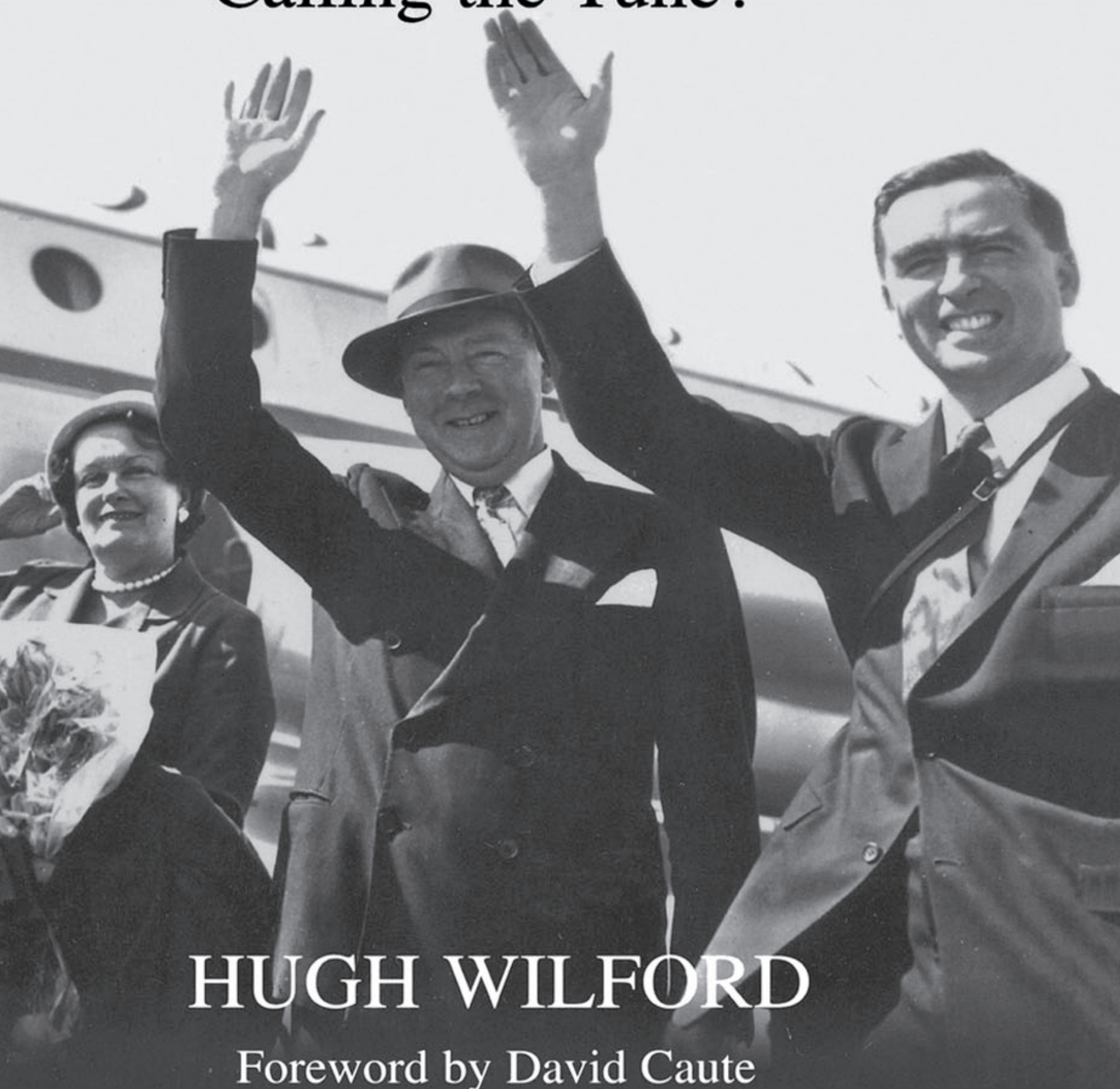
The CIA, the British Left and the Cold War

Calling the Tune?



HUGH WILFORD

Foreword by David Caute

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Calling the Tune?

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In Loving Memory of My Father

Co-Series Editor's Preface

Hugh Wilford's remarkable analysis of the relationship between agencies of the United States and the British left during the early Cold War represents the first serious and exhaustively documented study of a subject that has long been surrounded by speculation and rumour. It also forms part of a wider re-assessment of this period, which has highlighted the importance of ideology and culture, rather than power, in American foreign policy.

A significant new wave of writing about America and the world of intellectuals and cultural organisations has increasingly sought to develop the concept of the 'state-private network'. This has emphasised the way in which Washington pursued its Cold War objectives in partnership with private groups and independent organisations embedded in a free society. The Soviet Union had blazed a similar trail in the 1930s, making ingenious efforts to dominate the world of international conferences, festivals, exhibitions and social movements. After the Second World War, the United States sought to emulate its rival in a dynamic display of organised spontaneity and cultural largesse. Some groups were deliberately created, but the majority were co-opted, into a struggle for intellectual hearts and minds. By the 1960s, many organisations across Europe were receiving sponsorship from one Cold War agency or another, and indeed the basic facts were widely understood by numerous participants.

Wilford's study is amongst the very best of this new writing about 'state-private networks'. Scholars working in this area offer one of the most important challenges to the orthodox conceptions of United States foreign policy in the postwar world. Conventional perspectives have tended to see American behaviour as defensive, pragmatic and uninterested in ideology. New writings located in the realm of culture and ideas are questioning these assertions and seeking to examine the way in which social movements and intellectual organisations formed a central element in a deliberate American effort to extend the Cold War to all levels of society. The Central Intelligence Agency was significant in this process. By 1951, Tom Braden, perhaps the most insightful pioneer of the American Cold War, had set up the International Organizations Division of the CIA for precisely this purpose.

Wilford's impressive study, which draws out the many clandestine aspects of this subject, has extended its research beyond the familiar

diplomatic files, to cover a bewildering range of repositories that hold the papers of innumerable private bodies, many of which are only recently declassified. He concludes that discreet 'arm's-length' CIA covert operations involving intellectuals and trade unionists affected the whole spectrum of the British left during the early years of the Cold War. American activities touched many leading figures including senior Labour Party politicians, union leaders and even Bloomsbury *literati*.

The CIA, together with American information officers, sought to push the British left towards the centre and a degree of success accompanied the political dimensions of these operations. American support for such ventures as the Congress for Cultural Freedom and its London-based magazine *Encounter* subtly transformed the political culture of the British left, making it less socialist and more Atlanticist. Close cooperation with elements in the Labour Party formed a highlight of American activities in Britain.

By contrast, in other areas, such as trade union politics and left-wing attitudes towards European unity, the CIA proved less successful. British trade unionists were never enamoured of American ways in the work-place and here – like the Marshall Plan – it failed to influence its left-wing British friends in favour of American industrial practices. For that matter, amongst trade-unionists, even the CIA's agents on the American labor left proved unreliable and rebellious, asserting that they had been in the anti-communist game much longer than the 'johnny-come-lately' officials who merely funded them. Wilford's nuanced study shows us how union elements in both Britain and America were barely coordinated and rarely controlled.

Another major American project was support for the idea of a 'United States of Europe', built in the American image. CIA support for a federal united Europe went hand in hand with the Marshall Plan. Although the CIA pursued a successful programme of support of European federalism on the continent, this initiative never flowered in Britain. Some British MPs received subventions from the CIA in their pro-European work, but cross party-suspicions of European federalism were too strong in Westminster and Whitehall and they made little headway.

This is a careful and scholarly study, revealing much that is new about the place of culture and ideas in the complex Cold War relationship between Britain and the United States. The story of American influence in Britain also has a resonance with more recent American initiatives that have involved the promotion of democracy and free market philosophies in other parts of the world in the 1980s and 1990s. As such, its judicious observations about overt and covert action in the cultural realm, and the slippery nature of support operations, contain lessons that travel far beyond the immediate historical subject.

Professor Richard J. Aldrich, March 2003

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Foreword

The diplomatic and military crisis known as the Cold War was simultaneously a moral and ideological confrontation. Both Soviet communism and Western liberal democracy were contesting the heritage of the rationalist Enlightenment from which Marxism sprang. Given the extravagant cruelties of the Stalinist autocracy, its contempt for the fundamental freedoms we cherish, we may be tempted to dismiss the Soviet promise of utopia much as Orwell did in *Animal Farm*. But the communists and fellow travellers despised by Orwell stubbornly refused to believe reports of false trials, forced labour, and mass deportations in the USSR – or excused them as transitional responses to 'capitalist encirclement' and fascist aggression.

The question for historians, then, is why did leading western intellects, sharing a common cultural heritage, arrive at such irreconcilable conclusions? Were some of them bribed, bought or simply unwittingly manipulated? As Hugh Wilford points out, 'Moscow gold' was a familiar accusation before 'Washington gold' arrived on the scene with a series of revelations in the mid-1960s. Focusing on the covert political and cultural operations of the CIA and allied American agencies in western Europe and Britain, where the new Congress for Cultural Freedom received concealed subsidies, Wilford in effect asks, 'Conspiracy or genuine conviction?'

This puts his book at the heart of an ongoing debate. His (by no means fashionable) emphasis on conviction rather than conspiracy is welcome, although he is justly cautious in his conclusions. But the issue has been professional as well as ideological. Although the investigative impulse is indispensable, and exposure of sacred cows entirely healthy, there is no gainsaying that revelations of conspiracy make more of a splash than reflective explorations of sincere conviction. Hugh Wilford admirably resists the prevalent temptation to offer exaggerated claims about the role of the secret services in controlling the cultural production of the Cold War. Here is a scholar who had lifted his head above the archival tunnel and wisely taken note of the wider culture of the mid-twentieth century.

David Caute, January 2003

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My family has, as ever, been a constant source of emotional support and pleasant distraction, particularly my wonderful nephews and nieces. My wife, Heidi Wilford, graciously put up with the project over an eight-year period. My father-in-law, Mervyn Hodgkin, provided much of the office furniture and computing equipment on which the manuscript was eventually composed. My own father, Frederick Albert Wilford (1917–2000), did not live to see the book completed, but his personal and professional example remains a powerful inspiration in my life.

List of Abbreviations

ACCF	American Committee for Cultural Freedom
ACUE	American Committee on United Europe
ADA	Americans for Democratic Action
AEU	Amalgamated Engineering Union
AFL	American Federation of Labor
AIF	Americans for Intellectual Freedom
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CCF	Congress for Cultural Freedom
CCNY	City College of New York
CDS	Campaign for Democratic Socialism
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIO	Congress of Industrial Organizations
CPUSA	American Communist Party
DCI	Director of Central Intelligence
EAG	Europe–America Groups
ECA	Economic Cooperation Agency
ECLC	Emergency Civil Liberties Committee
EEC	European Economic Community
EIU	Economist Intelligence Unit
ELEC	European League for Economic Cooperation
EM	European Movement
EPU	European Parliamentary Union
ERP	European Recovery Program
ESU	English-Speaking Union
EYC	European Youth Campaign
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FO	Foreign Office
FRF	Friends of Russian Freedom

FTUC	Free Trade Union Committee
HICOG	US High Commission for Germany
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
IFTU	International Federation of Trade Unions
ILGWU	International Ladies Garment Workers Union
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IOD	International Organizations Division
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IRD	Information Research Department
IRIS	Industrial Research and Information Services
ISS	Institute of Strategic Studies
IUS	International Union of Students
JICMEU	Joint International Committee of the Movement for European Unity
JLC	Jewish Labor Committee
LIO	Labor Information Officer
LLY	Labour League of Youth
MI5	Security Service
MI6	Secret Intelligence Service
NCCL	National Council for Civil Liberties
NCFE	National Committee for a Free Europe (also Free Europe Committee)
NCL	Non-Communist Left
NEC	National Executive Committee
NL	*New Leader*
NSC	National Security Council
NUS	National Union of Students
NYU	New York University
OPC	Office of Policy Coordination
OSR	Office of the Special Representative
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
PCA	Progressive Citizens of America
PPS	Policy Planning Staff
PR	*Partisan Review*
PRO	Public Record Office
PSB	Psychological Strategy Board
PWE	Political Warfare Executive
SDF	Social Democratic Federation
SIS	Secret Intelligence Service
SOE	Special Operations Executive

SPA	Socialist Party of America
SPG	Special Procedures Group
THF	Trust-House Forte
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UAW	United Automobile Workers
UDA	Union for Democratic Action
UEM	United Europe Movement
ULR	*Universities and Left Review*
USIA	United States Information Agency
USIE	US International Information and Educational Exchange Program
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions
YPSL	Young Peoples Socialist League

Introduction

At the turbulent 1960 Labour Party conference, during the same speech in which he famously announced he would 'fight, fight and fight again' to defeat advocates of unilateral nuclear disarmament within the British labour movement, Party leader Hugh Gaitskell lashed out angrily at what he called 'fellow travellers' on Labour's left wing, thereby equating opposition to his multilateralist position with support for the Soviet Union.[1] Standing near the back of the conference hall, one of the putative fellow travellers, left-wing intellectual Michael Foot, turned to his neighbour and muttered darkly, 'But who are *they* travelling with'?[2]

In posing this question, Foot was articulating a belief widely held on the British left in 1960: that right-wing leaders of the Labour Party and trade unions, in their enthusiasm for bringing about the defeat of the Soviet Union in the Cold War, had forged too intimate an alliance with non- and anti-socialist forces, in particular the United States government. Indeed, there were even rumours that pro-American anti-communists within the British labour movement were covertly receiving financial support from the US secret service, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Gaitskell and his allies might throw around allegations of 'Moscow Gold', but what of their own record on '*Washington* Gold'?

This book will show that Foot and his fellow left-wingers were right to suspect secret US interest in the Cold War British labour movement. During the late 1940s and 1950s, American officials, responding to a concerted anti-US propaganda offensive by the Soviet Union, launched a massive, clandestine effort to win the Cold War allegiance of the European left, a category they defined broadly to include socialist politicians, trade unionists and leftist intellectuals. Although this campaign of 'psychological warfare' was targeted mainly at continental Europe, it also embraced Britain, where the position of right-wing Labour politicians such as

Gaitskell and his supporters was secretly strengthened at the expense of leftists like Foot and their leader, Aneurin Bevan. There were, moreover, covert attempts to combat communist penetration of British trade unions, stimulate support within the Labour Party for European unification (a key strategic aim for the US in the early years of the Cold War) and even influence the political opinions of Bloomsbury *literati*. In short, CIA operations affected every section of the Cold War British left.[3]

As well as using previously inaccessible primary sources to document these operations in detail, the book will also attempt the necessarily more speculative task of assessing their impact on the British left. In the small amount of literature on the subject published to date, the tendency has been to assume that the CIA's Cold War campaign in Britain was immensely successful. Right-wing labour leaders such as Gaitskell, whether as a consequence of having been hoodwinked or through a deliberate decision on their part to betray their followers, became, in effect, stooges of American capitalism; thanks to the right's growing dominance over the labour movement during the early years of the Cold War, the result was that the British left was reduced to a state of tame ideological obedience to the US. Such was the argument advanced in a pioneering piece of investigative journalism by Richard Fletcher published in the mid-1970s, 'How CIA money took the teeth out of British socialism'.[4] A similar verdict is implied in the title of a much more recent study of the CIA's efforts to influence European intellectual life in the so-called 'Cultural Cold War', Frances Stonor Saunders's enterprisingly researched *Who Paid the Piper?*, with its tacit suggestion that the Agency called the tune of those intellectuals who received its secret patronage.[5]

The evidence presented here tends to contradict this interpretation. The British response to CIA operations, it suggests, was in fact much more complex than talk of teeth-pulling or tune-calling would lead one to expect. Far from feeling themselves to be the victims of aggressive ideological colonisation, many on the British left positively welcomed the US intervention because they naturally shared its values and goals. In other words, this was, in part at least, an example of a phenomenon historians of continental European countries in the same period have termed 'self-colonization' or 'empire by invitation'.[6] By the same token, there is also evidence of members of the British left, including even strongly anti-communist Atlanticists, *resisting* aspects of the US campaign with which they did not happen to agree. The Labour leadership's position on Europe is perhaps the most obvious instance of this. A third response

which needs to be taken into account is *appropriation*, that is local groups or individuals adapting the apparatus and rhetoric of the American intervention to serve domestic purposes which had little or nothing to do with the Cold War. To suppose, then, that those British leftists who became involved in the CIA's operations were dupes or slaves of American foreign policy is to repeat the mistake made by Gaitskell and his followers when they identified all critics of their defence policies as puppets of the Kremlin.

The other major problem with the existing interpretation of the CIA's campaign on the British left – such as it is – is that it oversimplifies the nature of the campaign itself. The Agency did not, as a rule, intervene directly in Britain; the operations described here were carried out at 'arm's-length', that is by private citizens on the American 'non-communist left' (or 'NCL', to use an abbreviation favoured in Washington at the time) in a tactic directly imitated from the 'front' organisations created by the Soviets. The assumption has been that the NCL was a faithful and unquestioning instrument of the CIA's will, but newly available documents indicate a more problematic relationship. Anti-Stalinist intellectuals and unionists had been waging their own war on communism long before intelligence professionals appeared on the scene and, even after they became 'agents' in the US Cold War effort, were determined to have a say in the planning and conduct of anti-communist operations. Moreover, relations between the American NCL and British left in this period were not simply a function of official strategy; rather, they need to be viewed in the context of a long-standing and ongoing Anglo–American leftist dialogue. Indeed, it will be argued here that western commitment to the Cold War was itself prompted to a significant degree by members of the left, on both sides of the Atlantic.

This is not to deny that there are serious ethical questions raised by the CIA's secret sponsorship of the American NCL or that the US campaign did have an important effect on the postwar development of British socialism.[7] Indeed, one aim of the book is to show how the Cold War foreclosed various 'postwar possibilities' for the left, in America as well as in Britain, while another is to show how the US intervention artificially strengthened certain tendencies within the British left, not only political but cultural as well, at the expense of others. However, in assessing the impact of the CIA's covert operations on Britain, it is vitally important to acknowledge the *agency* of both the British and American lefts. Not to do so is to risk lapsing into discredited notions of American 'cultural imperialism' or even cruder forms of conspiracy theory.

The following chapters, then, trace the origins of the US's Cold War campaign on the non-communist left, describe those CIA operations which impacted particularly on Britain and examine the British response to the American intervention. Chapter 1 concerns the years immediately after the Second World War – a historical moment described by left-wing American intellectual, Dwight Macdonald, as 'the grey dawn of peace' – when socialist politicians, anti-communist literary intellectuals and trade unionists on both sides of the Atlantic engaged in various attempts to create a new, leftist international order, a project whose initial promise was quickly destroyed by the escalation of the Cold War in the late 1940s.[8] The next two chapters document the first official attempts to mobilise the non-communist left in the Cold War. Chapter 2 examines links between the Information Research Department (IRD), a secret Foreign Office propaganda unit created in 1948, and the British left, in particular the Labour Party, the Trades Union Congress and such literary intellectuals as George Orwell. Although originally charged with publicising the socialist foreign policy of the 'Third Force', IRD rapidly developed instead into an anti-communist political warfare agency. With Chapter 3, the focus shifts across the Atlantic, to the relationship which formed during the late 1940s between elements of the American NCL – anti-communist activists in the labour movement and literary ex-communists – and the CIA (or, to be more precise, the CIA's semi-autonomous covert operations arm, the Office of Policy Coordination). Far from being a 'puppet-on-a-string' affair, the chapter shows this was a partnership initiated and dictated to a significant degree by the NCL. The following chapter expands on this theme in a case study of the curiously neglected NCL American publication, *The New Leader*, arguing that the *NL* played an important role in the creation during the 1940s of 'Cold War consciousness', both in the US and abroad.

The remaining chapters all deal with specific American operations on the Cold War British left during the 1950s. Chapter 5 analyses the impact on Britain of US 'labor diplomacy', that is American attempts to eliminate communist influence in the British labour movement and spread the so-called 'productivity gospel' amongst industrial workers. Chapter 6 documents the activities in Cold War Britain of the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), an international organisation of NCL intellectuals secretly subsidised by the CIA. Chapter 7 examines covert American measures to increase Labour Party support for European unification as well as investigating Labour participation in the semi-secret, Atlanticist forum known as the Bilderberg Group. Finally, Chapter 8 presents a

further case study of a leading NCL publication of the period, the CCF's English-language, London-based organ, *Encounter*. In each chapter, emphasis will be placed on the complex and even contradictory nature of the US campaign, the variety of British responses to it and the uneven impact on Britain of the CIA's covert operations.

Before attempting any of this, however, it is necessary to give a brief, comparative account of the historical development of the non-communist left in Britain and America prior to the Cold War. There were, it will become clear, important Anglo–American differences: the absence in the US of a powerful socialist party to compare with Labour, the relative strength of American Trotskyism as an ideological and organisational focus for anti-Stalinist literary intellectuals and US unions' generally 'non-political' character. However, there were marked similarities as well: convergences between British socialism and American 'social liberalism', the sense of a common political fate shared by ex-communist literary intellectuals, the fierce anti-communism of many labour leaders and idealistic internationalism of much rank-and-file. These meant that there was a surprising amount of left-wing, transatlantic contact and collaboration in the years leading up to the end of the Second World War. Hence, to understand the Anglo–American encounters of the early Cold War era properly, we must first turn our attention to this earlier period.

SOCIALISTS

Although New Labour has represented itself as a radical departure from a continuously socialist past, in fact the British Labour Party's relationship with socialism has always been contingent and problematic. Formed in 1900 by a group of unionists and socialists seeking to ensure the representation of the labour 'interest' in Parliament, the Party was from the outset a 'contentious alliance' of pragmatists seeking piecemeal solutions for the problems of industrial workers – an approach often referred to by historians as 'labourism' – and visionaries hoping to transform capitalist society.[9] This is to say nothing of the intellectual incoherence of the British socialist movement itself, which comprised a bewildering variety of often contradictory ideas and impulses, including Christian nonconformity, Marxist doctrine and Fabian managerialism. During the economic crisis of the 1930s many Labour socialists moved leftwards, urging the Party to become a force for radical change in British society. Among them was the Welsh former miner, Aneurin 'Nye' Bevan,

who during the war years, assisted by Jennie Lee and Michael Foot, would help transform the weekly newspaper *Tribune* into an influential mouthpiece of the 'Labour left'.[10] Other socialist intellectuals in the Labour Party, however, young intellectuals such as Hugh Gaitskell, Evan Durbin and Douglas Jay, were impatient with what they perceived as left-wing dogma and, under the guidance of their patron Hugh Dalton, sought to synthesise traditional Fabian ethical concerns with promising new practical ideas, in particular the economic proposals of Liberal John Maynard Keynes. Dalton's experimental, modernising influence would live on in the postwar period, not only through early protégés such as Gaitskell and Jay (Durbin, widely considered the most brilliant mind of his generation, died tragically young, in 1948), but also a second generation of social democratic 'revisionists' who began rising through the Party's ranks during the 1950s, among them Anthony Crosland, William Rodgers and Roy Jenkins.[11] That said, the revisionist project would continue to meet determined, vocal opposition from such left-wingers as Bevan, Lee and Foot, as well as the less articulate but more obdurate resistance of labourism.

Although it suffered from even worse doctrinal disputes than Labour, the Socialist Party of America (SPA) never enjoyed the compensation of national power. Apart from two periods when it seemed poised to break out of its local bases of support, under the leadership of Eugene Debs in the early 1900s and, during the 1930s, under Norman Thomas, the unresponsiveness to its message of American organised labour (of which more below) condemned it to historical marginality. This is not to say that American socialism was entirely ineffectual. For one thing, it functioned as one of several foci on the American left for anti-communist thought and activity: those exiled Russian social democrats or 'Mensheviks' who sought refuge from Bolshevism in the US tended to gravitate towards it, while many of the most effective anti-Stalinist activists in the 1930s American labour movement came from the ranks of the SPA.[12] More positively, during the late 1930s, the right wing of the socialist movement blurred with the left wing of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal to produce what has been dubbed 'social liberalism' – a distinctive blend of liberal activism and social democracy which was to prove a powerful tendency in mid-twentieth century American political life.[13] The most obvious organisational expression of this socialist–liberal alliance was the Union for Democratic Action (UDA), a political action committee formed in 1941 to agitate for a continuation of New Deal reform at home and democratic intervention abroad, against both communist and fascist

depredations. Amongst those involved were such left-liberals as Freda Kirchwey of *The Nation* (the organisation's first chair), the former socialist James Loeb (its director and organiser) and the distinguished Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr (who later succeeded Kirchwey). When the UDA was reconstituted as Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) in 1947, it attracted an even more impressive array of political talent, making it the foremost anti-communist, liberal pressure group in postwar America.[14]

Despite their contrasting fortunes, there was considerable contact between British and American socialists in the years before the Cold War, especially during the 1930s. Labour intellectuals interested in revising Party doctrine, such as the social democrat Evan Durbin, looked to New Deal 'Brain Trusters' like A. A. Berle for theoretical and practical inspiration.[15] Even the Labour left, which had long been fascinated by America, with its confusing mix of social egalitarianism and untrammelled capitalism, was impressed by aspects of the Roosevelt experiment. Jennie Lee visited the US frequently during this period, while Harold Laski, the most influential interpreter of American affairs to the British left, befriended the President personally.[16] That said, British socialists never fully reconciled themselves with the US, Laski, for example, remaining a doctrinaire Marxist despite his affection for things American. For their part, American socialists and left-liberals were equally disparaging about aspects of Britain, particularly its history of colonialism. However, there was also great respect and admiration on the American left for the British Labour Party, which many regarded as a model of successful socialist organisation. Indeed, the UDA was partly based organisationally on the example of the Labour think-tank, the New Fabian Research Bureau. Consequently, the unexpected Labour victory in the 1945 General Election aroused considerable interest in left-liberal circles in the US.[17]

EX-COMMUNISTS

A second important element of the non-communist left, on both sides of the Atlantic, was that made up of literary intellectuals who had been attracted to communism during the crisis of the Great Depression, but then were violently repelled by it as a result of one or other of the 'shocks' of the late 1930s: the Moscow 'show trials', Stalinist persecution of Trotskyists and anarchists fighting in Spain and the Nazi–Soviet

non-aggression pact of 1939. The archetype of the anti-Stalinist man of letters was George Orwell, who formed the centre of a reasonably distinct community of non-communist left *literati* in Britain, made up mainly of such émigrés as the publisher Fredric Warburg, journalist T. R. Fyvel and novelist Arthur Koestler.[18] Together these intellectuals perceived themselves as an embattled ideological minority, bravely struggling against a massive *trahison des clercs*, symbolised most powerfully by the Popular Front alliance between communists and fellow-travelling leftists.

However, it would be a mistake to exaggerate the group identity and political purpose of the British literary non-communist left. The comparative weakness of the Trotskyist movement in Britain meant that anti-Stalinist Marxists like Orwell lacked an alternative organisational base when they began their retreat from communism. Hence Orwell's increasing attraction to *Tribune*-style socialism during the early 1940s, and the influence of other ideologies on the British non-communist left in this period, such as anarchism and, most importantly, aestheticism. The latter, arguably only partially submerged during the 'Red Decade', came roaring back in the late 1930s and war years, subduing the commitment of 'MacSpaunDay' (the group of Oxford-educated poets Louis MacNiece, Stephen Spender, W. H. Auden and Cecil Day Lewis) to radical politics. Consequently, while the main organ of Britain's literary intellectuals, Cyril Connolly's *Horizon*, (which, incidentally, Stephen Spender helped to edit), published several important political statements by Orwell, Koestler and other anti-Stalinist writers in this period, its main preoccupation was with the preservation of high cultural standards in wartime Britain, a fact which earned it charges of irresponsible bohemianism and *belle-lettrism*.[19]

Anti-Stalinist Marxists were rather better organised in America. To the right of the American Communist Party (CPUSA) were the 'Lovestoneites', named after Jay Lovestone, a former Party leader deposed by Stalin in 1929 for ideological 'deviationism'. Aided by his lieutenants Benjamin Gitlow and Bertram D. Wolfe, Lovestone led the Communist Party (Opposition) throughout the 1930s, taking an increasingly anti-Stalinist line until eventually abandoning Marxism–Leninism altogether in 1939.[20] To the CPUSA's left was a predominantly Trotskyist group of factions, including the Cannonites, Shachtmanites and Musteites, whose combined membership never amounted to more than a few thousand, yet which counted among their supporters a number of soon-to-be influential anti-Stalinist thinkers.[21]

The single most important institution for literary intellectuals on the American NCL, however, was not a political party but a magazine. Under the editorship of William Phillips and Philip Rahv, *Partisan Review*, originally the cultural organ of the New York Communist Party, became a rallying point for American intellectuals who were revolted by Stalinism but still thought of themselves as Marxists, such as writers Dwight Macdonald and Mary McCarthy.[22] Although *PR* devoted increasing attention to culture, in particular literary Modernism, it did not go as far down the path of aestheticism as its British counterpart, *Horizon*.[23] Anti-Stalinism remained the editors' ruling passion, as was shown by their enthusiastic participation in the Committee for Cultural Freedom, an organisation created in 1939 by former Trotskyist philosopher, Sidney Hook, to protest 'totalitarian' – meaning communist as well as fascist – acts of 'cultural dictatorship'.[24] Indeed, so great was their abhorrence of Stalinism that it gradually overwhelmed other more positive leftist impulses: the Trotskyism they espoused immediately after their defection from the CPUSA was gradually replaced by a rather vague, Marxist 'hyper-radicalism'. Eventually this process of 'de-radicalisation' led to a major editorial dispute in 1942, specifically over the issue of the magazine's position on the Second World War, with Dwight Macdonald eventually quitting the magazine to launch a publication of his own devoted to the exploration of new forms of political radicalism, *politics*.[25] Despite this and other internal disagreements, the 'New York intellectuals', as they were later designated, remained for the most part a remarkably cohesive group, united by an intense hatred of Stalinism.

A number of factors predisposed literary anti-Stalinists to international collaboration: their self-perception as beleaguered minorities, allegiance to universalist ideologies such as Marxism and Modernism, even the simple fact that so many of them were immigrants or émigrés. Internationalism was a particularly strong characteristic of *Partisan Review*, which functioned as an important point of transatlantic intellectual contact from the first. During the 1940s, George Orwell and Arthur Koestler contributed regular 'London Letters', as well as maintaining a private correspondence with the editors.[26] There was also a 'special relationship' between *PR* and *Horizon*, with the latter even helping to publish a short-lived special London edition of the American magazine.[27] Dwight Macdonald's *politics* was another channel of Anglo–American communication, especially with such British anarchists as George Woodcock, although again Orwell featured prominently.[28]

Their ideological sympathy and solidarity notwithstanding, there were also significant differences between the American and British literary non-communist lefts. The New York intellectuals were mainly from immigrant, proletarian backgrounds; if they had received any university education at all, it was probably from the low-prestige City College of New York (CCNY). Most of the British, in contrast, were from at least middle-class families, educated at public school and Oxbridge; those who were not were quickly absorbed into the dominant, aristocratic intellectual culture, with its carefully cultivated air of languid elegance. Whereas for most of the Americans their engagement with communism had been the defining intellectual experience of their lives, for the British (excepting émigrés like Koestler, who had worked as an officer of the Comintern), it had tended rather to be a brief flirtation at university. Consequently, while the anti-communism of the British NCL was undoubtedly intense, it lacked some of the fervour of its American counterpart. This difference would haunt Anglo–American literary collaborations during the Cultural Cold War of the 1950s.

LABOUR

There were several major divergences between the development of national trade union centres in Britain and the US. Whereas the Trades Union Congress (TUC) was strongly associated with socialism from the late nineteenth century, the American Federation of Labor (AFL), under the leadership of the English immigrant cigar-maker, Samuel Gompers, practised a form of 'trade unionism, pure and simple', whose sole aim was procuring practical benefits – principally, higher wages – for skilled workers. Following on from this denial of a broader, social purpose was a marked reluctance on the part of the AFL to identify itself with any political party – Gompers believed that political entanglements would lead inevitably to the domination of labour by more powerful economic interests – which again contrasted sharply with the TUC's involvement with Labour. Finally, although British labour leaders were on the whole strongly anti-communist – Ernest Bevin, first General Secretary of the powerful Transport and General Workers Union (and later Labour Foreign Secretary), detested communism with an almost religious zeal – they generally avoided direct confrontation with communists in their ranks, preferring instead a positive policy of working to improve the poor working and living conditions on which communism thrived. Britain's wartime

alliance with the Soviet Union, which swelled the numbers of communists in union posts and strengthened internationalist impulses amongst the rank-and-file, dampened the TUC leadership's anti-communism still further.[29] The AFL, in contrast, was fanatically anti-communist in deed as well as word. Hence, during the Second World War, while the TUC took the initiative in launching a new labour international, the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), the AFL refused membership of a body in which Soviet trade unions played a prominent role. Instead, the Federation established its own independent foreign policy unit, the Free Trade Union Committee (FTUC), one of whose main purposes was to counter Soviet designs on postwar Europe. The running of the FTUC was entrusted to the ex-communist Jay Lovestone, who had by this point earned a reputation within the AFL leadership as a supremely effective anti-communist activist and expert on world affairs.[30]

Despite these differences, there were strong bonds between the AFL and TUC which dated back to the late 1800s and were reinforced in the early twentieth century by the exchange of fraternal delegates at annual conferences, joint participation in the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and such symbolic gestures of international solidarity as the presentation by the Congress to the Federation in 1918 of a bronze panel depicting 'The Triumph of Labour' to adorn its new Washington offices.[31] If anything, the relationship grew closer in the 1930s and early 1940s as the AFL, partly under the influence of the determinedly internationalist David Dubinsky, head of the New York garment workers' union, (ILGWU), and his foreign affairs adviser Lovestone, abandoned its traditional isolationism and began pressing for more vigorous American intervention in European affairs, particularly to assist the victims of totalitarianism. Underpinning the alliance were links between the ILGWU's Educational Department, which was headed by a former Labour Party parliamentary candidate who had emigrated to America, Mark Starr, and the TUC's Publicity Department, run by Herbert Tracey.[32] Another organisation associated with Dubinsky's ILGWU, the Jewish Labor Committee (JLC), constituted a second bridge between the American and British labour movements, hosting visits to the US by TUC General Secretary Walter Citrine and, after Britain's declaration of war against Nazi Germany, helping create the American Labor Committee to Aid British Labor. The JLC had originally been created in the wake of a stirring speech by Citrine to the 1934 AFL convention about the plight of European victims of fascism.[33]

Moreover, after 1935 the AFL was no longer America's sole national labour centre. The Committee of Industrial Organizations (CIO), formed in the wake of the breakthrough National Labor Relations Act of that year, represented an ambitious attempt to organise the factory workers in mass industries previously regarded as untouchable by the AFL. In contrast with the latter's ethos of wage consciousness, the Committee (after 1938, the Congress) had a strong tinge of democratic socialism. Indeed, several of its leading figures, such as the dynamic Detroit autoworker leader, Walter Reuther, had earlier belonged to the Socialist Party. In addition, the CIO made no attempt to disguise its interest in politics, occasionally calling for the formation of a new political organisation to represent labour, but mainly campaigning on behalf of Roosevelt's Democratic Party, in the process becoming an important element of the New Deal electoral coalition. Later, such CIO leaders as Reuther would form an even more vital component of the alliance between New Deal left-wingers and socialist right-wingers which found organisational expression in, first, the UDA, then the ADA. Finally, while Reuther and the majority of his colleagues were firmly anti-communist, the CIO displayed a more pragmatic attitude towards communism than the AFL. When the WFTU was established at the end of the Second World War, the Congress became a member, along with the TUC and Soviet unions, leaving the Federation on the sidelines.[34] Combined with its much-vaunted history of industrial militancy and its social democratic complexion, this evidence of the CIO's internationalism greatly appealed to rank-and-file British unionists, as well as members of the Labour left: during the mid-1930s Walter Reuther struck up a close friendship with Jennie Lee and, through her, her soon-to-be-husband, Nye Bevan. In short, the TUC had more ideological sympathy with the new American labour centre than it did with the AFL.

Historical scholarship has tended to represent both the British and American lefts as peculiar, insular and exceptional. Certainly, both did possess their own distinctive features due to the different historical environments which shaped them and which they sought to shape. It would be foolish to deny the relative weakness of the American socialist movement, coherence of its literary non-communist left and conservatism of its union movement. However, equally it would not do to overstate the contrasts between the British and American lefts, or ignore the interaction which took place between them. Shared values, concerns – and an enduring mutual fascination – created a distinct transatlantic community

of left-wing discourse and bred a desire to create an international leftist order which would transcend national boundaries. This ambition did not die out with the Second World War; rather it intensified, as Chapter 1 will show.

NOTES

1. Quoted in Brian Brivati, *Hugh Gaitskell* (London: Richard Cohen Books, 1996), p. 374.
2. Quoted in Richard Fletcher, 'How CIA money took the teeth out of British socialism', in Philip Agee and Louis Wolf (eds), *Dirty Work: The CIA in Western Europe* (London: Zed Press, 1978), p. 200.
3. As Richard Aldrich has shown, the 'hidden hand' of the CIA also reached into areas of British life other than the political left, such as student organisations and news agencies. Such ventures, however, lie outside the scope of this study. See Richard J. Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand: Britain, America and Cold War Secret Intelligence* (London: John Murray, 2001).
4. See Fletcher, 'How CIA Money', pp. 188–200.
5. Frances Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London: Granta, 1999).
6. Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), p. 2; Geir Lundestad, 'Empire by invitation: The United States and western Europe, 1945–52', *Journal of Peace Research* 23 (1986), 263–77.
7. For a judicious discussion of the harmful consequences for the American left of its Cold War alliance with the CIA, see Eric Thomas Chester, *Covert Network: Progressives, the International Rescue Committee and the CIA* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), chap. 15.
8. Quoted in Neil Jumonville, *Critical Crossings: The New York Intellectuals in Postwar America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. xi.
9. Lewis Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance: Trade Unions and the Labour Party* (Edinburgh University Press, 1991). John Saville has defined labourism as 'a theory and practice which [accepts] the possibility of social change within the existing framework of society … [and emphasises] the unity of Capital and Labour'. Quoted in Peter Weiler, *Ernest Bevin* (Manchester University Press, 1993), p. viii.
10. On the origins and early history of *Tribune*, see Ben Pimlott, *Labour and the Left in the 1930s* (Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 107–8.
11. See Radhika Desai, *Intellectuals and Socialism: 'Social Democrats' and the British Labour Party* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1994), pp. 57–60. Desai generally gives a very useful account of the relationship between social

democratic intellectuals and the Labour Party. See also Elizabeth Durbin, *New Jerusalems: The Labour Party and the Economics of Democratic Socialism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985) and Edmund Dell, *A Strange Eventful History: Democratic Socialism in Britain* (London: HarperCollins, 2000).

12. See chap. 4.
13. Sean Wilentz, 'Socialism', in Richard Wightman Fox and James T. Kloppenberg (eds.), *A Companion to American Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1995), p. 639.
14. For a brief history of the UDA and more detailed accounts of the origins of the ADA, see Steven M. Gillon, *Politics and Vision: The ADA and American Liberalism, 1947–85* (Oxford University Press, 1987), ch. 1.
15. See Stephen Brooke, 'Atlantic Crossing? American views of capitalism and British socialist thought, 1942–62', *Twentieth Century British History* 2 (1991), 112–18.
16. See Henry Pelling, *America and the British Left: From Bright to Bevan* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1956), ch. 8.
17. See Douglas Richard Ayer, 'American liberalism and British socialism in a Cold War world, 1945–51', Ph.D. thesis, Stanford University (1983), ch. 2.
18. See T. R. Fyvel, *George Orwell: A Personal Memoir* (London: Weidenfeld, 1982) and Fredric Warburg, *All Authors are Equal: The Publishing Life of Fredric Warburg, 1936–71* (London: Hutchinson, 1973). Warburg, Orwell and Fyvel collaborated on a series of short books on British war aims called 'Searchlight Books'. The first work to be published in this series was Orwell's *The Lion and the Unicorn* (1941). Stephen Spender also contributed (*The Life and the Poet*). See John Newsinger, 'George Orwell and Searchlight: A radical initiative on the home front', *Socialist History* 9 (1996), 55–81.
19. Bernard Bergonzi, *Wartime and Aftermath: English Literature and its Background, 1939–60* (Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 6. For a detailed description of the *Horizon* circle, see Michael Shelden, *Friends of Promise: Cyril Connolly and the World of Horizon* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1989).
20. See Ted Morgan, *A Covert Life. Jay Lovestone: Communist, Anti-Communist and Spymaster* (New York: Random House, 1999).
21. See Alan M. Wald, *The New York Intellectuals: The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), chap. 6.
22. For a detailed account of *Partisan Review*'s early history, see Terry A. Cooney, *The Rise of the New York Intellectuals: Partisan Review and Its Circle* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986).
23. See Hugh Wilford, *The New York Intellectuals: From Vanguard to Institution* (Manchester University Press, 1995), chaps. 2 and 3, for a discussion of the New York intellectuals' engagement with Modernism.
24. See Cooney, *Rise of New York Intellectuals*, pp. 141–5. Around the same

time Dwight Macdonald, concerned that Hook's group placed insufficient emphasis on positive, radical goals, formed a rival organisation called the League for Cultural Freedom and Socialism. This split prefigured the later divisions in *PR*'s editorial board and Europe–America Groups, which are described below.

25. See Gregory D. Sumner, *Dwight Macdonald and the Politics Circle: The Challenge of Cosmopolitan Democracy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996).
26. See John Newsinger, 'The American connection: George Orwell, "literary Trotskyism" and the New York intellectuals', *Labour History Review* 64 (1999), 23–43.
27. See Wilford, *New York Intellectuals*, p. 51.
28. See Newsinger, 'American connection', 33–5.
29. See Nina Fishman, 'The phoney Cold War in British trade unions', *Contemporary British History*, 15.3 (2001), 83–104.
30. See Federico Romero, *The United States and the European Trade Union Movement, 1944–51* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), pp. 12–17.
31. File on 'American Federation of Labor, 1918–34', Trades Union Congress Papers, 973/17, Modern Records Centre, Warwick University.
32. See Pelling, *America and British Left*, p. 140.
33. Walter Citrine, *Men and Work: The Autobiography of Lord Citrine* (London: Hutchinson, 1964), p. 346.
34. On Reuther and the CIO, see Anthony Carew, *Walter Reuther* (Manchester University Press, 1993); Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit: Walter Reuther and the Fate of American Labor* (New York: Basic Books, 1995); and Robert H. Zieger, *The CIO, 1935–55* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

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1

Postwar Possibilities

For members of the non-communist left on both sides of the Atlantic, the end of the Second World War appeared a historic moment of opportunity. The defeat of fascism and a widespread expectation of change, both domestic and international, stimulated an unprecedented sense of political possibility. The most dramatic expression of this mood was the election in Britain of a Labour government. It was not the only one, however: the mid-1940s witnessed a proliferation of other, albeit less conspicuous, left-wing projects, including several which built on the transatlantic contact and collaboration of previous decades. For example, American social liberals established new links with the left wing of the British Labour Party in an attempt to create a 'Third Force' in international politics; ex-communist literary intellectuals collaborated on the reformulation of leftist ethical principles and the construction of organisational forms appropriate for the postwar environment; and union leaders joined in a common effort to create a new world order based on the values of labour 'internationalism'. There were, of course, big differences between the values and practices of these socialists, ex-communists and unionists. Nevertheless, all three of the principal components of the transatlantic non-communist left were united in 1945 by an unusual sense of optimism and idealism.

All of them were also to suffer a similar fate. In each case, the sense of optimism and idealism which had prevailed in the immediate postwar period gave way to feelings of disillusionment and realism as the western world divided into hostile ideological blocs after 1947. By the end of the decade the non-communist left had abandoned its attempt to occupy a third-camp position and thrown in its lot with the American cause in the Cold War. Although the polarising effect of the superpower conflict was clearly the main factor involved here, the causation of this development

was highly complex. It was not a simple case of the left being 'co-opted' by Cold War governing élites, or of US influence subduing impulses towards independence in the British left. The left itself – British as well as American – played an important role in the process, with its more anti-communist, 'right-wing' elements gradually squashing the positive, constructive intentions of those who retained a greater sense of leftist possibility. In other words, the left made a major contribution to the onset of Cold War in the west during the late 1940s. One sign of this is that all three of the ventures described below directly anticipated the organisational weapons with which the US government would wage its anti-Soviet campaign after the mid-century.

INTERPRETING BRITAIN TO AMERICA

The Union for Democratic Action – the amalgam of American socialists and left-wing New Deal-ers created in 1941 – had always regarded the British Labour Party as its leading foreign ally. It campaigned on Labour's behalf in the US throughout the war years, drumming up progressive support for the Party's domestic programme and contribution to the British war effort.[1] With peace and electoral victory in 1945, the UDA's enthusiasm for Labour increased further still, as did its determination to extend a helping hand across the Atlantic. According to James Loeb Jr., the organisation's ex-socialist National Executive Secretary, the election result constituted 'the most significant event of this generation from the point of view of democratic progressives'. Not only did the new British government represent 'the first great chance of democratic socialism in a major world power'; it was also 'the last chance', the squandering of which would have disastrous consequences, leaving Europe and the world to be fought over by 'two rival totalitarian systems'.[2] The UDA must therefore do all in its power to make the experiment a success. In America, where British foreign policy was prone to 'misunderstanding' and the Party lacked any 'public relations' apparatus, this meant stepping up efforts to give Labour favourable publicity.[3]

In the winter of 1946, Bruce Bliven, editor of the liberal magazine, *The New Republic*, and the British-born educational director of New York garment workers union, ILGWU, Mark Starr, carried across the Atlantic a memorandum from Loeb proposing that the UDA send to Britain an American who would act 'as the unofficial ambassador of American progressives and as a competent and sure source of