THE CULTURAL COLD WAR

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Political activists in the sixties regard talk with suspicion—not without reason, since much of what is said publicly consists of lies. “May the Baby Jesus open your mind and shut your mouth.” You drop out of society, or you try to revolutionize it; what you don’t do is try to criticize it. American society is assumed to be impervious to criticism.

If American institutions, American politics and American foreign policy had been exposed to sustained criticism over a long period of time, it might be necessary to conclude that criticism had had no effect. But sustained criticism has barely begun, and it is too early to say that it has made no impression. It is true that the critics have not put an end to the war in Vietnam; but what did they expect? Public discussion for years had taken for granted that “Communist aggression” had to be resisted, even at the risk of nuclear war. It had taken for granted that “freedom” was engaged in a global struggle against Communist slavery, a struggle from which moral men could not hold themselves aloof. Intellectuals, who might have objected to these formulations of the issue, far from objecting to them, helped to give them general currency. Are we to conclude from this experience that thought has no effect on history? On the contrary, it has a radical and immediate effect. It is well known that an interpretation of history, shared by a whole generation, becomes a historical fact in its own right. In the fifties, an interpretation of history that defined the cold war as a struggle for cultural freedom deeply influenced events that followed.

Our situation today derives in part from the bankruptcy of social and political thought over the last five or six decades, and more specifically it derives from the bankruptcy of social and political thought during the fifties. American intellectuals, on a scale that is only now beginning to be understood, lent themselves in that time to purposes having nothing to do with the values they professed—purposes, indeed, that were diametrically opposed to them. This defection of the intellectuals goes a long way toward explaining the poverty of public discussion today.

Press and Academy

There are two kinds of intellectuals in the United States, journalists and academicians. The journalist, strictly conceived, is engaged in an imaginative act: he keeps a journal of contemporary events. Most daily journalism is now mass produced and has become, with honorable exceptions, nothing more than a job. Journalism in the strict sense survives for the most part in periodicals, politico-literary reviews addressed to a limited readership but capable, nevertheless, of exercising a good deal of influence over the ways in which issues are formulated.

The academicians is nowadays a specialist almost by definition, incapable of addressing himself to public questions except as an expert, in which capacity his services are eagerly sought by government. (Those who are unwilling to become experts either do not address themselves to public questions at all or become part-time journalists.) The university is so deeply enmeshed with government that the wonder is not that it has furnished so little criticism of official attitudes but that it has furnished any criticism at all. If the university has emerged as a focus of protest, that is not so much because some teachers (particularly in the arts and humanities) still retain a critical perspective, as because the same universities which function so well as branches of industry and government have proved incapable, by reason of their heavy investment in “research” and their bureaucratized structure, of providing a human environment for their students. The students’ dissatisfaction with their own conditions spills over into politics; they see a connection, for instance, between the multiversity and the technological war in Vietnam. Student protest, in turn, may waken a belated response in some of their teachers.

The other group of intellectuals—the journalists writing for magazines of opinion—live in an environment that has no built-in institutional links with national power; none at least, that are immediately obvious. It was from this quarter, in the fifties, that criticism of the cold war and its effects might have been expected. The defection of the literary intellectuals is not something which the condition of their working lives would have led one to expect; it is thus harder to account for than the defection of the academicians. In order to understand it, one must reconstruct in some detail the events of the early fifties, the period during which the anti-Communist mentality came to dominate the intellectual community; and there is no better way of getting into the pathology of that decade than by investigating the activities of the Congress for Cultural Freedom and its affiliate, the American Committee for Cultural Freedom. Both as symptom and as source, the campaign for “cultural freedom” revealed the degree to which the values held by intellectuals had become indistinguishable from the interests of the modern state—interests which intellectuals now served even while they maintained the illusion of detachment.

From the beginning the Congress for Cultural Freedom had a quasi-official character, even to outward appearances. It was organized in 1950 by Michael Josselson, formerly an officer in the Office of Strategic Services, and Melvin J. Lasky, who had earlier served in the American Information Services and as editor of Der Monat, a magazine sponsored by the United States High Commission in Germany. The decision to hold the first meeting of the Congress in West Berlin, an outpost of Western power in Communist East Europe and one of the principal foci and symbols of the cold war, fitted very well the official
American policy of making Berlin a showcase of “freedom.” The United Press reported in advance that “the five-day meeting will challenge the alleged freedoms of Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe and attempt to unmask the Soviet Union’s and Soviet-sponsored ‘peace’ demonstrations as purely political maneuvers.” H. R. Trevor-Roper, one of the British delegates, noted that “a political tone was set and maintained throughout the congress.” Nobody would have objected to a political demonstration, he observed, if it had been avowed as such. The question was whether “it would have obtained all its sponsors or all its delegations if it had been correctly advertised.”

**Politics of Freedom**

The sponsors of the meeting included Eleanor Roosevelt, Upton Sinclair, the philosophers G. A. Borgese and A. J. Ayer, Walter Reuther, the French writer Suzanne Labin and Dr. Hans Thirring, a Viennese atomic scientist. Delegates attended from twenty-one countries, but the most conspicuous among them were militant anti-Communists (some of them also ex-Communists) from the European continent and from the United States: Arthur Koestler, Franz Borkenau, Lasky, Sidney Hook, James Burnham, James T. Farrell, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. A number of the themes that emerged from their speeches would become polemical staples in the following decade.

One was the end of ideology, the assertion that conventional political distinctions had become irrelevant in the face of the need for a united front against Bolshevism. Arthur Koestler announced that “the words ‘Socialism’ and ‘Capitalism,’ ‘Left’ and ‘Right’ have today become virtually empty of meaning.” Sidney Hook looked forward to “the era when references to ‘Right,’ ‘Left,’ and ‘Center’ will vanish from common usage as meaningless.”

Franz Borkenau made the same point and went on to explain the deeper sense in which ideology could be said to have died. “We are living,” he said, in “the last phase of an ebbing revolutionary epoch” in which “the absurdity of the belief in perfect and logical social constructions” had been exposed for all to see. For more than a century utopian “extremes”—visions of total freedom competing with visions of total security—had “increasingly turned the history of the occident into a tragic bedlam.” But having observed at first

hand the devastating effects of utopianism, particularly in Russia, reasonable men had at last learned the importance of a more modest and pragmatic view of politics.

At the same time, the pragmatists who met at Berlin announced that in the present crisis a moral man could not remain aloof from the struggle of competing ideologies. Robert Montgomery, the American film actor, declared that “no artist who has the right to bear that title can be neutral in the battles of our time.” Koestler said: “Man stands at a crossroads which only leaves the choice of this way or that.” At such moments “the difference between the very clever and the simple in mind narrows almost to the vanishing point”; and only the “professional disease” of the intellectual, his fascination with logical subtleties and his “estrangement from reality,” keep him from seeing the need to choose between slavery and freedom.

An attack on liberal intellectualism, and on liberalism in general, ran through a number of speeches. Borkenau argued that totalitarianism grew dialectically out of liberalism. “The liberal utopia of absolute individual freedom found its counterpart in the Socialist utopia of complete individual security.” With liberalism in decline, intellectuals looking for “a ready-made doctrine of salvation and a prefabricated paradise” turned in the twenties and thirties to communism and “permitted themselves to be led by the nose through Russia without noticing anything of the reality.” During the Second World War—which Borkenau called “a second edition of the Popular Front”—even experienced politicians allowed themselves to be deceived by Stalin’s professions of good faith. “Thus in the course of a quarter century communism ran a course which brought it in contact with every stratum of society, from extreme revolutionaries to ultra-conservatives.” But this very pervasiveness, by another turn of Borkenau’s dialectic, meant that “the entire body of occidental society has received an increasingly strong protective inoculation against communism. Every new wave of Communist expansion led to a deepening of the anti-Communist current, from the ineffective opposition of small groups to the rise of an intellectual countercurrent, and finally to the struggle in the arena of world politics.”

The attack on liberalism, together with the curious argument that exposure to communism was the only effective form of “inoculation” against it, points to another feature of the anti-Communist mentality as revealed at Berlin: a strong undercurrent of ex-communism, which led Trevor-Roper to describe the whole conference as “an alliance between . . . the ex-Communists among the delegates . . . and the German nationalists in the audience.” Borkenau, Koestler, Burnham, Hook, Lasky and Farrell had all been Communists during the thirties, and it requires no special powers of discernment to see that their attack on communism in the fifties expressed itself in formulations that were themselves derived from the cruder sort of Marxist cant. Borkenau’s defense of “freedom,” for instance, rested not on a concern for institutional safeguards of free thought, but alone for the independence of critical thought from national power, but rather on an assumption of man’s capacity to transcend the “narrow materialism” posited, according to Borkenau, by liberalism and socialism alike. The defense of freedom merged imperceptibly with a dogmatic attack on historical determin-
ism. It is significant that Borkenau still regarded Leninism as a "great achievement", not, however, because Lenin had contributed to the materialist interpretation of society but because Lenin rejected Marx's "fatalism" and converted socialism "into the free act of a determined, ruthless and opportunist elite." Elitism was one of the things that attracted intellectuals to Leninism in the first place (more than to orthodox Marxism); and even after they had dissociated themselves from its materialist content, they clung to the congenial view of intellectuals as the vanguard of history and to the crude and simplified dialectic (of which Borkenau's speech is an excellent example, and James Burnham's *The Managerial Revolution* another) which passed for Marxism in left-wing circles of the thirties.

These things not only demonstrate the amazing persistence and tenacity of the Bolshevik habit of mind even among those who now rejected whatever was radical and liberating in Bolshevism, they also suggest the way in which a certain type of anti-Communist intellectual continued to speak from a point of view "alienated" from bourgeois liberalism - Anti-communism, for such men as Koestler and Borkenau, represented a new stage in their running polemic against bourgeois sentimentality and weakness, bourgeois "utopianism" and bourgeois materialism. In attributing "twenty years of treason" to an alliance between liberals and Communists, the anti-Communist intellectuals put forth their own version of the right-wing ideology that was gaining adherents, in a popular and still cruder form, in all the countries of the West, particularly in Germany and the United States. In the fifties, this high-level McCarthyism (as we shall see) sometimes served as a defense of McCarthyism proper. More often it was associated with official efforts to preempt a modified McCarthyism while denouncing McCarthy as a demagogue. In both capacities it contributed measurably to the cold war.

**First Aid for Britain**

The Berlin meetings, meanwhile, broke up in a spirit of rancor which must have alarmed those who had hoped for a "united front" against Bolshevism. A resolution excluding totalitarian sympathizers, "from the Republic of the Spirit" was withdrawn ("Professor Hook and Mr Burnham," according to Trevor-Roper, "protesting to the end"). The opposition came largely from the English and Scandinavian delegates, a significant fact for two reasons. In the first place, it showed how closely the division of opinion among intellectuals coincided with the distribution of power in the world. In the second place, the reluctance of the British delegates to join a rhetorical crusade against communism seems to have suggested to the officers of the Congress for Cultural Freedom that British intellectuals needed to be approached more energetically than before, if they were not to lapse completely into the heresy of neutralism.

The founding of *Encounter* magazine in 1953, with Stephen Spender and Irving Kristol at its head—after 1958, Spender and Lasky—was the official answer to the "anti-Americanism," as it was now called, which disfigured the English cultural scene. The editors of *Encounter* addressed themselves with zeal to its destruction.

The new magazine lost no time in establishing its point of view and its characteristic tone of ultra-sophistication. The very first issue contained a spirited polemic on the Rosenberg case by Leslie Fiedler, whose uncanny instinct for cultural fashions, combined with a gift for racy language ("Come Back to the Raft Ag'in, Huck Honey"), made him a suitable spokesman for cultural freedom in the fifties. Fiedler had already, in "Hiss, Chambers, and the Age of Innocence," exhorted intellectuals to accept their common guilt in the crimes of Alger Hiss. With an equal disregard for the disputed facts of the case, he now went on to berate sentimentalists who still believed the Rosenbergs to be innocent. "As far as I am concerned, the legal guilt of the Rosenbergs was clearly established at their trial." From the fact of their guilt, Fiedler spun an intricate web of theory intended to show, once again, what a pervasive and deplorable influence Stalinism had exercised, for twenty years, over the life of the mind in America. Years later it turned out that the central document which had been used to convict the Rosenbergs was a crude forgery.

Even while proclaiming the "end of innocence," Fiedler was performing feats of gullibility that rivaled and even excelled the ones he attacked. Again and again, the professional cold warriors were taken in by just such "evidence" as that which convicted the Rosenbergs—evidence brought forward to prove a Communist conspiracy in the United States and a Communist conspiracy to take over the world, or on the other hand, to prove that, whereas Soviet intellectuals lived under bureaucratic control, American intellectuals arrived at their judgments quite independently of official interference. In the latter context, "innocence," the end of which Fiedler somewhat prematurely celebrated, could hardly go further than that of certain editors of *Encounter*, in the matter of the magazine's financing.

For a group of intellectuals who prided themselves on their realism, skepticism and detachment (qualities they regularly displayed in cogent analyses of the deplorable state of affairs in Russia), the editors of *Encounter* and their contributors showed a surprisingly unshakable faith in the good intentions of the American Government. It was inconceivable to them that American officials were not somehow immune to the temptations of great power. The defense of "cultural freedom" was wholly entwined in their minds, with the defense of the "free world" against communism. Criticism of the men who presided over the free world—even mild criticism—tended automatically to exclude itself from their minds as a subject for serious discussion. These men might make occasional mistakes; but there could be no question of their devotion to freedom.

"*Encounter*" wrote Denis Brogan (a frequent contributor) in 1963, "has been the organ of protest against the *traхisun des clerсs*" Julian Benda's point, in the book from which Brogan took this phrase, was that intellectuals should serve truth, not power. *Encounter*'s claim to be the defender of intellectual values in a world dominated by ideology rested, therefore, on its vigorous criticism of all influences tending to undermine critical thought, whether they emanated from the Soviet Union or from the United

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States. This is indeed the claim that the editors and friends of *Encounter* have made. As we shall see, the cold-war liberals have not hesitated to criticize American popular culture or popular politics, but the question is whether they have criticized the American Government or any other aspect of the officially sanctioned order. And the fact is that *Encounter*, like other journals sponsored by the Congress for Cultural Freedom (except perhaps for *Censorship*, which recently expired), consistently approved the broad lines and even the details of American policy, until the war in Vietnam shattered the cold-war coalition and introduced a new phase of American politics.

Writers in *Encounter* denounced the Soviet intervention in Hungary without drawing the same conclusions about the Bay of Pigs. The magazine published Theodore Draper’s diatribes against Castro, which laid a theoretical basis for American intervention by depicting Castro as a Soviet puppet and a menace to the Western Hemisphere. Writers in *Encounter* had little if anything to say about the American coup in Guatemala, the CIA’s intervention in Iran, its role in the creation of Diem, or the American support of Trujillo; but these same writers regarded Communist “colonialism” with horror. The plight of the Communist satellites wrung their hearts; that of South Korea and South Vietnam left them unmoved. They denounced racism in the Soviet Union while ignoring it in South Africa and the United States until it was no longer possible to ignore it, at which time (1963) *Encounter* published an issue on the “Negro Crisis,” the general tone of which was quite consistent with the optimism then being surveyed by the Kennedy administration.

In 1958, Dwight Macdonald submitted an article to *Encounter*—“America! America!”—in which he wondered whether the intellectuals’ rush to rediscover their native land (one of the obsessive concerns of the fifties, at almost every level of cultural life) had not produced a somewhat uncritical acquiescence in the American imperium. A magazine devoted to the defense of intellectual freedom might have welcomed a piece of criticism on so timely a subject, all the more timely inasmuch as some of the more prominent of the rediscoverers of America (Leslie Fiedler, for example) had also written for *Encounter*. Instead, the editors asked Macdonald to publish his article elsewhere. In the correspondence that followed, according to Macdonald, “the note sounded more than once . . . [was] that publication of my article might embarrass the Congress in its relations with the American foundations which support it.” When the incident became public, Nicholas Nabokov, secretary general of the Congress, pointed to triumph in the fact that Macdonald’s article had eventually appeared in *Tempo Presente*, an Italian periodical sponsored by the Congress. That proved, he said, that the Paris headquarters of the Congress did not dictate editorial policy to the magazines it supported. But the question was not whether the Paris office dictated to the editors; the question was whether the editors took it upon themselves to avoid displeasing the sponsors, whoever they were. The editors took it upon themselves.
were, standing behind the Congress for Cultural Freedom. The reference to "American foundations," in their correspondence with Macdonald, seemed to suggest that the editors exercised a degree of self-censorship, partly conscious and partly unconscious, that made any other form of censorship unnecessary. It was possible that they had so completely assimilated the official point of view that they were no longer aware of the way in which their writings had come to serve as rationalizations of American world power.

Mission to India

The Congress for Cultural Freedom, growing directly out of the postwar power struggle in Europe, centered most of its attention on Europe, as did American foreign policy in the fifties, but it did not neglect the rest of the world. In 1951 it sponsored a large conference in India, attended by such luminaries as Denis de Rougemont, W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender, Ignazio Silone, Louis Fischer, Norman Thomas and, of course, James Burnham, without whom, in those early days, no gathering of the Congress was complete. The Times correspondent understated the case when he wrote that "many of the delegates are said to be former Communists, who have become critics." He noted further, "The meeting has been described as an answer to the World Peace Conference" supported by the Soviet Union." (The Berlin conference of the year before, it will be recalled, was also conceived as a response to Soviet "peace propaganda." Its immediate stimulus was a series of peace congresses in East Germany.)

The delegates meeting in India hoped to bring home to the nonaligned nations the immorality of neutralism. Transferred to a non-Western setting, however, the reiteration of this theme, which had gone down so well with the Berliners, led to an "unexpected undertone of dissatisfaction," according to the Times. When Denis de Rougemont "compared the present Indian neutrality with that of the lamb that is neutral between the wolf and the shepherd," one of the Indian delegates drew from the table a moral quite different from the one intended. He pointed out that the shepherd, having saved the lamb from the wolf, "shears the lamb and possibly eats it." Many Indians boycotted the Congress because it had been "branded widely as a U.S. propaganda device." The Indian Government took pains to withhold official sanction from the meeting, and insisted that it be held, not as intended in the capital, New Delhi, but in Bombay.

It seemed at times that the Indians did not want to be free. Robert Trumbull, a correspondent of the Times, tried to reassure his readers about their "peculiar" point of view. The Indian speakers weren't really neutralists, they were only "manifesting the common Indian oratorial tendency to stray from the real point of the issue in hand." A dispassionate observer might have concluded that they understood the point all too well.

The Congress, having in any case suffered a rebuff, made no more direct attacks on neutralism in the Third World. In 1958 it held a conference on the problems of developing nations, but the tone of this meeting differed noticeably from the one in Bombay. (It was on the second of these occasions, incidentally, that Richard Rovere wrote the memorable description of the Congress for Cultural Freedom as "a worthy organization, anti-Communist and generally libertarian in outlook and associated with no government.") The conference, meeting on the isle of Rhodes, produced no notable results. Probably it was not expected to have any. Already the global struggle for cultural freedom seemed to have entered a new phase, in which the crudely propagandist flavor of the Berlin and Bombay meetings had given way to a new worldliness, a new "sophistication"—about neutralism, for example—that heralded the coming of the New Frontier. A new official style was emerging, faithfully reflected in the Congress for Cultural Freedom—urbane, cool and bureaucratic. The old slogans had become passe (even as the old policies continued). The union of intellect and power deceptively presented itself as an apparent liberalization of official attitudes, an apparent relaxation of American anti-communism. McCarthyism was dead and civilized conversation in great demand. The Congress for Cultural Freedom no longer proselytized; to everyone's delight, it sponsored conversation—bounded, of course, by the limits of rational discourse, the agreed-upon end of ideology, but with no other visible strings attached. The Congress flew people to Rhodes (a pleasant place to find oneself in the middle of an American winter) and encouraged them to participate in a highly civilized, non-ideological discussion of economic development—a gratifying experience for everybody concerned, all the more so since it made so few demands on the participants. Expansive and tolerant, the Congress asked only that intellectuals avail themselves of the increasing opportunities for travel and enlightenment that the defense of freedom made possible.

Home Front Rancors

Shortly after the founding of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, its more active members set up subsidiaries in various countries. The American Committee for Cultural Freedom was founded in 1951 by Burnham, Farrell, Schlesinger, Hook and others, to hold annual forums on such topics as "The Ex-Communist: His Role in Democracy" or "Anti-Americanism in Europe," to "counteract the influence of mendacious Communist propaganda" (for instance, "the Communist assertion that the Rosenbergs were victimized innocents"); to defend academic freedom, and in general "to resist the lengthening shadow of thought-control." The Committee had a limited though illustrious membership, never exceeding 600, and it subsisted on grants from the Congress and on public contributions. It repeatedly made public appeals for money, even announcing, in 1957, that it was going out of business for lack of funds. It survived; but ever since that time it has been semi-moribund, for reasons that will become clearer in a moment.

Sidney Hook was the first chairman of the ACCF. He was succeeded in 1952 by George S. Counts of Teachers College, Columbia, who was followed in 1954 by Robert Gorham Davis of Smith. James T. Farrell, who took Davis' place in the same year, resigned in 1956 after a quarrel with other members of the Committee. Traveling
in the Third World, he had come to the conclusion that
foreign aid was a waste of money and that the Indians,
for instance, believed that their best policy was "to flirt
with Communists, insult us and perhaps get more money
out of us." In a letter written from Turkey and published
in the Chicago Tribune, Farrell insisted that American
aid should be given only on condition that the recipients
join the United States in "a truly honest partnership in
freedom"; otherwise Americans "should retire to our own
shores" and "go it alone."

Diana Trilling, chairman of the administrative commit-
tee of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom,
attacked Farrell's letter on the ground that it "sullied his
long record as a champion of understanding among the
free peoples of the world." Anyone expressing such
opinions, she said, was "not suited" for the chairmanship
of the ACCF. Farrell, in resigning, said that "his travels
had convinced him that he and other members had been
'wrong' in earlier struggles against Paris office policies."
His statement, incidentally, suggests that the Paris office
sometimes tried to enforce its own views on subsidiary
organizations, in spite of its disclaimers. It also shows
what should already be apparent—that the Congress in
its early period took a very hard line on neutralism.

Farrell's resignation, along with other events, signaled
the breakdown of the coalition on which the American
Committee was based, a coalition of moderate liberals
and reactionaries (both groups including a large number
of ex-Communists) held together by their mutual obsession
with the Communist conspiracy James Burnham had
already resigned in 1954. Earlier Burnham had re-
signed as a member of the advisory board of Partisan
Review (which since 1959 has been sponsored by the
Committee) in a dispute with the editors over McCarthyism. Burnham approved of McCarthy's actions and held that the attack upon him was a "diversionary"
issue created by Communists. William Phillips and Philip
Rahv, adapting a favorite slogan of the cold war to their
own purposes, announced that there was no room on
Partisan Review for "neutralism" about McCarthy.

Originally, the ACCF took quite literally the assertion,
advanced by Koestler and others at Berlin, that the Com-
munist issue overrode conventional distinctions between
Left and Right Right wingers like Burnham, Farrell,
Ralph de Toledano, John Chamberlain, John Dos Passos,
and even Whittaker Chambers consorted with Schlesinger,
Hook, Irving Kristol, Daniel Bell and other liberals. In
the early fifties, this uneasy alliance worked because the
liberals generally took positions that conformed a good
dest of ground to the Right, if they were not indistin-
guishable from those of the Right. But the end of the
Korean War and the censure of McCarthy in 1954 created
a slightly less oppressive air in which the right-wing rhet-
oric of the early fifties seemed increasingly inappropriate
to political realities. Now that McCarthy was dead as a
political force, the liberals courageously attacked him,
thereby driving the Right out of the Committee for Cul-
tural Freedom.

The ACCF and its parent, the Congress for Cultural
Freedom, had taken shape in a period of the cold war
when official anti-communism had not clearly distin-
guished itself, rhetorically, from the anti-communism of
the Right. In a later period official liberalism, having taken
over essential features of the rightist world view, belatedly
dissociated itself from the cruder and blatantly reactionary
type of anti-communism, and now pursued the same anti-
Communist policies in the name of anti-imperialism and
progressive change. Once again, the Kennedy administra-
tion contributed decisively to the change of style, placing
more emphasis on "counterinsurgency" than on military
alliances, advocating an "Alliance for Progress," de-em-
phasizing military aid in favor of "development," refrain-
ing from attacks on neutralism, and presenting itself as
the champion of democratic revolution in the undeveloped
world.

The practical result of the change was a partial detente,
with communism in Europe and a decidedly more aggres-
sive policy in the rest of the world (made possible by
that detente), of which the most notable products were
the Bay of Pigs, the Dominican intervention and the war
in Vietnam. The particular brand of anti-communism
that flourished in the fifties grew out of the postwar
power struggles in Europe and out of traumas of 20th-
century history—fascism, Stalinism, the crisis of liberal
democracy—all of which had concerned Europe, not
Asia. The anti-communism of the sixties focused on the
Third World and demanded another kind of rhetoric.

Heresy or Conspiracy

During its active years, however, the ACCF represent-
ed a coalition of liberals and reactionaries who shared a
conspiratorial view of communism and who agreed,
moreover, that the Communist conspiracy had spread
through practically every level of American society. (It is
the adherence of liberals to these dogmas that shows how
much they had conceded to the right-wing view of his-
try.) Sidney Hook's "Heresy, Yes—Conspiracy, No!"
and distributed as a pamphlet by the ACCF, set forth the
orthodox position and tried to distinguish it (not very
successfully) from that of the Right, as well as from "rit-
ualistic liberalism." Heresy—the open expression of dis-
senting opinions—had to be distinguished, according to
Hook, from secret movements seeking to attain their
ends "not by normal political or educational processes
but by playing outside the rules of the game." This dis-
tinction did not lead Hook to conclude that communism,
insofar as it was a heresy as opposed to a conspiracy, was
entitled to constitutional protection. On the contrary, he
argued that communism was a conspiracy by its very na-
ture—a point he sought to establish by quotations from
Lenin and Stalin which purportedly revealed a grand de-
sign for world conquest. Since they were members of an
international conspiracy—servants of a foreign power—
Communists could not expect to enjoy the same liberties
enjoyed by other Americans.

The American Committee's official position on academic
freedom started from the same premise. "A member of
the Communist Party has transgressed the canons of aca-
demic responsibility, has engaged his intellect to servility,
and is therefore professionally disqualified from perform-
ing his functions as scholar and teacher." The committee
on academic freedom (Counts, Hook, Arthur O. Lovejoy
and Paul R. Hays) characteristically went on to argue that the matter of Communists should be left "in the hands of the colleges, and their faculties." "There is no justification for a Congressional committee to concern itself with the question." Academic freedom meant self-determination for the academic community. The full implications of this position will be explored in due time.

"Ritualistic liberals," according to Hook, not only failed to distinguish between heresy and conspiracy, they helped to "weaken the moral case of Western democracy against Communist totalitarianism" by deploring witch hunts. Hook, like many liberals in the ACCF, essentially endorsed James Burnham's contention that this issue was a Communist diversion, conjured up to divide the forces of anti-communism. Talk of witch hunts, he argued, gave the unfortunate impression that America was "on the verge of fascism."

He conceded that some demagogues—he tactfully refrained from naming them—sought to discredit unpopular reforms by unfairly labeling them Communist. But the important point was that these activities were not the official policy of "our government," they were the actions of "cultural vigilantes." Ignorant people saw progressive education, for example, or the federal withholding tax, as evidence of Communist subversion—an absurdity which suggested to Hook, not the inherent absurdity of the anti-Communist ideology but the absurdity of untutored individuals concerning themselves with matters best left to experts. "A community has a right to decide whether it wishes to support a medical system or a school system. But it would be absurd to try to settle, by the pressures of the market place, what medical theories should guide medical practice or what educational theories should guide educational practice." Likewise it was absurd to argue that a withholding tax on wages was "a sign of a police state." "There may be relevant arguments against any general or specific form of tax withholding, but they are of a technical economic nature and have absolutely nothing to do with a police state."

Once again, the student of these events is struck by the way in which ex-Communists seem always to have retained the worst of Marx and Lenin and to have discarded the best. The elitism which once glorified intellectuals as a revolutionary avant-garde now glorifies them as experts and social technicians. On the other hand, Marx's insistence that political issues be seen in their social context—his insistence, for example, that questions of taxation are not "technical" questions but political questions the solutions to which reflect the type of social organization in which they arise—this social determinism, which makes Marx's ideas potentially so useful as a method of social analysis, has been sloughed off by Hook without a qualm. These reflections lead one to the conclusion, once more, that intellectuals were more attracted to Marxism in the first place as an elitist and anti-democratic ideology than as a means of analysis which provided not answers but the beginnings of a critical theory of society.

Hook's whole line of argument, with its glorification of experts and its attack on amateurs, reflected one of the dominant values of the modern intellectual—his acute sense of himself as a professional with a vested interest in technical solutions to political problems. Leave education to the educators and taxation to the tax lawyers. Hook's attack on "cultural vigilantism" paralleled the academic interpretation of McCarthyism as a form of Populism and a form of anti-intellectualism, except that it did not even go so far as to condemn McCarthyism itself, instead, it focused attention on peripheral issues like progressive education and the withholding tax.

Some liberals, in fact, specifically defended McCarthy. Irving Kristol, in his notorious article in the March, 1952 issue of Commentary, admitted that McCarthy was a "vulgar demagogue," but added: "There is one thing that the American people know about Senator McCarthy; he, like them, is unequivocally anti-Communist. About the spokesmen for American liberalism, they feel they know no such thing." This article has been cited many times to show how scandalously the anti-Communist Left allied itself with the Right. Kristol's article was a scandal, but it was no more a scandal than the apparently more moderate position which condemned unauthorized anti-communism while endorsing the official variety. By defining the issue as "cultural vigilantism," the anti-Communist intellectuals lent themselves to the dominant drive
of the modern state—not only to eliminate the private use of violence (vigilantism) but to discredit all criticism which does not come from officially recognized experts (“cultural vigilantism”). The attack on vigilantism played directly into the state’s hands. The government had a positive interest in suppressing McCarthy, not because of any solicitude for civil liberties but because McCarthy’s unauthorized anti-communism competed with and disrupted official anti-Communist activities like the Voice of America. This point was made again and again during the Army-McCarthy hearings. (Indeed the fact that it was the Army that emerged as McCarthy’s most powerful antagonist is itself suggestive.) The same point dominated the propaganda of the ACCF; unofficial anti-communism actually weakened the nation in its struggle with communism. “Government agencies,” said Hook, “find their work hampered by the private fevers of cultural vigilantism which have arisen like a rash from the anti-Communist mood” “Constant vigilance,” he added, “does not require private citizens to usurp the functions of agencies entrusted with the task of detection and exposure.”

In effect—though they would have denied it—the intellectuals of the ACCF defined cultural freedom as whatever best served the interests of the United States Government. Vigilantism was bad because it competed with the experts; also because it blackened the image of the United States abroad. When James Wechsler was dropped from a television program, The New Leader (a magazine which consistently took the same positions as the ACCF) wrote: “This lends substance to the Communist charge that America is hysteria-ridden.” After McCarthy’s attack on the Voice of America, even Sidney Hook criticized McCarthy because of “the incalculable harm he is doing to the reputation of the United States abroad.” The ACCF officially condemned McCarthy’s investigation of the Voice of America. “The net effect, at this crucial moment, has been to frustrate the very possibility of the United States embarking on a program of psychological warfare against world communism.” A few months later, the ACCF announced the appointment of Sol Stein as its executive director. Stein had been a writer and political affairs analyst for the Voice of America. He was succeeded in 1956 by Norman Jacobs, chief political commentator of the Voice of America and head of its Central Radio Features Branch from 1948 to 1955.

The ‘Sincerity’ Test

While avoiding a principled attack on McCarthyism, the ACCF kept up a running fire on “anti-anti-communism.” (It was characteristic of the period that issues so often presented themselves in this sterile form and that positions were formulated not with regard to the substance of a question but with regard to an attitude or “posture” which it was deemed desirable to hold.) In January, 1953, the ACCF handed down a directive setting out the grounds on which it was permissible to involve oneself in the Rosenberg case. “[The] pre-eminent fact of the Rosenbergs’ guilt must be openly acknowledged before any appeal for clemency can be regarded as having been made in good faith. Those who allow the Commu-

nists to make use of their names in such a way as to permit any doubt to arise about the Rosenbergs’ guilt are doing a grave disservice to the cause of justice—and of mercy, too.”

In 1954, the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee sponsored a conference at Princeton, at which Albert Einstein, along with Corliss Lamont, I. F. Stone, Dirk Struik, and others, urged intellectuals not to cooperate with “witch-hunting” Congressional committees. Sol Stein immediately announced that the ACCF opposed any “exploitation” of academic freedom and civil liberties “by persons who are at this late date still sympathetic to the cause of the Soviet Union.” Following its usual practice, the ACCF proceeded to lay down a standard to which any “sincere” criticism of American life, even of McCarthyism, had to conform. “The test of any group’s sincerity is whether it is opposed to threats of freedom anywhere in the world and whether it is concerned about the gross suppression of civil liberties and academic freedom behind the Iron Curtain. The Emergency Civil Liberties Committee has not met that test.” The validity of criticism, in other words, depended not so much on its substance as on its adherence to a prescribed ritual of dissent—a ritual, one can see, which had a special significance for ex-Communists because it required the critic first of all to purge himself by denouncing the crimes of Stalinism, but which invariably served to blunt criticism of the United States.

On another occasion, the ACCF tried to plant with the New York World-Telegram and Sun a story, already circulated by The New Leader, that a certain liberal journalist was a “Soviet espionage agent.” Sol Stein called the city desk with what he described as a “Junior Alger Hiss” story. The reporter who took the call asked whether the proper place to determine the truth of these charges was not a court of law. Stein replied, in this reporter’s words, that “libel suits were a Communist trick to destroy opposition by forcing it to bear the expense of trial.” The reporter then asked whether the ACCF was “upholding the right of people to call anyone a Communist without being subject to libel suits.” Stein said: “You misunderstand the context of the times. Many reckless charges are being made today. But when the charges are documented, the Committee believes you have the right to say someone is following the Communist line without being brought into court.” The reporter asked if Stein had any proof that the journalist in question was a Soviet spy. Stein said no, “but we have mountains of material that show he consistently follows the Soviet line.” When they took positions of which the ACCF disapproved the “ritualistic liberals” were Communist tools. When they took positions critical of the Soviet Union, the ACCF denied their right to take them. Arthur Miller in 1956 wrote a statement condemning political interference with art in the Soviet Union. The ACCF did not congratulate him; it asked why he had not taken the same position in 1949. The Committee also noted that Miller, in any case, had made an unforgivable mistake: he had criticized political interference with art not only in the Soviet Union but in the United States, thereby implying that the two situations were comparable. American incidents, the Committee declared, were “episodic violations of the
tradition of political and cultural freedom in the United States," whereas "the official government policy" of the USSR was to "impose a 'party line' in all fields of art, culture and science," and enforcing such a line with sanctions ranging from imprisonment to exile to loss of job." Having dutifully rapped Miller's knuckles, the ACCF then went on to make use of his statement by challenging the Soviet Government to circulate it in Russia.

Where the Chips Fell

In 1955 a New York Times editorial praised the ACCF for playing a vital role in "the struggle for the loyalty of the world's intellectuals"—in itself a curious way of describing the defense of cultural freedom. The Times went on to make the same claim that was so frequently made by the Committee itself: "The group's authority to speak for freedom against Communist slavery has been enhanced by its courageous fight against those threatening our own civil liberties from the Right." We have already noted that the Committee's quarrel with the Right, even though it finally led to the departure of the right-wing members of the Committee, was far from "courageous." Even when it found itself confronted with cultural vigilantism in its most obvious forms, the Committee stopped short of an unambiguous defense of intellectual freedom. In 1955, for instance, Muhlenberg College canceled a Charlie Chaplin film festival under pressure from a local post of the American Legion. The ACCF protested that "while it is perfectly clear that Chaplin tends to be pro-Soviet and anti-American in his political attitudes, there is no reason why we should not enjoy his excellent movies, which have nothing to do with Communist totalitarianism." This statement left the disturbing implication that if Chaplin's films could be regarded as political, the ban would have been unjustified. The assertion that art had nothing to do with politics was the poorest possible ground on which to defend cultural freedom.

But whatever the nature of the ACCF's critique of vigilantism, a better test of its "authority to speak for freedom" would have been its willingness to criticize official activities in the United States—the real parallel to Soviet repression. (In the Soviet Union, attacks on vigilantism are doubtless not only not proscribed but encouraged. It is attacks on Soviet officials that are not permitted.) It is worth examining, therefore, the few occasions on which the ACCF expressed even the slightest disapproval of American policy.

In March, 1955, the Committee criticized a post office ban on Pravda and Izvestia as "unreasonable and ineffective in dealing with the Communist conspiracy." A year later the Committee deplored the Treasury Department's raid on the office of The Daily Worker. "However much we abominate The Daily Worker...we must protest even this much interference with the democratic right to publish freely." The ACCF criticized the Agriculture Department's dismissal of Wolf Ladejinsky and the Atomic Energy Commission's persecution of Oppenheimer, in both cases arguing that the victims had established themselves in recent years as impeccably anti-Communist. On one occasion the ACCF attacked the U.S. Information Agency because it had canceled an art show in response to charges that four of the artists represented were subversive. Diana Trilling insisted that "actions of this kind hold us up to derision abroad." She went on to question the judgment of government officials "who mix politics and art to the detriment of both."

On the other hand, when 360 citizens petitioned the Supreme Court to repeal the 1950 Internal Security Act (which created the Subversive Activities Control Board), James T. Farrell issued a statement for the ACCF calling the petitions "naive," accusing them of a "whitewash" of the Communist Party, and declaring that if freedom were left in their hands "it would have no future."

The infrequency of complaints against American officials, together with the triviality of the issues that called them forth—as contrasted with the issues against which others protested out of their "naivete"—show that the anti-Communist liberals cannot claim to have defended cultural freedom in the United States with the same consistency and vigor with which they defended it in Russia. In the first place, they concerned themselves with the actions of vigilantes at a time when the gravest threat to freedom came from the state. In the second place, even the attack on vigilantism was half-hearted; it was only when McCarthyism moved against the Voice of America that the ACCF criticized him at all, and most of the criticism came after McCarthy had already been censured by the Senate. Claiming to be the vanguard of the struggle for cultural freedom, the anti-Communist intelligentsia in reality brought up the rear.

Finally, they based their positions (such positions as they took) on grounds that had nothing to do with cultural freedom. They condemned vigilantism on the ground that it embarrassed the United States abroad and interfered with the government's efforts to root out the Communist conspiracy at home. They criticized interference with art not because they thought that the best art inevitably subverts conventions (including political ones) and is valuable for that very reason but because they believed, on the contrary, that art and politics should be "divorced."

* They defended academic freedom for non-Communists only, and even for non-Communists they defended it on the ground that educators, as experts in a complicated technique, ought to be left alone to manage their own affairs.

In all of this, the cold-war intellectuals revealed themselves as the servants of bureaucratic power; and it was not altogether surprising, years later, to find that the relation of intellectuals to power was even closer than it had seemed at the time.

The Professional and the State

As a group, intellectuals had achieved a semi-official status which assigned them professional responsibility for the machinery of education and for cultural affairs in general. Within this sphere—within the schools, the universities, the theatre, the concert hall and the politico-literary magazines—they had achieved both autonomy and

*The popularity of the "new criticism," with its insistence that a work of art can be understood without any reference to the author's life, was symptomatic of the cultural climate of the fifties,

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affluence, as the social value of their services became apparent to the government, to corporations and to the foundations.

Professional intellectuals had become indispensable to society and to the state (in ways which neither the intellectuals nor even the state always perceived), partly because of the increasing importance of education—especially the need for trained experts—and partly because the cold war seemed to demand that the United States compete with communism in the cultural sphere as well as in every other. The modern state, among other things, is an engine of propaganda, alternately manufacturing crises and claiming to be the only instrument which can effectively deal with them. This propaganda, in order to be successful, demands the cooperation of writers, teachers and artists not as paid propagandists or state-censored time servers but as “free” intellectuals capable of policing their own jurisdictions and of enforcing acceptable standards of responsibility within the various intellectual professions.

A system like this presupposes two things: a high degree of professional consciousness among intellectuals, and general economic affluence which frees the patrons of intellectual life from the need to account for the money they spend on culture. Once these conditions exist, as they have existed in the United States for some time, intellectuals can be trusted to censor themselves, and crude “political” influence over intellectual life comes to seem passe. In the Soviet Union, on the other hand, intellectuals are insufficiently professionalized to be able effectively to resist political control. As one would expect in a developing society, a strong commitment to applied knowledge mitigates against the development of “pure” standards which is one of the chief prerequisites of professionalization.

It can be demonstrated that in the 19th century United States professionalization of intellectual activities went hand in hand with the acceptance of pure research as a legitimate enterprise, first among intellectuals themselves and then among their patrons. Only when they win acceptance for pure research do intellectuals establish themselves as masters in their own house, free from the nagging public scrutiny that naively expects to see the value of intellectual activity measured in immediate practical applications. This battle having been won, the achievement of “academic freedom” is comparatively easy, since academic freedom presents itself (as we have seen) not as a defense of the necessarily subversive character of good intellectual work but as a prerequisite for pure research. Moreover, the more intellectual purity identifies itself with “value-free” investigations, the more it empties itself of political content and the easier it is for public officials to tolerate it. The “scientific” spirit, spreading from the natural sciences to social studies, tends to drain the latter of their critical potential while at the same time making them ideal instruments of bureaucratic control.

The high status enjoyed by American intellectuals depends on their having convinced their backers in government and industry that “basic research” produces better results in the long run than mindless empiricism. But in order for intellectuals to win this battle it was necessary not only to convince themselves of these things but to overcome the narrowly utilitarian approach to knowledge that usually prevails among the patrons of learning. The advancement of pure learning on a large scale demands that the sponsors of learning be willing to spend large sums of money without hope of immediate return. In advanced capitalism, this requirement happily coincides with the capitalists’ need to engage in conspicuous expenditure, hence the dominant role played by “captains of industry” in the professionalization of higher education (with the results described by Veblen in The Higher Learning in America).

At a still later stage of development, the same role is played by the foundations and directly by government, both of which need to engage in a form of expenditure (not necessarily conspicuous in all its details) that shares with the conspicuous expenditure of the capitalist a marked indirection to results. Modern bureaucracies are money-spending agencies. The more money a bureaucracy can spend, the larger the budget it can claim. Since the bureaucracy is more interested in its own aggrandizement than in doing a job, the bureaucrat is restrained in his expenditure only by the need to account to some superior and ultimately, perhaps, to the public; but in complicated bureaucracies it is hard for anyone to account for the money, particularly since a state of continual emergency can be invoked to justify secrecy in all the important operations of government. This state of perfect nonaccountability, which is the goal toward which bureaucracies ceaselessly strive, works to the indirect advantage of pure research and of the professionalized intellectuals.

In Soviet Russia, a comparatively undeveloped economy cannot sustain the luxury of unaccounted expendi-
ture, and the bureaucracy is still infected, therefore, by a penny-pinching mentality that begrudges expenditures unless they can be justified in utilitarian terms. This attitude, together with the lack of professional consciousness among intellectuals themselves (many of whom share the belief that knowledge is valuable not for itself but for the social and political uses to which it can be put), is the source of the political interference with knowledge that is so widely deplored in the West. It is obvious that the critical spirit cannot thrive under these conditions. Even art is judged in narrowly utilitarian terms and subjected to autocratic regulation by ignorant bureaucrats.

What needs to be emphasized, however, is that the triumph of academic freedom in the United States, under the special conditions which have brought it about, does not necessarily lead to intellectual independence and critical thinking. It is a serious mistake to confuse academic freedom with cultural freedom. American intellectuals are not subject to political control, but the very conditions which have brought about this result have undermined their capacity for independent thought. The American press is free, but it censors itself. The university is free, but it has purged itself of ideas. The literary intellectuals are free, but they use their freedom to propagandize for the state.

The freedom of American intellectuals as a professional class blinds them to their un-freedom. It leads them to confuse the political interests of intellectuals as an official minority with the progress of intellect. Their freedom from overt political control (particularly from "vigilantes") blinds them to the way in which the "knowledge industry" has been incorporated into the state and the military-industrial complex. Since the state exerts so little censorship over the cultural enterprises it subsidizes—since on the contrary it supports basic research, congresses for cultural freedom, and various liberal organizations—intellectuals do not see that these activities serve the interests of the state, not the interests of intellect. All they can see is the absence of external censorship; that and that alone proves to their satisfaction that Soviet intellectuals are slaves and American intellectuals free men. Meanwhile, their own self-censorship makes them eligible for the official recognition and support that sustain the illusion that the American Government, unlike the Soviet Government, greatly values the life of the mind. The circle of illusion is thus complete, and even the revelation that the campaign for "cultural freedom" was itself the creation and tool of the state has not yet torn away the veil.

The Intellectual Front

That there is no necessary contradiction between the interests of organized intellectuals and the interests of American world power, that the intellectual community can be trusted to police itself and should be left free from annoying pressures from outside, that dissenting opinion within the framework of agreement on cold-war fundamentals not only should be tolerated but can be turned to effective propaganda use abroad—all these things were apparent, in the early fifties, to the more enlightened members of the governmental bureaucracy; but they were far from being universally acknowledged even in the bureaucracy, much less in Congress or in the country as a whole. "Back in the early 1950s," says Thomas W. Braden, the man who supervised the cultural activities of the CIA, "... the idea that Congress would have approved many of our projects was about as likely as the John Birch Society's approving Medicare." There was resistance to these projects in the CIA itself: To a man of Braden's background and inclinations, the idea of supporting liberal and Socialist "fronts" grew naturally out of the logic of the cold war. During the Second World War, Braden served with the OSS—next to the Communist movement itself, the most fruitful source, it would appear, of postwar anti-communism (the same people often having served in both). After joining the CIA in 1950, Braden served as a member of the California State Board of Education. He was a new type of bureaucrat, equally at home in government and in academic circles; but when in 1950 he proposed that "the CIA ought to take on the Russians by penetrating a battery of international fronts," his more conventional colleagues made the quaint objection that "this is just another one of those goddamned proposals for getting into everybody's hair." Allan Dulles intervened to save the project after it had been voted down by the division chiefs: "Thus began the first centralized effort to combat Communist fronts."

Before they had finished, the directors of the CIA had infiltrated the National Student Association, the Institute of International Labor Research, the American Newspaper Guild, the American Friends of the Middle East, the National Council of Churches and many other worthy organizations. "We... placed one agent in a Europe-based organization of intellectuals called the Congress for Cultural Freedom," Braden notes. This "agent" was Michael Josselson, who was born in Russia in 1908, educated in Germany, represented American department stores in Paris in the mid-thirties, came to the United States just before the war, and was naturalized in 1941. During the war Josselson, like Braden, served in the OSS. Afterwards he was sent to Berlin as an officer for cultural affairs in Patton's army. There he met Melvin J. Lasky. In 1947 he and Lasky led a walkout of anti-Communists from a cultural meeting in the Russian sector of Berlin. When they organized the Congress for Cultural Freedom in 1950, Josselson became its executive director—a position he still holds, in spite of the exposure of his connection with the CIA.

"Another agent became an editor of Encounter." The usefulness of these agents, Braden comments, was that they "could not only propose anti-Communist programs to the official leaders of the organizations but they could also suggest ways and means to solve the inevitable budgetary problems. Why not see if the needed money could be obtained from 'American foundations'?" Note that he does not describe the role of the CIA as having been restricted to financing these fronts, its agents were also to promote "anti-Communist programs." When it became public that the Congress for Cultural Freedom had been financed for sixteen years by the CIA, the editors of Encounter made a great point
of the fact that the Congress had never dictated policy to the magazine; but the whole question takes on a different color in light of Braden's disclosure that one of the editors of Encounter—it is not clear whether he refers to Lasky or Kristol—had worked for the CIA. Under these circumstances, it was unnecessary for the Congress to dictate policy to Encounter; nor would the other editors, ignorant of these connections, have been aware of any direct intervention by the CIA.

On April 27, 1966, The New York Times, in a long article on the CIA, reported that the CIA had supported the Congress for Cultural Freedom and other organizations through a system of dummy foundations, and that "Encounter magazine... was for a long time—though it is not now—one of the indirect beneficiaries of CIA funds." (Rumors to this effect had circulated for years.) The editors of Encounter—Stephen Spender, Lasky and Irving Kristol—wrote an extremely disingenuous letter to the Times in which they tried to refute the assertion without denying it outright. They asserted—what was a half-truth at best—that the Congress' funds "were derived from various recognized foundations—all of them (from such institutions as the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations to the smaller ones) publicly listed in the official directories." What was not publicly listed was the fact that some of these "smaller ones" received money from the CIA for the express purpose of supporting the Congress for Cultural Freedom. Thus between 1961 and 1966, the CIA through some of its phony foundations (in this case the Tower Fund, the Borden Trust, the Beacon Fund, the Price Fund, the Heights Fund and the Monroe Fund) gave $430,700 to the Hoblitzelle Foundation, a philanthropical enterprise established by the Dallas millionaire Karl Hoblitzelle, and the Hoblitzelle Foundation obligingly passed along these funds to the Congress for Cultural Freedom. Needless to say, no hint of these transactions was in the Lasky-Spender-Kristol letter to the Times.

Privately, Lasky went much further and declared categorically that Encounter had never received funds from the CIA. (Later he admitted that he had been "insufficiently frank" with his colleagues and friends.) In public, however, the magazine's defense was conducted in language of deliberate ambiguity. Another letter to the Times, signed by John K. Galbraith, George Kennan, Robert Oppenheimer and Arthur Schlesinger Jr., completely avoided the question of Encounter's financing and argued merely that the magazine's editorial independence proved that it had never been "used" by the CIA. One must ask why these men felt it necessary to make such a guarded statement; and why, since they had to state their position so cautiously, they felt it necessary to make any statement at all. The matter is even more puzzling in view of Galbraith's statement in the New York World Journal Tribune (March 13, 1967) that "some years ago," while attending a meeting of the Congress in Berlin (he probably refers to a conference held there in 1960), he had been told by a "knowledgeable friend" that the Congress for Cultural Freedom might be receiving support from the CIA. Galbraith says that he "subjected its treasurer to interrogation and found that the poor fellow had been trained in ambiguity but not dissemblance." "I was disturbed," he says, "and I don't think I would have attended any more meetings" if his entrance into government service had not ended his participation. In an interview with Ivan Yates of the London Observer (May 14, 1967), Galbraith says that he "made a mental note to attend no more meetings of the Congress." Yates asked "how in that case he could possibly have signed the letter to The New York Times." He replied that at the time, he had 'very strong suspicions' that the CIA had been financing the Congress. "I was writing really with reference to Encounter, but you could easily persuade me that the letter was much too fulsome."

Whereas Lasky believes that he was "insufficiently frank," Galbraith allows that he may have been "too fulsome." His urbanity is imperturbable.

The letter was "fulsome" indeed. Moreover, it specifically dealt with the Congress for Cultural Freedom, not with Encounter, which it does not even mention by name. The letter states that "examination of the record of the congress, its magazines and its other activities will, we believe, convince the most skeptical that the
congress has had no loyalty except an unswerving commitment to cultural freedom. . . . " Yet one of the signers of this statement was sufficiently skeptical to have "made a mental note" not to attend any more meetings of the Congress! And he was assuring the still unsuspecting public of the Congress' unimpeachable independence long after he had privately reached the conclusion that it was probably being supported by the CIA.

We have heard a great deal about the "credibility gap" that is supposed to have been created by the Johnson Administration; but what about the credibility of our most eminent intellectuals? As a further indication of the values that prevail among them, when the Encounter affair finally became public, Galbraith's principal concern was that a valuable public enterprise was in danger of being discredited. The whole wretched business seemed inescapably to point to the conclusion that cultural freedom had been consistently confused with American propaganda, and that "cultural freedom," as defined by its leading defenders, was—to put it bluntly—a hoax. Yet at precisely the moment when the dimensions of the hoax were fully revealed, Galbraith joined the Congress' board of directors; and "I intend," he says, "to put some extra effort into its activities. I think this is the right course and I would urge similar effort on behalf of other afflicted but reformed organizations."

What should a "free thinker" do, asks the Sunday Times of London, "when he finds out that his free thought has been subsidized by a ruthlessly aggressive intelligence agency as part of the international cold war?" According to the curious values that prevail in American society, he should make a redoubled effort to salvage the reputation of organizations that have been compromised, it would seem, beyond redemption. Far from "reforming" themselves—even assuming that this was possible—Encounter and the Congress for Cultural Freedom have vindicated the very men who led them to disaster. At their meeting in Paris last May, officials of the Congress voted to keep Josselson in his post. Lasky's resignation was likewise rejected by the management of Encounter.

Ever since The New York Times asserted that Encounter had been subsidized by the CIA, the Congress and its defenders have tried to brazen out the crisis by intimidating their critics—the same tactics that worked so well in the days of the cold war. Arthur Schlesinger leaped into the breach by attacking one of Encounter's principal critics, Conor Cruise O'Brien. Following the Times' initial disclosures, O'Brien delivered a lecture at New York University, subsequently published in Book Week, in which he referred to the Times story and went on to observe that "the beauty of the [CIA-Encounter] operation . . . was that writers of the first rank, who had no interest at all in serving the power structure, were induced to do so unwittingly," while "the writing specifically required by the power structure" could be done by writers of lesser ability, men skilled in public relations and "who were, as the Belgians used to say about Moise Tshombe, comprehensifs, that is, they could take a hint." In reply, Schlesinger at first dodged the question of Encounter's relations with the CIA by attacking O'Brien's "apparent inability to conceive any reason for opposition to communism except bribery by the CIA." When pressed, he said that "so long as I have been a member of the Encounter Trust, Encounter has not been the beneficiary, direct or indirect, of CIA funds." (The subsidies to Encounter, it is now known, ran from 1953 to 1964, although the Congress' connection with the CIA, according to Galbraith, continued until 1966.) Moreover, Schlesinger said, Spender, Lasky and Kristol had revealed "the past sources of Encounter's support" and documented "its editorial and political independence." They had, of course, done nothing of the kind. The magazine's editorial independence was not to be taken on the editors' word, and the question of its financing was an issue they had studiously avoided. Why did Schlesinger go out of his way to endorse their evasions? Presumably he knew as much about Encounter's relations with the CIA as Galbraith—probably a good deal more. How was cultural freedom served by lending oneself to a deliberate deception?

In its issue of August, 1966, Encounter published a scurrilous attack on O'Brien by "R" (Goronwy Rees). Karl Miller of the New Statesman offered O'Brien space to reply, but when Frank Kermode of Encounter (who has since resigned as editor, saying that he knew nothing of the CIA connection) learned of this, he called Miller and threatened to sue the New Statesman for libel if O'Brien's piece contained any reference to Encounter's relations with the CIA. O'Brien then sued Encounter for libel and won a judgment in Ireland. At this point, Ramparts broke the story of the CIA's infiltration of NSA, bringing a whole series of other disclosures in its wake, including the CIA's connection with the Congress for Cultural Freedom. The editors of Encounter, unable to deny those relations any longer, and threatened with heavy damages, apologized to O'Brien, retracted its aspersions on his integrity (which it now admitted were "without justification"), and agreed to pay his legal expenses.

**Instruments of Policy**

Throughout this controversy, the editors of Encounter have repeatedly pointed to their editorial independence, first in order to deny (by implication) any connection with the CIA, and then when it was impossible any longer to deny that, in order to prove that the CIA, although supporting the magazine, had not tried to dictate its editorial policy—or in Josselson's words, that the money had "never, never" been used "for propaganda and intelligence purposes." Spender, Kristol and Lasky, in their letter to the Times, claimed that "we are our own masters and are part of nobody's propaganda." The letter signed by Galbraith and Schlesinger declared that Encounter maintained "no loyalty except an unswerving commitment to cultural freedom" and that it had "freely criticize[d] actions and policies of all nations, including the United States." These statements, however, need to be set against Thomas Braden's account of the rules that guided the International Organization of the CIA: "Use legitimate, existing organizations; disguise
the extent of American interest; protect the integrity of the organization by not requiring it to support every aspect of official American policy.”

These rules do more than shed light on the nature and extent of Encouter’s editorial freedom. By publishing them at a time when they must surely embarrass the writers concerned, Braden reveals the extent of his contempt for the CIA’s kept intellectuals. Whatever the intellectuals may have thought of the relation, the CIA regarded them exactly as the Communist Party regarded its fronts in the thirties and forties—as instruments of its own purpose. Most of the beneficiaries of the CIA have been understandably slow to see this point; it is hard to admit that one has been used and that one’s sense of freedom and power is an illusion. Norman Thomas, for instance, admits that he should have known where the money for his Institute of International Labor Relations was coming from, but (like Galbraith, like Thomas Braden himself) what he chiefly regrets is that a worth-while work has had to come prematurely to an end. The Kaplan Fund, Thomas insists, “never interfered in any way”—which merely means that he was never aware of its interference. He does not see that he was being used, as Stephen Spender puts it in his own case, “for quite different purposes” than the ones he thought he was advancing. He thought he was working for democratic reform in Latin America, whereas the CIA valued him as a showpiece, an anti-Communist who happened to be a Socialist.

Spender has had the wit to recognize the situation (retrospectively) for what it was. “In reality,” he writes, the intellectuals employed by the CIA without their knowledge were “being used for concealed government propaganda.” Spender admits that this arrangement made a “mockery” of intellectual freedom. Michael Wood, formerly of the National Students Association, has written even more poignantly of his relations with the world of power. “Those of us who worked for NSA during 1965-66, experienced an unusual sense of personal liberation. While actively involved in many of the insurgent campus and political movements of the day, we were also able to move freely through the highest echelons of established power.” These experiences, Wood says, “gave us a heady feeling and a sense of power beyond our years.” But “to learn that it had been bought with so terrible a compromise made me realize how impotent we really were.”

Sham Pluralism

What conclusions can be drawn from the history of the cultural cold war? Some of them should be obvious. Thanks to the revelations of the CIA’s secret subsidies, it is no longer very novel or startling to say that American officials have committed themselves to fighting fire with fire, and that this strategy is self-defeating because the means corrupt the end. “In our attempts to fight unscrupulous opponents,” asks Arthur J. Moore in Christianity and Crisis, “have we ended up debauching ourselves?” The history of the cold war makes it clear that the question can only be answered with an emphatic affirmative.

These events, if people consider them seriously and try to confront their implications without flinching, will lead many Americans to question (perhaps for the first time) the cant about American “pluralism,” the “open society,” etc. Andrew Kopkind puts it very well: “The illusion of dissent was maintained: the CIA supported Socialist cold warriors, Fascist cold warriors, black and white cold warriors. . . . But it was a sham pluralism, and it was utterly corrupting.” A society which tolerates an illusory dissent is in much greater danger, in some respects, than a society in which uniformity is ruthlessly imposed.

For twenty years Americans have been told that their country is an open society and that Communist peoples live in slavery. Now it appears that the very men who were most active in spreading this gospel were themselves the servants (“witty” in some cases, unsuspecting in others) of the secret police. The whole show—the youth congresses, the cultural congresses, the trips abroad, the great glamorous display of American freedom and American civilization and the American standard of living—was all arranged behind the scenes by men who believed, with Thomas Braden, that “the cold war was and is a war, fought with ideas instead of bombs.” Men who have never been able to conceive of ideas as anything but instruments of national power were the sponsors of “cultural freedom.”

The revelations about the intellectuals and the CIA should also make it easier to understand a point about the relation of intellectuals to power that has been widely misunderstood. In associating themselves with the war-making and propaganda machinery of the state in the hope of influencing it, intellectuals deprive themselves of the real influence they could have as men who refuse to judge the validity of ideas by the requirements of national power or any other entrenched interest. Time after time in this century it has been shown that the dream of influencing the war machine is a delusion. Instead the war machine corrupts the intellectuals. The war machine cannot be influenced by the advice of well-meaning intellectuals in the inner councils of government; it can only be resisted. The way to resist it is simply to refuse to put oneself at its service. That does not mean playing at revolution; it does not mean putting on blackface and adopting the speech of the ghetto; it does not mean turning on, tuning in and dropping out; it does not even mean engaging in desperate acts of conscience which show one’s willingness to take risks and to undergo physical danger. Masked as a higher selflessness, these acts become self-serving, having as their object not truth or even social change but the promotion of the individual’s self-esteem. Moreover they betray, at a deeper level, the same loss of faith which drives others into the service of the men in power—a haunting suspicion that history belongs to men of action and that men of ideas are powerless in a world that has no use for philosophy.

It is precisely this belief that has enabled the same men in one lifetime to serve both the Communist Party and the CIA in the delusion that they were helping to make history—only to find, in both cases, that all they had made was a lie. But these defeats—the revelation that the man of action, revolutionist or bureaucrat, scorns...
the philosopher whom he is able to use—have not led the philosopher to conclude that he should not allow himself to be used; they merely reinforce his self-contempt and make him the ready victim of a new political cause.

The despair of intellect is closely related to the despair of democracy. In our time intellectuals are fascinated by conspiracy and intrigue, even as they celebrate the “free market place of ideas” (itself an expression that already betrays a tendency to regard ideas as commodities). They long to be on the inside of things; they want to share the secrets ordinary people are not permitted to hear. The attractions of power and the satisfactions of inside-dopestersm are stronger, in our society, than the pull of any particular position.

In the last twenty years, the elitism of intellectuals has expressed itself as a celebration of American life, and this fact makes it hard to see the continuity between the thirties and forties. On the one hand, and the fifties and sixties on the other. The hyper-Americanism of the latter period seems to be a reaction against the anti-Americanism of the depression years. Both of these phenomena, however, spring from the same source, the intellectuals’ disenchantment with democracy and their alienation from intellect itself. Intellectuals associate themselves with the American war machine not so much because it represents America as because it represents action, power and conspiracy; and the identification is even easier because the war machine is itself “alienated” from the people it claims to defend. The defense intellectuals, “cool” and “arrogant,” pursue their obscure calculations in a little world bounded by the walls of the Pentagon, sealed off from the reality outside which does not always respond to their formulas and which therefore has to be ignored in arriving at correct solutions to the “problems” of government. At Langley, Va., the CIA turns its back on America and busies itself with its empire abroad; but this empire, which the CIA tries to police, has no relation to the real lives of the people of the world—it is a fantasy of the CIA, in which conspiracy and counter-conspiracy, freedom and Communist slavery, the forces of light and the forces of darkness, are locked in timeless combat. The concrete embodiments of these abstractions have long since ceased to matter. The processes of government have been intellectualized. Albert D. Biderman, the prophet of “social accounting,” speaks for the dominant ethos: “With the growth of the complexity of society, immediate experience with its events plays an increasingly smaller role as a source of information and basis of judgment in contrast to symbolically mediated information about these events... Numerical indexes of phenomena are peculiarly fitted to these needs.”

Washington belongs to the “future-planners,” men who believe that “social accounting” will solve social “problems.” Government is a “think tank,” an ivory tower, a community of scholars. A member of the RAND Corporation speaks of its “academic freedom” which “allows you to think about what you want to.” A civil servant praises the democratic tolerance, the respect for ideas, that prevails in the Defense Department. Herman Kahn, jolly and avuncular, encourages “intellectual diversity,” on his staff at Hudson Institute, a center of learning largely devoted to the science of systematic destruction, he retains a dedicated pacifist who doubtless thinks that he is slowly converting the Hudson Institute to universal brotherhood.

Never before have the ruling classes been so solicitous of cultural freedom; but since this freedom no longer has anything to do with “immediate experience and its events,” it exists in a decontaminated, valueless void.

**HUAC Under Siege (Continued from page 197)**

that committees cannot conduct investigations unless they have a valid legislative purpose. HUAC has been desperately trying to find one. In the last Congress, it reported out three bills, none of which was adopted.

Now HUAC is making another try it hopes will be aided by the political fallout from the McHugh-SACB explosion. On May 25, the committee’s chairman introduced H.R. 10390 which would restore the McCarran Act to life by providing that the Attorney General, not SACB, should register those persons found, by SACB, to belong to one or another of the various “Communist” groups. During the hearings (August 15-18), spokesmen for the committee frankly conceded that the purpose of the amendment was “to get around the Supreme Court rulings.” The Senate Internal Security Subcommittee has reported to the full Judiciary Committee a similar bill (S 2171) which has now been reported out to the Senate.

What are the chances of one of these bills passing? The silence from the Justice Department has been deafening. It is worth noting that the Judiciary Committee did not ask the Justice Department for its opinion. The HUAC measure received favorable testimony from a former FBI assistant director (not from the FBI itself), a former president of the American Bar Association (not from the ABA itself), and from Judge Michael Musmanno of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, among others, in a transparent effort to create the impression that bar, bench and bureau were behind it. The HUAC measure contains a provision (not found in the Senate bill) which would forbid the courts from interfering by injunction, declaratory judgment or otherwise while proceedings were pending before SACB. At the present time, SACB cannot proceed with the only case now pending before it—involving the W. E. B. DuBois Clubs—until a three-judge court has disposed of a constitutional challenge to the proceedings.

If H.R. 10390 fails, what other mischief can HUAC engage in by way of justifying the $350,000 appropriation it received for 1967? It has promised public hearings on the recent ghetto riots. But in which of the riot-torn cities could HUAC hold hearings that would not be a provocation to further rioting? What Congress should do, of course, is to enact Senator Proxmire’s bill (S 2146) which would abolish SACB, and then it should abolish HUAC.
