states. The libertarian socialists like William Mandel and Lamont were long gone. Steinmetz's positions regarding the Soviets thus put him in an unfamiliar place: among the apologists and dogmatists for whom gradual reform and coalition building was a foreign country. Whereas before World War II Harry Steinmetz resembled a Sinclair-esque reformer, by the middle 1960s he was closer to a William Z. Foster.

Steinmetz moved ever further into the margins. For the first time in his life Steinmetz began to study communism. His ideology during the Cold War was essentially Leninist, disavowing the purges and massacres of Stalin. Steinmetz thought that, in all

[1303] Ibid., AFCR discussion, not dated [1973 probable]; Box 7, Folder 3.
[1304] Ibid., Essay for unknown publication, signed with an alias [Ana Ditor], 1970s; Box 1, Folder 53.

countries, eventually an intellectual vanguard would impress the virtues of socialism onto the working class, which would then form the backbone of a socialist revolution. Steinmetz created a vision of Lenin in his own image. Because Steinmetz had no stomach for violence (a rather large part of the Leninist program), he denied that Lenin was at all comfortable with violence either.[1305] Lenin, Steinmetz argued, believed "…wars in the future must be for the minds of men and women…", and claimed that the brutality of the Russian Civil Wars was the responsibility of the Whites. [1306]

Steinmetz denied that Khrushchev's program at all differed from Lenin's. Had he been alive in the Cold War, Steinmetz imagined Lenin would advance a program similar to Khrushchev. He based this on Lenin's "What is to be Done?" He wrote, "Now, what was Lenin's last answer? I presume to formulate it thus: Let there be peace between nations, and between political economies, especially as exemplified by the USSR and the USA. Let us compete fairly in the fulfillment of human needs, control and improvement of the environment, public health, education and philosophies. Let the more advanced and affluent aid the less developed peoples and those with poorer natural resources, without exploitation or imposition."[1307] Steinmetz bemoaned that Americans did not recognize Lenin for his benevolent nature, his genius, or his immense contribution to political thought and to the world's proletariat. This was especially tragic because, to Steinmetz's eyes, Lenin had been prescient about the endless exploitative expansion of

[1305] On the violence inherent in the Soviet project, see Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia's Continuum of Crisis, 1914-1921* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002).
[1306] Ibid., "Lenin in Relation to Americans and the United States," Grass Roots Forum, October 22, 1970; Box 2; Folder 44.
[1307] Ibid., "Lenin in Relation to Americans and the United States," Grass Roots Forum, October 22, 1970; Box 2; Folder 44.

capitalism under the United States. “Indeed, few of us may prove so buoyant and insightful as he, but surely more and more could strive to acquire Lenin’s sense of history and his sense of responsibility for it.,” he said in 1970.[1308]

In particular, Lenin’s pamphlet, “Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder” resonated with Steinmetz. In that work, Lenin posited that communist movements in other countries must be allowed to proceed at their own pace, that it was foolish to try to force them to conform to narrow conditions imposed by the International, and that it could well be a long time before communism encompassed the globe. Most of all, Lenin stressed that it was unreasonable for communists to expect or try to force a communist revolution to proceed in the same manner as in the Soviet Union, meaning, with a vanguard leading masses of workers. Lenin insisted that every country must make do with the revolutionaries it had, not the ones the vanguard wanted, and not split over minor ideological differences.[1309] Steinmetz thought these lessons applied as well to the United States as anywhere. He claimed Lenin had “deplored the aloofness from organized labor” of American socialist Daniel de Leon and “the syndicalist aloofness from other population elements” of IWW. Whereas he had previously been in full favor of a modification of socialism to fit a national context, Steinmetz came to share Lenin’s sentiments.[1310] Left-wing communism, he said, was “a disorder that I suspect still afflicts

[1308] Ibid., “Lenin in Relation to Americans and the United States,” Grass Roots Forum, October 22, 1970; Box 2; Folder 44.
[1309] Vladimir Lenin, “Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder,” in *Collected Works*, vol. 31 (USSR: Progress Publishers, 1964), 17–118.
[1310] “Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University,” “Lenin in Relation to Americans and the United States,” Grass Roots Forum, October 22, 1970; Box 2, Folder 44.

a lot of 'Marxists,' orthodox and revisionist… Today we have Maoist communists, Eurocommunists – reminding me of Baptist Christians, Methodist Christians, and 160 other variations."[1311] The socialist world needed more acolytes if it was to progress and that meant less sectarianism. Drawing lines, Steinmetz felt, would only promote infighting and work to the gain of the capitalists.

In 1963, he founded the American Institute of Marxist Studies (AIMS) with Marxist historian and fellow PhD Herbert Aptheker. This was inspired both by Steinmetz's renewed study of Marxism as a philosophy as well as his belief that a vacuum existed in the ideology of the New Left that Old Leftists could help to fill. He wrote to a friend "Young people are avid for Marxist instruction," and "a group of Old Leftists can do no better than work up a Marxist curriculum and advertise it.[1312]" This was not true, exactly. As Kirkpatrick Sale writes, the New Leftists who joined organizations like Students for a Democratic Society "tended to be not only ignorant of the history of the left and its current half-life in New York City, but downright uninterested… they emphasized 'morals' and 'values,' action and bodies-on-the-line, honesty and courage, not ideology and theory and what they called 'Old Leftism' and 'all that thirties horseshit.'"[1313] But Steinmetz viewed an understanding of Marxism to be a prerequisite to engagement with the wider world:

> Marxism, i.e., revolutionary socialism, is important because it informs, has a history of importance, and constitutes the ideological composition of perhaps more than 50 percent who have any theory of history, any respect for the true relationship between theory and practice, and desire

[1311] Ibid.
[1312] Ibid., Steinmetz to Bill Conway, 1962-1972 [1963 probable]; Box 3, Folder 7.
[1313] Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS.* (New York: Random House, 1973), 204–5. Sale covers Marxism and the New Left as thoroughly as anyone.

> not only to understand but also to make history. Marxism is not only the basic philosophy of the USSR and officially Eastern Europe and China, but is undoubtedly the philosophy of most intellectuals, labor leaders in Italy, France, India, and most of the newly developed states.[1314]

AIMS was very much in line with Steinmetz's inclusive and academic approach to socialism. In its literature, the organization referred to itself as "an educational, research and bibliographical institute…. [meant to] encourage Marxist and radical scholarship in the United States."[1315] It meant to provoke, Steinmetz and Aptheker claimed, "…a meaningful dialogue among Marxist and non-Marxist scholars and writers," while avoiding "sectarian and dogmatic thinking" as well as passing judgment on "political questions."[1316]

There is no question that the organization filled a void in the United States in the 1960s. There had been little serious study of Marxism in the United States country since Sidney Hook, Lewis Corey, and Meyer Shapiro, who were all anticommunists by then.[1317] Such scholars were ill disposed to work with the inevitably communist institutions that had the funds and infrastructure to produce literature about Marxism en masse in the Cold War. Indeed, cultural theorist Edward Said claimed that the intellectual bankruptcy of Marxism in America was the result of "the comparative absence of a continuous native Marxist theoretical tradition or culture to back it up and its relative isolation from any concrete political struggle."[1318] As Michael Denning argues, this led to

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[1314] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University," "Socialist Utopia and Scientific Marxism;" Box 2, Folder 44?.
[1315] American Institute for Marxist Studies, *A Bibliography of the History of the Latin-American Labor and Trade Union Movements.* ([New York, 1965).
[1316] Ibid.
[1317] Michael Denning, "'The Special American Conditions,': Marxism and American Studies," *American Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (1986).
[1318] Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983), 166.

a situation in which there was "little engagement with Marxism by American Studies scholars, and few Marxists interpreting American culture."[1319]

AIMS had an erratic publishing history, and for the most part produced bibliographies regarding indigenous Marxist movements in various countries. But it also published historically-minded work by communist authors (such as Elizabeth Gurley Flynn's *Memories of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW)*), collections of papers from symposiums, and theoretical musings. The pro-communist slant was obvious but did not necessarily compromise the work's value, no more than the anticommunist slant compromised the value of the contemporaneously published *Communism in American Life* series. Americans, however, did not take well to the existence of the AIMS, deeming it a Soviet front. Director Herbert Aptheker was subject to so much invective, including death threats, from the public that he made the organization's New York office so secure as to resemble, in the words of one visitor, "a bomb shelter."[1320] In 1968, five men attempted to murder Aptheker for his work with a homemade bomb but police arrested them in the process, after they found a hidden arsenal in a conspirator's home.[1321] Steinmetz, in Alberta for a teaching position since 1966, was unable to participate in the day-to-day operations of the AIMS and was as such subject to neither threats to or attempts on his life. Nevertheless, he was disappointed in the apparent unwillingness of Americans to learn about the ideology that thought they hated, especially in the post-

[1319] Michael Denning, "'The Special American Conditions,': Marxism and American Studies," 357.
[1320] Herbert Aptheker, Eric Foner, and Manning Marable, *Herbert Aptheker on Race and Democracy: A Reader* (University of Illinois Press, 2006), 255.
[1321] Edward C. Burks, "Anti-Red Bomb Plotter in Bronx Gets Two Years: Judge Calls Him a 'Punk' -- Two Co-Defendants Given Suspended Sentences," *New York Times*, February 6, 1968.

Stalin era. "It would seem extremely important to any reasonable person that Americans should try to learn what modern Marxism is and whether to support or oppose it," he wrote.[1322]

The Soviet Union was influential to Steinmetz on a professional level as well. Steinmetz had never been pleased with the behaviorist direction of American psychology. Behaviorism only became more entrenched during the 1950s and 60s. When he spoke of American psychology after his firing, it was usually to explain that he was done with it. He argued that modern Western psychology had "moved blithely into the projection business with significant disregard for introjection." [1323] By this, he meant that Western psychology either aimed to understand unconscious processes (as with the work of Freud and other psychoanalysts) or physically measurable ones (such as the work of James B. Watson and other behaviorists). Western psychologists, Steinmetz claimed, thought of the mind as "free in itself, self-determined and quite immune to experience," leading to an endless array of obscurantist theories such as "ego involvement, the phenomenal self, the subjective frame of reference" that attempted to explain why people did not act solely in their own best interest. [1324] They failed to recognize what Steinmetz had been saying all along: that "personality is to the individual exactly what culture is to society – and personality and culture are the products of experienced relationships – of the individual in

[1322] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University," "Socialist Utopia and Scientific Marxism," 1970s; Box 2, Folder 44.
[1323] Ibid., Catharsis of a Psychologist, Misc Writings 1938-1970, Box 1.
[1324] Ibid.

the social environment and of the society to its means of subsistence and its instrumentalities."[1325]

In 1967, Steinmetz helmed an edited volume on Soviet psychology, which he believed a superior alternative to American psychology. Soviet psychology, he claimed, considered ideas as a motive for behavior. Soviet psychologists, like Zalkind, with the support of Soviet political luminaries like Lunacharsky, Bukharin, and Stalin, "opposed the fatalism of group mind theories and genetics, and echoed faith in the perfectibility of man."[1326] Lev Vigotsky took this further, studying behavior "as the result of both biological evolution and human development, exemplified in culture and mediated by words, signs, figures, diagrams, the arts, and other symbols of communication that distinguish our species." [1327] Although Antonin Pavlov, a proponent of behaviorism, was the most important psychologist in the Soviet Union, Steinmetz found Pavlov's work on conditioning more compelling than James Watson's or BF Skinner's. Pavlov, Steinmetz wrote, focused on "the whole person," including their social influences, rather than just their biological needs.[1328]

Steinmetz also wrote about Soviet educational technique. He wrote that as early as preschool, "special importance is attached to the inculcation of moral concepts, emotions, and habits, to teaching the children to respect their elders and be friendly with other boys and girls. They are taught to play and work together, help one another, share

[1325] Ibid.
[1326] Metro Gulutsan et al., *Papers from the Seminar on Soviet Educational Psychology* (Edmonton: Dept. of Educational Psychology, University of Alberta, 1967), 47.
[1327] Ibid.
[1328] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University," Steinmetz to Holland Roberts, 1970-75; Box 5, Folder 15.

toys, and subordinate their efforts toward common goals."[1329] Steinmetz thought that the United States left the development of socially beneficial attitudes to chance or even Madison Avenue. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, took such attitudes seriously. It facilitated a society willing to remake its citizenry along the lines advocated by experts. Steinmetz argued that Lenin and Stalin (for all his faults) had been "great sociologists" themselves. This was displayed by both the Soviet education and nation-building campaigns in the Central Asian republics.[1330] Lenin and Stalin "exemplified the conviction of the American anthropologist George Boar that cohesion was needed before adhesion, that a people have to have their own language, customs, culture, before they could grasp the advantages of a federated nationalism."[1331]

Most American writers in the 1960s had mixed to negative feelings about Soviet culture. Soviet achievements in the sciences impressed them. Yet, Americans all but ruled those achievements invalid due to their association with an authoritarian regime. Since the 1940s, after all, as William Graebner explains, most American intellectuals had exchanged their ideological values for an understanding of freedom specifically opposed to the Soviet political system.[1332] In the Cold War, that Soviet education "worked" was no longer enough for educators so long as it did not recognize the freedom of the individual.

That Soviet education did not recognize the individual is, of course, the exact reason Steinmetz found Soviet education appealing in contrast to the American. In the

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[1329] Ibid., Foreword to Lenin's Grandchildren, Writings 1959-1979, Box 1.
[1330] Ibid., "Foreword to Lenin's Grandchildren," 1971; Box 1, Folder 52.
[1331] Ibid., Book Review, "Born of the Revolution," Book reviews and articles, 1958-1979; Box 1.
[1332] Graebner, *The Age of Doubt*.

early 1970s, he listed to Mike Davidow, a communist who wrote on Soviet education himself, the reasons that American education was inferior to Soviet. First, American education lacked supervision by the community of children, and maintained a "permissiveness which cloaks neglect." Second, Americans exposed children to "a degenerate culture" associating obligation and civic pride with "cynical contempt." Third, American education was compromised by the capitalist system and its corruption of schools. Fourth, American education had confusion in its curriculum because of religious influences. Fifth, American schools had large class sizes and inferior teachers.[1333] All of these problems, he reasoned, were due to inadequate social control of children or the influence of capitalism. Both were intrinsic to the American system, which Steinmetz believed would soon be surmounted by the Soviets in every sense.

The combination of political, social, and cultural influences meant that Steinmetz's transformation into a Sovietophile – every bit as solid in his self-identification as Lamont in the 30s or Kent in the 50s ever had been – was complete by the middle of the 1960s. It was a remarkable shift. Steinmetz was primed to move toward the Soviet Union by the repressive actions of the US government. The surge of attacks on radicals in the late 1940s, capped for Steinmetz with the insistence on loyalty oaths for educators by the state of California in 1954, resulted in Steinmetz's firing from San Diego State College, at which point he found himself abandoned professionally, culturally, politically, and socially. He was essentially purged by the establishment.

[1333] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University," Steinmetz to Mike Davidow, 1977; Box 5, Folder 2.

Evidently, there was no more room in the political mainstream of the United States for left-leaning radicals in the Cold War: even ones as willing to compromise on the character of reform as was Steinmetz. The United States was, as he had suspected as a child, an unjust bully that trumpeted its vaunted "rights" and "freedoms." It only applied those freedoms, he concluded, when it suited the establishment of rich white men. Cast adrift in an America without a Popular Front to accommodate his preference for coalition building and political pragmatism, Steinmetz looked for other assorted outcasts with whom he could make a difference and build something new.

His salvation lay in the American-Soviet friendship movement, which he first entered in the early 1950s. He forged an enduring Southern Californian satellite to the previously isolated New York base in the 1960s. Like most of its members, Steinmetz was attracted to the movement because he believed the Soviet Union to be an inspiring state with innovative solutions that could pass these ideas on to Americans in a more fruitful international climate. Whereas Corliss Lamont was interested in the centralized Soviet economy, and Rockwell Kent in the state's treatment of artists, Steinmetz was drawn by the Soviet approach to education. Steinmetz believed the Soviet approach respected the power of ideology as much as he himself did and that it accordingly aimed to teach children community-oriented ethics from an early age.

In his many trips to the USSR, Steinmetz became convinced that the Soviet Union was a new civilization that could transcend the accomplishments of the United States. Over a decade and a half, Steinmetz "went native," shifting from a postcapitalist with an open-minded approach to liberal reform in the United States into a devotee of Soviet

culture and politics that had little chance of finding favor in America. As he stared into the Soviet abyss, the abyss stared back, shaping Steinmetz at least as much as he shaped the American-Soviet friendship movement. Once suspicious of ideological rigidity, Steinmetz became a devoted Leninist with unbending loyalty to the Soviet Communist Party. Such was his devotion to the nation that shared his principles that he was willing to compromise his own to the extent that he would circle wagons on any and every issue, considering even the subjugation of other communist states by Soviet troops to be less atrocity than a family affair.

## Epilogue: Friends… and Enemies

After spending almost the entire 1960s either working as a lecturer in various states or abroad, Steinmetz returned to Southern California to retire. He immediately picked up where he left off. Morford asked Steinmetz to repair divisions among the leadership in the Los Angeles council in 1970. The LA branch split between an "old guard" which controlled the board of directors of the organization and a younger group of Sovietophiles who sought reform. Eugenia Wolfson led the old guard. Wolfson was a Russian medical technician who immigrated to the United States in the 1920s. She worked with RWR in New York during the 1940s as well as the NCASF and moved to Los Angeles when her husband died.[1334] She was a tough veteran of the friendship movement, having survived a 1954 HUAC attempt to smear her as an atomic spy.[1335] The

[1334] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," SCR Celebration of Eugenia Wolfson, August 23, 1980; American Russian Institute; Box 3.
[1335] "State 'Spy' Claims Atom Contacts by Red Fronter," *Sacramento Bee*, December 11, 1954.

leaders of the friendship movement loved her and Steinmetz was no exception. Wolfson and her friend Melvin Katz tried to retain control over the LA branch's operations, whereas the reformers, led by Martin Hall and Leo Koski, argued that the older group was characterized by a "lack of democracy, [and] a "refusal to compromise."[1336] Even Steinmetz claimed the board of directors was "ingrown." Morford, commenting from afar, lamented their "narrow approach."[1337]

Hall and Koski, meanwhile, were socialist immigrants from Germany and Finland, respectively, and were interested in trying to reach a wider constituency than was the cautious Wolfson. Koski argued, "Anybody, no matter what their opinion might be beyond friendship and coexistence with the Soviet Union, will be at home with us."[1338] Wolfson refused opening up the board to elections, however, because she "could not envision any harmony in working with some of these people if they should be in a position of responsibility."[1339] Wolfson feared losing control of the board to people who were less loyal to the Soviet narrative than she was. Twenty years ago there would have been no question as to where Steinmetz's sympathies would have lay. Nevertheless, in 1970, Steinmetz was torn. On the one hand, he agreed with Hall and Koski's united front approach. On the other, he worried that the reformers would dilute the American-Soviet

[1336] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Woflson to Morford, April 22, 1970; Local Councils-- LA; Box 5.
[1337] Ibid., Steinmetz to Morford, February 25, 1969; Local Councils-- LA; Box 5; ibid., Minutes, 1969; Box 1.
[1338] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University, Leo Koski, "A Point of View on Our Program," 1974; Box 9, Folder 1.
[1339] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Wolfson to Morford, April 22, 1970; Local Councils-- LA; Box 5.

friendship movement's message by acknowledging the rights of a plurality of socialist nations instead of locking step with the USSR. Indeed, there was some concern that the "criticism of our society… follows the same pattern of thought" as the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia.[1340] Specifically, Wolfson thought that Hall, a critic of the intervention, might want to be on the board of the LA society to urge the diverse membership to criticize the Soviet Union. Steinmetz thought this less likely but was nervous enough about the possibility that he initially sided with Wolfson in the dispute. His pragmatic side eventually won out to the extent that he convinced the LA branch to allow board elections and thereby preserved the unity of the organization. Nevertheless, he found the experience trying. Steinmetz, ever the united fronter, was annoyed that the other American-Soviet friends could not look past their long-term ideological differences to focus on the concrete, short term goal of educating their community.

Yet, despite the personnel difficulties, Steinmetz was effective in a leadership role because he knew what Jessica Smith did not: that American-Soviet friendship was a matter of presentation. Steinmetz, because of his experience as a politician and educator, understood that what one said was only as important as how one said it. "I am diligently seeking friends for the Soviet Union who are representative US citizens no matter what their understanding is otherwise," he wrote.[1341] He noted that this attempt at a wide audience made him few friends on the Left but was necessary given the circumstances. He fought against any of the societies of which he was a member becoming "another CP

[1340] Ibid., Morford to Steve Fritchman, June 10, 1970; Local Councils-- LA; Box 5.
[1341] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University," Steinmetz to Anatoly Mkrchhian, 1971-77; Box 5, Folder 26.

club" because of "the prospect of community isolation…".[1342] "This policy leads my friends on the left to think that I am bourgeois and possessive," he allowed, "yet in this conservative, militarized community, I know that much overt activity [on the part of the Left] will lead to the withdrawal of those in cultural activities with whom counterpart elements of your society should be in contact." [1343]As such, "I think that the principal role of our societies lies in the promotion of cultural relations: exchanges between their specialized institutions and ours, their city halls and ours, in reciprocal travel and hosting, pen-palling, private extensions of bilaterally agreed upon exchanges in the arts, sciences, and humanities…"[1344] This was the same strategy the New York NCASF found successful in the 1960s.

Steinmetz was, by all accounts, responsible for the revitalization of the American-Soviet friendship movement in Southern California during the early 1970s. He changed the name of the ARI of Southern California to the more specific (and less loaded) Society for Cultural Relations with the Soviet Union. He arranged public lectures and showings of Soviet documentary films, while hosting Soviet tourists and sailors. He also provided films and books to schools and universities, and sent a news bulletin to members beginning in 1971: at that time, the only American-Soviet friendship newsletter in existence. Under Steinmetz, the Los Angeles council had twenty reliable volunteers, a little under a hundred members, a mailing list of over 1000 names, and the ability to turn out as many as 700 people at events. The organization had its own office, income from its

[1342] Ibid.
[1343] Ibid.
[1344] Ibid., Letter to Sidney Gluck, March 14, 1977; Box 5, Folder 17.

distribution of literature, and scores of documentaries and exhibits in constant rotation in schools.[1345] Considering the fractured nature of the council only two years before, this was a sizable achievement. Steinmetz also established the precedent for outreach to the community beyond the familiar Old Left veterans and was an important factor in tying the Los Angeles organization to the Morford's national one. Steinmetz's approach lay the groundwork for the reorganization of the NCASF in 1977: an occasion marked by an emphasis on expansion of the membership and greater centralization. Steinmetz claimed that the Soviet leadership knew of his leadership and singled his organization out for praise. Morford certainly did on a consistent basis throughout the early 70s.

Having tired of members who wanted to sponsor talks by "weak and cynical speakers" like William Mandel in Los Angeles, however, who treated the movement like "an offshoot of a cultural club" (i.e., they did not seek to change American opinion on American-Soviet relations but rather merely wanted to socialize with likeminded people), Steinmetz decided to abandon the Los Angeles group and start his own group in San Diego instead.[1346] He formed his new San Diego group, called the San Diego Society for Cultural Relations with Socialist Countries, in 1973. A group close to home was attractive because it promised to save Steinmetz hours in travel time. Radical groups were rare enough in San Diego that there was little sectarianism. He also imagined that the expanded scope of his group would preclude nationalist squabbling among the membership. Because San Diego was by the 1970s a larger city than San Francisco,

[1345] Ibid., AFCR Letter; Box 7, Folder 23.
[1346] Ibid., Steinmetz, Unknown letter, 1971-76; Box 7, Folder 23.

Steinmetz thought the opportunities for friendship based upon exchange and education were limitless. For several years, the San Diego branch was everything Steinmetz hoped it would be, bringing together "a few Republican members, a number of Democrats, and many to their left," with access to plenty of universities, cultural institutions, and politicians.[1347]

Despite his initial success with the San Diego society, Steinmetz never seemed happy there. He was clearly not comfortable with the direction of the Soviet Union politically and appeared to be concerned that the nation was stagnating and failing in its leadership of the other socialist nations. He began arguing with friends and Soviet representatives that, if he was going to be providing such unqualified support for the Soviet Union's positions, he had to be given more proof that these positions were part of a wider plan. He evidently became concerned enough with the policies of the Soviet Union to write an extensive letter to the Soviet cultural relations agency (SSSD) after his trip to the Soviet Union in 1972. He appears to have been suffering a crisis of conscience. "I have recently left your country at the end of a fifth tour with mixed feelings and many questions, a sense of defeat never felt before, a feeling of being rebuffed by bureaucrats incapable of international cooperation…," he wrote.[1348] He questioned the continued commitment of the Soviet Union to an international movement for peace, arguing that he and his fellow American peace workers were "handled throughout by men who seemed to care neither to instruct us nor to learn from us beyond the needs of immediate duty,

[1347] Ibid., Letter to Sidney Gluck, March 14, 1977; Box 5, Folder 17.
[1348] Ibid., Letter to 'Soviet Comrade," not dated [1975 probable]; Box 5, Folder 26.

perfunctory hosting." [1349]Steinmetz worried the Soviets had given up on being a revolutionary, internationalist alternative to the capitalist/fascist world order of nationalist conflict in favor of adopting the culture of American capitalism. For the first time, he asserted a reluctance to take the Soviet commitment to leadership at face value: "I left with the sad feeling that a subjectivized nationalism tends to block genuine cooperation, that there may be a tragic gap between those who made and those who inherited a revolution. I have accepted on faith your claim to be producing a new socialist or communist personality; now I am seeking evidence." [1350] However, Steinmetz evidently lost his nerve. He never sent the letter. But the bitterness remained. Like Rockwell Kent, Steinmetz had bought into a myth and, in his old age, became disappointed at the rest of the world for not living up to it.

To cap this tragic narrative, Steinmetz's participation in the movement concluded in as unhappy a manner as one could imagine. First, his task of facilitating friendship was complicated by the fact – apparently unforeseen by Steinmetz – that the US government prohibited Soviet government workers from entering San Diego due to its number of military installations. He received next to no help from the Soviet embassy in San Francisco on this matter, so people-to-people exchange tours usually bypassed his city. This was problematic because the exchange tours were the most popular element of friendship programs in the 1970s. He complained to the ISAR, which ignored him. Steinmetz began to feel taken advantage of by the Soviets and upset about the lack of

[1349] Ibid.
[1350] Ibid.

publicity they provided for the American-Soviet friendship movement. Even other Soviet friends ignored his often cranky missives and the Soviet embassy in Washington refused to honor his request to meet with his son about an educational program idea. The US State Department, too, itself committed to détente with the Soviet Union since 1969, continued to give Steinmetz a cold shoulder. All the while, President Ford sent congratulations to Holland Roberts (who Steinmetz judged a fair parallel to his own contribution to American-Soviet friendship) for his long service to the cause of American-Soviet relations in 1975.[1351] Even as tensions between the United States and Soviet Union lessened, Steinmetz seemed to remain unappreciated.

He blamed his isolation not on his own esoteric expectations but rather on the narrow-mindedness of the American-Soviet friendship constituency. Steinmetz was growing concerned about the influence of nationalists and communists on the friendship societies. Regarding the former, the American-Soviet friendship societies were becoming too interested in "identity politics" such as the anti-racism program, he said. The pro-Israeli sentiments of so many members both "bored" and concerned him because they emphasized what was a controversial issue in the friendship movement, and a divisive one with the USSR. Regarding the latter, Steinmetz rebelled against the increasingly bellicose, anti-American statements coming from some of the local societies, who were drifting into the hands of veteran communists who failed to understand the public. He argued that "political leftism by enthusiastic members in full democratic control" was a

[1351] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Steinmetz to Morford, July 8, 1975; Box 5, Folder 43.

"danger" to any chance of cooperation with the political mainstream.[1352] It was along those lines that Steinmetz fought, unsuccessfully, to retain his organization's broadly-aimed name when the NCASF formally absorbed it in 1977, rather than accept the "American-Soviet Friendship" branding. "Americans are so brainwashed and in San Diego so constantly propagandized negatively that we should be known for information, hospitality, and non-partisanship," he wrote. The "political martyrdom" of taking on the compromised "American-Soviet Friendship" label was, he deemed, "not brave, but foolish."[1353]

However, it was the first problem, identify politics, that did Steinmetz in. By 1979, the San Diego council became dominated by a group of Jewish members from New York, led by Rose Sparer. She had been friends with Steinmetz for several years and both had worked on the cause without much friction. In Steinmetz's telling, Sparer and her faction became angry with Steinmetz because of his defense of the Soviet Union against charges of anti-Semitism at meetings. Sparer also wanted to have a closer relationship with the Communist Party than Steinmetz did. Sparer's ideology – Jewish "nationalism" combined with strong communist sympathies – was a kind of conservative radicalism, all about nostalgia for a leftist past rather than a desire for change in the present and future. Her positions confused Steinmetz, and made him think that Sparer was just seeking conflict. Steinmetz was particularly annoyed at Sparer's invitation to Steinmetz's friend Herbert Aptheker to speak at a council event: Steinmetz deemed the communist Aptheker

[1352] Ibid., Steinmetz to Holland Roberts, 1972-1977 [early 1970s probable]; Box 5, Folder 43.
[1353] Ibid., Steinmetz to membership, December 2, 1978; Box 5, Folder 43.

far too partisan a presence for conservative San Diego to bear. Steinmetz dismissed the Sparer group as infantile leftists:

> Such folk readily become cultists and glory in their singularity, 'proletarians' entertaining foreigners educated way beyond them, bourgeois in background and ethics, eager for instant 'friends' rather than the labor of winning such, contemptuous of 'cultural relations' in a community both rightly and wrongly proud of such, deaf to argument and far more concerned with myoptic [sp] control than with stated purpose and public need.[1354]

They were, he thought, the stereotypical "fellow travelers" discussed in so much Cold War literature. Narrow-minded, inflexible, uninterested in genuine debate or community engagement, star-struck by Soviet visitors: these were Soviet fans, not Soviet friends. Indeed, Steinmetz wrote, "'Friendship' is a relationship which I have not found the seven [Sparer group members] capable of manifesting toward me, the National Council, or the USSR (or each other)." [1355]

Conflict was inevitable and Sparer struck first. She packed a December, 1978 meeting with supporters who spontaneously demanded an election for the leadership of the organization Steinmetz had founded. She did not even inform many of Steinmetz's friends about the meeting. Steinmetz lost the ensuing election to Sparer by four votes. It was, according to Steinmetz, a "sneaky and invalid" coup.[1356] Steinmetz was incensed to the extent that he withdrew from the organization entirely and told Morford he intended to set up a rival San Diego society of his supporters. Here, again, Sparer was the savvier politician. With the bulk of the membership behind her, she successfully cast Steinmetz

[1354] "Harry Steinmetz Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Services, San Diego State University," Steinmetz to membership, December 20, 1978; Box 5, Folder 17.
[1355] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Steinmetz to membership, December 20, 1978; Box 5, Folder 43.
[1356] Ibid.

as unstable and unreasonable. Phil Honor, the new corresponding secretary of the San Diego society, argued to Morford that treating with Steinmetz "would only sidetrack our efforts and divert our attention from the important tasks at hand."[1357] Morford's records suggest that Sparer made personal appeals to the National Council for the legitimacy of her organization and the heretical nature of Steinmetz's, asserting that Steinmetz was an anti-Semite who constantly railed against "the Jews from New York."[1358]

On the verge of convincing Ewart Guinier to become the first black chairman of the NCASF, accusations of racism were too much for Morford to dismiss in 1978. In the interest, ironically, of unity, Morford told Steinmetz that the National Council would no longer accept his leadership and drove the point home by requesting that the Soviet embassies no longer deal with him. Steinmetz left no records of this entire episode in his own files. Presumably, he was still too angry when he arranged the files to keep the material. This lends credence to Morford's claims that Steinmetz was heartbroken. Steinmetz's letters to Morford in the National Council files confirm this. It was a last, ignominious gut punch to his political ambition. "Support of peace through the promotion of friendly USA-USSR relations has been my life," he wrote to Morford.[1359] "Where have I fallen down?"[1360] Steinmetz died in 1982, never having received an answer.

[1357] Ibid., Phil Honor to Morford, January 12, 1979; Box 5, Folder 43.
[1358] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 376.
[1359] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Steinmetz to membership, December 20, 1978; Box 5, Folder 43.
[1360] Ibid.

## Epilogue and Conclusion

In 1982, humorist PJ O'Rourke, then carving out a reputation as something of a conservative version of gonzo journalist Hunter S Thompson, wrote a devastating piece for *Harper's Monthly.* "Fellow Travelers: Up the Volga with the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship" told the story of O'Rourke's fourteen-day journey down the Volga River in the Soviet Union as part of the so-called Volga Peace Cruise. The Volga Peace Cruise was a Soviet-sponsored trip for the purpose of educating Americans about the Soviet dedication to peace and other humanist causes ("I never did get it, what this trip was all about," offers O'Rourke).[1361] O'Rourke signed up for the cruise as a lark, thinking that he would at the very least get to meet some Old Leftists for the first time in his life. He imagined these radicals "to be admirable and nasty, like Lillian Hellman, or brilliant, mysterious, denying everything, like Alger Hiss, or – best of all – hard-bitten and cynical but still willing to battle oppression, like Rick in *Casablanca."*[1362] There were no Bogarts on this trip, however. What O'Rourke got instead was a boatload of American-Soviet friends from the NCASF. O'Rourke sums them up as a group of insufferable phonies. "These were people who believed everything about the Soviet Union was perfect, but they were bringing their own toilet paper," he wrote.[1363]

O'Rourke deems the NCASF a Soviet fan club full of deluded people who must not be taken seriously. He suggests its members are universally uncritical *Pravda*

[1361] P. J O'Rourke, *Republican Party Reptile: Essays and Outrages* (New York; [Boston, Mass.]: Atlantic Monthly Press; Distributed by Little, Brown, 1987), 37.
[1362] Ibid., 38.
[1363] Ibid.

mouthpieces. They fetishize memorized statistics and factoids without concern for their veracity or source. They express strong opinions but the minds generating them have been sterilized of opposing perspectives and debatable points. They lack the curiosity to learn about the Soviet Union in depth: they assume it is superior to the United States based upon a lifetime of bitterness toward their home country rather than any quest for reliable evidence. A running joke in the piece is that the American-Soviet friends ask the same three questions to every Russian they meet – "What is the cost of housing in the Soviet Union as a percentage of worker wages?" is a favorite – and are awed each time by the Soviet guide's propagandistic answers every single time.[1364]

The NCASF members are unable to handle even minor disagreement with their hollow pronouncements. These are people, O'Rourke suggests, who have no interest in expanding the audience of their cause and, at any rate, lack the ability to do so. The American-Soviet friends are unable to get along with anyone else: They are rude, complain about everything, and are impossible to satisfy. They are content to agree with each other while avoiding anyone who steps to the left or right of Soviet doctrine as they understand it. The American-Soviet friends pester Soviet children about their politically incorrect language and prudishly wag their fingers at O'Rourke for "going to see the Soviet Union through the bottom of a vodka glass."[1365]After a particularly frustrating Saturday spent with the American-Soviet friends, O'Rourke's sole entry for Sunday is "Sunday I was drunk."[1366]

[1364] Ibid., 48.
[1365] Ibid., 44.
[1366] Ibid., 52.

The most embarrassing part of the piece, and probably the most accurate, is the relationship O'Rourke's depicts between the American-Soviet friends and their Soviet hosts. The Soviet guides and officials, it seems, find the Americans every bit as unendurable as O'Rourke did and have no idea what to do with them. "I think the Russians had decided, both privately and officially, that these Volga peace cruisers were inconsequential people, unable to influence American policy in any important way," O'Rourke wrote.[1367] Soviet officials seem to see the peace cruise, instead, as a chore. "Progressives," one Russian tour guide laments, "Everything must be made perfect for them."[1368]

O'Rourke's article is obviously intended to make the American-Soviet friends look ridiculous. It is very much of its time: a right-libertarian reaction against the politicized 1960s, in which the American Left is mocked for its persistent (supposedly insincere) rhetoric about social justice and equality. The rest of the world, O'Rourke suggests, has moved on. It is a cynical perspective for a cynical milieu. O'Rourke represented a post-Watergate generation that, in the words of Bruce J. Schulman, was stricken with "a widespread cynicism about politics, politicians, and government itself as an instrument of the collective good."[1369] They had witnessed the idealism of the 1960s crumble in the face of war and political corruption. Such people could not help but guffaw at the sight of a group of self-proclaimed "radicals" who expressed unreserved faith in the Soviet government.

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[1367] Ibid., 54.
[1368] Ibid., 47.
[1369] Bruce J. Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (Da Capo Press, 2002), 48.

As regards the NCASF, however, O'Rourke is perhaps not off-target. What makes the work so effective and telling for a scholar of the American-Soviet friendship movement is how precisely O'Rourke – an American-Soviet friendship novice – is able to identify and depict the crippling flaws of the post-Morford, post-reorganization NCASF: the conformity, the cultish faith, the banality of their program. As discussed in Chapter Six, Steinmetz and others had asserted in the late 1970s that the NCASF had become a "culture club" devoted to nostalgia. Morford, writing to the Institute of American-Soviet Relations in Moscow in 1983, also claimed to notice a gradual shift in the attitudes of the NCASF membership:

> The "outreach" injunction has quite well sunk into the minds of our people but they hesitate to move into the broader community, I am led to believe, for fear of rebuff. Thus they sell that wider community short. For, in spite of all the deliberate and organized anti-Soviet propaganda perpetrated in our country, I find people generally much more understanding of the falsity of much propaganda and willing to consider the promotion of American-Soviet understanding. Coming partly, it is true, out of their deprecation of the arms race and the survival crisis into which we are thrust, but also in positive terms: "I think we can live together with the Soviet Union without giving way to communism."[1370]

The manner in which O'Rourke, Morford, and Steinmetz paint the NCASF in its later years suggests that the NCASF was not long for this world. Indeed, it was not. The beginning of the end had been the 1977 reorganization, when Morford tried to guarantee that the NCASF survived his upcoming retirement by giving board member positions to the heads of the local societies. The consequences were not really felt until Morford retired in 1983. Without a strong presence from Christian socialists or independent socialists, the remaining Communists refused to budge from their comfort zones, meeting

[1370] "Richard Morford Papers; TAM.361," "Outstanding Failures of the Present Administration;" Folder 30, Box 10.

only to socialize and reminisce. The organization did not so much slide into irrelevance as fall off a cliff.

The decline was not for lack of trying. Before he left, Morford had done his best to prevent the organization from entering a leadership crisis in his absence. He had even participated in selecting his successor. Alan Thomson, a Connecticut minister, activist, and an occasional participant in the Boston American-Soviet friendship affiliate, was eventually selected for the executive directorship. He began work in 1981. It is not difficult to see why Morford liked the idea of Thomson as a successor. Thomson was, in many ways, a more polished version of who Morford himself had been in 1946. Thomson too was a Presbyterian minister who went to Union Theological Seminary. Thomson was also a Christian socialist: a dying breed in 1980 but in Morford's reckoning an essential one for the struggle for American-Soviet friendship. However, Thomson had also outdone Morford in many respects. He graduated from Union (Morford had dropped out after being ordained), taught at Yale Divinity School, and had done missionary work in Southeast Asia. Thomson had even run a political campaign in 1978, managing the Communist candidacy of Joelle Fishman for Congress. He had all the credentials Morford wanted and then some. Morford saw himself in Thomson. He also saw what he himself could have been had his career not been sidelined by the Great Depression. Morford happily gave Thomson the reins of the NCASF and expressed utter confidence in him to the Soviets.[1371]

[1371] Morford stayed on as "Director Emeritus" for three years, until 1983, to placate a nervous board of directors. Thomson did not appear to appreciate it. Ibid., "Outstanding Failures of the Present Administration," 1983, p. 25–26; Folder 30, Box 10.

In practice, however, the two men could not have been more different. Thomson was, by all accounts, a nervous and difficult man. He had none of Morford's inspirational qualities and little of his vision. Morford summarized Thomson's position in 1983, "...he had no vision of campaign on the peace issues… No consideration given to national or local action to mobilize the forces of the people. [Thomson thought] We would do best just to hook on to coalition efforts nationally or locally."[1372] Without an independent voice of its own, the NCASF could not establish a program that could motivate its members. Further, Thomson was frequently overwhelmed with the tasks expected of him. This was not altogether surprising given the twelve-hour days Morford had been accustomed to but was a shock to the board of directors all the same. Morford was sympathetic to Thomson's difficulties but began to doubt that Thomson had the necessary temperament for the job. He explained to the Soviet cultural organization, the ISAR, that "…I would have to say that to maintain an organization requires a person more adapted to the ways of administration than Alan. He is not an organizational man; this is not his strength."[1373]

Meanwhile, it turned out that Thomson's sympathies less resembled those of a Christian socialist than those of an old guard Communist: a perspective which already had ample representation in the NCASF, and one not capable of moderating the organization's tendency toward Soviet apologia. He wrote constant statements on behalf of the Council that were far more incendiary than Morford ever allowed. These

[1372] Ibid., "Disaster Management Review," November 10, 1983; Folder 30, Box 10.
[1373] Ibid., "Management Crisis Review," November 10, 1983; Box 10, Folder 30.

statements were universally in line with Soviet positions, with no room for nuance or pangs of conscience. Thomson's response to the Soviet Union downing of Korean Air Lines flight 007 on August 31, 1983, is illustrative. The Soviets destroyed KAL 007 after the plane veered into their territory after a navigation error. Over two-hundred-fifty civilians were killed. The Soviets, against all logic, insisted that the flight was an American spy mission. It was one of the tensest moments of the Cold War: one that showed the real-world complications of the military preparedness of the previous forty years.[1374] As with the invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia, Americans were angry. Thomson did not factor any of this into his response. He asserted in a statement, "It seems now plausible to suggest that Korean Air Lines flight 007 deliberately violated Soviet airspace and that appropriate warning steps were taken before the plane was shot down."[1375] Thomson's statement was an aggressive dismissal of public opinion and a signal that he and his organization were indifferent to other perspectives and feelings.

Thomson's deficiencies were aggravated further by the chairmanship of Ewart Guinier. Guinier, who took over the chairmanship from William Howard Melish (again pressed into service after Rockwell Kent died) in 1980, was a trade unionist, politician, and the head of Harvard's Afro-American Studies Department. The board believed Guinier would immediately confer legitimacy on the NCASF among the black Americans

[1374] On the KAL 007 incident, see Alexander Dallin, *Black Box: KAL 007 and the Superpowers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). An independent investigation was documented in International Civil Aviation Organization, *Report of the Completion of the Fact-Finding Investigation Regarding the Shooting down of Korean Air Lines Boeing 747 (flight KE 007) on 31 August 1983* (Montreal: International Civil Aviation Organization, 1993).
[1375] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," Fact Sheet: The Airliner Epsidoe Begins to Unravel, September 14, 1983; Box 3, Folder 31.

that the organization had been trying to court for decades. Further, he presented the possibility of expansion into labor with his trade union contacts. But Guinier had an agenda far too ambitious and far too far afield for the membership's comfort. In a 1980 board meeting, he announced, "When it comes to a showdown, we must recognize that the conflicts of the world are, at their core, racial conflicts. Racism is the basic problem in our world."[1376] Guinier was suggesting that anti-racism become the Council's primary agenda. Asking the largely Stalinist membership to see the world through the lens of race was like asking them to learn a foreign language. Few were willing to put in the effort. While no one formally objected to Guinier's revision of the NCASF mission statement, in practice it was ignored completely. Guinier was a brilliant man but had next to no influence on the organization's day-to-day operations. Thomson was in complete control.[1377]

There is reason to believe that the Soviet cultural agency, the ISAR, was also disturbed by the changes in leadership at the NCASF. Journalist Kathy Kahn, who traveled in ISAR circles in the early 1980s, explained in an interview with Morford that the Soviets thought Thomson to be too close to the Communist Party. She reported that Fedosov knew that institutional separation from the Party was a necessity in order to achieve credibility for the NCASF in the United States. She thought that Fedosov was "very aware of the situation [of the NCASF] now, the weakness of it, and he compares it with other organizations that are now cropping up which do not have the link [to the

[1376] Ibid., "Outstanding Failures of the Present Administration," p. 23-24; Folder 30, Box 10.
[1377] Ibid., "Outstanding Failures of the Present Administration;" Box 10, Folder 30.

CPUSA] and therefore have a better chance of reaching a wide public…"[1378] Indeed, in the absence of effective leadership in the NCASF, dozens of new organizations surfaced in the United States filling its role. They were mostly specialist groups who tackled one element of the NCASF's old program apiece. These organizations included Promoting Enduring Peace, which conducted peace campaigns with the public; Soviet American Sail, which sponsored tours of the Soviet Union on sailboats full of both American and Soviet citizens; and Peace Fleece, which, remarkably, sought peace through the exchange of yarn. None of these groups were burdened with the NCASF's Cold War reputation.

The NCASF was dying by the mid-1980s. Its program lacked outreach and its coffers were dry. There just were not enough of the core Old Leftists left to support an ambitious program. In 1987, Thomson went to the USSR, desperately seeking the support necessary to get the NCASF program into respectable shape. In particular, he had been looking toward upgrading the Council's film library, which had become the Council's most popular feature. The project, he estimated, would cost $16,500.[1379] The Soviets were notoriously stingy with foreign currency. Yet, they gave Thomson cash in Moscow, which he smuggled into the country without declaration. The FBI had infiltrated the NCASF for decades and had numerous agents in the organization by the 1980s, including some leaders. They did not miss their chance. Barbara Makuch had joined the NCASF in the 1970s specifically to help the FBI. Over the course of a decade, she worked her way into a leadership role in the Buffalo American-Friendship society. She played a

[1378] Kahn and Morford, "Richard Morford Biographical Manuscripts," 1: 440.
[1379] "National Council of American-Soviet Friendship Records; TAM 134," NCASF Film Library Proposal, May 1987; Box 7, Folder 86.1.

prominent part in the 1977 reorganization and had become a close confidante of Thomson's by 1987. Makuch managed, on hidden camera, to get Thomson to admit to bringing money into the United States that he had received from a Soviet cultural agency. This was an admission of violating US currency laws. For what it is worth, the smuggled cash amounted to about $17,000.[1380]

The NCASF was left leaderless and disintegrated quickly. The tragedy was that, given time and the absence of the Thomson scandal, new chairman John Randolph – a beloved actor and self-described "old radical" – might have reversed the course of the NCASF.[1381] His assumption of the chairmanship in 1988 brought press the NCASF had not seen in years. [1382] The events he sponsored were full of Hollywood and Broadway celebrities. He could get Ed Koch, the mayor of New York, to answer his calls and even managed to secure the participation of a New York City Councilwoman to attend an NCASF event. But with Thomson's arrest, few NCASF members had the nerve to fight any more. The organization was largely defunct even before the Berlin Wall came down in 1989.

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, American-Soviet friendship was likewise finished as a cause. What was left of the NCASF was dissolved by Randolph that same year. Several groups, however, emerged from its ashes. Noting the continued difficulties in relations between the United States and Russia, most of these organizations

[1380] This case is discussed in significant detail in Harvey Klehr, *The Communist Experience in America: A Political and Social History* (Transaction Publishers, 2010).
[1381] Janice Arkatov, "John Randolph: An Actor's Life Overlaps Art, Activism," *Los Angeles Times*, March 12, 1988.
[1382] Randolph became chairman in 1988, taking over from John Cherveny, a Detroit businessman who became chairman in 1985.

simply substitute the Russian Federation for the Soviet Union. Some of them remain today. US Friends of the Soviet People (USFSP) has a nearly identical structure to the NCASF and was founded by former NCASF member Angelo D'Angelo. It claims 200 dues-paying members.[1383] Strongest in New York and Los Angeles, the USFSP seems to serve as a nostalgia club for former NCASF members and their children. Its website is full of republished articles from current issues of *Pravda* and articles of revisionist Soviet history (its writers continue to assert that the Moscow Trials were legitimate and argue that Khrushchev's speech was all lies). The USFSP adores Vladimir Putin and spends most of its time denouncing US intervention in Ukraine. Other organizations have arrived to cover the cultural part of the NCASF program. The American-Russian Cultural Cooperation Foundation has impressive academic and corporate support and facilitates productions of Russian entertainment in the United States.[1384] The Russia & America Goodwill Association, meanwhile, is an apolitical group dedicated to preserving peace between the nations. Its founder, Vladislav Krasnov, is a Russian citizen who carved out an academic career in the United States beginning in the 1960s and claims to have had a history with the NCASF.[1385]

From an intellectual perspective, however, such groups have little to do with the NCASF we have been discussing here. The new groups are either utterly non-political or are successors to the Thomson-led, Communist-dominated NCASF of the 80s. As this

[1383] See www.usfriendsofthesovietpeople.org
[1384] See www.a-rccf.org
[1385] See www.raga.org

dissertation has demonstrated, the NCASF between 1943 and 1977 was a different animal. One reason why the NCASF was so unique was the width of the program. The NCASF began as an advocacy organization and during World War II was able to find the ear of many legislators in the United States on matters of foreign policy. Yet, it was also a grassroots political organization. In the late-1950s and 1960s the NCASF facilitated cultural contacts, both on a professional and individual level, sending doctors, teachers, farmers, and children to meet their Soviet counterparts. In the early 1940s, the Council facilitated exchange of artwork between the US and USSR and hosted conferences where American and Soviet scientists could discuss their work. Cultural exchange dropped off when the Cold War began in 1947. But after the Lacy-Zarubin Agreement was signed by both countries in 1958 – which allowed entertainers and technical experts to travel between the countries with fewer restrictions – the NCASF worked with Russian émigré Sol Hurok to bring Soviet entertainers to the United States. Many Americans first encountered Soviet cultures through troupes sponsored by the NCASF, including the Moiseyev Dancers and Bolshoi Ballet.

Lastly, the NCASF was an educational organization over a thirty-five-year period. While the Council's ability to educate Americans about the Soviet Union was compromised by its subversive reputation, it nevertheless often served as the only existing outlet for information about Soviet culture and society for the American public outside of New York and Los Angeles during the early Cold War. The Council distributed information about the Soviet Union to tens of thousands of educational institutions and individuals, providing sources on topics such as Soviet education, health,

religion, and sports to anyone with a library card. When Elizabeth Moos published *The Educational System of the Soviet Union* under the NCASF imprint in 1950, the NCASF began a revival of interest in Soviet education that peaked with the launch of Sputnik in 1957. The NCASF showed that an audience existed in the United States for information about the Soviet Union and met these needs until mainstream publishers began to tackle the topic in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

This wide array of cultural activities reflected the ideological diversity of the NCASF. The original American-Soviet friends who joined Friends of Soviet Russian and other organizations in the 1920s were Communist Party members with the occasional liberal and independent socialist mixed in. Scholars of subsequent periods have presumed that this was the case for the NCASF as well. In World War II and the early Cold War, however, the NCASF was a singular institution in its ability to provide a home for a wide range of dissenting traditions in the United States. In the absence of the Popular Front after 1948, the NCASF was the sole organization in which communists, Christian socialists, and independent socialists could work together and discuss alternatives to Cold War domestic and foreign policy imperatives. These three groups, which together were the constituency of the friendship movement, were able to use the NCASF to survive McCarthyist attacks while they continued to pursue visions of progress and justice that advocates of the Cold War had ruled obsolete, foolish, and treasonous. Under the innocuous rubric of friendship and cultural exchange, the friends managed to keep ideas about central planning, progressive education, techno-utopianism, social realism, and gradualist socialist reform in circulation. While the circuit had indeed become much

smaller since the peak of the Popular Front in the mid-1930s, the ideas were kept alive and moving nonetheless.

Communists found the NCASF particularly useful, as it was one of the few places in the postwar United States where they continued to be an accepted part of a left-liberal coalition. After having worked well with other leftist groups during the Popular Front era of the middle 1930s, communists had burned most of their bridges by the end of Henry Wallace's 1948 campaign. Radicals with long memories recalled the communist shift toward Nazi Germany after the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact in 1939: something which had created "a legacy of mistrust" toward the CPUSA and its advocates.[1386] This legacy was cemented with the communist attacks on vulnerable American Trotskyists in 1941 and the negative press coverage of the Party's purge of ideologically unreliable members after the war. By 1949, communists had been expelled from the large labor unions and the leadership of many progressive organizations, including the ACLU. There were few places where other radicals would work with communists during the Cold War. The NCASF was, however, one such place. Especially during the early Cold War, its willingness to allow communists to serve on its board commended the organization to those who still hoped that a united Left could make a comeback in the postwar period. Aside from the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom – a comparatively tiny organization during the early Cold War – no non-communist organization in the U.S. pushed so hard to allow communists a voice. The NCASF was rewarded for its tolerance with a steady influx of communists, who, through their administrative acumen, allowed

[1386] Lieberman, *The Strangest Dream*, 10.

the organization to reach more people and raise more money than comparably sized groups.

The NCASF communists were more overtly radical than the vast majority of the communist in the CPUSA. They proved more resilient and less critical of the Soviet Union. Khrushchev's revelations about Stalin, for example, led to the boarding up of *The Daily Worker* and a near split in the Party. John Gates' attempt to reform the Party enjoyed such support that, as Starobin explains, "…American Communists, in their upheaval of 1956-7… were far ahead of the international movement in their independent thinking, their desire for a national form, and their search for a new kind of Marxism-Leninism."[1387] The communists in the NCASF, however, seem to have been unshaken in their convictions. Ted Bayer and Jessica Smith, the two communist leaders on the NCASF's board, did not express any ambiguity, let alone doubt, about the Soviet actions that year. Both of them went into immediate damage control for both Khrushchev's speech and the invasion of Hungary to a degree that might have made William Z. Foster jealous. Constituent letters to the NCASF board of directors point to similar reactions by the communists in the membership. We must conclude that either the NCASF was joined by the most loyal of the loyal communists (a likely possibility), or that paying such close attention to the Soviet narrative led to a high degree of faith in that narrative. At any rate, the NCASF communists provide a glimpse at a constituency that was rarely seen in the United States. While no Cold War organization absorbed a significant part of the "more than a million" people who participated in communist causes during the Popular Front

[1387] Starobin, *American Communism in Crisis, 1943-1957*, 224.

days, there were hundreds, perhaps thousands, of them within or on the periphery of the NCASF.[1388] None of the few remaining Left organizations that accepted communists, such as AJ Muste's American Forum for Socialist Education, could boast so many.

In addition to providing a refuge for hardcore communists, the NCASF was important for its role in rallying Christian socialists and independent socialists. Whereas the communists had an existing organization to accommodate them (albeit after 1956 a greatly weakened one), there was no radical left organization as receptive in the Cold War to Christian socialist initiatives as the NCASF. Most leftist Christians followed Reinhold Niebuhr to the Right after World War II. The few Christians who remained in the radical Left were generally "treated as cranks or worse" in the postwar.[1389] Yet in the NCASF, Christian socialist leaders enjoyed high standing. The NCASF was run from 1946 to 1981 by a Christian socialist, Richard Morford, who treated the organization as his ministry. Between 1947 and 1949, both the chairperson and executive director of the NCASF were Christian socialists. Only the Fellowship for Reconciliation and War Resisters International were larger and more Christian socialist-influenced organizations than the NCASF at the beginning of the Cold War. No secular, American-born group could claim to have as many Christian socialists in positions of power.

The NCASF was able to accommodate a diverse array of independent socialists. From civil libertarians to postcapitalists to Debsian socialists to third-way proto-New Leftists, the NCASF contained individuals from all over the socialist map. After Norman

[1388] Ibid., 230.
[1389] Phillips, *A Kingdom on Earth*, 286.

Thomas' "all-inclusive" American Socialist Party was destroyed by sectarianism in the late 1930s, there was no organization for socialists with an ecumenical ethos in the United States. This remained the case until the American Socialist Party was reformed in 1956. In the interim, the NCASF served as a replacement for Thomas' 1930s ideal, welcoming all socialist creeds into the fold. Along with Trotskyist parties like the Socialist Workers Parties and the few left-liberal coalitions such as the American Labor Party, the NCASF was a rallying point for socialists unwilling to join the Communist Party during World War II and the early Cold War.

While the independent socialists were by definition a group with many different agendas, in general they were focused upon using the NCASF to reach a large and broad audience. While the Christian socialists emphasized conscience and the communists obedience to the USSR, the independent socialists sought to bring the message of American-Soviet friendship to the American people in a manner they could stomach. Corliss Lamont and Rockwell Kent successfully linked the NCASF with the wider civil liberties struggle of the early Cold War and won important victories against McCarthyist repression. Examples include the U.S. District Court's dismissal of HUAC's charges against Lamont in 1954 and Kent's winning of his right to travel in 1956. These cases highlighted the domestic costs of the Cold War to Americans. Mary van Kleeck and Margaret Lamont, meanwhile, were independent socialists who saw a lack of education about the Soviet Union in the United States and tried to convince the NCASF to switch gears to address it. Author William Mandel lectured leftist organizations on the necessity of considering both Soviet pros *and* cons, with the aim of producing a Cold War narrative

between that of the communists and anti-communists. Businessmen Mandel Terman and Edward Lamb advocated for the NCASF to aim its outreach at American companies, emphasizing enormous trade possibilities if only the relationship between the United States and Soviet Union became more stable.

The question that occurs to many people when they are presented with the concept of the American-Soviet friendship movement is what attracted so many people to an advocacy group for the Soviet Union in the first place. What was it about the Soviet Union, they ask, that made such a varied group of people dedicate their lives to a cause aimed at softening tensions with it? Through analysis of the intellectuals who led the NCASF and American-Soviet friendship movement, we can discern two main causes of pro-Soviet enchantment. One was economic: the friendship movement attracted those who were quite comfortable with the idea that the state, even a strong centralized one, must play a big role in society. Many American-Soviet friends saw the New Deal as a good first step toward reforms that civil society showed no ability to fix on its own. The institutions of civil society, they reasoned, simply left too many decisions to chance, and in so doing allowed individuality to be coopted by the already dominant capitalist class. Efficiency, happiness, and community suffered. The leftists in the friendship movement were the successors to Roosevelt's coalition and belonged to a lineage of economic reformers which extended through techno-utopians, technocrats, Debsian socialists, and agrarian populists. Leaders motivated by American economic reform were drawn to what they perceived as the experimental nature of Soviet economic policies. They were interested in using the NCASF to educate Americans and convince them of the necessity

of using the increased administrative capacity of the state and technological innovations of modern industry to implement economic planning as practiced in the Soviet Union. By coordinating production on a national level based on the needs of citizens rather than on profit, NCASF leaders saw that the Soviet Union was able to escape from the catastrophe of the Great Depression. In the long run, they wanted to see economic planning of this sort imitated or improved upon by Americans.

The second motive was the desire to forge a united-front counter to the bipartisan anti-communist, pro-Cold War consensus in America. In a nation where dissent was increasingly criminalized and war seen as good business, American-Soviet friends held to the view that peace remained a worthwhile and realistic goal in the world and, more generally, that the welfare of the people should take priority over the profits of munitions manufacturers. Many NCASF leaders drew on the spirit of unity and inclusivity of the Left during the 1930s and early 40s. Having been encouraged by the spirit of cooperation which animated the United States in both the Popular Front and during World War II, many American-Soviet friends sought to preserve a unified left-liberal front against the politics of exclusion and demonization which surfaced in the Cold War.

Such a perspective has a heritage in most of the social justice and pacifist movements in American history, from the transcendentalists and the abolitionists to the Christian socialists and the Wobblies. As wildly different as these movements were from one another, they all sought to part the "mist of prejudice:" to argue against the inevitability of conflict with "others" who had been vilified with the implicit or explicit approval of the American government. While the transcendentalists and abolitionists

battled racism, and the Christian socialists and Wobblies class discrimination, the NCASF worked to counter the Russophobia and anti-communism they believed was at the heart of the Cold War. The NCASF increased awareness of Soviet culture and society, aiming to humanize the Soviet "adversary" and in the process show that, contrary to the apocalyptic narrative of Cold Warriors from Truman to Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., conflict between the United States and Soviet Union was not inevitable. For people who believed that peace between the two superpowers was possible and even necessary, no cause could be so important.

Most of the American-Soviet friends I have analyzed drew on both of these sets of motivations to varying degrees. Corliss Lamont, a civil libertarian and independent socialist, found that two of his intellectual paths, pragmatism and techno-utopianism, joined together and pointed to the Soviet Union in the 1930s. Lamont was a student of John Dewey in the 1920s. He advocated for a Deweyian pragmatist approach to philosophy. Dewey argued that an idea had value if it had the "capacity to guide thinkers toward a successful or satisfactory resolution of some palpable social problem." In other words, solutions to a problem should not be judged by how well they correspond to previous ideas or theoretical constructs, but rather upon how well they correspond to reality as it presented itself in the course of a scientific analysis of that problem. The proper moral action was the one that empirical inquiry determined would most contribute to the welfare, and particularly the freedom, of everyone involved.

Lamont's techno-utopianism, meanwhile, drew on the work of HG Wells. In his political writings, Wells argued for an international governing body that would resolve

disputes between the nations and thereby prevent existential threats like World War I. Wells championed the League of Nations as a concept after World War I, but abandoned it when the organization proved less ambitious than Wells had hoped. But his science fiction writings went further still, asserting that humanity could create a perfect society if it embraced a fully centralized state reliant on technological-driven efficiency. Many people in the United States and Britain during the late 19th and early 20th century advocated similar ideas, with the common thread being an emphasis on the community over the individual and the urgency of adopting an economic system based around efficiency rather than profit. Lamont, after reading and meeting Wells, was among these techno-utopians. He argued that a society focused upon "a balanced and even distribution of capital resources" and "intelligent flexibility" would allow for unparalleled prosperity for Americans.[1390]

Wells and Dewey both went to the USSR, and both were impressed by what they saw. Wells saw great promise in the Soviet emphasis on planning and centralization. While he found much of Communism as practiced after the Russian Revolution to be abhorrent and cultish, he suggested that the Soviet focus on efficiency would lay the foundation for a successful state the world would ignore at its own peril. Dewey, too, found Communism overly doctrinaire, but argued that abstruse Marxist theories were a less important part of the Soviet experiment than the liberation of the Soviet people in the 1917 Revolution from the shackles of tsarist tyranny. Dewey in the late 1920s and early 1930s argued that the Soviet Union was a pragmatic society in action, one run by and for

[1390] Lamont, *You Might like Socialism; a Way of Life for Modern Man.*, 66.

the people and capable of molding itself according to the exigencies of the social good in the modern world. Lamont went to the Soviet Union for himself based on these recommendations in 1933 and agreed with their assessments.

Lamont found in the Soviet Union a subject in which the two strains of his thought – techno-utopianism and pragmatism – combined for the first time. When Lamont looked to the Soviet Union, then, he saw not only what it was, but what it could be, and what it could contribute to the future of world civilization. His agenda in joining FSU in 1933 and founding the NCASF in 1943 was to show Americans the USSR's virtues as a pragmatic, techno-utopian society. Throughout the 1930s and 40s, Lamont wanted to convince Americans of the need to adopt a program of economic planning in the wake of the Great Depression, which he hoped would cause them to discard the wasteful and inhumane features of capitalism.

Meanwhile, Richard Morford, a Christian socialist, treated the NCASF as a means of securing world peace. Following the ideas of the Social Gospel – first articulated by Christian socialist George Herron in the 1890s – Morford wanted to make religion in the 1930s more meaningful in the lives of parishioners. His means of accomplishing this goal in his early career during the Great Depression was a "mission Church" model. The priority in the congregations Morford worked with in Morristown, New Jersey, and Albany, New York was social services. These services included classes on childcare, household budgeting and activities for children. Morford also integrated himself and the Church into the wider community, fixing the run-down houses of parishioners, cleaning up vacant lots, and teaching community leaders how poorer constituents were actually

living. Morford did not want the Church to be a passive element in parishioners lives that lay on a different plane from their real-world concerns. He wanted to use the Church's position in the community to serve as an example to Americans to act in a manner that would promote social and economic welfare. To his parishioners, he argued that the long term goal for Americans was to usher in socialism as a means of securing a basic minimum level of prosperity. Attaining this economic parity, he thought, would allow Americans to stop thinking about material possessions and concerns and instead address what mattered – spiritual development amid a brotherhood of man.

Whereas progressive churchmen like Harry Ward gravitated toward the Soviet example in the same period, Morford took little note of it. His socialism drew on the example of Eugene Debs and George Herron, not Lenin and Marx. After acquiring a reputation as a progressive churchman and organizational worker in the first half of the 1940s, however, Morford accepted the executive directorship of the NCASF because of his awareness of the developing Cold War. Morford believed the Cold War could eliminate the possibility of a Kingdom of Heaven on earth altogether. Morford therefore tried to use the NCASF to develop a peace movement in the United States that could stand against the bipartisan anti-communist and apocalyptic discourse which mandated a showdown with the Soviet Union. He believed that in the Cold War, as in World War I, corporations and military interests were pushing the United States toward a war that would only benefit business. Capitalists, he thought, furthered such a war by telling lies about Soviet positions and red-baiting the supporters of peace. Morford thought the proper counter-strategy was to educate Americans on the need for peace while showing

the Truman and Eisenhower administrations that the people did not support war. Morford dedicated his time in the NCASF to building a coalition of peace workers motivated by a ban on nuclear weapons and the arms race, years before other more popular organizations took on the same cause.

Rockwell Kent was drawn toward the American-Soviet friendship movement because of an unlikely collision of 19th-century beliefs. Kent loved America but only a certain version of America. He was enamored of a "spirit" of democracy which he believed was embodied in the American Revolution against European authority, traditions, and values. Kent celebrated the rural, yeoman democracy represented by Thomas Jefferson and, later, by transcendentalists such as Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson. He combined this antimodernist ideology with socialism in the early 1900s, creating a unique anti-capitalist perspective which also embraced isolationism and agrarianism. Kent, who discovered his artistic talent as a child, also brought into the mix a benevolent elitism - artists, as he saw it, were workers on behalf of a greater good in society. It was only through art, Kent reasoned, that Americans would be able to reconnect themselves with nature on a spiritual level and thereby see their own meaning and potential.

Yet, as Kent became more experienced and more successful in the art world, he became aware that the United States and Americans were moving away from his ideals. Americans had participated in World War I, he believed, to save the very European nations and ideas Kent thought they should be happy to see destroyed. In the 1920s, American industry kept growing while corporations created monopolies and oppressed

their workers. The art world, meanwhile, became dominated by European modernists and their imitators. Modernism, an informal artistic genre that included Pablo Picasso and Marcel Duchamp, was a European-birthed movement defined by highly personal abstract paintings prioritizing innovation over accessibility. Kent found the modernists, who made their first large impact on the American artistic scene with the 1913 Armory Show in New York, to be indicative of nothing more than "silly, ivory-tower self-expressionism" that rejected the artist's social obligations.[1391] Art, for Kent, needed to provide moral or social guidance for ordinary people, not just provoke intellectual curiosity. Frustrated with the trends which dominated both the economy and culture of his homeland, Kent during the 1920s spent more and more of his time outside the United States in distant and lonely locales, where he sought to discover his greater purpose in an individual symbiosis with nature.

When the Great Depression hit, however, Kent was sure that Americans would see the light. He worked vigorously within the Popular Front in the 1930s, hoping to help create a new society that could further his ideas about integrating the artist in American life and thereby allow artists to inspire the common people. But when the Popular Front collapsed, Kent became convinced that the United States would never change. He worried that fascism was growing in America as well as abroad and that the United States government was doing nothing to stop it. The Soviet Union, meanwhile, seemed to be holding a vigorous front against fascism. It also, he determined, represented those

[1391] "Rockwell Kent Papers, circa 1840-1993, Bulk 1935-1961. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.," Kent to New Masses, March 10, 1945; New Masses.

American values he treasured better than did the United States. He appreciated the fact that socialist realism, a close parallel to his own realist style, was institutionalized in the Soviet Union. Soviet art celebrated Soviet workers and farmers, not personal interpretations or flights of fancy. He saw American-Soviet friendship as a cultural cause that could make Americans more receptive to Soviet values. Perhaps by learning about Soviet culture through the NCASF, Kent reasoned, Americans would be able to rediscover what had made America great.

Harry Steinmetz went to the NCASF in order to present Soviet ideas to Americans as well. Steinmetz was introduced to socialism by International Workers of the World, but his distrust of ideology made him a postcapitalist by the 1930s: he wanted a more economically and socially equal America, but he was not committed to any particular conception of how to accomplish it. In the 1930s, he advocated for economic reform that could alleviate the suffering caused by the Great Depression, which he blamed on the broken capitalist system. He was receptive to many avenues for resolving America's ills, such as technocracy and Upton Sinclair's EPIC. Part of his receptivity to varied political movements was due to geography. Steinmetz was a San Diegan, and hence as a leftist radical, in a perpetual political minority. The only way he could make reform happen in the United States was by working in broad coalitions with Communists, liberals, and other independent radicals like himself. He quickly accumulated respect in his community for his openness and commitment and in 1935 was voted head of San Diego's Labor Council union collective. Steinmetz also ran for mayor of San Diego on

the Progressive Fusion ticket: a political party pieced together from the small left-liberal movements throughout the city.

San Diego had by the 1930s become the crib of the military-industrial complex, a new melding of the military and corporate agenda which would become commonplace in the Cold War. Dissenters like Steinmetz were not given a warm welcome. Steinmetz was red-baited out of the labor movement and later purged from his job as a psychology professor in the 1950s. The latter was a result of the California Board of Education's insistence on loyalty oaths. These loyalty oaths reclassified teachers as government workers, and asserted that teachers who did not agree with American foreign policy were subversive. In protest, Steinmetz refused to sign. His political ambitions were obliterated as a result and even his credibility as an educator was tarnished. It was only after his firing that Steinmetz approached the American-Soviet friendship movement, as a last outlet that could advance his ideas. The NCASF was one of the few left-liberal coalitions remaining in the United States that had any capacity for outreach that would simultaneously allow a person with Steinmetz's reputation to take an active role. Steinmetz believed the NCASF should be used to educate Americans about the Soviet Union. He hoped it could remove their biases and open them up to ideas about topics as diverse as economics, social control, and psychology.

The friendship movement was not only notable for its constituency: it had tangible effects on American life. Before World War II, FSR provided millions of dollars for relief to the infant Soviet state. A decade later, FSU and *Soviet Russia Today*, despite their clear bias, were able to keep the issue of Soviet recognition in the news. Had FSR

not lobbied so hard, it is doubtful that Roosevelt would have recognized the Soviet Union so early in his presidency. In World War II, the NCASF and Russian War Relief provided a staggering amount of relief to the ailing Soviet population. American-Soviet friends held rallies, conferences, and innumerable meetings and educational lectures in which hundreds of thousands of ordinary Americans learned about Soviet life for the first time and were able to express solidarity with their World War II ally.

Even after they lost influence in American society, however, the American-Soviet friends continued to play an important role. In the late 1940s, the NCASF was one of the few dissenting voices to the bipartisan anti-Communist, anti-Soviet perspective which dominated Washington's policies. By protesting the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and NATO, the NCASF picked up the mantle of Wallace's Progressive Party to dispute America's Cold War narrative from the inside. In the 1950s and beyond, after the NCASF had been forced to abandon politics in order to survive government persecution and public opprobrium, the organization filled a new niche in American society that was at least as important. The NCASF was one of the few institutions from which Americans could acquire information about the Soviet Union and its citizens. Over ten-thousand libraries, and thousands of Americans directly, received books about quotidian Soviet life. In 1958, when cultural contacts between the governments expanded, the NCASF was one of the few institutions with the Soviet connections to quickly take advantage of the new situation. Because of NCASF funds and hard work, Americans were introduced to cultural performances by Soviet entertainers in the United States. It must also be noted that the NCASF facilitated the experience of hundreds of American children who met

their Soviet counterparts at Camp Artek, teaching a cohort of children to see and value similarity rather than difference. It is impossible to estimate the total number of Americans affected by all of these endeavors undertaken by the NCASF after World War II – millions, certainly. Their work may have paved the way for the calming of Cold War tensions in the 1970s and surely made Americans more receptive to the de-escalations furthered by Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Carter.

Given this track record, it is worth asking: why did the American-Soviet friends not accomplish more in American society? The NCASF was never treated as a credible, non-biased peace organization by most Americans and even its educational efforts were stymied by its reputation as a Soviet front. I have suggested that a significant reason why the NCASF was treated in this manner by most Americans was because of the influence of doctrinaire communists and the refusal of the rest of the coalition to challenge those communists on pragmatic grounds. Too many decisions were based on pleasing a constituency that was holding the NCASF back from reaching a wider audience. Too few leaders were willing to subject the Soviet Union to the same standard of criticism to which they held the United States. It is hard to look at the reactions to 1956 and 1968 and deem the perspective that shaped them to be a successful one. We must acknowledge that the American-Soviet friends were often their own worst enemy.

But more than anything, the limiting factor for the organization was timing. The NCASF was just too far ahead of the curve on some subjects and behind it on others to ever become integrated into Cold War society. Examples abound. If the American-Soviet friendship movement had not been burdened with the Communist-sponsored history of

FSR and FSU, more Americans might well have taken them at their word in the 1940s. If the NCASF had begun to advocate for a counter-narrative of the Cold War in 1965 instead of 1947, they would have matched the zeitgeist a great deal more closely. If, hypothetically, circumstances had allowed Lacy-Zarubin to be signed in 1948 instead of 1958, the NCASF would have had much more opportunity to cultivate a solid reputation among the American people through a cultural program before they were scarred by McCarthyist branding. The NCASF was an organization out of time: beholden to an ideological tradition that was not always useful in their own milieu and presaging perspectives that would later surface in more socially acceptable contexts.

The most obvious of these later and more socially acceptable contexts was the 1960s, in the emergence of the New Left. That term is often used as an umbrella under which shelter the entire counterculture of the 1960s, including free speech activists, Black Power, Second Wave Feminism, Maoism, and the Peace Movement. The New Left, which branched out from the narrower "loosely organized, mostly white student movement that promoted participatory democracy, crusaded for civil rights and various types of university reforms, and protested against the Vietnam War" movement of the same name, represented the first large-scale leftist movement in the United States since the Popular Front. [1392] They held teach-ins to educate American students about the Vietnam War, argued against the demonization of communists which had occurred since World War II, and protested against the oppression of minorities.

[1392] John Campbell McMillian and Paul Buhle, *The New Left Revisited* (Temple University Press, 2008), 5.

In many ways, the New Left was struggling in the 60s on behalf of the same causes and ideas as the NCASF leaders. All four of the subjects of this dissertation had their ideologies forged in their opposition to social injustice, whether in the form of racism, sexism, or economic inequality. The NCASF had been arguing and lobbying on behalf of American civil liberties since the late 1940s. People like Corliss Lamont, Richard Morford, Rockwell Kent, and Harry Steinmetz had endured abuses of civil liberties by McCarthy and other elements of the American government. Their example and occasional victories were part of the reason why New Left leaders were spared from the same kind of systematic overt federal attacks (if not other forms of persecution). Further, the NCASF had fought the Cold War which had produced the Vietnam War since its inception, and was a harsh critic of the Vietnam War in particular. Richard Morford was an articulate exponent of anti-imperialist rhetoric throughout the 1960s. Lamont began protesting American involvement to the press in 1964 and Rockwell Kent made headlines when he donated the $10,000 he won as a result of his Lenin Peace Prize to the women and children of Vietnam. The NCASF and New Left leaders, therefore, in retrospect appear natural allies. At the very least, one might expect the experience of the NCASF and its leaders to serve as an example for how a succeeding generation might approach its work on these issues.

No alliance between the NCASF and New Left was forthcoming, however, nor was one even attempted by either party in any sense. The two groups were divided by numerous issues. Whereas the American friends were advocates for a strong central government with ever-expanding authority, most New Leftists often professed an outlook

that rejected the state altogether. As Clecak writes, they exhibited "a quasi-religious yearning to be free from 'the things of the earth,' which is to say free from the complexities and ironies of history."[1393] New Leftists often resisted the entire premise of a government. While capitalism remained an enemy, it was only as a subset to the greater adversary that was authority itself: "All notions of order, rank, hierarchy, and distinction came under sustained attack…"[1394] To the American friends, this was anarchical madness that attacked the foundations of civilization. To Corliss Lamont, Rockwell Kent, Richard Morford, and Harry Steinmetz, New Leftists appeared to stress confrontation with authorities over election-driven reform and were hence choosing to disown the entire heritage of the Western world. They thought New Leftists, from Yippies like Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin to Black Panthers like Huey Newton just wanted to watch society burn.

Attitudes also differed as to what constituted progress. Efficiency through technology had been an important element for many of the American friends. Indeed, much of the American friends' confidence in Soviet progress rested upon its emphasis on efficiency and technology, in contrast to the wasteful and chaotic profit-driven industry in America. Neither held much appeal to the New Left. New Leftists reasoned that technologically-driven efficiency was not an improvement, as it had appeared only to have increased the ease with which the military-industrial complex could exploit, dehumanize, and even destroy ordinary people. As David Allen has summarized, "The

[1393] Peter Clecak, *Radical Paradoxes; Dilemmas of the American Left: 1945-1970.* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 252.
[1394] Ibid.

notion of progress tied up with economic determinism, the advancement of science, technology, and rationalism, the idea that societies naturally evolve was out… progress in the New Left would revolve around the subjective factor, human agency, the notion of human beings as a *tabula rasa*, not around economic processes, science, or technology."[1395]

Industrialism itself, which allowed for the material progress sought by most American friends, was similarly questioned. When Dow Chemical proclaimed that its new refrigerators created "a place for everything with everything in its place," New Leftists could not help but remember that its profits and technology were used in the fuel-air napalm bombs that were burning the Vietnamese jungle. Driven by fears of environmental degradation suggested by Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, which raised troubling concerns about the trustworthiness of corporate America, the anti-corporatism often espoused by the Old Left was expanded by the New Left into anti-industrialism and naturalism. As *Rat*, an underground newspaper, declared, "revolutionaries must begin to think in ecological terms… [A]n attack against environmental destruction is an attack on the structure of control and the mechanisms of power within a society."[1396] This was an alien and regressive viewpoint to most of the Old Leftist American friends, who associated progress with material prosperity.

As we saw in the failure of the NCASF to accommodate the proposed program of Ewart Guinier, the American friends were also out of sync with the New Left on their

[1395] David Allen, "The Dream of a New Left: A Genealogical Inquiry into the Collapse of Sixties Radicalism" (PhD dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1995), 27.
[1396] Steven Conn, *Americans against the City: Anti-Urbanism in the Twentieth Century*, 2014, 271.

understanding of race. As Kirkpatrick Sale describes, race had come to the forefront of radical concerns in the 1960s due to increasing contacts between white and black university students, the continued oppressive measures of police toward black radicals, and a growing awareness among white radicals of the existence of their white middle-class privilege.[1397] The Greensboro sit-ins of February 1, 1960, in which four black students protested against Woolworth's segregationist policies in North Carolina through the act of ordering coffee at a whites-only counter, was, indeed, an early rallying cause for SDS and the organization made civil rights a high priority in its agenda.[1398] As the New Leftists encountered resistance from whites and "local, state, and national governments resorted to force, unconvincing rhetoric, and very little genuine aid" in response, radicals began to see racism as a source of much of what they wanted to change in America, from inequality to foreign wars.[1399] Sale claims "the traditional New Left line" was "the retort that racism was a malady inherent in all parts of the white world, *including* the white working class, and that blacks were important chiefly because their struggle for liberation was in fact the cutting edge of the revolution at this moment."[1400] The American friends, meanwhile, continued to see history and politics through the lens of class, arguing, like most Old Leftists, "that racism was simply a device of the ruling class to oppress the working class and that blacks were strategically important only because they were the most exploited segment of the working class."[1401] They thought

[1397] Sale, *SDS.*, 418.
[1398] Ibid., 23.
[1399] Clecak, *Radical Paradoxes; Dilemmas of the American Left*, 243.
[1400] Sale, *SDS.*, 508.
[1401] Ibid.

that the New Leftists were failing to understand the real Marxist dialectic between the working class and bourgeoisie because they were distracted by so-called arbitrary "identity politics."

The major sticking point, however, as it had always been for the NCASF in the area of outreach, was the Soviet Union. The New Left viewed the Soviet Union as a wasted legacy from which little could be learned. As the 1962 Port Huron statement read, "The Soviet Union, as a system, rests on the total suppression of organized opposition, as well as on a vision of the future in the name of which human life has been sacrificed, and numerous small and large denials of human dignity rationalized."[1402] Even in the midst of a radical revival in American society, the Soviet Union was too bitter a pill for Americans to ingest. Instead, New Leftists praised the newer communist dictatorships, like Cuba, China, and Vietnam. As Clecak writes, "the apparently freewheeling, antibureaucratic ethos of China and Cuba appealed to the desire for liberation from the stultifying, tedious quality of their own lives in a postindustrial society."[1403] The Soviet Union had, meanwhile, become inseparable to New Leftists from the heartless authoritarian regimentation of Stalinism and a symbol of the folly of reformism. As Katsiaficas writes, "Soviet Marxism has long regarded the transformation of the basic structures of society as inevitably and automatically leading to cultural and social transformation. The new

[1402] "Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society, 1962," accessed April 7, 2016, http://coursesa.matrix.msu.edu/~hst306/documents/huron.html.
[1403] Clecak, *Radical Paradoxes; Dilemmas of the American Left*, 256.

radicalism demanded a simultaneous transformation of politics, economy, and culture, of social structure and individual subject."[1404]

From their end, the NCASF leaders struggled to understand the concept of a radical movement that did not use the Soviet Union as a touchstone. Surely, they reasoned, the New Left was just another doomed case of overemotional, infantile leftists who privileged ideals over results. In focusing upon what the New Left lacked, the American friends for the most part failed to grasp their similarities. While they espoused many ideas that were relevant to Americans in the 1960s, including pacifism, the preservation of civil liberties, and economic reforms that would promote equality, the American friends remained reliant on a vision of the Soviet Union as a progressive state without which their ideas could not survive. The NCASF remained on the outside looking in.

[1404] George N. Katsiaficas, *The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968* (South End Press, 1987), 36.

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## Appendix: Table of Abbreviations

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| ACC | Albany Consumer Cooperative |
| ACLU | American Civil Liberties Union |
| ACSR | American Council on Soviet Relations |
| AFL | American Federation of Labor |
| AIMS | American Institute of Marxist Studies |
| ALP | American Labor Party |
| ARI | American-Russian Institute |
| CPUSA | Communist Party of the United States of America |
| ECLC | Emergency Civil Liberties Committee |
| EPIC | Eliminate Poverty in California |
| FBI | Federal Bureau of Investigation |
| FSR | Friends of Soviet Russia |
| FSU | Friends of the Soviet Union |
| HUAC | House Un-American Activities Committee |
| ISAR | Institute of Soviet-American Relations |
| IWO | International Workers Order |
| IWW | International Workers of the World |
| JAFRC | Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| NCASF | National Council of American-Soviet Friendship |
| NEP | New Economic Policy |
| RWR | Russian War Relief |
| SACB | Subversive Activities Control Board |
| STASR | Society for Technical Assistance to Soviet Russia |
| SWP | Socialist Workers Party |
| UCCD | United Christian Council of Democracy |
| USSR | Union of Soviet Socialist Republics |
| WILPF | Women's International League for Peace and Freedom |
| WPA | Workers Party of America |
| WPC | World Peace Council |