The Politics of Authenticity

Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America

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PREFACE

UNLIKE MOST PREVIOUS historians of the 1960s, the origin of my scholarship does not lie in a personal involvement with the events and movements about which I write. I am not old enough, by many years, to have been involved in the new left, much less the civil rights movement of the cold war era; I am not a Christian believer; I am not very countercultural (in the usual sense of the term); and I am not a Texan. As an undergraduate in the 1980s, I simply stumbled on the new left as a historical topic, never having heard of this movement before.

Although I did not witness the movements chronicled here (save as an infant and, at that, only on television), this in no way furnishes me with an objective viewpoint. Rather, my own experiences give me a particular perspective on the events I discuss. In the late 1980s, my political outlook underwent significant changes, and learning that there had been a "new left" in the United States during the 1960s, I was eager to see what I might learn from its experience. Early on, I was occupied not only with the expository question of what these people had said and done but also with the question of why their movement had "failed," that is, why it had lost its bid to transform American politics and why it had collapsed around 1970. The reflection of my own situation is clear. Why did there seem to be so little guidance available to those who were only then coming to a critical outlook on their society? Why were the connections to the past severed so cleanly?

These questions are flawed, but that is somewhat beside the point, since they no longer guide my analysis. I have come to think that the new left's greatest historical significance lies not in its impact but in its meaning, including its meaning for the larger political world from which it emerged. To neglect the vociferous opposition that the new left directed toward the political and cultural order in which new left radicals lived would be foolish and misleading. I intend no such neglect when I state that possibly the single comment most consistent with my own perspective on this movement is Raymond Williams's remark that "the dominant culture . . . at once produces and limits its own forms of counter-culture." The civil rights movement, the cold war, and the cultural experience of certain social groups in the twentieth-century United States converged to produce the new left of the 1960s. This was a movement of opposition, but opposition on the most intimate of terms. In an effort either to validate or to indict this opposition, however, sometimes the intimacy gets lost.

It is clear to me that my perspective on the new left is a product of the politically conservative times in which I have researched and written this book. Once, around 1960, historians interested in the history of American radicalism—likewise shaped by a young adulthood in conservative times—came to discern deep affinities between American dissent and the American mainstream. They were inclined to look at the larger structures of political expression and action, and disinclined to romanticize rebels of the past, sympathy notwithstanding. I have gradually come to feel a certain kinship with this group of historians. They sometimes are termed an "in-between" generation, since they were too young to have been deeply involved in the "old left" of the 1930s and 1940s and too old to be part of the new left (although they have been labeled the first "new left" historians). I feel a strong and sometimes partisan sympathy for the people about whom I write. However, my purpose here is neither praise nor burial. In the future, this book may seem like the product of another "in-between" time. One can always hope.

Several institutions have supported this book's writing. The Johns Hopkins University history department, the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History (NMAH), and the Pew Program in Religion and American History at Yale University provided generous financial support, for which I extend my gratitude. At NMAH, my sponsor, Charlie McGovern, and the doyenne of the fellows' office, Mary Dyer, offered unfailing reassurance. Lee Baker, Carolyn Goldstein, Peggy Shaffer, and I formed a postdissertation reading group at the museum, which supplied both an unsurpassed level of attention to works in progress and crucially timed

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I wish to thank all those who let me interview them for this book or who wrote me with their recollections. Without their cooperation, this book, as I imagined it, would have been impossible. I am grateful to Kristin Henry for helping me to locate many of my correspondents. I have not specifically cited every interview I conducted, but all the personal information I gathered helped shape my understanding of the time and place about which I have written. Casey Hayden, Al Lingo, and Jim Neyland were especially generous with their time and attention. I conducted many of the interviews in Texas, where Sally Clarke and Peter Jelavich showed me remarkable hospitality.

Many friends and colleagues graciously found the time to read and comment on all or part of this manuscript at some point in its development (even if they didn't know that was what they were reading). For this I thank Lee Baker, Brian Balogh, Alan Brinkley, Sally Clarke, Pete Daniel, Sandy Dijkstra, David Farber, Richard Flathman, Steve Fraser, Lou Galambos, Carolyn Goldstein, Steve Hahn, Casey Hayden, Lisa Cobbs Hoffman, Jonathan Holloway, Daniel Horowitz, Maurice Isserman, Cathy Kerr, Rebecca Klatch, George Lipsitz, Walter Benn Michaels, Michael Parrish, Leo Ribuffo, Dorothy Ross, Erica Schoenberger, Peggy Shaffer, Jim Sidbury, Gaddis Smith, Julian Zelizer, and Jon Zimmerman. At the NMAH library, Jim Roan and Bridget Burke performed yeoman service in tracking down obscure theological texts and rolls of microfilm. I'm sorry if I've forgotten anyone.

At the Johns Hopkins University, I learned a great deal about the practice of history, none of which I will recount here. I thank my teachers in the history department there—Lou Galambos, Dorothy Ross, Ron Walters, and JoAnne Brown—for all they taught me, and the department's support staff—Sarah Springer, Sharon Widomski, and Shirley Hipley—for answering uncounted questions. Lou and Dorothy have been avid in their support for this project since I earned my Ph.D. Dorothy gave me a rare and highly valuable teaching opportunity at Hopkins. Lou and Jane Eliot Sewell have shown me good cheer on many an occasion. As I developed my project in its initial stages, Lou provided a kind of mixed economy of dissertation advis-

ing: intellectual laissez-faire combined with material and emotional protectionism. As John Kenneth Galbraith once said, "It works." Lou and Brian Balogh have shown unstinting encouragement for many years, through thick and thin; I'm happy to count them as friends as well as teachers.

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My parents, Rhoda and Ed Rossinow, somewhere got the idea that I would not damage myself badly if I spent a lot of time reading books, so they let me. They have continually expressed their support for a course of action that, I know, has sometimes seemed mysterious to them. For this and for other things, I thank them. My sisters, Jill and Sharon, likewise have been consistently encouraging (as well as offering me places to crash when I've been in New York). I thank Bob Lowen, the late Joan Lowen, Sara Lowen, and Tom Omestad for their interest in this project and their friendship along the way; Bob also has offered indispensable technical support. Rebecca Lowen's belief in me and in this book has never faltered. The book has benefited from her razor-sharp skills as a reader and editor, and her high professional standards have provided me with a valuable benchmark, but her faith in me has proved most important. We married for better and for worse. Owing to circumstances outside our control, we've had some of each already, and she has been impressive throughout. Thanks, Becky; the best is yet to come.

INTRODUCTION

From the Age of Anxiety to the Politics of Authenticity

THIS IS A STUDY of the political culture of the United States between the late 1940s and the early 1970s. It traces the somewhat surprising emergence of a "new" political left following the politically conservative era of the 1950s, the flowering of this left in the 1960s, and its frustration in the 1970s. This "new left" stemmed from white youth participation in civil rights activism in the late 1950s and early 1960s. It attracted considerable attention in the early 1960s by promoting a project of both formal and social democracy, the emphasis on formal or "participatory democracy" receiving the most attention from the movement's members and sympathizers. In the late 1960s the new left gained adherents rapidly, especially on college and university campuses around the United States, in step with the mounting frustration among Americans in general with the course of the Vietnam War. Yet this movement had dissipated as a coherent force for radical political change by the time the Paris Peace Accords officially ended the war in January 1973.

The new left broke sharply with the thought and activism of the "old left" of the 1930s and 1940s. By the late 1940s, hopes for a working-class-based social democracy—the dominant vision of the left in the previous century—had been severely dampened in the United States. Fewer than ten years later, small numbers of Americans, largely independent of one another, began laying the groundwork for a new left that would draw on a drastically different social and intellectual basis than had the old left. Although Students for a

Democratic Society (SDS), the main new left organization, advocated in its *Port Huron Statement* (1962) a liberal–labor–civil rights coalition, SDS nonetheless broke with what the radical sociologist C. Wright Mills called the "labor metaphysic" of the old left and promoted universities, not factories or working-class neighborhoods, as the most promising sites of left-wing insurgency.[1]

The new left was a movement of white, college-educated young people, few of whom ever had known poverty. Material deprivation provided neither their main explanation of insurgency nor their prime argument for social change. In fact, new left radicals launched what many have called a "postscarcity" radicalism, directing their basic criticism at the "affluent society" itself, which they, along with many liberals and conservatives of the 1950s and 1960s, considered an achieved fact. Under the influence of Mills's writings and the civil rights movement, the new left from its start viewed students and African Americans as the two groups most likely to stimulate radical social change in the United States. For a time, the new left viewed the poor—a category they differentiated sharply from the working class, for new left radicals endorsed the widespread belief that the U.S. working class was comfortable and conservative—as the agent of social change. Yet even here the new left saw the poor's political potential arising not from economic want but from political "alienation."[2]

The broad salience of the term *alienation* is the key to understanding the post–World War II left's shift away from a materialist strategy. Possibly no word was used more frequently in discussions of political discontent in the United States during the period considered here. *Alienation* means "estrangement," and Americans in the 1950s and 1960s applied this term to many contexts—different individuals and groups can be estranged from a variety of things and people, after all—and paradoxically, it took on both positive and negative connotations among dissidents. Black Americans and the poor of all races were alienated from the formal political system, perhaps even from the values that underlay the social system (the argument went), so they might prove willing to storm the palace gates, unlike the industrial working class, which had been "bought off," given a "seat at the table." Marginality was the key to radical agency.

The new left radicals sometimes asserted that college students likewise sat outside the political system and therefore also had insurgent potential, but more often the new left emphasized the strategic location of students in the universities, which were increasingly important components in the nation's political economy. It was not easy to argue that students—especially those who had grown up in an era of unprecedented material abundance and whose leading role in the consumer culture was increasingly recognized—were marginal. Yet many observers had noted a malaise among affluent youth as early as the 1950s and had labeled this a variety of alienation. Not surprisingly, new left activists devoted a great deal of time to pondering the sources and meaning of this middle-class alienation.[3]

Those who found the prospect of radical change less attractive than did the new left found the phenomenon of alienation politically worrisome, not cheering. Many political liberals expressed dismay, and did so for years before the new left came on the scene, at the link they discerned between alienation and depoliticization. (Levels of voter participation had been dropping since the turn of the century, with a temporary reversal during the 1930s, and they continued to do so until the century drew to a close.) Political liberals feared a listless and perhaps volatile citizenry. The sociologist Kenneth Keniston called alienated, affluent youth "the uncommitted." As early as 1949, as the cold war deepened, the influential historian, publicist, and liberal activist Arthur Schlesinger Jr. foresaw widespread political and moral alienation, and in the context of what John F. Kennedy later called the "long twilight struggle" against communism, an alienated citizenry seemed worrisome indeed.[4]

Alienation, Schlesinger argued, stemmed from an inability to cope with the cultural impact of industrialization, and he feared political tyranny would be the ultimate result. The transition to industrial modernity had "devitaliz[ed] the old religions while producing nothing new capable of controlling pride and power." Americans lived in an "age of anxiety," he explained. Anxiety meant the awareness of moral and social alienation, the feeling of floating adrift on foreign seas, a feeling that opened the way to brutal regimes offering a sense of certainty through a "totalitarian" program. "Red fascism," as some called communism, held a genuine appeal for many who were stricken with anxiety, Schlesinger believed, because it offered both new social forms and a new creed. The diplomat George Kennan feared that for this reason, communism would triumph. Schlesinger, too, doubted that the political culture of democracy, whose "thinness" he bemoaned, could win out over communism as a solution to alienation. "The spectacular reopening of these problems [of anxiety] in our time," he concluded bleakly, "finds the democratic faith lacking in the profounder emotional resources. Democracy has no defense-in-depth against the neuroses of industrialism."[5]

The new left, shaped by cold war anticommunism and by the collapse of the Stalinist left in the United States, set out to prove wrong this line of thought. It sought to chart a third way between the politics of communism and of anticommunism by showing that if invigorated and expanded, the culture of democracy could defeat the forces of alienation and anxiety.

Turning the politics of estrangement upside down, new left radicals asserted that alienation somehow could propel people out of anxiety and into social commitment—which was the polar opposite of alienation. Since these radicals favored drastic social and political change, the condition of alienation actually appeared as an opportunity, since an estrangement from society seemed like a prerequisite for recruitment into a new radical movement. Still, bringing people from alienation into commitment would not be easy. The new left argued that only a radical vision of democracy—a vision much more radical than anything Schlesinger entertained—could serve as the ideal that would bring water from the rock, commitment and wholeness from alienation and anxiety.

For all the social and political alienation that they observed among blacks or the poor, the new radicals of the 1960s agreed with scholars like Keniston that they themselves experienced a distinctive kind of alienation. But unlike Keniston, they felt that this alienation of the affluent provided the surest basis for new left recruitment. They felt their own alienation was an estrangement less from dominant social norms, or from conventional political activity, than from their own real selves. This estrangement from one's self caused subjective feelings like anxiety. The theologian Paul Tillich and other existentialists had long made this argument in a more spiritual vein. The fundamental estrangement that caused anxiety, they believed, was an alienation from God. According to existentialist thought, a state of unity with the self or the divine or, as Tillich put it in his disembodied way, "the ground of Being" furnished a kind of inner wholeness. This wholeness was the opposite of alienation in an internal sense, just as commitment was the opposite of social alienation; this inner wholeness was the state of authenticity. Adopting an existentialist outlook, the new left came to argue that social and political arrangements caused inner alienation and that only radical social change would open the path to authenticity. Thus a growing understanding among affluent youth of their own predicament would inspire this segment of the population to seek the twin goals of authenticity and democratization.

The search for authenticity lay at the heart of the new left. The new left was not simply a movement of opposition, the antithesis of the society that produced it, or merely an eccentric cousin of the Marxist left. Rather, it was a logical development of broad strains in twentieth-century politics and culture. Although the quest for authenticity stretches across industrial American history, only after World War II did it become a widespread preoccupation. T. J. Jackson Lears sees a sensation of "weightlessness"—a feeling of insubstantiality or inauthenticity—among the American upper class at the turn of the twentieth century. Christopher Lasch was the first to recognize that concern over this predicament, and a consequent desire to make contact with "real life," animated some of those on the modern political left, usually those from rather genteel backgrounds. In 1965 he termed this "the new radicalism."[6] At almost exactly the same time, the combination of the search for authenticity with leftist politics acquired a popular basis. Amid conditions of broad affluence, mass consumption, the bureaucratization of many areas of social life, and increasing disengagement from formal political participation, feelings of weightlessness migrated down the social scale, appearing among much broader strata of American society and leading to a widespread yearning for authenticity. Unlike the pessimistic upper-class yearning in earlier times for "real" experience, the young people who sought authenticity in the early cold war often believed strongly that they would achieve their personal and political goals. The triumphalism of cold war America influenced them as much as did American anxiety.[7]

The intersection of the search for authenticity and political life produced what, looking backward, we can see as a tradition of existentialist politics in these middle strata in cold war America. Not inappropriately, this politics appeared most conspicuously in the country's universities, among students whose experience in those institutions during the cold war had become the single clearest mark of "middle-class" identity. The poles of alienation and authenticity define existentialism, and existential politics spins political analysis and action between these two poles. It is not merely a historian's conceit to call this politics existentialist. The vocabulary of existentialism became widely popular in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s, and the young people considered in this book made it the means of expressing their personal and political hopes. They talked all the time about becoming "real" or "natural" or "authentic" and about transcending their generation's "alienation." Existentialism did not simply overtake the new left in its later years, displacing a rational, deliberative project aimed at cultivating participatory democracy, as some argue. Rather, existentialism was a powerful element in this movement from the start. The *Port Huron Statement* asserted that the "goal of man and society should be . . . finding a meaning in life that is personally authentic," and the new left's ultimate aim was to alter social arrangements so as to allow as many people as possible to pursue that goal.[8]

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, clusters of American youth became enamored of different variants of existentialism. While many high school and college students spent hours in coffeehouses over paperback volumes edited by Walter Kaufmann or written by Jean-Paul Sartre or Albert Camus (who was the more readable and the more read of the Frenchmen), the most organized and most politically consequential source of existentialist ideas in

this era—still unknown to many today—was the student Christian movement of the nation's campuses.[9] The Student Young Men's Christian Association–Young Women's Christian Association (YMCA–YWCA), along with other, less far-flung organizations, immersed interested students in the heady intellectual currents then swirling through American and world Christianity, introducing young adults to such authors as Tillich, Rudolf Bultmann, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. This environment offered Christian existentialism as a way of understanding both social and personal concerns and as a means of bringing the two together. The Student Y convened thousands of collegians at the end of 1958 for a national conference whose official theme was "The Search for Authentic Experience," encouraging a quest for personal meaning and authenticity, for a path out of alienation. In the world of Christian existentialism, salvation was returned to its original, therapeutic meaning: the healing of a wound, the bridging of the awful separation of the human from the divine. Sin was translated as alienation, and salvation now meant authenticity.[10]

This therapeutic quest for authenticity did not lead away from the world of politics; quite the contrary. The student Christian movement brought the legacy of the earlier social gospel movement into the cold war era and expressed an unusually spirited dissent from the prevailing conservative trend of the 1950s. The Student Y's association with an embattled liberal politics was never far from the surface. Most important was the identification of this Christian liberalism with racial egalitarianism. The student Christian movement was biracial; increasingly it was racially integrated; and in the 1950s, it facilitated an extraordinary degree of interaction between black and white youth.

In the mid-1950s, the questions of racial separation and inequality came to the fore in American public life. The U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* invalidated public school segregation, and in 1956 the boycott by black residents of bus lines in Montgomery, Alabama, enjoyed success and also propelled Martin Luther King Jr. to national attention. With signs of weakness showing in the edifice of southern segregation, the minds of idealistic, socially concerned youth turned to the question of how to hasten a process of change that seemed to have begun. Many of them drew connections between inner alienation and the estrangement of the nation into racial parts; they concluded that personal authenticity was possible only if they could break through the barriers separating black from white. The Student Y conference at the close of 1958 ended with an impromptu, interracial civil rights rally, and starting at this time, many students involved in the student Christian movement, white and black, became leading civil rights activists around the country. Some ultimately went to work for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), founded in 1960, the leading organization of the civil rights movement's youth wing. A smaller number, often leaving behind the religious framework of discussion that had nurtured their existentialist politics, found their way to SDS.

SNCC and SDS embodied the political side of a wide-ranging youth existentialist movement in 1960s America. When it appeared at this time in the world of politics, the quest for authenticity veered sharply to the left. It was associated closely with a search for change, with activism and agitation, and with a desire to break through existing social barriers. "Black and white together" and the "beloved community" were the slogans symbolizing this moment of fusion of different social groups and of cultural and political imperatives. Existentialist activists viewed not only individual minds and souls but also the whole world as broken and in need of healing. Hence the search for community occupied a central role in existentialist politics. Political communities committed to change formed the crucibles of authenticity, carrying it to the larger culture. Overcoming alienation meant individuals discovering a common human identity, working toward common purposes, and joining in collective action. Accordingly, one historian of the new left termed the largest goal of this movement "solidarity."[11] Even though the search for solidarity never dimmed, after 1965 it became more problematic to search for interracial solidarity. While the young African American militants of the civil rights movement ventured into a search for the authentically black, the young whites of the new left moved further left, coming to identify capitalism as the main culprit responsible for their alienation, edging toward a familiar Marxist orientation.

To cement the connection between the traditional left and the new left search for authenticity, many radicals of the 1960s—not just in the United States but around the world (in the countries of eastern Europe, under the moniker of "revisionism")—promoted an existentialist or "humanist" Marxism, drawing heavily on Karl Marx's 1844 manuscripts, which focused on the problem of alienation. Whereas Marx wrote of humanity's need to recover its "species essence," leftists of the 1960s spoke instead of "human potential" and authenticity. The new left refashioned the religious aspiration to bridge the gap between the secular and the divine into the secular goal of making oneself and the world more fully human. This radical humanism was recognizable in the existentialism of Camus, who asserted, "I am waiting for a grouping of those who refuse to be dogs and are resolved to pay the price that must be paid so that man can be something more than

a dog." Striking a heroic pose, the young radicals of the new left resolved themselves willing to pay whatever this price might be.[12]

This concern with "human potential" was not, of course, the exclusive property of the political left, and sometimes it was not political at all. Psychologists of the cold war era, like Abraham Maslow, who was a political liberal unsympathetic to radicalism, and liberals, like Betty Friedan, did more than any others to popularize the aspiration to the fulfillment of potential. The 1960s "counterculture" of hippies, or "freaks," began a search for the authentic and expressed a desire to explore human potential that helped lead to the popular, therapeutic experimentalism that became known as the "human potential movement." (An explicit spirituality, often in the form of exploration of non-Western spiritual traditions, returned to the search for authenticity within the counterculture.)[13] The shared ground of humanism fueled the sense of kinship between the new left and cold war liberalism, on one side, and between the new left and the counterculture, on the other, although these relations were nonetheless fraught with tension, even antipathy. These links to the counterculture and to a broader "therapeutic culture" may confirm some people's skepticism about the political seriousness of 1960s radicalism and may alarm those who view this radicalism more sympathetically. Neither sympathizers nor detractors, however, should conclude that the delineation of these connections depoliticizes the new left. This movement did emerge from an intersection of personal and political concerns, but this is true of all political movements. To grasp this aspect of the new left is to understand better how it emerged from the larger fabric of American culture and what it meant for the development of American political life.

The centrality of the search for authenticity in the new left is what recent work on this movement has neglected to appreciate or explore, and this accounts in large measure for the failure to assimilate the new left fully to the main lines of historical development in twentieth-century America. In the future, rather than asking why a left-wing movement became so preoccupied with authenticity, we might do better to ask how it was that one branch of a broad-ranging youth existentialist movement, a search for authenticity, turned leftist. And we may have to let the new left stand or fall with its existentialist politics.

Deep in the Heart. . .

It hardly could be more ironic that we have no "histories from the bottom up" of the new left, the political movement that bequeathed this idea to the historical profession. The national overviews that we do have are invaluable, and they present a narrative that in many respects I endorse.[14] There remains, however, much more to learn about political radicalism in the 1960s. In this book, I move back and forth between the national and the local. In the context of national developments, I examine the important center of youth activism that emerged in Austin, Texas, showing, with a specificity that only a close scrutiny of particular people and places can yield, how various forces converged in individual people's lives to lead them in particular political directions. Existing accounts of the new left, surprisingly, neglect the campus environments where this movement flourished and focus on the national leadership of the movement to the neglect of the rank and file. A close look a campus environment illuminates the diversity and complexity of the new left. This method reveals not only how the child of a liberal family, like Alice Embree, came to the new left, but also how a Barry Goldwater supporter like Mariann Wizard, or a hill-country autodidact like Bob Speck, or an air force veteran like Paul Spencer did so as well.

Austin, Texas, was the largest center of new left activism in the American South, one of the biggest in the United States and probably the most important in all the vast spaces east of Berkeley, west of Morningside Heights, and south of Chicago. As the state capital and home of the University of Texas (UT), Austin is a regional political and intellectual center. During the period considered here, UT rose in status and reputation from a regional to a national center of research and learning, a characteristic story of the cold war, when the unprecedented expansion of the university system helped produce student activism.[15] Activists of national significance, such as Sandra "Casey" Hayden (a key civil rights activist who moved from the Student Y and the National Student Association to SNCC and SDS and who became an early feminist voice in the 1960s left) and Jeff Shero Nightbyrd (who became vice president of SDS), reached prominence in their school years at UT.

Most important, the Texas new left represents the radical constituency that emerged in conservative parts of the country. By 1965, the large Austin contingent in SDS became identified in that organization as leading representatives of the cohort that flowed into the new left in the mid-1960s: young people from the South and the Midwest, people with few ties to the old left. This new wave of young radicals, whose numbers dwarfed those of the SDS "old guard," seemed newly sympathetic to the counterculture, and their style earned them the sobriquet "anarchist." They became associated with the slogan "prairie power," although as already noted, their origins were geographically dispersed and the Texas group rode into the new left on the crest of this wave. The Austin new left first appears in the customary nar-

rative of SDS with the arrival of Charlie Smith at an SDS National Council meeting in June 1964 on his motorcycle, declaring to the gathering of sober young radicals that he was a pacifist, an anarchist, a Marxist, and a beatnik. Several members of the Austin circle spent the summer of 1965 trying to run the SDS National Office in Chicago as a controversial experiment in participatory democracy.[16] Where such people might have come from and where they went back to after these seemingly disruptive appearances on the national stage we can hardly guess from reading the existing works on the new left.

The Texans' incomprehensibility to the SDS old guard points to a deeper problem, namely, that the history of American radicalism has been heavily "New York-ocentric," to borrow a phrase from the sociologist Richard Hamilton.[17] To be precise, the national histories of the new left have drawn mainly on the experiences of the early leaders of SDS, most of whom were active in a small number of cities forming a northern rim across the United States, running from New York and Cambridge in the East to Ann Arbor and Madison in the Midwest to Berkeley in the West. Intellectuals in these places formed a kind of national cultural elite, part of a metropolitan culture forged by a similarity of outlook and experience and maintained by strong personal and institutional links. The university towns just cited, small as they were, nonetheless were home to numerous members of this metropolitan elite, who were paid serious attention by their peers in New York and Washington.

The experiences of metropolitan student radicals, to be sure, furnish a highly important story of 1960s radicalism, and the story has been told well before. The initial elite of the new left exerted a shaping force on the development of SDS, whose national headquarters was in New York City until 1965. These young people, many of them Jewish, were the most deeply involved in the new left's complex relation to the old left; indeed, many had old left parents. These children wished to break with what they saw as the hierarchical and deceitful modus operandi of that earlier movement. For them, this was the driving force behind the emphasis on participatory democracy, the insistence on democratic means as well as ends. At the same time, these young radicals, disillusioned with the cold war's domestic and international ramifications, led the break with the fervid anticommunism of the social democratic trade unions that originally sponsored SDS. This fight with the trade unions, lasting from 1962 to 1965, helped alienate the new left from cold war liberalism. The most important contributions of this early metropolitan elite in the new left were their passionate commitment to a politics that was both effective and morally honest—which they popularized with the slogan of participatory democracy—and their insistence on the irrelevance of communism and anticommunism to the new left. In these commitments, they soon found, they were not alone. Participatory democracy and the politics of "antianticommunism" appealed also to young people from the provinces.[18]

There were great differences as well between the group that got SDS off the ground and the larger, provincial cohort that entered the new left later. A large majority of all those who at one time or another got involved in new left activism came from cultural and political backgrounds quite different, in important respects, from those of the early metropolitan elite. Most were neither red-diaper babies nor Jews, although both those groups were strongly overrepresented in the new left throughout its existence. The emergence of a new left in New York, Boston, Chicago, and the San Francisco Bay area was almost guaranteed by the strong old left presence that lingered in such cities through the 1950s, a presence that, in the larger context of American society, was quite unusual. Histories of the new left that emphasize the influence of old left connections and place the new left in a self-contained "history of the American left," for all the valuable insights they offer, simply cannot explain the new left's appearance in most of the country, yet the new left existed all over the United States.[19]

To segregate political radicalism from the mainstream of political and cultural history is to obscure the close and tangled connections between the new left and larger strands of political and cultural development in the twentieth-century United States—strands such as social gospel liberalism and Christian evangelicalism, cold war liberalism and Western libertarianism, liberal feminism and the search for authenticity. My investigation of these connections provides an alternative genealogy for the new left. Looking at the new left from the ground up and bringing it into focus as it appeared in and from the provinces, this book provides, in a sense, the first new left history of the new left.

In a place like Texas, the dissident search for authenticity and democracy took heart from sources unlike those to be found in metropolitan culture. Among those sources was more than one kind of political liberalism, none of which resembles very closely our received picture of "cold war liberalism." Here, communism existed almost solely in the right-wing imagination, but there were "homemade fascist" elements in the state's political and economic elites, according to the 1943 observation of folklorist J. Frank Dobie, one of the most eminent members of the UT faculty.[20] The perception of the political right's power and extremism exerted a profound force on Texas liberals. There one finds a distinctive breed of liberals, indebted to populist traditions

and little concerned with debates over communism and fellow traveling. Such people, whose loudest voice after the mid-1950s belonged to Ronnie Dugger of the *Texas Observer*, located themselves in a south-by-southwestern tradition that mixed Jeffersonian democracy, agrarian radicalism, and New Deal liberalism.[21] An ideal of lonely heroism, and a slightly desperate irreverence that helped them cope with their isolation, flavored their dissent.

Just as overlooked as these secular liberals have been individuals and institutions in the dissident Christian tradition (which itself encompassed more than one strand), which communicated to young cold war idealists the ambition to find lives of meaning and authenticity even as they sought to improve society.[22] In the South and in other relatively conservative areas, Christian liberals became mentors of young Americans who ultimately took the search for community and faith well beyond the confines of liberalism. Dissident Christianity led young white people toward a stance of severe dissatisfaction with their contemporary culture, particularly with the same aspects of American life that later drew the new left's ire. Christian thought encouraged young people searching for authenticity to intervene in the larger social world.

This sort of cultural critique and this linkage between authenticity and activism opened the path to the new left's postscarcity radicalism. Dissident Christianity did not play the catalytic role everywhere in the way that it did in Texas. Nonetheless, the search for authenticity that infused American radicalism generally in the 1960s had a notable spiritual aspect. In the 1980s and 1990s, a "search for meaning," linked to both left–liberal politics and a pluralistic religious impulse, reappeared on the American scene. Sometimes the search for authenticity has taken less political forms, as in the "new age" cultural phenomenon of recent years.[23] Examining the role of Christianity in the history of the radical search for authenticity offers a chance to understand the roots of these cultural developments, which have occurred throughout the United States in a host of cultural idioms.

The clearest political connection between Christianity and the new left was the role of Christian liberals in inspiring youth participation, black and white, in the civil rights movement. In this connection, a southern setting is an especially appropriate one in which to examine the political role of Christianity in this period. Serious attempts to understand why a small minority of white southerners became civil rights activists in this period have only recently begun, but it is clear even now that religion played a major role.[24] National leaders of cold war liberalism acknowledged the moral imperative to secure civil rights for African Americans, but race, like class, often was peripheral in their social and political analysis until events

forced on them an awareness of imminent political change.[25] In this respect, the people in this story, including the secular liberals who were closest to cold war liberalism, were different. Certainly after World War II, the issue of Jim Crow stayed permanently on their agenda.

The political actors examined here are notable for their tendency to view pressing racial issues as primarily a matter of black and white. The racial structure of Texas society, which included a large Chicano minority (sometimes called Tejano), was considerably more complex than that in other parts of the country. The overall racial makeup of Texas, 15 percent Chicano and 12 percent black in 1960, is not very revealing in itself. Austin straddles the intersection of the Deep South, the southwestern United States, and the Great Plains, which stretch south through the Texas Panhandle. Humid, heavily wooded East Texas, home to most of the African Americans in the state and few Chicanos, is more like Mississippi in demographics and topography than it is like dry West Texas. In the 1960s, a Mexican American movement of great cultural power and political significance emerged in the Southwest, among farmworkers, students, and others, and one of its hotbeds was South Texas, where many counties, in a wide belt hugging the Rio Grande from Corpus Christi and Brownsville to El Paso, have had Mexican American majorities for much of the twentieth century. Yet perhaps surprisingly, this *movemiento* held nothing close to the interest to the young Anglos—who are the focus of this book—that the black civil rights movement did. Nothing better illustrates the power of a national racial discussion that focused on black–white relations, a national discussion that reached new heights of urgency in the 1950s and 1960s as a result of the civil rights movement's advances. From their geographic position in the middle of Texas, closer to Mexico City than to San Francisco or New York City, these Austinites looked eastward for the decisive political cue of their time.[26]

Nonetheless, for all their concern over developments in the Deep South, Texas liberals viewed themselves as Texans, not simply as southerners or westerners. The Texan interplay of West and South emerged as a culturally powerful statewide identity, a Texan persona that exerted a strong hold on residents of the Lone Star State. The geographer D. W. Meinig summarizes the results of various social science surveys:

> The Texan . . . is . . . volatile and chauvinistic, ethnocentric and provincial. . . . [He] regards government as no more than a necessary evil, distrusts even informal social action as a threat to his independence, and accepts violence as an appropriate solution to certain kinds of personal and group problems. Material wealth is much admired for its own sake but industriousness has no particular virtue.

Furthermore, says Meinig, the Anglo culture of fundamentalist East Texas is specifically "egalitarian, individualistic, aggressive, and adaptable . . . volatile and conspiratorial." It is "egalitarian" in the sense of a racist "volk" populism, a rough leveling feeling among Anglos that depends on the subordination of racial minorities. We should understand this Texas identity as a myth that many Texans believe in and even try self-consciously to fulfill. Despite this belief in Texans' peculiarity, however, the elements in this Texas persona are also exaggerated forms of character traits that observers might have noted throughout the United States. An outsized belief in the uniqueness of Texas is part of the persona.[27]

Even as secular liberals in Austin, like those gathered around the *Observer*, saw themselves resisting in crucial respects the main drift of things in their state and their country, they also absorbed some aspects of the dominant culture. They—and, later on, new left activists in Austin—refused to flee from their indigenous culture. Instead they cultivated an alternative Texan identity. They pitted their own, more thoroughgoing brand of populism against the traditional volk populism. They were great libertarians. They liked to drink beer. Not a few would have called the liberals and leftists here "egalitarian, individualistic, aggressive, volatile, and conspiratorial." These dissenters played a variation on the broader new left theme of "speaking American," seeking to oppose the dominant arrangements of society and politics with tools they found in the dominant political culture. Provincial new left radicals consciously drew on the "residual" and "traditional" cultures of their environment in an effort to build "alternative" and "oppositional" cultures. Although they felt little kinship with the old left, they did not see their politics appearing *ex nihilo*. Once again, the resources they found at their disposal, like the dominant culture they opposed, were distinctively local yet in some ways representative of the situation of radicals all over the United States. From subculture to counterculture, from libertarianism to anarchism, this commitment to "speak American" spelled both promise and hazard for their political efforts.[28]

Agency and Authenticity

In the new left radicals' understanding, "speaking American," making themselves relevant to their country's culture and society, meant that they had to address issues of race. This was not something they had to push themselves to do, given the new left's roots in the civil rights movement and the profound impact that this movement had on even new left radicals who did not take part in civil rights protests. The depth of this impact demonstrates, as

clearly as anything, the centrality of the search for authenticity in 1960s radicalism. The new left search for authenticity was entangled from the start with what we today might call questions of "identity," both racial and sexual. But this became clear to the new left radicals themselves only gradually.

In the 1950s and 1960s, a fraction of white American youth felt a spontaneous sympathy for the civil rights movement, building on a private feeling of solidarity with African American culture. The young whites of the new left grew up influenced by the subversive, transgressive romanticization of black Americans in mid-twentieth-century popular culture. The appeal of jazz and rhythm-and-blues, jitterbugging, baseball and boxing, encouraged among some young whites the old idea that African American culture was a repository of authenticity, which spiritually desiccated whites might tap through a kind of racial "crossover."[29] As noted earlier, according to new left thought, political marginality or alienation connoted radical agency. Yet marginal groups also, paradoxically, seemed culturally authentic to new left radicals. This was the reverse image of their own inner alienation, the alienation of affluence, which equaled inauthenticity. In this way, the new left radicals updated the tradition of the earlier "new radicals," white intellectuals who had invested people of color, the poor, and sometimes women and children with the treasured stuff of authenticity.[30]

This deep cultural affinity was always at work beneath the tendency among young white liberals and radicals in the 1960s to look to African Americans as the vanguard of social change. New left radicals' persistent fears of their own inauthenticity gnawed at their confidence in their own ability to create change. Perhaps only those already residing in a state of authenticity could open the way to a society that afforded authentic life to all. The new left longed for "solidarity" with "others," yet this was a movement of and by college-educated white Americans. This circumstance always led back to the question of radical agency. Would black or white, poor or middle class, usher in the new society, or would they do it together? These questions plagued the new left from start to finish, until its last, tempestuous efforts to settle on the true revolutionary vanguard.

Many, perhaps most, new left radicals addressed the conundrum of agency and authenticity by embracing their movement's actual social identity. Ultimately, instead of looking for an external vanguard to lead them, they asserted that white, college-educated youth could in fact move from alienation to authenticity and help make the new society. They intensified the rejection of materialism present in their politics from its inception and elevated alienation over both exploitation and marginality as the essential sign of inclusion in the revolutionary elect. They argued that the new left

should be a movement not only of and by but also *for* college-educated white youth.

Ironically, black power thought, which became hegemonic in SNCC after 1965, encouraged this turn toward a doctrine of "self-liberation." Such ideas took hold among the new left's rank and file in the late 1960s, in defiance of the new left's national elites, who instead pledged the support of SDS to "external agencies" that would lead the revolution. This presumptive national leadership has dominated previous accounts of the SDS collapse, diverting attention away from ideological developments within the new left more generally. The programmatic expression of the widespread embrace of the new left's actual social character was called the "new working-class" analysis. In effect, this analysis represented an adjustment of theory to practice.[31]

The most important such practice was the attempt, beginning in the mid-1960s, to make the new left itself into a counterculture, an avant-garde that would do the traditional work of a political vanguard. The new left took a countercultural turn in its later years, hoping to develop its own constituency's authenticity as a political strategy in itself. The new left's countercultural turn did not represent a turn away from worldly, political concerns. Rather, this turn coincided with the escalation of antiwar agitation in the late 1960s, a priority whose burning importance sometimes threatened to consume the radicals. But the countercultural turn, which continued into the early 1970s, did represent a move toward more local concerns, toward far more incremental methods of social change, and toward a more pronounced concern with alleviating the alienation of the new left's own members. In the end, the new left's cultural politics moved toward neither revolution nor privatism but, rather, toward a kind of cultural liberalism, a reformist practice that exerted a considerable impact on more traditional political liberals. The new left's quiet rapprochement with liberalism in its last years is another untold part of its history.[32]

The feminist activism that developed among white leftist women between 1967 and 1973 further extended the growing conviction that the new left should be a movement of self-liberation. Clearly, feminism complicated the task of self-liberation for white, middle-class radicals, by indicating that men and women in the new left might have divergent interests. More significant, this leftist feminism challenged the whole tradition of existential politics that had developed throughout the cold war period. The longing for an authentic masculinity was one of that tradition's pillars. Men who pursued authenticity in the realm of politics had, explicitly and repeatedly, equated a strenuous sense of self and a vigorous citizenship with masculinity, just as they equated alienation with emasculation.

Arthur Schlesinger made these connections clear in 1949. In his polemic against those liberals who would follow the Communists' lead, he derisively called such dupes "Doughface progressives." The term evoked the "softness" he discerned—a softness evidenced not least in the Doughface's ingenuous attraction to the dashing "hardness" of the Communists. Schlesinger drew out the hardly concealed gender associations of political softness and hardness, ridiculing the Doughface's "feminine fascination with the rude and muscular power of the proletariat." The historian and activist asserted that he and his sort, by contrast, had brought a "new virility" into American politics. Much as he inveighed against the Communists, he slyly indicated the similar "hardness" of liberals like himself. As Lasch observes, Schlesinger was part of the "hard-boiled" tradition in American liberalism, taking a "realistic," affirmative view of the role of power in politics. The hard-boiled liberals might keep the Doughfaces in line, winning their allegiance by a display of muscularity that equaled anything the Communists could offer. "Hardness" was the sign that one had triumphed over anxiety, as few Americans could be expected to do. In America, a liberal elite alone might shoulder the twin burdens of manhood and freedom. Others could remain soft, effeminate, anxious.[33]

This consideration of Schlesinger's early cold war ruminations raises two questions regarding the new left. How easily could this movement avoid Schlesinger's elite solution to the problem of democracy and anxiety? And how "hard" did its politics need to be? For most of its history, the new left rejected the elite aspect of Schlesinger's solution while joining in its machismo. Men in the new left, residents of the same political culture as Schlesinger was, felt the enervation of the spirit in the industrial order and the "iron cage" of bureaucracy, and they, too, called it emasculation. They affirmed the equation of virility, authenticity, and citizenship. Instead of a small elite of authentic males asserting their will on the field of politics, the new left envisioned a whole society alive with participatory democracy. Yet the young radicals still equated this invigorated citizenship with masculinity, viewing it as a triumph over effeminacy. The role that women might play in such a democratic revival was unclear, but they certainly would have difficulty qualifying for full citizenship in a regime of manliness.[34]

Small wonder, then, that women on the left, encouraged by the rhetoric of self-liberation, came to view SDS as, in left-wing feminist Robin Morgan's acid phrase, a "counterfeit Left."[35] Afforded greater political opportunities when the male-dominated institutional framework of SDS disintegrated, leftist women argued, starting in the late 1960s, that the real democratic solution to the problem of anxiety was to jettison the emphasis

on masculinity. Only this could allow women, as well as men, to become authentic citizens. In a sense, the project of radical feminists was to reconstitute the new left on a feminist basis. This was a viable project as long as the new left itself cohered as a movement, even if not as a single organization; as long as this was the case, the recruiting grounds for a feminist left remained open for business. In the end, the feminist radicals were unsuccessful in their effort to remake the left, because their own activism tended toward cultural liberalism, as did that of the left overall; because the Vietnam War ended and women won the right to have abortions in the United States; and because not enough radical men wanted to join a left not built on the pursuit of masculinity. In their effort to build such a left, the feminists discovered one of the limits to the American culture of dissent.

As political history, this is not a story of triumph. In the end, the new left found more success in untying the knot of inner alienation and democracy than in pursuing large-scale social change. Many new left radicals succeeded in overcoming alienation in their own lives, and they made considerable progress in building democratic local communities, which became visible across the United States in the 1960s and 1970s and in many cases remained viable long after that. This kind of dissident, geographically specific community—often developing on the fringes of a university, drenched in the spirit of participatory democracy, and linked by the common radical itineracy of the era to similar communities around the country—became the typical center of leftist activity between, roughly, 1968 and 1973. In those years the young radicals acquired a new kind of autonomy and legitimacy by building their own institutions and by attracting a critical mass of like-minded people who lived, worked, and played in close proximity to one another.

In the 1950s and early 1960s, student dissenters leaned on the legitimacy enjoyed by universities as havens of free thought and by the few faculty sympathizers the students found there. Such teachers heavily influenced idealistic and activist students during those years, and the activists were deeply interested in the controversies occurring in the universities themselves. Despite all the building occupations and ensuing controversies on American campuses between 1968 and 1970 (starting with the events at Columbia University in the spring of 1968), by the late 1960s many new left radicals were, in an important sense, less concerned with what was occurring in the universities than with the new culture they saw germinating in their own communities.[36] By then, sympathetic professors were likely to look to these radical communities for political cues, rather than the other way around. It seemed to many that the scene of social change had shifted to such autonomous communities, and my narrative follows that movement.

In the end, however, the new radical communities did not give birth to a new political culture. At best they nurtured a small subculture; they did not take over the country. In such communities, new left radicals found a place for themselves, but this was very far from their goals of political and social transformation. New leftists' adoption of the project of self-liberation in the late 1960s represented, in part, an acknowledgment of their movement's failure to identify adequate mechanisms of social change. In later years, their silence regarding the difference between self-liberation and their earlier, large-scale aspirations bespoke the pain of their grievously mistaken political diagnosis and reflected their inability to respond politically to the rightward turn in national politics.[37]

New left radicals probably were better able to deal with such distressing developments personally than they were politically, precisely because both their thought and their social endeavors had turned to the matter of self-liberation. They did not simply give up politics and start taking care of themselves in the 1970s, as some have charged; they were already taking care of themselves. It is worth noting that the young people considered here ceased talking very much about anxiety around the time the new left started spreading rapidly, in the early 1960s. Previously, in the 1950s and in the heroic phase of the interracial civil rights movement, anxiety had been an explicit concern for the discontented young; their solution was political activism, which might propel them out of anxiety and into freedom. The subsequent ebbing of talk concerning anxiety offers good reason to think that for many, this existentialist gambit worked.

In the new left, the quest for authenticity changed. Now the search for authenticity became fully socialized, with new left radicals excoriating what they saw as the inauthenticity of American culture at large. It was a culture of death and artificiality, they said. Having gradually come to assert their own radical authenticity, new leftists came to see themselves forming an island of integrity and vitality in a debased, lifeless land. Although the shadow of inner alienation still hovered over their shoulders, new left activists now felt less alienated within themselves; at the same time, they had become far more alienated from the society that bore them. In a sense, by the early 1970s the young radicals passed over the horizon of authenticity into marginality: they exchanged the inner alienation they bemoaned for the outer alienation they always had admired.

Perhaps the cold war really has been an "age of anxiety"; perhaps the entire twentieth century has been such an age. This book interprets several

phases in the history of post-1945 liberalism and left-wing politics as a series of responses to this condition. This is only one way to interpret this political history, but it is one that helps make sense of a turbulent period that still, in larger narratives of the American past, often appears as a rupture—"the Sixties"—not as an epoch that flows logically out of previous developments. Scrutinizing the cultural underpinnings and meanings of the political radicalism of the 1960s brings an enhanced sense of continuity to the larger story of twentieth-century American politics; analyzing political efforts to address cultural conditions reminds us that cultural meanings and possibilities are bounded by political realities. Whatever else it was, the new left was a response to deepening symptoms of life under advanced, bureaucratic capitalism. Political movements may rebel against social structures and political regimes, but those structures and regimes produce these very movements of opposition. The dialectics of politics and culture, structure and dissent, are the real objects of this study.

The new left belongs to the past. But the social and political problems that the new left addressed—alienation, powerlessness, racism, war, sexism—have not disappeared. New left radicals' attempts to combat these social afflictions by developing democratic and compelling forms of sociality and morality continue to merit our sympathetic, if critical, attention. Today, we may judge the new left's analysis of these problems flawed or shallow. We may deem this movement's political approach time bound or inadequate to its aims. For all this, the new left's agenda remains regrettably current.

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

This Once Fearless Land: Secular Liberals Under Right-Wing Rule

THE WHITE RADICALS of the 1960s were shaped by both political and personal ideals, by the twin search for democracy and authenticity. These two ideals did not necessarily come to young people from the same sources. Furthermore, different forces bore the standard of democracy in different places during the decades preceding the 1960s, leading the forces of political dissidence in different ways. In the industrial North, labor unions harbored some of the most effective resisters against the prevailing conservatism of the early cold war. In New York City and California, vestiges of the old left lingered, rallying to outposts of outspokenness like *Dissent* magazine, founded in 1954. In the urban Southeast, African American civil rights activists drew on a unique cultural milieu to protest racial segregation. In many metropolitan areas, amid the political coerciveness of the McCarthy era, dissent turned oblique, toward expressions of dissatisfaction with American culture, the personal swallowing the political. In Texas, things looked different. There, a group of secular liberals stood at the forefront of resistance to right-wing dominance. These secular liberals imparted their distinctive brand of politics, shaped by fierce traditions of populism and individualism, to young idealists who by 1960 themselves took up the banner of democracy.

In early cold war Texas, the fault lines of political life were in some ways similar to the divisions that prevailed in the rest of the United States, in other ways especially southern, and in yet other ways Texas politics seemed

distinctively Texan. As in much of the country in the 1940s and 1950s, a split between liberals and conservatives shaped the formal political life of parties and elections, with issues of economic policy at the forefront of discussion. Liberals favored progressive taxation, regulation of industry, the growth of labor unions, and increased expenditures on public education and other government services that benefited citizens of modest means. Conservatives favored less of all these things and had warmer relations with the corporate sector.[1] The New Deal and World War II had imparted momentum to liberal initiatives, and many liberals had high hopes in the late 1940s that they might push their agenda further. Beginning with strong congressional gains by the more conservative Republican Party in the 1946 elections, however, the liberals were increasingly put on the defensive, at least at the national level, and by 1950 the conservative viewpoint clearly had the upper hand.

Differences over economic policy were not the entire substance of the liberal–conservative competition, however. Always standing in back of the disagreement over economic issues were racial matters, adding intensity to the struggle for state power. Liberals were more inclined to support some form of civil rights for Americans of African descent, an issue usually framed in terms of the official segregation, encoded in state and local law, that draped the entire Southeast from Virginia to Texas. Since the issue was framed strictly in terms of altering southern laws and social conditions, it is not surprising that most liberals, at least on racial issues, were northern. Black southerners, who might have sympathized with the liberal agenda generally, were simply shut out of formal political participation. Thus the most fundamental way in which liberal–conservative competition differed in the South was that there the liberals were far fewer, far more embattled, and far less likely to win any particular dispute. The cultural significance of official white supremacy in the South sharply diminished the constituency for the liberal program.

The predominance of conservatism in the South took the specific form of conservative supremacy inside the Democratic Party in most southern states. In most northern states, strongly conservative politicians and voters were concentrated in the Republican Party, and almost all the liberals were, at least by the late 1940s, Democrats. As a consequence of two-party competition in these states, the liberals held a good share of the power in Democratic Party organizations. In the South, ironically, the Republicans had been crippled for nearly three-quarters of a century by their ever receding history as the champions of emancipation and equal rights for black Americans during and after the Civil War. In this regional one-party system, conservatives—close to big business and hostile to civil rights—held sway. Southern liberals fought many of their battles out of the public

eye, led by party infighters like Frankie Randolph and Creekmore Fath, one-time ally of John Connally and "Democrat No. 1" according to Maury Maverick. They scratched and clawed for gains in the Democratic Party, often fighting over procedural rules and in state caucuses and conventions. Maverick himself fought similar battles on the national stage. At one time the mayor of San Antonio, he served two terms in the U.S. House in the 1930s as a leader of the "Young Turks" trying to push Franklin Roosevelt's administration to the left.[2]

In these respects, Texas politics in the 1940s and 1950s conformed to the southern pattern. The real elections usually were the Democratic primaries; the elected governors, senators, and congressmen were mostly conservatives. A partial exception to this pattern and a partial confirmation of it can be found in the Texas gubernatorial election of 1946. It was an unusual election in that, still flush with the political strength they had acquired in the Roosevelt years, the liberals won the Democratic nomination for one of their own, and the general election meant something. The result of the election also was unusual in that a Republican won the governorship. This result was more typical than exceptional, however, since the conservative won, as usual. The winner was indistinguishable from Democratic conservatives in Texas, and conservative voters had no qualms about supporting the GOP in this case. Furthermore, the election was normal in that even though economic issues played a major role in the explicit campaign rhetoric, largely unspoken differences on racial issues were widely acknowledged to have played a quiet role in the liberal candidate's defeat by a margin of two to one.[3]

This liberal candidate was Homer Price Rainey, who had served between 1939 and 1944 as president of the University of Texas (UT) at Austin—the same city that was home to the governor's mansion he tried to capture. For his liberalism, Rainey had been harassed and finally fired by the board of regents of the university. The regents, drawn invariably from the highest business circles of the state, had final authority over all administrative decisions at UT, and the governor of Texas appointed the regents. If he had been elected governor, Rainey undoubtedly would have liberalized the board. Rainey's tribulations at UT during World War II form the backdrop to the growth of an enclave of liberalism around the university in Austin during the following years. This enclave weathered the intensely conservative climate of the early cold war, which shaped Texas liberalism in distinctive ways. Ten to fifteen years after Rainey was cashiered, this island of liberalism would nurture a group of militant liberal students. Those students in turn helped lay the groundwork for the more radical search for democracy that animated student life in the 1960s.

The Rainey Affair

The single most important event looming in the memory of cold war liberalism at UT was the termination of the university president's employment in 1944. This was the opening shot on the academic front of the domestic cold war, although in conservative places like Texas, the severe anticommunism and antiliberalism associated with the cold war had enjoyed much success with little interruption since the late 1930s.[4]

Despite his Texas roots, Homer Rainey came to represent a kind of cosmopolitanism his enemies found threatening. In the late 1930s he served in Washington, D.C., as head of the Rockefeller-sponsored American Youth Commission. He was a New Dealer in his politics. In 1939, after a nationwide search, the Texas governor, Jimmy Allred—the closest thing to a liberal who had ever won the office—and the board of regents chose Rainey to head UT.[5] This may seem surprising given the regents' later hostility toward him. But the presence of the regents appointed by Allred softened what otherwise might have been the staunch opposition of the political establishment in Texas to Rainey's appointment.

The choice of Rainey and the search that preceded it indicated a desire among many of the Texas elite to conform to the national criterion of "quality," a desire that was rooted in the feelings of provinciality that sometimes slipped through the renowned Texas bravado and that was validated by the 1886 Charter of the University of Texas. This charter declared that the state must maintain a public university and must attempt to make it "a university of the first class." This phrase was invoked time and again to legitimate any attempt at innovation at UT, especially one that sought to bring UT in line with more prestigious schools in the North and East. It became, in many cases, a rallying cry for liberals at the university. With the hiring of Rainey in 1939, the governor nodded in the direction of this demand for a "first-class" institution and encouraged hopes in Austin for further change. Rainey himself later defended his actions at UT not by saying that his opponents were right-wing extremists (as they were) or that he wished to defend the liberal values of free expression and inquiry (which he did) but instead by obscuring the ideological dimension of the conflict, stating merely that he wanted to create a first-class university.[6]

By the 1940s there was a new governor and a more aggressively conservative board of regents, and trouble was brewing. The governor— a radio personality and conservative named Pappy "Pass-the-Biscuits" O'Daniel—treated his relations with the university as a political issue to be used to his political benefit. In 1940 he met with business leaders and lawyers to discuss

how they could influence, or at least make an issue of, university appointments. At a subsequent regents' meeting, a business lobbyist who served on the board handed Rainey a list with the names of four full professors of economics whom he wanted Rainey to fire. Rainey then explained the concept of academic tenure to the regents and managed to fend off the initiative. But later the regents changed the tenure rules to make it easier to fire professors.[7]

Rainey was less successful in 1942, when the regents acted in response to a political and economic issue that stretched beyond the university, that touched the interests of the regents and their cohorts directly. A trio of liberal economics professors at the university attended a rally organized by corporate interests to protest the federal Fair Labor Standards Act, which required that workers receive overtime pay for work beyond forty hours per week. The professors asked to speak in favor of the proposal; although they were not allowed to do so, someone dutifully took down their names. A federal judge in Dallas wrote the regents that the economics department at UT was "swinging away from true economics and routing our children into the camp of state socialism."[8]

Rainey then explained to the regents the concept of academic freedom, which, as he understood it, ought to protect the jobs of these professors against any objections raised concerning their political views or statements—at least concerning such a nonrevolutionary view as the one these professors had expressed. The regents were not impressed with this concept. Weren't these professors employed by the university—and thus by the regents? the regents asked. They were. They did not have tenure. Rainey warned that the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) might "blacklist" UT if the regents fired the professors. Ultimately the regents overruled both the president and the economics department and terminated the three teachers directly.

The harassment of liberal professors continued. One regent threatened to eliminate the teaching of social work, since, he said, it only created socialists. The regents changed the tenure rules so that in any particular case, they could suspend a threatened professor's customary hearing and thus fire him with impunity. Next, Governor O'Daniel and the members of the board publicly expressed their concern over the alleged presence of homosexuals among the faculty. In the interior life of cold war politics, all forms of social deviance were linked—if only implicitly—thereby joining the pink menace and the red menace. In 1944 the regents demanded that Rainey fire a professor for assigning John Dos Passos's *The Big Money*, which they deemed obscene.[9]

Having had enough, Rainey went public. At a dramatic meeting of the faculty, he recited a long list of instances in which, he claimed, the regents

had interfered with his proper authority. The ideological dimension, again, was left implicit: in fact if not in words, Rainey enlisted the faculty's support not just for the president's authority but on behalf of a liberal view of a proper and "first-class" university, in which, Rainey hoped the faculty would agree, they had a clear interest. He thought a university should be an independent intellectual center in society—not threatening that society but enriching it, perhaps challenging it but ultimately serving it, even if by providing a refuge for minority opinions.[10]

The regents fired him. In their statements they never seemed angry, expressing—as if only repeating common sense—their view that whatever the proper role of a public university, it certainly was not to be an independent intellectual center. Furthermore, in their view, the president of the university was not to serve the interests of the faculty or any higher vision. Properly understood, he had a job, not a mission, and his job was to do his bosses' bidding. The president, said one businessman-regent, "occupies the position to the board of regents as a general manager of a corporation does to its board of directors."[11]

The AAUP imposed its blacklist. The students struck, staying away from classes for a week. Eight thousand of them marched to the state capitol in protest, carrying a coffin draped in black with the words "academic freedom" written on it. The state senate agreed to hold hearings on the controversy, and various professors and regents testified to their respective views of the events. It made no difference. Rainey stayed in Texas for another couple of years, entering the ill-fated governor's race in 1946 and running on proposals to tax big corporations and expand social services. After his defeat, he left the state, but his memory lingered among liberals and freethinkers in Austin, as both an inspiration and a warning.[12]

In the late 1940s and 1950s, outspoken liberals at UT continued to risk hostile attention from powerful quarters. The regents, and occasionally members of the state legislature, identified departments or even individual professors whose statements or inclinations they found questionable or sounded questionable from what they had been told. The regents thus found and took the opportunity to fire J. Frank Dobie in 1947, four years after he made his crack about "homemade fascist" elements in the ruling circles of the state.[13] Now there was no Homer Rainey standing between the authorities and the faculty. What Willie Morris, a prominent liberal journalist in Austin during the 1950s, said generally of this time was particularly true for liberals: "Texas . . . its chronic xenophobias fed by the passions of the McCarthy period, was not an entirely pleasant place in those years. There was a venom in its politics."[14]

Liberals and Libertarians

Perhaps the political factor most brightly illuminated by the Rainey affair was the extreme and unyielding conservatism of the regents. The regents could not have been more closely linked to the large corporate interests of Texas—oil and gas, construction, real estate, finance, insurance—and they were tied almost as closely to the forces of political conservatism in the state. These ties were entirely open, never denied; the regents jeopardized no pretense of political or intellectual neutrality in their management of the university, and consequently their rule was rather bare-knuckled. Little persuasion, much coercion: This style reflected a notable frankness concerning the allocation of power. The regents felt they represented a group that owned both the state's wealth and its government—hence they owned the university. (Or, if the public theoretically owned it, then the regents were the sole legitimate representatives of the owners—the board of directors, as they said.) It was a setup whose neatness would have made a Marxist swoon. It also would have primed the intellectual pump of any college student who, in later years, picked up a copy of *The Power Elite*, a book by one of the better-known members of the UT class of 1939, C. Wright Mills.[15]

Imagine the effect of such an environment on liberals in and around the university. They might treat seriously models of institutional power that others would dismiss as "conspiracy theories." They might be unremittingly suspicious of the university administration, seeing it as an extension of corporate power and interpreting its actions always in that light. Struggles in the university could take on far broader significance. Liberals there might develop a feeling that the odds were stacked unfairly against them and that their political survival was always precarious, so powerful and unified were their enemies. Others in less difficult straits might see Texas liberals at times as afflicted by paranoia and delusions of heroism, but from the Texas point of view, it was only realism. To some extent, liberals at UT did come to display these characteristics—and considering their local political background, this was not unreasonable.

The tight spot in which they always seemed to find themselves marked Texas liberals in another, perhaps less expected way. They were irreverent; sometimes they were funny, frequently sardonic. This was a relatively safe way to express anger, and it also helped make life bearable. Speaking one's mind, giving little thought to the consequences (or at least appearing to give little thought to them), was a prized quality. To be slightly outrageous was to set a good example. These were qualities seen in numerous individuals whom liberals in Austin and in Texas admired during the 1940s and

1950s: Emma Long, the Austin City Council member who specialized in her own type of political pugilism against conservatives; Frankie Randolph, daughter of a wealthy lumber and banking family who turned her back on her class to become a statewide liberal leader in the 1950s, "a hard drinker, a hard fighter, and a courageous tactician"; John Henry Faulk, the radio commentator and folklorist who fought the media "blacklist" during the McCarthy era and won, at least in court; and Clarence Ayres, the UT economist who penned Veblenesque titles like *The Divine Right of Capital* and who thwarted the state legislature's attempts to terrorize him by hauling him into the state capitol for interrogation on the stand.[16]

This tradition also highlights a substantive political issue involved in liberal–conservative competition in Texas, one suggested by the Rainey affair. This was the issue of civil liberties. The strenuous defense of civil liberties was the third leg of the liberal triad, along with economic populism and sympathy for civil rights. Civil libertarianism was important to liberals in Texas for reasons both strategic and moral, both abstract and practical. The Rainey affair illustrated the practical importance of libertarian concepts such as academic freedom at a university that existed in a conservative environment. It had become clear that professors could not rely on independent-minded administrators to protect them, as the only one who tried to do so had been removed. Under pressure from powerful conservative forces, the concept of academic freedom seemed like an awfully thin reed on which to rest anyone's career, so liberals had an interest in shoring up both the legal and cultural supports for this idea. Furthermore, students at the university also felt the heavy hand of regental and administrative authoritarianism: in 1956, students still could not invite speakers to campus whom the administration deemed "political." ("The people of Texas are not mature enough yet," explained UT President Logan Wilson.)[17] The list of the unwelcome prominently featured liberal luminaries such as Eleanor Roosevelt and Adlai Stevenson.[18]

Beyond the political protection that civil liberties afforded, libertarian ideals took on an intrinsic value for liberals in so right-wing an environment. The liberty to say whatever one thought or felt was not simply a means to an end; for many, it expressed the essence of a free person and a free people. To put it differently, many liberals in Texas did not simply value civil liberties as an insurance policy, as a concept to be employed in the event of political trouble. In this view, liberties were not to be invoked in extraordinary circumstances; they were to be practiced in ordinary situations. The liberals echoed the republican tones of C. Wright Mills's declamation, "We are free men. Now we must take our heritage seriously. . . . We must stop

defending civil liberties long enough to use them."[19] The regional new left adopted this libertarianism more fully than any other element in the Texas liberal tradition. Given the power of the conservatives, given their hostility to civil libertarianism, and given the inclination of some liberals actually to put their libertarian values into practice, the tradition of civil libertarianism, which seemed so tame and ethically empty to radicals in many other places, always seemed more genuinely radical here. Especially in conservative periods, the common emphasis on civil liberties among liberals and radicals helped blur the line between them.

In 1954, the single most important outpost of this kind of outspoken, balloon-puncturing liberalism in Texas during the cold war was established. In response to their defeat in the state Democratic Party by Governor Allan Shivers, who had supported Dwight Eisenhower in the previous presidential election and was outspoken in his support for Senator Joseph McCarthy's red hunting, Frankie Randolph and others put up the money for a political journal, which was called the *Observer*, and she handed over the small operation to the young Ronnie Dugger, only recently editor of the UT *Daily Texan*. The *Observer* provided reports and commentary on statewide and national issues. Dugger was lucky to have so staunch a benefactor as Randolph, since he quickly lost perhaps half his subscribers by reporting prominently on the murder of a teenaged African American in East Texas by carousing whites, putting a large photograph of the corpse on the front page. Dugger kept up his investigation of such cases, such as one in which an all-white jury set free the confessed white killer of a black teenager. He gleefully welcomed the harassment that he sometimes received from official sources for his alleged interference in such cases.[20]

At first a line from Thoreau, "The One Great Rule of Composition Is to Speak the Truth," appeared on the *Observer*'s masthead, along with the proclamation that this was "An Independent–Liberal Weekly Journal." Explaining what he meant by "liberal," Dugger insisted, "This is a newspaper of principle, not of party." Eventually he called the *Observer* simply "A Journal of Free Voices."

These dramatic words invoked traditions of western bigtalking and American freethinking, filtered through a southern populist rhetoric. Although the ghost of William Brann, editor of the eponymous *Iconoclast*—shot dead in the streets of Waco by an irate Baptist—haunted the *Observer*'s pages, Dugger strained for a cosmopolitan identification, citing Jefferson, Woodrow Wilson, John Dewey, Thorstein Veblen, Franklin Roosevelt, and Harry Truman as his political forebears. What they shared, he asserted, was both a willingness to adapt to changing historical circumstances and an

embrace of liberty. He approvingly quoted another magazine's explanation that "liberty, far from being an ethereal thing, is always identified with and related to specific and present situations."[21]

Liberals here sought a usable past of their own, linking their dissident creed, as Brann had done, to individualist elements in the dominant, rightward-leaning political culture of their time and place. Henry Nash Smith, a prominent scholar of American culture who had left the flagship university of his native Texas because of Homer Rainey's firing, noted acerbically that the American myth of frontier independence had, "by some accident or alchemy of public-relations engineering . . . become linked in the public mind with the economic individualism of big business and the hatred of the federal government that is the one unifying emotion of right-wing radicals."[22] Texas liberals like Dugger wanted to wrest this myth of liberty from the political right and to update it, giving it new meaning in a world profoundly different from that of the old Southwest. But despite this political modernism, Dugger still appealed to the myth of a fiercely independent frontier culture, now supposedly eclipsed by fear and cowardice. He averred that liberalism must triumph "if fear of the consequences of honest opinions honestly expressed is to be banished from this once fearless land."[23]

The way in which libertarianism cut across conventional political categories, appealing over the years to centrist liberals and leftist activists in Texas, to professional newspaper reporters and revolutionaries, indicates that in addition to the liberal–conservative axis, political life here was organized along a libertarian–authoritarian axis, that this division, too, was vitally important to people's political orientation. Frequently the two axes lined up with each other, the liberals tending toward libertarianism and the conservatives almost always embracing an authoritarian creed. But it was not always so neat. People who pursued liberal political and economic goals might sanction authoritarian methods. After he and his associates rose to state and national power in the 1960s, Lyndon Johnson became the classic example of this type. Leftists might be more libertarian than liberals.

These complications may be characteristically southern; the radicalism of civil libertarianism may be simply a corollary of right-wing power and of a violent and authoritarian regional culture. But even if this pattern is distinctively southern, it may not be the result of such a culture. After all, violence and authoritarianism abounded in various northern local cultures in the 1960s, yet leftists there still had far less attachment to a civil libertarian agenda than their southern counterparts did. The relative weakness in the South of traditions of political dissent, such as Marxism, that criticize liberty as a "bourgeois" value allowed greater influence here for competing traditions of libertarian dissent.

Dissenters

During the late 1940s and the 1950s, there were a few notable outposts of recalcitrant liberalism at the university in Austin, voices that simply would not get with the current program. Frequently they were characterized by the irreverence and truculence discussed earlier. These liberals, such as they were, had the capacity to inspire young people, both to secure their allegiance to a liberal viewpoint and to encourage them to go further. To understand the politicization of those students who helped lay the groundwork for the new left—students who attended college roughly between 1958 and 1963—one needs to consider their exposure to these voices.

One such voice, at least intermittently, was the UT undergraduate newspaper, the *Daily Texan*. Under Ronnie Dugger and other editors like Horace Busby, the *Texan* developed a reputation for muckraking and outspokenness, a reputation that was occasionally justified, at least since the war years, when the regents asked Homer Rainey to do something to curb the allegedly socialistic sympathies of Busby's editorial page. Dugger made a name for himself, at UT and then at the *Observer*, for unmasking corporate power and wrongdoing.[24]

Starting with Dugger, there was considerable traffic between the *Texan* and the *Observer*. In 1956 Willie Morris, as editor of the *Texan*, incurred the regents' anger by writing an editorial in favor of public regulation and taxation of the oil and gas industries. When the in-house censor at the *Texan* refused to approve some of Morris's editorials, Morris sometimes ran a blank space instead, informing his readers, "This Editorial Censored."[25] In response, the regents removed him, as well as the editors of two other UT student publications, from the governing board of Texas Student Publications (TSP), the corporation that owned and had final authority over the paper. Instead of the editors sitting on the board, as had been traditional, now students from the UT student government body, the more pliant Student Assembly (SA), would take their places.[26]

After graduating, Morris went to work for the *Observer*. Others followed in subsequent years. Dugger and the *Observer* were celebrities on campus and around town. Austin was not a huge place, and editors from the *Observer* like Dugger, Morris, and Lawrence Goodwyn, who later departed for North Carolina and become a leading academic authority on the nineteenth-century Populist movement, mingled with *Texan* editors, as well as

liberal state legislators, at popular watering holes like Scholz's Beer Garden, an indoor–outdoor spot just a few blocks from either the campus or the state capitol.[27] The *Observer* editors took the younger liberals at the *Texan* under their collective wing, bringing them into the circle of the well known, encouraging their self-confidence.

By the late 1950s the *Texan* had become one of the most prominent pro–civil rights voices on the UT campus. In a celebrated case in 1957, President Logan Wilson intervened to prevent the female lead in a campus production of the opera *Dido and Aeneas* from going to one of the few black students on campus, Barbara Smith.[28] There was much heated discussion of the Smith case in Austin, and the *Texan* editorial page came out against Wilson's decision. In 1958 Bud Mims, then the *Texan* editor, wrote in the paper that the South needed to go further on the racial front than even most liberals wanted to go. He insisted that it was not enough merely to strike down Jim Crow laws that formally ensured segregation—the South needed to take positive steps toward actual racial integration.[29] This prointegration position put the *Texan* a sizable step to the left of much "progressive" opinion and helped earn the paper the avid praise of U.S. Senator Ralph Yarborough, hero of Texas liberals, who, in a speech to the UT Young Democrats in 1958, called the *Texan* "the only free college paper in Texas today."[30]

More consistently feisty than the *Texan* were a few highly visible on-campus voices of outspokenly liberal professors at the university, whose iconoclastic teachings left their mark on many a student. The most notable seedbed of critical thinking in the university was the economics department, the immediate source of Homer Rainey's troubles. In the 1940s and 1950s, marginalist theory and abstract econometric models were not the pervasive dogma among economics departments that they became in later years. Instead, the UT economics department in this period followed a different path. Edward Everett Hale Jr., the department chair for much of the period between 1920 and 1950, was a Marxist scholar who kept his politics to himself in the classroom. Others followed Thorstein Veblen, studying economic institutions rather than developing abstract economic models.[31]

The most Veblenian was Clarence Ayres, who adopted not only the Norwegian American troublemaker's method but also his acerbic perspective on American industrial capitalism. Ayres criticized the American economy less for its injustices than for its wastefulness. His prescriptions for economic planning were unfashionable in the 1950s, when the United States witnessed a fresh burst of enthusiasm for the idea of (if not the practice of) economic laissez-faire. Like Veblen, Ayres depicted the cherished ideological underpinnings of the American social system as a set of curious folkways,

and he conveyed his sharp views to his students, C. Wright Mills among them. For a time a board member at the *New Republic*, Ayres remained engaged throughout his career in the wider world, and he was noticed beyond his immediate environment. He testified in hearings before the state legislature many times throughout the 1930s and 1940s on behalf of liberal positions on various issues. But by 1951 chillier winds were blowing for those of his ilk, and the state house of representatives voted, 130 to 1, to denounce him for favoring "the destruction of free enterprise." One delegate said that if UT did not investigate and quiet Ayres, "we ought to knock out appropriations for the economics department."[32]

Besides Ayres, the most politically outspoken liberal member of the economics department from the 1930s through the 1950s was Robert Montgomery, known alternately around UT as "Dr. Bob" and "Bushy Bob" (because of his perpetually tousled hair). He preached the religion of southern Populism, telling his students that the South had been colonized after the Civil War by the capitalist North (thus employing a long-lived strategy among southern liberals and leftists, seeking to transcend racial divisions in their region by focusing on a sense of common economic oppression and capitalizing, to boot, on the pervasive hostility toward the North). Like some of his colleagues at UT, Montgomery had not exactly been bred for the academy. The son of "a frontier circuit-riding Methodist minister," he grew up picking cotton and punching cows for wages, attending school in the countryside only a couple of months a year. A person from a class background like Montgomery's could be represented only in a university faculty whose demographic sources had not been narrowed and calcified by the advance of academic professionalization. As a professor in the 1930s, he occasionally took students along for private conversations with Governor Allred, for whom Montgomery wrote a utilities regulation bill. During the New Deal and World War II, Montgomery served in the federal government in Washington. When the United States dropped two atomic bombs on Japan, he resigned from the government, and every year he delivered what became a famous lecture on the bombings, which some students attended over and over.[33]

One student at UT who was influenced by the atmosphere in the economics department, as well as the *Texan*, was Robb Burlage. Later he became a prominent member of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), one of the provincials who mingled with the new left's early metropolitan elite. His experiences were both similar to and different from those of early SDS leaders like Tom Hayden and Todd Gitlin. Gitlin went from New York City's prestigious (and public) Bronx School of Science to Harvard,

where at one point he and some fellow student peace activists found themselves in the White House basement gaining the attention of a Kennedy administration aide for their concerns. The impresario of SDS, Alan Haber, picked out Hayden, a newspaper editor at the University of Michigan who had come to college on an athletic scholarship, as a prime recruit for a new left. Burlage, too, was editor of the student paper at a big public university—he achieved this long-held ambition at the *Texan* in 1958/1959—and he went on to Harvard for graduate work in economics. His parents were political liberals who expressed a disdain of racism; his father became dean of the School of Pharmacy at UT. He differed from other early new left activists less in his status or social background than in the specific emphases that his upbringing as an idealistic Texan lent to his politics.

While the left-wing activists that Burlage met around Boston in the early 1960s—influenced by either the concerns of the old left or John Kennedy's priorities—held forth on international relations, Burlage—his thought shaped by the southern realities of Jim Crow and economic oligarchy—felt more comfortable "talking about democracy in the U.S."[34] As an economics major under the tutelage of professors like Ayres and Montgomery, Burlage came to favor an activist government that could forge economic order and equity. At the same time, he was touched by the antistatist currents running through dissent in Texas. An older reporter at the paper, Edd C. Clark, one of the Korean War veterans who leavened college life in the mid-1950s, introduced him to the writings of the anarchist theoretician Piotr Kropotkin. Burlage had not served on active duty in the armed forces, but he had been in the reserves since high school. The military presence in Texas seemed pervasive, he remembers; in the experience of many Texans, the military establishment *was* the state, and antimilitarism, in the 1960s, led easily to antistatism.

While still in high school, in the summer of 1955 Burlage attended the National Student Association (NSA) Congress in Chicago, and he remained involved in the NSA for several years. His participation in the Liberal Study Group, the SDS brain trust in the NSA that Haber started in 1961, led directly to Burlage's attendance at the SDS Port Huron Conference in 1962. Another UT student who went from the NSA to Port Huron was Dorothy Burlage, who married Robb after they graduated from college. Although both of them were involved in civil rights activism in Austin, Dorothy's political involvement was based more in a spiritually oriented, local activist outlook. She introduced Robb to the works of Albert Camus and other existentialist writers.

Ayres and Montgomery had been the "liberal heroes" on the UT faculty since the 1930s. But in the imagination of liberal students at UT, they were

superseded in the mid-1950s by a new assistant professor of philosophy named John Silber. Starting with the *Brown* decision in 1954, race became the leading, emotionally motivating issue for young white liberals on college campuses, and on this issue Silber was far more outspoken. He was a San Antonio native who received his doctorate from Yale University. UT Vice President Harry Ransom, a scholar of philosophy and English literature, wooed Silber, who began teaching in Austin in 1954.[35] The older liberals on the faculty were less willing to disagree openly with the UT administration, and on the key issue of civil rights, they were more inclined toward gradualism. As noted earlier, their liberalism was defined primarily by economic concerns.

The racial gradualism of these older liberals was demonstrated during the Barbara Smith case in 1957, when Logan Wilson appointed a faculty committee, which included Clarence Ayres, Walter Webb, and Page Keeton of the Law School, all known as liberals, to review the controversy. The committee endorsed Wilson's decision to prevent Smith from appearing in the campus production, saying that it would be "offensive" to many whites if Smith, a black woman, played the romantic lead opposite a white man. Although they expressed hope for movement toward integration at the university, they wished to support their president, who preferred to move with caution. Silber, at this time a young assistant professor with neither standing nor security in the university, protested loudly. He peppered members of the committee with questions at a special faculty meeting, and he gave a speech at the campus Y denouncing Wilson's decision. (This open dissent may have cost him a $1,000 raise the following year.)[36]

Silber's hiring was part of an intellectual buildup that Ransom engineered in these years. Ransom had a vision of UT as the leading research university in the entire South and Southwest—"Yale on the Colorado," as one professor quipped—and to pursue his goals, he began to tap the almost inexhaustible funds that lay accreted beneath the oil fields that the university owned in the Permian Basin in West Texas. (The university had been given the land in 1875, before the oil was discovered. The regents sold drilling leases on it, as well as mineral leases and grazing rights, and the returns were invested in bonds. The university was allowed to spend only the interest from these investments, not the principle; hence it was called the Permanent Fund.)[37] Ransom acquired fancy collections of papers as well as fancy young faculty. A trio of young professors he brought to Austin in the mid-1950s who became particularly close to one another, were Roger Shattuck, a scholar of French literature and culture, William Arrowsmith, a prominent translator of the classics, and Silber. They were

known as "Harry's Boys." They saw themselves as a young intellectual elite, and some students saw them that way, too. All three men were political liberals.[38]

Silber was a dynamic presence in and out of the classroom. A teacher of Kantian ethics, he pushed students to apply abstract ethical rules to real-world situations. He assigned them to research the ownership of specified areas of real estate in their hometowns. A lot of wealthy Texas families sent their children to UT, and the students not infrequently discovered that people they knew, perhaps people they knew quite well, were slumlords. Silber was the kind of teacher who believed that to do his job well, he had to unsettle his students. Furthermore, he seemed argumentative by inclination. When he thought he was right about something, as in the Barbara Smith case, he could become adamant.

Silber was as outspoken in his opposition to the death penalty as he was in his opposition to segregation, and on this issue, he was in perhaps an even smaller minority. He was president of the Texas Society to Abolish Capital Punishment, and he testified before state legislative committees concerning what he saw as the racial bias in the application of the death penalty. To many idealistic students who knew him in the late 1950s, his uncompromising, stubborn personality made him seem ethically pure, but sometimes, either inside or outside the classroom, he seemed like a bully. Many liberal students at that time viewed him as the professor on campus most sympathetic to their efforts.[39]

For many such students, Texas was a sea of conformity, and the university was, in general, simply an extension of that culture—the "football, beer-drinking culture," as Dorothy Burlage, who graduated from UT in 1959, calls it. A social class division between the fraternity and sorority members, often from elite or affluent backgrounds, who dominated organizational activity in general, and all other students, pervaded campus life.[40] Willie Morris describes his initiation rite in a fraternity, evoking his estrangement from what he considered the dominant campus culture's banality:

> It was full of such garbled mumbo-jumboes and high-flown adolescent sputterings, all thrown together in some uneasy overlay of illiteracy, that I was reminded of the way Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer had negotiated their own private blood-oaths as pirates. It was so juvenile that the Ku Klux Klan, in contrast, might have resembled the American Association of University Professors. But when the new brothers were lined up and presented with fraternity pins, I noticed that several of my fellow novitiates were crying, apparently from the impressiveness of it all.[41]

Despite her involvement in elite campus circles, Dorothy Burlage, like Morris, was determined to escape this atmosphere, and cosmopolitan teachers like Silber and Harry Ransom helped her do so. She graduated from high school in San Antonio; her family hailed from East Texas and, before that, from the slave country of the Southeast. Raised in this conservative Southern Baptist environment, her religious parents taught her to believe in the brotherhood of man, and she did not fail to notice that this principle conflicted with the white supremacy of the South. The contradictions of her upbringing were just as intense where the role of women was concerned. She was raised to be tough and self-reliant but also felt pressured to conform to the conservative values of her region. Inheriting a self-conscious tradition of "frontier women," as she puts it, she learned how to fix a flat tire and shoot a gun. Her mother, who had more formal education than most of her female contemporaries, held a bachelor's degree in journalism from UT (her father had a master's degree in geology). At UT, Dorothy was able to fulfill many of her intellectual aspirations, and she collected awards and honors. At the same time, because of the conventions of time and place, Dorothy's opportunities were sharply bounded. Young white women from middle-class families in Texas might attend college, but after that they were expected to settle down to a wifely role. In many ways, the excitement and freedom they experienced in college then ended. As a friend of hers, Celia Morris (a star in the social scene at UT), sums up the lot of women of their race and class in that setting, "It wasn't until after we got married that we got shat upon."[42]

Dorothy Burlage became involved in the desegregation activism of the late 1950s. This was the basic context for her political development, and it remained so for many years. When she graduated from college, however, an additional experience broadened her horizons beyond anything she had known before, informing her subsequent politicization. She was one of only two American students chosen by the State Department to visit the Soviet Union, which she did in the summer of 1959. It "had a major impact on me," Burlage recalls. She "could see different ways of addressing social problems." Not many people from her environment had ever seen a system of socialized health care and day care. Although the experience did not convert her to socialism, it certainly did nothing to discourage her growing criticisms of American society. The pervasive celebration of the American status quo during the 1950s was anchored in the demonization of socialism. With her picture of socialism now humanized, Burlage was more open to critical views of her own society than were most of her contemporaries.[43]

In a sense, the broadest possible social consciousness that any students developed during these years was the internationalist consciousness that a small group acquired. An internationalist consciousness was maintained on those campuses around the country where there was a significant "red diaper" presence—that is, where the children of families involved in left-wing politics were concentrated—or that were in close proximity to those few enclaves of left-wing activity that existed in the United States in the 1950s. In such circles, internationalism tended to have a leftist slant. The colleges congenial to these circles often were private schools, usually in the North—Swarthmore, Harvard, the University of Wisconsin, City College of New York, as well as the University of California at Berkeley. The University of Texas was not among such campuses.

Internationalism did extend to the provinces, however. Austin's proximity to Latin America (it is closer to Mexico City than to either New York City or San Francisco) colored the internationalism that developed at UT throughout the period considered here. In the summer of 1959, UT inaugurated an annual month-long student exchange program with a Chilean university. The Chilean students who came to UT often were further to the left than were any students from Texas. Accordingly, the UT students who went to Chile brought back a bit of the wider world. Those who went that first summer met with, among others, the youth leaders of the Chilean Communist Party, who told the North Americans, to their dismay, that capitalism was doomed.[44]

Even more politically charged were trips to the newly revolutionized Cuba. News of Fidel Castro's victory and descriptions of the changes he might make in Cuban society appeared continually in Texas newspapers, including the *Texan*, between 1958 and 1960. In August 1959 the Cuban government sponsored "Operation Friendship," an invitation for U.S. students to visit Cuba, including a promised visit with Fidel himself. The NSA also sponsored a Cuban expedition. The sixteen Texans who went to Cuba that summer on these trips got a firsthand glimpse of agrarian reform and collectivization, and indeed, they got a short lecture from a tired Castro, who promised that Cuba would always be open to them. Professor G. W. Ayer, who participated in Operation Friendship, reported that there was "freedom of expression" in Cuba, although he added, "The question of academic freedom is yet to be decided." Cuban students seemed strongly supportive of Castro. He had, after all, reopened the University of Havana, which had been closed for two years by the now deposed Fulgencio Batista.[45]

Through such contacts, students at UT in the late 1950s and early 1960s were exposed to the view that socialism was inevitable, that it represented

the coming era of world history, especially in the former colonies of the Third World. This view was certainly not popular in the United States, but it had many adherents around the world. In April 1960, UT students heard it from Dr. Julian Hochfeld, a professor of sociology at the University of Warsaw. His position was distinctly evolutionary, not revolutionary: he stated that socialism would grow gradually out of the welfare states of western Europe rather than resulting abruptly from anticolonial revolts in Latin America, and he asserted, "Socialism is not a system based on opposition to capitalism and separated from capitalism by a clear line of distinction, but a method for steady improvement and progress in a democratic, industrial nation." This might not have sat well with Fidel, but it seemed calculated to appeal to North American college students. Through contacts like this, college students in the United States at this time were encouraged to feel they could enter into a dialogue with socialism without subverting the American political or social system.[46]

Of course, most of the authoritative voices that students heard were staunchly anticommunist and antisocialist. Characteristic was that of Paul Geren, executive director of the Dallas Council on World Affairs, who spoke at the Y in February 1959. He contrasted Christianity with communism, charging that communism ignored the spiritual dimension of life. Furthermore, he said, while Christianity valued the human individual, "Communism regards the individual as a fragment of society with no importance other than that of a cog in a machine." Despite the social critics who lambasted American society during this period for what they perceived as its conformist tendencies, the defenders of that society resolutely portrayed it as the fortress of individualism.[47]

The liberal role models on campus at this time maintained a position regarding communism and anticommunism that was critical of both. Clarence Ayres criticized "America-firsters" who "stomp" on traditional American freedoms in the process of fighting communism. John Silber, in a veiled reference to red-scare guilt-by-association tactics, argued that one should evaluate the logic and "sense" of what people have to say rather than judging them by their motives. The scrutiny of "motives" was perhaps one basis for judging people on their organizational associations, rather than by what they said and did. None of these liberals gave any indication that they would have any truck with communism (though Ayres, arguably, was a socialist of some stripe).[48]

In the 1950s, however, the furthest that student activists at UT went in deviating from the conventional wisdom on international affairs was to advocate an open-minded internationalism. Some student leaders discussed the

U.S. role in the world at the Y in 1959. Dorothy Burlage observed that Americans knew little about international affairs and needed to learn more—although she cautioned her fellow student activists that their political involvement should be rooted in local affairs and institutions close to home (as hers would be). One student, born in Italy, suggested that Americans should show more sympathy for nationalist movements around the world, opining that nationalism results from "having been slapped in the face" and that the United States did not know what that was like. Don Mathis, who had been a delegate to the NSA Congress during the past summer, took the opposite tack, asserting that nationalism in the United States was "so much a part of the American people that it [is] hard to talk about it objectively." He noted that without a "revolution" in the United States—a peaceful revolution, one of "ideas and awareness"—the world would be headed for another great war.[49]

These students were not radicals. Contrary to the charges often made by conservatives in the 1950s, the internationalism of such young liberals did not betoken secret socialist leanings. Instead, it expressed a dissatisfaction with the intellectually constricting nature of anticommunism and jingoism in the United States, of the way in which these tendencies shrank the spectrum of legitimate discussion. These ambitious young intellectuals wanted to broaden their horizons, and they saw conservative anticommunism as an obstacle to this goal. Their growing awareness that their fellow students in other countries stood in the vanguard of social change made the ignorance of many North Americans concerning world affairs all the more galling and further whetted their appetite for international contacts. At this time, the liberal internationalism of provincial activists was less a reflection of a capitalism-versus-communism debate than it was a variation on the larger theme of liberal cosmopolitanism versus conservative anti-intellectualism.

Rising Controversy

The pulse of conflict quickened amid the controversies between liberals and conservatives that marked the campus scene in the late 1950s, a fluid period in American politics generally, witnessing such politically disparate events as the passage, in 1957, of the first federal civil rights legislation since the Reconstruction era, and the 1958 founding of the rightist John Birch Society. Both liberals and conservatives among American youth were on the rise at this time. In 1960 not only the leading new left organization, SDS, but also the foremost "new right" group, Young Americans for Freedom (YAF), were established.

At UT, students on the right and left squared off over the issue of membership in the NSA. This was the major national collegiate organization in the United States. UT, like many other schools, paid annual dues and sent a delegation to the annual NSA Congress, which was held in the summer, usually on a midwestern campus and usually somewhere in the North. Students in Austin continually questioned the value of their school's involvement in this national organization, even after one UT student, Ray Farabee, became president of the NSA during the 1950s. The organization seemed irrelevant to many students' concerns.

Just as important, many viewed the NSA as a stronghold of student liberalism. Indeed, the UT delegations to the summer congresses were stocked with liberal activists. Many of the NSA's defenders at UT were involved with either the Y or the *Texan*. Robb Burlage and his successor as the *Texan*'s editor, Kay Voetmann, successfully argued before the SA that they should keep their membership in the NSA. The student government thus decided to put the NSA on a kind of informal probation, appointing a committee to keep its eye on the organization for the coming year.[50]

The NSA's liberal cosmopolitanism generally did not stray far from typical American views of the world at this time. Anthony Henry, an early black student at UT and a YMCA activist, was one of only fifteen students who attended a seven-week NSA seminar on International Student Relations in the summer of 1958. When arguing at UT that the school should maintain its membership in the NSA, he used an anticommunist gambit, allaying concern that internationalism was a little pink. This was the only American organization, Henry contended, that matched the Soviet Union's attempt to study the international scene and influence students around the world.[51] Indeed, in 1967, journalists at *Ramparts* magazine revealed that the CIA had funded the NSA so that the student organization could compete with Soviet student groups—just as Henry suggested—in the area of "outreach."[52] This was a double irony, for although the connection between anticommunist efforts and the NSA eluded American conservatives, the CIA's manipulation achieved mixed results, since the NSA's internationalism helped lay the groundwork for the anti-imperialist perspective that some of its members later developed. As noted earlier, many of the students who planned the 1962 SDS Port Huron Conference came together in the Liberal Study Group.

Other conflicts of the late 1950s concerned civil liberties, another issue dear to both cosmopolitan aspirations and the libertarian tradition of Texas dissent. On public university campuses, heated discussions were held concerning the anticommunist "loyalty" oaths that some state governments required of professors. The 1949 loyalty oath controversy in California is

well known. In 1949 the Texas state legislature passed House Bill 837, which mandated that a question concerning national loyalty be asked of all applicants for faculty or staff positions at public universities in the state, as well as of students when they registered. Ten years later, a move was afoot to eliminate the oath. Many criticized it as both offensive and ineffective: it would have a "chilling effect" on political life, they said, and besides, a real subversive would have no compunctions about simply lying in his answer to any loyalty question. (Significantly, the arguments against such oaths generally were not based on an absolute opposition to government regulation of political beliefs—this would have involved a defense of Communists' civil liberties, a defense that even the most avid civil libertarians in Texas were not eager to make.) The *Texan* applauded the administration at the University of North Carolina, which asked its own board of regents to remove the anticommunist loyalty oath from university job applications, and urged that the Texas legislature learn from this example. This law was "freedom-assaulting" and "legally ineffective," it said.[53]

Around this same time, opposition among student leaders and faculty members—and by national political figures as well—crystallized against the loyalty affidavit required of anyone accepting one of the student loans that had been provided by the National Defense Education Act (NDEA). Passed in 1958 in reaction to the Soviet Union's launching of the *Sputnik* satellite, the NDEA pumped large sums of money for myriad purposes into American higher education, all ostensibly to improve the national cold war effort. The affidavit stated that one was not a member of any organization dedicated to the illegal or violent overthrow of the U.S. government. The objections to this oath were the same as those to the Texas state government's oath. Between early 1959 and the spring of 1960, the *Texan*, the SA, and the UT faculty all took stands against the NDEA oath. So did the NSA, as well as other student bodies and faculties around the country. In June 1960 the U.S. Senate passed a bill that removed this affidavit from the NDEA loan application procedure. Conservatives in Texas criticized opponents of the oath as soft on communism, but on this civil liberties issue, as the 1960s began, the liberals were in step with the national trend.[54]

Another oath controversy flared at UT at exactly the same time. In early 1959 three members of the Texas house of representatives proposed a bill that would have required all teachers in public colleges and universities to sign an annual statement declaring their belief in "a supreme being." University administrators were timorous in their response. A vice president of UT asserted that the administration "has no knowledge of atheism being taught" at their school. Bishop Frank Smith, the chairman of the board of regents at Southern Methodist University, a private school, commented, "It is beyond comprehension that any person who is a professed atheist would ever be employed as a teacher."[55] But students, faculty, and local clergy in Austin rallied against what they considered a gross intrusion into religious freedom, and after the testimony of clergymen before the legislature, the proposal went down to defeat. In a state where conservative Protestantism prevailed, the doctrine of religious freedom provided some of the strongest liberal ground, especially because advocates of religious liberty could appeal to the dominant Baptist tradition, which strongly favored separation of church and state.[56]

Some students worried most of all about the impact of conservative harassment on the faculty. Robb Burlage opined that the greatest threat to political freedom in the university came from within, from the administration. He cited a professor at Rice University in Houston who claimed that schools kept secret dossiers on politically outspoken professors. Burlage located the cause of this pressure in the corporate control of the university system: The American university, he wrote with a Millsian flourish, had fallen "victim to the cult of combinationism" and was controlled by the same people who controlled the wealth of the society. The "Academic Corporation," he said, had institutionalized conservatism and conformism.[57]

Arguably, the conformism of university life in the 1950s was merely one aspect of a more general spirit of caution governing American society. By the end of the decade, however, controversies over civil rights began to dispel the cloud cover that lay over American politics, largely through the work of black activists in the South. In the 1957/1958 school year, the civil rights issue that attracted the most attention in Austin was school integration. Newspaper headlines gave a day-by-day account of the events at Central High School in Little Rock, the capital of Arkansas, bordering Texas on the northeast. President Dwight Eisenhower felt constrained to send the army to Little Rock to overcome Governor Orval Faubus's obstruction of the city school board's integration plan. Such developments were not foreign to Texas; white mob violence had prevented the integration of schools in the town of Mansfield, prompting Governor Shivers to dispatch the Texas Rangers—to keep the peace, not to enforce the Supreme Court's desegregation order.[58]

The black residents of Austin had been segregated on the east side of town since the town fathers had shunted them there in the 1930s, and Jim Crow prevailed in public places and business establishments in town, but black Austinites continually pushed at the sealed envelope of segregation.[59] Even students at the virtually all white university were beginning to push.

The first African American had been admitted to UT in 1950 under court order, when Heman Sweatt was allowed to attend the Law School. In the mid-1950s a trickle of black undergraduates started to flow in. They were a small group, perhaps sixty in number, kept apart from their fellow students by segregation in both university housing and off-campus establishments.[60]

In the late 1950s, a few black students and a small group of white students started to work to change the situation for black students in the campus area. The major target of activity in the university itself was student housing. Many students lived in either fraternities or sororities or in privately owned buildings that were on a university list of approved housing. Others lived in dormitories. Finally there were cooperatives, owned by the university and supervised by UT employees. A few dorms and co-ops were available for black students. The black student housing was, by all reports, inferior to what was available to whites. In the summer of 1958 the university built a new dorm for white women, which the *Texan* said looked like a "luxury hotel" complete with modern air-conditioning. The black housing facilities, on the other hand, were marked by "sagging windows" and "aged kitchen facilities."[61] Student activists in the SA Grievance Committee wrote a report in the fall of 1959 highlighting these inequities and demanding that the black students, especially the women, be provided with decent housing. The report was adopted by the Austin Human Relations Commission (AHRC), a euphemistically named body that had been established by the city government to try to deal with racial controversies in the least explosive way. Pro–civil rights clergy and students were continually involved in the AHRC. In November 1959 the board of regents agreed to build the new housing but did not set a timetable. At this time, it seems, no one on campus called for racially integrated student housing.[62]

The other front on the student desegregation fight at this time formed along the retail establishments on Guadalupe Avenue, "the Drag," on the west border of the campus. The shops, restaurants, and movie theaters there were for whites only. In November 1958, students from the SA Student Welfare Committee scheduled a meeting, through the AHRC, with businessmen from the area to discuss the issue. The SA voted overwhelmingly to urge area businesses to desegregate. Furthermore, the SA, which regularly recommended to students a list of area establishments by issuing seals that read "Steer Here" (playing on the Texas Longhorn mascot, symbol of UT's "football and beer-drinking culture"), resolved to exclude those businesses that would not serve all university students. Despite these actions, in the 1950s, student activists had no luck in pressuring Drag businesses to desegregate.[63]

While race relations were merely simmering in Austin in the late 1950s, they were boiling over elsewhere. The contrast between Little Rock's school controversy and events in Austin is instructive. In 1955 the Austin Independent School District had technically desegregated its public schools by quietly allowing thirty-eight black students to begin attending the city's three previously all-white high schools, thus insulating itself against legal challenges (for the time being). Local white leaders, if conservative, had little taste for Faubus's style of grandstanding. Governor Price Daniel, a conservative politician who apparently wanted to avoid unnecessary trouble, held the situation steady, allowing localities to decide for themselves whether they would integrate their schools (certainly not a stance that would lead to much integration).[64]

Kay Voetmann of the *Texan*, an Arkansan, asserted that Austin's culture was less "Old Southern" than Little Rock's. This was why, she thought, the Texas legislature had been less intransigent than their Razorback counterparts. Political scientist V. O. Key speculated that in a state like Texas, where in 1940 less than 10 percent of whites had lived in counties where at least three of ten residents were black (compared with almost 70 percent of whites in Mississippi), white citizens would "have little cause to be obsessed about the Negro." Surely Key was engaging in wishful thinking. Texas could lay claim to a long history of racist violence against African Americans; in the 1950s, white Texans were generally conservative and did not appear ready to give up racial segregation. Nonetheless, Key was right in recognizing that by this time, the racial fear of the Deep South was not similarly consuming Texas political life, making the white resistance to civil rights agitation potentially less formidable than it was to the east. As the 1950s ended, change was indeed soon to come. Dugger put the matter provocatively to his fellow Texans in 1957: "We might as well join the battle early. Texas is half South, half Not South. Are you one or the other? You may put off deciding for a few years, but decide you must."[65]

Moral Individualism

Following the big Democratic Party victories in the 1958 congressional elections and John Kennedy's election to the White House two years later, liberal youth felt that the tide was turning in their direction, and their political horizons quickly outgrew the modest changes planned by political figures like Kennedy. The expansion of political discussion in the 1960s created a sharp sense of discontinuity with the politics of the preceding years. Nonetheless, the political involvement of young white activists

around 1960 grew primarily out of the liberal traditions they inherited, including the tradition of secular southern liberalism. To understand how insurgency emerged from a period of rightist dominance, one needs to see the changes occurring in secular liberalism in the 1950s. Laboring in obscurity and extremity, suffering one defeat after another, liberalism mutated. In the lean years, the truest believers acquired greater influence in the liberal camp, and the "summer soldiers" of earlier, better days departed the scene. Younger people with new ideas, such as Ronnie Dugger, were able to rise fast and far within the political opposition. In sometimes subtle ways, the dissident, secular liberalism of this period broached the issues that the new left would pursue as grassroots activists and framed political issues in ways that younger radicals would absorb, if unknowingly.

The clearest shift in the white liberal agenda was the increased emphasis on issues of racial justice. Although racial liberals in the 1930s and 1940s were likely to be Roosevelt loyalists and New Dealers, they were vastly outnumbered in this coalition by white citizens, of the South and North, who evinced a reflexive and unchallenged racism. Partly in order to negotiate this alliance, liberals in that period focused their policy proposals almost exclusively on economic matters. Civil rights were relegated to an obscure place on the agenda. Only the more radical members of the New Deal coalition spoke out against racist violence, and on the issue of Jim Crow segregation, blacks stood almost entirely alone in their opposition.[66]

Lawrence Goodwyn put the matter squarely in 1958, asserting that southern Democratic power was built on a devil's compact between the different economic classes of the white race. This arrangement allowed wealthy whites to rule the South and made poorer whites their junior partners. Southern liberals, he said, had failed to break away from these relationships. Their failure to challenge the force of race baiting in southern politics had prevented the emergence of "a progressive southern movement—whether it be called Populism, Progressivism, New Dealism, or simply Liberalism."[67] The most notable aspect of the liberalism that Goodwyn, Dugger, and the *Observer* championed starting in the mid-1950s was its new outspokenness about racial inequality and violence. That Goodwyn's challenge to white southern liberals on "the Negro issue" would figure so prominently in the leading journal of Texas liberalism indicated that in one of the bleaker hours of that political creed, something new was afoot.

Dugger himself complained that it was hard for whites and blacks to be "natural" around each other, to step outside the games they had learned to play so well when encountering each other, "because our normal social life is so corrupt." Here a yearning for authenticity peeked through the nuts-and-bolts agenda of secular liberalism.[68] If Dugger cried out in a wilderness of white southern conservatism, he found the balm for his pain in the civil rights movement. Beginning as an all-black movement, by the early 1960s it brought together the most idealistic of the black and white young, offering a vision of a "beloved community," of an end to estrangement and an emergence of authenticity. This movement furnished young white liberals with the most concerted example of political protest they had ever witnessed, and the movement became the catalyst for the subsequent escalation of youth activism, white and black. For many younger whites, as for Dugger, the interracialism of the civil rights movement at its high tide seemed to offer a possibility of "natural" and equal interaction between the races.

In more philosophical terms, a change occurred in these years in the way young white liberal activists viewed political issues in general. Just as they felt personally challenged to respond to the civil rights movement in a moral fashion, they began to view politics in general as a matter of personal responsibility and decision. Conceptually, the new emphasis was on the moral individual; only a grouping of morally courageous persons who made individual decisions to take public action would lead to social good. In the 1930s and 1940s, liberals had controlled the reins of national government and had stressed government as the main instrumentality of collective action. When liberals returned again to state power after 1960, this emphasis on government action received fresh impetus, and a fissure opened between older liberals in positions of power and younger activists who fixed their moral gaze on the character and actions of individuals.

The emphasis on personal integrity among young activists was a way of protesting the culture of conformism. Seeking to justify political dissent, activists played on the theme of individualism, to which Americans often paid lip service. In the 1950s, "individualism," as Henry Nash Smith observed, often signified a defense of "the free enterprise system," meaning economic conservatism.[69] However, political liberals found they could put this kind of rhetoric to their own uses. They were not alone in plucking out a dissident variation on the theme of individualism. After all, despite the celebration of conformity in the corporate sector and the exaltation of "togetherness" in social life generally, as well as the chilling effect of the red scare on political life, the frostiest years of the cold war produced critiques of conformist culture far more biting than most of what has been seen since, and several of these critiques found a large and enthusiastic audience. As a study of Vance Packard, the author of some of these critiques, makes clear, individual autonomy, sometimes caricatured in antigovernment polemics, remained a genuine and deeply held ideal in American culture, and dissenters could call on its

authority in their indictments of a society that sometimes seemed as though it was squeezing the individual within an ever tighter compass.[70]

The ideal of individualism found many supporters, including some who were highly placed. After he became chancellor of the UT campus in 1961, Harry Ransom asserted that the belief in the uniqueness and freedom of the individual student, a belief he associated with the "progressive" movement in American education, was threatened by the growth of educational institutions, in which it was easy to view students as an impersonal "mass." Jo Eickmann, editor of the *Texan* in 1960/1961, expressed the same anxiety, writing, "As that campus has become a massive conglomerate of glass and brick, so we have become a mass." This feeling of "massification" among the "baby boomers" as they began to enter college in the 1960s frustrated them and fueled campus rebellions like the Berkeley Free Speech Movement in 1964, in which student leaders like Mario Savio condemned "the machine" that housed them. But whereas Clark Kerr, the chancellor of the Berkeley campus, stubbornly resisted the students' complaints—celebrating the same trends that the students protested—Ransom's sympathetic view indicated the cultural power of the ideal of autonomy. He himself warned against viewing students as interchangeable cogs in a "machine" or as "herds that move like driven cattle."[71]

Shades of Savio—or C. Wright Mills, who urged a distinctly individualistic, heroic role on dissident intellectuals. A native of Waco and, like Ronnie Dugger, a lapsed Catholic, Mills transferred to UT from Texas A&M as a college student in the 1930s. In the following decades, he compiled an impressive body of sociological writings. Indeed, he became the single most influential thinker in the formation of the new left in the United States. Part of this influence lay in the cold war appeal of the outlaw persona he cultivated, a kind of renegade John Wayne figure, squaring off against vast, immoral forces. He was "decisive and outspoken in speech, independent in thought, and frequently flamboyant and unorthodox in dress," wrote a clearly impressed student reporter when Mills returned to his alma mater in 1960 to give a talk. At UT, this prodigal son told students that they were entering an age of giant bureaucracies in which no one seemed to make the crucial decisions, an era "dominated by rational organization and rational moral insensibility." He challenged them to find a way to transcend this moral debauch, to raise their individual voices in dissent. In his writings Mills conjured what one scholar calls a "pastoral of autonomy," and he spoke for a tradition of individual responsibility.[72]

One student who found himself deeply affected by Mills's writings, Chandler Davidson, started writing a column in the *Texan* in the fall of 1959.

Davidson thought that plenty of students wanted to rebel against something but that, he said, they often had trouble figuring out what to rebel against. Like others at this moment, he saw students caught between caution and dissent, attracted to the prospect of involvement but still plagued by paralysis. Vance Packard, a Methodist whose characteristic style of criticism was the jeremiad, visited UT in 1960 and lamented the wayward course of contemporary students, going so far as to say that they seemed more conservative than they had been "10, 20, 30, 40 years ago."[73] In fact, several political issues had aroused the concern of young people during the second Eisenhower administration, and despite Davidson's comments, student activists were not motivated merely by an attraction to rebellion for its own sake. By the decade's close, young observers like Davidson and older commentators like Packard and Mills, as well as countless others, saw student political and cultural concerns focus sharply on the issue of race.