Preface to the Updated Edition

Karl Marx once said that when history turns a corner, the intellectuals are the first to fall off the train. I lost my seat on July 13, 1999, when listener-supported KPFA-FM in Berkeley underwent a series of convulsions that received worldwide press coverage. That day local media activists intercepted an e-mail message indicating that members of the Pacifica Foundation's national board favored selling the station to "logical and qualified buyers" in order to capitalize the organization. Several hours later, Pacifica dispatched a corporate security firm to close the station. Over fifty KPFA staff and supporters were arrested for trespassing on the institution they had kept alive for decades. During the next three turbulent weeks, Pacifica spent almost $500,000 in its conflict with KPFA. The city of Berkeley became engulfed in marches, rallies, sit-ins and teach-ins over the issue. The battle peaked with a day-long demonstration of over 10,000 KPFA supporters, demanding the re-opening of the station and the resignation of the Pacifica board.

Pacifica Radio had just been published. It argues that in the 1950s and 60s, McCarthyism forced the Pacifica radio network to define itself less as an institution in search of humanist dialogue—the goal of its founders—and more as a defender of the right of the individual to speak. In the tortuous course of this transition, "alternative radio" was born, along with a difficult question: Could listener-sponsored radio live by dissent alone?

But watching KPFA's staff and supporters—many of them my friends—being led out of their building in handcuffs, I felt the need for a broader explanation of this awful scene. In the ensuing weeks of the conflict between Pacifica and the station's supporters, I looked for some analysis that reached beyond incidents or personalities for its conclusions. The result is the postscript of this updated edition.

The postscript herein, *A Crisis of Containment*, argues that the events of the summer of 1999 in Berkeley were rooted in two decades of government policy hostile to what by the 1970s had come to be called "community" radio and what I call local access broadcasting. These policies trapped an insurgent cultural movement inside tiny, inadequate spaces, creating generations of embittered managers who gradually lost faith in the possibility of democratic governance for non-commercial, listener-supported radio. Ultimately, this planned marginalization resulted in Pacifica governors who, judging by their actions, regarded legal accountability to their constituents as an impediment to the business of the organization. At KPFA-FM in Berkeley they collided with thousands of people who thought otherwise.

Although I served as a volunteer at KPFA in the 1980s, most of this book was written afterwards, in an atmosphere of relative distance from Pacifica radio's current affairs. The postscript was not. As soon as this book hit the stands Pacifica began taking actions that I regarded as dangerously out-of-sync with the democratic rhetoric heard articulated daily on the network's national and local programs. I said as much in many public statements. I have written the postscript in the first person so that the reader will not mistake me for a more detached scholarly observer. Indeed, I dedicate it to the KPFA community—its paid and unpaid staff, its subscribers and its supporters—who have endured far more than should be expected of a group of people who, in the end, simply want to broadcast and hear good things on the radio.

Preface to the First Edition

A CALL is being sounded throughout the United States. It echoes from our schools, spiritual institutions, houses of government, and newspapers. It is a plea for public dialogue and an acknowledgment of its absence in our time. Our magazines and talk shows offer a steady stream of authorities who worry that Americans do not congregate, volunteer, join, vote, or, most important, talk enough.[1] Our foundations donate generous sums to promote what they call "civic culture."[2] Recent books on American life, with chapter titles such as "Can We Talk?" or "Can We Be Brought Together?" call for greater communication between blacks and whites (or Jews), women and men, those who favor and those who oppose the legality of abortion, Republicans and Democrats, white women and women of color.[3] The World Wide Web—arguably the last technological panacea of the twentieth century—hosts numerous sites that help organize or instruct people in the art of discussion.[4]

Much of this admirable activity is motivated by civic pride, patriotism, or sociability. But the crusade for dialogue also seems to be fueled by fear, either vaguely sensed or explicitly experienced. Immigration, globalization, identity politics, the supposed breakdown of the family, the decline of our cities—all these phenomena have produced a generation of writers who think we had better start talking as soon as possible.

Since the 1960s our nation has experienced an "unraveling," according to one historian.[5] We are a "disunited" culture, bereft of singular purpose, thanks to the "cult of ethnicity." Another author pleads for a return to assimilationism—for us to be "Americans simply," above all else. "Let us celebrate that choice," argues Nathan Glazer, "and agree it would be better for America if more of us accepted that identity as our central one, as against ethnic and racial identities."[6]

Even those observers sympathetic to such sentiments detect more than a bit of ahistorical panic in all this. As sociologist Todd Gitlin observes, these anxious expressions presume the existence of a lost golden age when "an incontestable consensus reigned, and deserved to reign, about the virtue of Western civilization, the nature of merit and authority, the rules of reason, the proper constitution of canon and curriculum, the integrity of American history, the civility of men."[7] Once upon a time, "we" knew who "we" were. How do we get back home?

Given this pervasive sense of the present, it may surprise some to discover that back in the hypothetical good old days, people worried about the same problems we worry about today. In 1952, a group of psychologists gathered in Asilomar, California, to hear Lewis Hill's diagnosis of the condition of American society and culture. Hill, general manager of the country's first listener-supported FM radio station, expressed concern about a relatively new phenomenon—the widespread availability of privacy, or what he called "the Private Room." Consumerism and suburbanization had produced a generation of people able to define themselves largely by their capacity to keep others away. "In fact, the place of identity and consciousness in modern man is very much identified, perhaps inseparably, with the tile bathroom and the ninety-nine dollar bedroom suite that complement its psychic mirrors," Hill said. "It has a patch of yard in front and a garbage can in back; and a window no one can look in unless the owner raises the blind." Within private rooms Americans formulated those values "which in other times were assigned to a concept of the soul and to a community of labor, however unequal."[8]

Where in this new landscape lay the chance for the articulation of a "firm communal value system"? asked Hill.[9] And how did this new culture prepare the individual for what Hill metaphorically described as "the Man at the Door"—an intruder with a different point of view or a deadly "alien enemy." The door must be opened, he declared. Communication with the threat—whatever it might be—must be encouraged, not shunned. "If this is too much to hope for," Hill concluded, "someone will have to explain to us how we can do with less."[10]

This book tells the story of a small group of people who, possessed of an idealism almost incomprehensible in our time, thought that dialogue could save the world. *Pacifica Radio: the Rise of an Alternative Network* traces the early evolution of the Pacifica Foundation, the first nonprofit FM radio network in the United States, created by pacifists, explicitly to encourage communication and the breakdown of ideological barriers. The story begins with Lewis Hill, Pacifica's founder, and the creation of KPFA-FM in Berkeley in 1949; it follows the foundation's acquisition of

two more signals—in Los Angeles and New York City—ending in 1964, a turning point in the network's history.

"The essence of history," writes historian Louis J. Halle, ". . . is the contrast between the immensity of its movement and the limitations of the individuals who, often with the greatest gallantry, put themselves at grips with it."[11] The Pacifica Foundation, created in 1946, had its ideological roots in a set of communitarian values drawn from Gandhian pacifism, anarchism, and cooperativism. The organization saw its primary mission as promoting "a pacific world" by encouraging creative exchange between people of diverse backgrounds and beliefs and, secondarily, as an advocate of free speech and individual rights. The original Pacificans hoped to attract a mass audience to their dialogue-oriented project.

The onset of McCarthyism, however, gradually forced the foundation to define itself primarily as a haven for unpopular ideas, and for the absolute right of individuals to speak such ideas. By 1949, the foundation had largely abandoned its efforts to attract a broad listenership. Instead, its first radio station, KPFA in Berkeley, served in the 1950s as a refuge for an educated audience deeply alienated from American politics and culture. By the late 1950s, a second generation of Pacificans adopted a more aggressive broadcasting style, openly challenging the actions of what the historian Daniel Yergin calls the "national security state."[12] The consequent conflicts with that state only intensified the foundation's need to emphasize the unpopular individual's right to "dissent" as its raison d'être, creating what would later be called "alternative radio" along with a crisis of meaning. What larger mission unified a world of dissenters, some of the network's participants began to ask. What higher purpose, if any, did free speech broadcasting serve besides the right of the individual to speak?

Pacifica Radio: the Rise of an Alternative Network celebrates this country's only independent noncommercial radio system and its daring, even heroic, contributions to our culture. Pacifica's story also illustrates how easily any attempt to promote public interaction can be disrupted. The Pacifica Foundation's early struggles reflect one of the characteristics of American society: a "self divided," in Richard Randall's words, continually forced to choose between the desire for community and individual autonomy, between dialogue and dissent.[13]

MY SCHOLARSHIP, and the work of many others, has depended on the labor of the dedicated archivist Vera Elizabeth Somers Hopkins. "My mother was very peace minded," Hopkins once wrote. "Therefore, I have always been peace minded." Born and raised in the pacifist Church of the Brethren, Hopkins studied sociology during the 1930s at the Claremont

Graduate School. Her passionate advocacy of social justice inspired her master's thesis, a devastating critique of the *Los Angeles Times*' hostile coverage of Upton Sinclair's 1934 campaign for governor. As an undergraduate, Hopkins anticipated the Pacifica idea by more than a decade: "Survival of a democratic form of government is predicated upon a high degree of freedom for open discussion of the issues which face the electorate. . . . It assumes that the rules will be changed by means other than force through war or coercion of individuals."[14]

Following World War II, Hopkins and her husband, John, moved to Berkeley, where he opened an electrical repair shop, eventually manufacturing custom FM radios for KPFA listeners, and she began her forty-year career as an archivist for the Pacifica Foundation. In the last decade of her service, she wrote an invaluable history of KPFA. From the thousands of crucial documents relating to Pacifica history she had saved, she assembled her "Sampler from Pacifica Foundation."[15] Vera Hopkins's role as commentator and witness to or participant in important KPFA or Pacifica events makes her indispensable to this book, which is dedicated to her.

This study began as a doctoral dissertation under the supervision of Vicki L. Ruiz, whose mentorship and guidance have made all the difference in my intellectual journey. I hope this text reflects what she taught me, that ultimately history is about people and their stories. The editor of this series, Robert Dawidoff of the Claremont Graduate University, shook me up when appropriate, calmed me down when necessary, and recited John Berryman by heart. Temple editor Janet Francendese patiently showed me how to make longwinded prose more readable and concise, as did Erica Fox. Elazar Barkan, Janet Brodie, Eric Foner, William Mandel, John Ohlinger, Michael Roth, Susan Smulyan, and Jesse Walker read the manuscript or helped in other ways.

Much of the time I spent working on this project, I felt like a beggar or a burglar. Wandering around California, I confronted ex-Pacificans in their seventies or eighties with painful, sometimes embarrassing, questions and photocopied their private correspondence. Many thanks to the two dozen people who put up with such intrusion, particularly Watson Alberts, Roy Finch, William Mandel, Eleanor McKinney, Richard Moore, and Jerry Shore. Pat Scott, Dick Bunce, and Mary Tilson of the Pacifica National Office in Berkeley opened their doors and their archive boxes to me. By the time I'd recatalogued everything, we'd become good friends. I hope they know how grateful I am for their help. I hope Pamela Burton of the Pacifica Archives in Los Angeles knows as well.

While revising my manuscript for publication, I subscribed to the

progressive-radio electronic mail discussion list, which focuses on current Pacifica politics and policy. I cannot say that I always found the experience pleasant, but the list's often heated exchanges helped me clarify my thinking. I owe a debt to its participants. Former KPFA staff engineer John Whiting read the manuscript, generously shared his insights and oral history interviews, and backed me up when I was down. Lincoln Bergman let me use his invaluable oral history of Elsa Knight Thompson. Jeff Land and James Tracy alerted me to important sources. I am particularly grateful for the friendship and assistance of Veronica Selver, who is producing a documentary film about KPFA.

The San Francisco basement where I hoarded tape-recorded interviews is in the home of Sharon Wood, whose work as a documentary film writer inspires me, whose constant love and support sustains me, and with whose son, Jake, I have mastered many Sony Play Station games.

My mother, Rita Lasar, conducted one of the oral history interviews and transcribed another. That was the least of her assistance. I deeply cherish our friendship and the memory of a man we both knew named Theodore. I'd also like to thank my brother, Raphael, and sister-in-law, Karen, as well as Larry Bensky, Darcy Buerkle, Lawrence Chatman (aka D. J. Collage), Gary Coates, Arlette Cohen, Dan Cox, Ilana DeBare, Sherry Gendelman, Marilyn Golden, Amina Hassan, Cliff Hawkins, Thea Hensl, Julia Hutton, Margaret Jacobs, Elaine Korry, Neskah LaFlamme, Peg Lamphier, Jane-Ellen Long, Mimi Lyons, Laurie Nelson, Ken Nightingale, Mark Mericle, Alicia Rodriguez, Sam Schuchat, Abby Smith, Ralph Spaulding, Eugene Stevanus, Emilie Stoltzfus, Tamara Thompson, and Janice Windborne. Thanks also to Olivia and Snowball, Ted the lizard, and the beloved memory of Skittle the rodent. Needless to say, no one mentioned thus far bears any responsibility for the story you are about to read.

I

WAR

That extreme Evils are committed today, with no large-scale opposition, by the agents of great nations—this leads me to conclude not, with the liberals and the Marxists, that the peoples of those nations are horrified by these Evils . . . but rather that, on the contrary, these Evils are rejected only on a superficial, conventional, public-oration and copy-book-maxim plane, while they are accepted or at least temporized with on more fundamental, private-levels.

—Dwight Macdonald,
"The Root Is Man"

1 The Road to Coleville

I have closed my eyes on the past
As you want it remembered for
The rest of life, called 'forever'.
I was not there. I was away.
At the Poles, in the Amazon.
I am not going to have been
Where you say I was. You fancy
You can force me to have lived
The past you want. You are wrong.

—Kenneth Rexroth,
Kenneth Rexroth: The Collected Shorter Poems

The people who founded KPFA were pacifists. Moved by principles of nonviolence, they refused to fight in the Second World War. They joined organizations such as the Fellowship of Reconciliation and the War Resisters League. They wrote for and subscribed to pacifist newspapers, and they attended antiwar demonstrations and events. A. J. Muste, the most prominent advocate of pacifism at the time, was often quoted as saying that "there is no way to peace; peace is the way."[1] The founders of KPFA wholeheartedly endorsed this as their personal and political credo.

Yet somehow their message did not get through. Even two decades after the creation of KPFA, the Pacifica Foundation's political origins were widely misrepresented. Journalists, even sympathetic ones, described the founders as communists, or liberals, or adherents of some other incompatible perspective. In 1974, for instance, a reporter covering a conflict at KPFA for the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* summarized the station's early history by claiming that the "vocal minorities using the station at that time

were generally communists, well-educated and often rich."[2] Vera Hopkins, Pacifica's archivist and historian, asked William Triest, KPFA's first regular announcer, if the reporter's statement was true. "Never, never, never," Triest replied. Although some of the original KPFA staffers had joined a Communist Party (CP) front organization, he insisted that "all the principals were in fact anti-communist in the sense of being anti-authoritarian (not in the sense of being red-baiters)."[3] Indeed, aversion to the Party among Pacifica's first generation sometimes bordered on paranoia. "Our greatest difficulty in those days," recalled another founder, "was the risk that the Communist Party would take over. And we were constantly on guard against this."[4] By all standards their vigilance proved successful. In the 1950s—the Cold War's cruelest years domestically—the Federal Bureau of Investigation scrutinized the Pacifica Foundation for communist influence and by its own admission found little.[5]

Whether Pacifica's early antipathy toward Marxism-Leninism made practical sense, it certainly makes sense historically. People who opposed U.S. involvement in the Second World War could not possibly have functioned as members of the Communist Party. After Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, the party condemned labor strikes as sabotage and denounced as obstructionist efforts by African American union leader A. Philip Randolph to desegregate U.S. troops. Further, communists who adhered to the leadership of the Soviet-controlled Third International would never have tolerated efforts to resist the draft among its members. Many served in the most dangerous theaters of the war.[6]

Later Pacifica promotional literature sometimes described the organization's founders as liberals, but they did not fit comfortably fit into that category either.[7] Anarchists at heart, the first Pacificans sympathized with the goals of the New Deal but feared liberalism's reliance on an increasingly bureaucratic and militarized state. "We felt that liberals were people who couldn't be counted on," recalled one early Pacifica supporter, "and that when the showdown came, they would be lining up with conservatives."[8]

No one symbolized liberal vacillation more among the early Pacificans than Minnesota senator Hubert H. Humphrey, who championed moderate civil rights legislation one day and voted for the creation of concentration camps for communists the next.[9] They expected liberals to make remarks like novelist and reformer Upton Sinclair made in 1963: "I am also a pacifist, but I supported both of the World Wars. I'm that kind of pacifist."[10] The creators of listener-sponsored radio were not that kind of pacifist. They had refused to serve in the only overwhelmingly popular armed conflict in U.S. history. The Pacifica story begins with a recounting of that resistance.

A Meeting in the Woods

Having graduated from Andover Academy and Yale, Roy Finch was drafted in 1942 while working at the *New York Herald Tribune*. Refusing active duty, he was sent to Coleville, a remote camp for conscientious objectors on California's far eastern border, about seventy miles south of Reno. He would not be released until 1947, when he joined the War Resisters League and resumed his study of the writings of Wittgenstein.[11]

Many pacifists met worse fates in dealing with the selective service system. The decision to grant someone 4-E status was not made by some bureaucrat in Washington, D.C., but by a local official at a draft office. "You went in and said, 'I want to be a conscientious objector,'" Finch recalled, "and he said yes or no. . . . In some places they accepted virtually anybody, and in other places they said, 'No. We're not going to do it. You've got to go to jail.'"[12] Despite Coleville's harshness and lack of electricity, Finch considered himself lucky to have wound up there. A young Berkeleyan named Kerwin Whitnah, who would eventually help raise KPFA's first transmitter tower, had not been so lucky. His board had decided that since Whitnah did not belong to a "historic peace church," he would be sent to the "Greybar Hotel," as COs called it, a penitentiary notorious for its cruelty, on McNeil Island in Washington. "I don't know of any CO who went to McNeil Island who came out emotionally unharmed," another pacifist remembered.[13]

Along with the Mennonite Central Committee and a group called the Brethren, the Quaker-led American Friends Service Committee had negotiated with the Selective Service to operate Coleville. They did so as part of a Civilian Public Service (CPS) program, modeled after the New Deal's Civilian Conservation Corps, that the Quakers ran with the Forest Service.[14] The program supervised, clothed, and fed about twelve thousand men nationwide in 151 camps.[15] The churches saw the camps as an alternative to noncombatant duty; however, many pacifists regarded any service to the government as either participation in war or exploitation.[16] By the time Finch went to Coleville, he had lost respect for even the Quakers, whom he regarded as compromised by their willingness to collaborate with the government. He had only slightly more regard for the Forest Service, which in his view offered Coleville residents little to do that was productive. Mostly they built trails, a make-work activity.

When Lewis Kimball Hill arrived in June 1942, he struck Finch as different from anyone he had ever met before. Hill showed up far better dressed than the other residents. "The guy looked like he had outfitted himself at Abercrombie and Fitch, that kind of a place," Finch

remembered. The newcomer was twenty-three, blonde, frail, pale of complexion, and he chain smoked. Finch noticed that Hill had difficulty straightening up in the morning, due, as Finch later found out, to an arthritic condition. Finch marveled at Hill's "amazing mellifluous voice" and his slightly aristocratic manner, made all the more charming because it seemed so natural.

Both Finch and Hill were assigned to late-night kitchen duty, where, during the course of making sandwiches for Coleville's 150 COs, they talked about their favorite subjects: philosophy, politics, poetry, and radio. Hill was consumed with a plan to create a new kind of radio station, one that would promote wide-ranging discussion. He hoped such dialogue would lead to the identification of the roots of conflict and help resolve them. Over time, they began to see the station "as like a living room," where people who had fundamentally different ideas would talk and work out their differences.[17] The formative ideas for the Pacifica Foundation were coming into being.[18]

Lewis Hill had been born on May 1, 1919, in Kansas City, Missouri, to a pair of "empire builders," as his wife, Joy Cole Hill, once put it.[19] His father, Johnson D. Hill, a lawyer, had moved from Missouri to Tulsa, in the Oklahoma territory. While visiting the city of Bartlesville, he met and married Lura Phillips. Lura's older brother, Frank, was soon to become the living symbol of the "self-made" Southwest oil millionaire. A one-time singing barber who married into a prosperous Iowa banking family, Frank Phillips had taken advantage of the breakup of the Oklahoma Indian territory to obtain fields rich with oil. By the late 1920s, the Phillips Petroleum Company, with its chain of "Phillips 66" gas stations along legendary Route 66, had become a byword for Jazz Age prosperity.

Johnson Hill also went into the oil business, and later he bought an insurance company. Young Lewis grew up in an atmosphere of sudden wealth. He spent time at his uncle's majestic ranch in Bartlesville, where Frank Phillips entertained the likes of Hollywood cowboy Tom Mix, Herbert Hoover, and evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson. The famous mansion was noted for its halls filled with medieval sculpture and Frank Phillips's gigantic study. In a letter to a friend, Lewis once described his home life as combining "corporate wealth, romantic ladies and unlimited scotch and soda."[20]

But beyond this lavishness lay fresh and unapologetic corruption. In the year of Hill's birth, Oklahoma had been a state for little more than a decade. Its politics was unstable and bizarre. In 1927, the dapper and bespectacled governor, Henry Simpson Johnston, a member of the Ku Klux Klan,

summoned the National Guard to prevent the legislature from convening a special session to investigate charges of graft in the executive branch; two years later the legislature finally impeached him for incompetence.[21] During the later years of the Second World War, Johnson Hill won the speakership in the state assembly on the promise he would investigate charges of kickbacks at Oklahoma State University (OSU); his anticorruption stance began his career in politics. "Father is going to be governor sooner or later," Lewis Hill confidently wrote to Roy Finch during a family visit in 1944.[22] But Johnson resigned as speaker—and cut short his political career—when the Democratic political machine stopped him from firing OSU's president.[23]

By all accounts, Lewis Hill was a precocious child. He played musical instruments with little effort and, according to classmates, often was absent from school yet passed exams easily. Later on he became one of those people who could easily fix a mimeograph machine after others had fumbled with it for hours.[24] Like so many young boys in the mid-1920s, Lewis was fascinated with radio. One historian suggests that during an era when professional career paths had become increasingly bureaucratized, technical activities such as amateur broadcasting allowed boys to prove their virility. When Lewis was six, his older brother, Johnson, Jr., gave him the parts to construct a small crystal radio set, complete with a cigar box. Lewis assembled the kit with ease. This and later displays of technical proficiency apparently did not please Hill the elder, however, who envisioned his son becoming a rugged oil man and carrying on in the family enterprise. In pursuit of this goal, the family sent Lewis to Wentworth Military Academy in Lexington, Missouri. He detested the place and cultivated a lifelong contempt for militarism. Eventually, Lewis fled west to Stanford University, where he studied philosophy and flew airplanes for sport.[25]

At Stanford, Hill embraced the branch of philosophy known as existentialism, concluding that, for better or worse, people live free lives—in that they define themselves and the rest of the world through their own self-perceptions and beliefs. The "reality of society," Hill later declared in a radio broadcast, resides in the individual's "own inward nature, and . . . change in society can only be the product of his own inward transformation."[26] The challenge was how to translate that transformation into a constructive, collective reality. One might have called Hill a pragmatic existentialist. He thought that people made their own realities but that those realities were negotiable. He derived much of this passionate credo from his reading of Søren Kierkegaard, the nineteenth-century religious philosopher with whom he closely identified for most of his life.

Later Pacifica literature would claim that Hill drew his ideas primarily from Gandhian or Quaker thought. Certainly Gandhi influenced Hill's writings and statements, but letters to Finch written after they both left Coleville consisted of page after single-spaced page asserting that "there is perhaps nothing in the world like Kierkegaard, nothing that approaches his tremendous, visible movement through the existential tensions of belief."[27]

In his brief life as a writer, Kierkegaard had posed a single startling question: if God were to suddenly appear, how would one know it was God? Here, Kierkegaard warned, lay the truly radical aspect of Christianity. One did not find evidence of God's existence in external reality but in one's desire for God and for higher meaning. God and godly qualities such as love lay hidden from humanity. "As the quiet lake invites you to look at it but the mirror of darkness prevents you from seeing it," Kierkegaard wrote, "so love's mysterious ground in God's love prevents you from seeing its source."[28] Contact with God required a "leap of faith." One had to create God and then submit to one's creation, as did Abraham when ordered by Jehovah to sacrifice his son Isaac. In daily existence one had to become what Kierkegaard called a "knight of faith."[29] The capacity to create the eternal through belief meant the capacity to construct all of reality through perception and belief. This was Kierkegaard's paradoxical understanding of reality and human life.

To the young Lewis Hill, these ideas proved that one did not need a socioscientific plan like Marxism or liberalism to make a better world; one simply needed to believe and act accordingly. "The mere conception that reality and present being consist in paradox," Hill wrote, "and the dialectical proof that the only possible movement through paradox is a leap, are like a clean broom, all manner of positivist, phenomalist, humanist rubbish is swept out and the way is empty."[30] Hill drew from his studies at Stanford a deeply optimistic belief in the power of the individual to reconstruct human relations. The foundation for this view—and later for his vision of listener-supported radio—was Kierkegaard's contention that one's relationship with others, like one's relationship to God, was based on a willfully constructed self based on faith. Thus, in a sense, one created human reality as one created God. After reading Martin Buber's *I and Thou*, Hill wrote to Finch: "The real crux of the matter, is, as Kierkegaard saw it, that an implacable paradox arises in the absolute existence of Thou through the cognitive act of I. The paradox can only be lived subjectively."[31]

Sometimes this ideology, which placed so much primacy on "inward nature," made Hill's friends nervous. A "philosophy for desperadoes," Finch once said of Hill's interpretation of Kierkegaard,[32] and it was easy to

perceive a lonely, radical individualism in Hill's statements. But Hill assured his friends that he didn't mean it that way. Rather, he said, we must acknowledge and accept the realities of others as well as our own. This, for Hill, represented true human relatedness. "Our relationship has often appeared to me to consist in our sharing the tension of an identical paradox from its opposite poles," began yet another letter to Finch in Hill's strangely affectionate style. "Perhaps it is that the poles of a true paradox are interchangeable that we meet so often."[33] Hill put the matter more plainly in a lecture to psychologists in 1952: "As long as I can communicate I can create. As long as I can create I am free."[34]

To Hill, words, pictures, and ideas controlled the world, not the environment or economics. His friend Richard Moore remembers Hill as someone who thought that if one could engage in dialogue with others, one could solve any human problem. "He was not intimidated by anything," Moore recalled, "because what is there in the human being except the human being's perceptions and language?"[35] The small group of writers and artists who later surrounded Hill found his hopeful enthusiasm irresistible.

From Kierkegaard to Gandhi

At Stanford, Hill also became involved with one of the most popular movements of the 1930s: pacifism. Although nowhere in the hundreds of letters Hill composed after the Second World War did he explain why he decided to become a conscientious objector, his close friends thought it was in good part because of his unhappy life at Wentworth Military Academy.[36] Whatever the reason, Hill refused to serve during the Second World War.

In the decade before the war, there had been an upsurge of support for pacifism throughout the Atlantic region. Many pacifists found this ironic, since conscientious objectors had been persecuted during the First World War by virtually every sector of society. Many Americans who had applauded President Woodrow Wilson's intervention into that war now saw nothing that justified the bloodshed. England and France seemed determined to hold onto their empires. The German economy staggered under the terms of a vindictive peace. "Fifteen years ago, came the Armistice and we all thought it was to be a new world," lamented Kansas newspaper publisher William Allan White. "It is! But a lot worse than it was before."[37] Grim exposés like George Seldes's *Iron Blood and Profits* charged that the conflict had been orchestrated by the munitions industry. In 1936, a widely publicized Senate investigating committee came to the same conclusion. Perhaps nothing so symbolized the changing mood of the times than the

return of social reformer Jane Addams to public favor. In 1917, as head of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Addams had opposed U.S. entry into the war. For this, the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) Honorary Society described her as "the most dangerous woman in America."[38] Yet, by the early 1930s—just before her death—the sage of Hull House basked in what one historian aptly called "sunshine pacifism."[39]

By the mid-1930s, almost everyone—Stalinists, Democrats, Republicans, Trotskyites—had some kind of antiwar stance. But this professed love of peace was a mile wide and an inch deep. In addition to disillusionment over the outcome of the First World War, the pacifist movement had strong roots among the isolationists, led by newspapers such as the *New York Daily News* and the *Chicago Tribune*.[40] Further, by the early 1930s, the Communist Party had entered into its so-called Third Period, during which capitalism, imperialism, and fascism were seen as fundamentally the same. To the Party, "war" meant an imperialist war—most likely against the Soviet Union—distracting the proletariat from its historic task: the overthrow of a deteriorating capitalist world.[41]

In the midst of this ambiguous political atmosphere, a remarkable student movement against militarism and war flourished. On April 12, 1935, some sixty thousand college students engaged in a nationwide strike in which they pledged never to participate in an armed conflict.[42] Even before the strike, antimilitarism had ignited many campuses. In 1932 at the City College of New York, a young communist named William Mandel—who would later play a crucial role in the Pacifica Foundation—attended a tense meeting with the president of the college after he called in the police to break up a student demonstration. The president had stipulated that students could speak at the meeting only if they asked questions. Mandel obliged with a carefully phrased 250-word rhetorical question. School authorities expelled him from the college within the year.[43] On the opposite coast, at the University of California at Berkeley, Richard Moore, a future KPFA staff member, had also immersed himself in antiwar activities. "My position was, one: I don't believe in killing," he later explained, "and two: I was not willing to submit myself to a higher authority whether it was God or the United States of America."[44]

The core of the antiwar sentiment in the mid-1930s was based not in isolationism or communism, however, but in organizations that emphasized spiritual pacifism. No leader so epitomized this tradition as A. J. Muste, described by *Time* magazine as America's "Number One U.S. Pacifist" and spokesperson for a generation of war resisters.[45] Finch, along with pacifist leaders Bayard Rustin and David Dellinger, served as a coeditor with

Muste on the postwar pacifist magazine *Liberation*.[46] Although both Finch and Hill disagreed with Muste on some issues, they recognized his importance to the American peace movement and his role in creating a pacifism that emphasized both spiritual and political goals.

Abraham Joannese Muste lived a life of constant conversion and reconversion. As a minister for a Massachusetts Congregational church, he had opposed U.S. entry in the First World War, a position his congregation found intolerable. Muste turned to and soon became a leader in the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), an organization founded in Britain a few years earlier. Under his leadership, FOR abandoned its apolitical stance and became an exponent of Walter Rauschenbusch's "social gospel" vision of Christianity. FOR activists believed that eliminating economic injustice was a requisite to the struggle to eliminate war and that once both these evils were eradicated, Christ's Kingdom would be approximated on earth. A strong advocate of organized labor, Muste briefly left FOR and joined the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP). But this proved to be a brief digression in his spiritual and political development. Two years later, after an argument with Trotsky in Norway, Muste experienced a religious renewal while visiting a medieval church in Paris. Trotsky's revolutionary/materialist analysis had satisfied Muste's desire to engage in political work, but it had left a significant void spiritually.[47]

Muste's dilemmas proved prototypical for the pacifists of his time. How was one to reconcile the need for an inner faith with a desire to fight for the collective good? And how was one to engage in this struggle nonviolently, without having enemies? The answer for Muste and thousands of other pacifists—particularly those who started the Pacifica Foundation—could be found in the living example of the Indian attorney Mohandas Gandhi, whose campaign against British imperialism in India had attracted great interest among religious pacifists in the United States. Gandhi's philosophy—or at least American readings of it—seemed to offer a way to engage in transformative political work not only without advocating violence but also without identifying individuals or classes of people as the enemy. This was certainly Richard B. Gregg's interpretation of Gandhi's works.

During the Second World War, Hill and Gregg, a Quaker lawyer, both served on a blue-ribbon support committee for conscientious objectors. Inspired by Gandhiism in the 1920s, Gregg journeyed to India, where he spent more than half a year with Gandhi at his ashram.[48] Gregg then returned to the United States to reengage himself in the American pacifist movement and write pamphlets and books on Gandhian nonviolence. Gregg's ideas paralleled Hill's understanding of Kierkegaard, and in a 1932 essay, *Gandhiism versus Socialism*, Gregg anticipated Pacifica philosophy.

Like Kierkegaard, Gregg argued that perceptions and beliefs construct reality. He thought that the socialist assumption that classes and institutions determine how the world is governed avoided the central issue: "The real control comes from ideas and sentiments—a scheme of values, a set of ideals or activities which people are induced to desire and accept as right, fitting and praiseworthy." Gregg argued that the words people speak and the symbols they use determine how society works much more than any class or institution. Because society functioned according to what people think and feel, nations ultimately could change only through movements that emphasized moral persuasion rather than violent coercion. For Gregg, Gandhi embodied such a movement as both leader and symbol. By exemplifying the idea of simple living, by making his own clothes, and by performing daily community service for the poor, Gandhi offered an alternative model to exploitative capitalism. "Gandhi's full program tends to restore reality to economic, political and social relationships, and to correct a symbolism which has gone wrong," Gregg wrote. Similarly, Gandhi's program of disciplined nonviolent civil disobedience, or *Satyagraha*, showed the masses that they could have faith in themselves, rather than in symbols of militarism.[49]

Gregg acknowledged that socialism and Gandhiism had many similarities, especially their emphasis on economic leveling. But he predicted that the willingness among socialists to use violence would ultimately produce little more than a new ruling class skilled in the art of repression. "Gandhiism does not talk of the expropriation of the ruling class," he explained. "Instead, it proceeds to demolish the values and symbols which are the source and inner strength of the ruling class."[50] Finally, like Kierkegaard's vision of truth through faith, Gandhiism rejected the idea of objective truth. "Nobody in this world possesses absolute truth," Gandhi wrote. "This is God's attribute alone. Relative truth is all we know. Therefore, we can only follow the truth as we see it. Such pursuit of truth cannot lead anyone astray."[51]

By the late 1930s and early 1940s, Muste and the American pacifist movement had clearly embraced this mode of thought, which satisfied both the desire to be engaged in political change and the need for spiritual growth. American Gandhiism, with its emphasis on spirituality, also attracted the generation of younger pacifists who had joined the War Resisters League. The WRL had been founded in 1925 as a secular sister to the Fellowship of Reconciliation.[52] Many early members of the Pacifica Foundation belonged to the league, including Americo Chiarito, KPFA's first music director.[53] These pacifists had become increasingly uncomfortable with credos that emphasized personal, conscience-oriented opposition to

war without addressing the inevitable need for social and political action. The likelihood of another world war only intensified this disagreement.

In 1941, as the United States verged on intervention in both Europe and Asia, Muste reaffirmed his faith in Gandhiism as a political and spiritual path. In the essay "The World Task of Pacifism," he urged his followers to practice pacifism as "a way of life" and as a tool for social change: "A Western non-violence movement must make effective contact with oppressed and minority groups such as Negroes, share-croppers, industrial workers, and help them to develop a nonviolent technique, as Gandhi did in the India National Congress." But the pacifist movement also had to decide what kind of world it wanted. "It must decide how much socialization is possible without the creation either of a totalitarian state. . . . It must not only invent, it must experiment with schemes for a more decentralized, human and cooperative way of living."[54]

Finch and Hill strongly concurred with Muste. "This was the way *we* imagined pacifism," Finch recalls. "We did not think of it as nonresistance; we thought of it as direct-action of a non-violent character."[55] They agreed that oppressive groups such as southern segregationists would sometimes have to be coerced, albeit nonviolently, into agreeing to change. Finch and Hill differed with Marxists, however, in that they believed that persuasion would have to accompany that coercion, if coercion proved to be necessary. This idea that politics had to be done by example, through dialogue and persuasion, through emphasis on spiritual values rather than materialist analysis, and above all nonviolently, would eventually form the ideological basis of the Pacifica Foundation. In 1945, Hill wrote a letter to Finch that hinted at the faith-oriented path they had both taken. "If St. John of the Cross were walking out of Williamsburg this year you would follow him, though at severe expense to your sense of propriety, while if Eugene Debs were doing the same, you would not."[56]

By the late 1930s, American pacifism gained internal coherence but quickly lost political ground. As the Nazi war machine spread across Eastern Europe and war with the Japanese Empire became a reality, pacifism lost supporters on the left and right. In one of a series of devastating *volte-faces*, in June 1941, the CP-USA reversed its anti-interventionist stance after Germany invaded the Soviet Union. This response was critical in convincing Hill and Finch that Stalinists could not be trusted.[57] Similarly, isolationist organizations, such as America First, almost immediately reversed their stance once the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.[58] Finally, as Germany began cutting a swath through France by land and then over Great Britain by air, fewer groups opposed proposals to loan ships to the British Navy.

Simultaneously, draft resistance became less popular. In the autumn of 1940, Congress debated the Burke-Wadsworth conscription bill. On the Senate floor isolationist Burton K. Wheeler warned, "If you pass this bill, you slit the throat of the last democracy still living—you give Hitler his greatest and cheapest victory." Nevertheless, Congress passed a law drafting almost a million men into the armed forces, and President Roosevelt signed it immediately.[59]

Pacifists like Muste remained skeptical of the drive toward intervention in Europe. Many of them, Roy Finch and Lewis Hill included, regarded stories about Nazi atrocities as anti-German propaganda, similar to false stories circulated during the First World War.[60] In speeches, Muste reminded his audiences that the European powers had failed to negotiate a just peace after the First World War and that Hitler's racism was hardly unique, since England and France also justified their imperial conquests with racist ideology. Another total war would exhaust Europe and elevate the United States, also a racially segregated society, to imperial superpower status.[61] Finch, Hill, and others thought that a war with Germany would simply set the stage for a much larger conflict, a showdown with the Soviet Union. "We were very clear on this point," Finch remembered. "It was a way by which we would be led into a war against the communists."[62] They also feared that during the war civil liberties would be suspended as they had been during World War I. Muste called for pacifists to press for a negotiated settlement between Germany and the Allies, to use diplomacy to drive a wedge between Hitler and the German people. "There is no cheap and easy way out," he argued. "But the assumption that the German people are a special breed of semi-humans who do not react to love and hate, good and evil, as do other men is patently without foundation."[63]

Surely Muste knew, however, that most of his audience had disappeared. The pacifist movement of the 1930s had staked out an eloquent moral position against U.S. intervention in World War II, but it had no compelling political arguments to explain how nonviolence would prevent the spread of fascism worldwide. By the late 1930s, Reinhold Niebuhr weighed the risks of nonintervention against an inevitable catastrophe. "We can justify the refusal to take such risks only if we believe that peace is always preferable to the exploitation of the weak by the strong," Niebuhr warned.[64] After the war Hill admitted to Finch that even he could not stand firm in this instance. "One of the threads of the pacifist problem today runs back to the early days of the last war," Hill wrote in 1948, his mind now on Stalinism, "they never answered Niebuhr about Evil."[65]

Nonetheless, in the months following the Japanese attack on Pearl Har-