

Preface

case for their position. (And least likely, in consequence, to understand themselves, and so least likely to be understood by their opponents.) Namely, the crucial issue of the "open society."

Then there is a brace of chapters (Chapters Six and Seven) which deal with two issues (pacifism, and the role of "consent" in politics) with respect to which American Conservatism is conspicuously continuous and overlapping with the great tradition of the West.

In the final chapter (not I hope too presumptuously) I have brought together some thirty of the reviews I have written in recent years, including them on the assumption that one good way to understand the Conservative affirmation is to watch it in the give-and-take of political controversy among egg-heads.

WILLMOORE KENDALL

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Chapter 1

What Is Conservatism?

What, I ask, is Conservatism? Or, more concretely—since I write with an eye to present-day politics in the United States—what, to begin with, is contemporary, American Conservatism?¹

The question, make no mistake about it, is "up"; people, American undergraduates especially, are wondering about it, as wonder they well may. Contemporary political journalism finds the terms "conservative" and "liberal" somehow indispensable, so that people encounter them now twenty times a day:² The coalition of Republicans and Democrats that struck down most of Mr. Kennedy's legislative program in the last session of Congress is a "conservative" coalition. Senator Byrd and Senator Goldwater are "conservatives," just as Senator Humphrey and Senator Douglas are "liberals." *National Review* is a "conservative" magazine, the *New Republic* a "liberal" magazine. Moreover, the journalists who employ the terms in question now do so unapologetically, and with what seems an easy confidence that their readers will understand by them what they mean by them.

¹ Note the two-fold implication that (a) Conservatism in contemporary America has something in common with "conservatism in general," but (b) is by no means necessarily the same thing as "conservatism in general." Again more concretely: we should expect a certain overlap between contemporary American Conservative principles and, say, Burke's principles—as also between Burke's principles and, say, those of the natural-law philosophers of the Middle Ages. But it is not easy to say how much or what kind of overlap, and the whole question has, in this writer's opinion, been a booby-trap for writers on contemporary American Conservatism—e.g., Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1953) and Clinton Rossiter, *Conservatism in America* (New York: 2d ed. rev. 1962, Knopf).

² Not so, I think, in my own undergraduate days, when there were, quite simply, "radicals" and, so to speak, the rest of us. The present chapter should help make clear why new adjectives have become necessary in the interim.

That meaning, however, is certainly not to be found in any dictionary or encyclopedia;³ nor, we may safely guess, could the writers who spend the terms as common coinage (or the readers who accept them) come up with definitions that they themselves would consider even marginally satisfactory. Nor can anyone with an ear for these things long remain unaware that there are difficulties about the terms, and that people, who generally tend to be very wise about the language they speak, sense those difficulties, especially what I believe to be the major difficulty. That is to say, Yes, Senator Goldwater is a "conservative" and Senator Humphrey, who does seem to disagree with Senator Goldwater pretty much all the time, is a "liberal"; that is easy, presumptively without difficulties, if only because these are the terms that these distinguished statesmen apply to themselves. And Yes, *National Review* is "conservative" and *New Republic* "liberal"; that also is easy, again because each of them applies the relevant term to itself but also because—for that seems to help—they so identify each other. But what, most people still have to ask, am I? What is *The New York Times*, which *National Review* excoriates as the *fons et origo* of the "Liberal propaganda line," and which Professor Rossiter, apparently without a bat of an eyelash, describes as a "great conservative newspaper"? What is Senator Thomas Dodd, who is said to owe his seat in the Senate to the labor (i.e., Liberal) vote in Connecticut and yet, when he speaks on foreign policy, receives "hero-treatment" in the editorial columns of *National Review*? What of the average newspaper reader, who can only say to himself that he seems to agree with the "conservatives" about some things and with the "liberals" about others?

All this adds up to a "major difficulty," as I see it, for the following reason: Current usage of the terms "conservative" and "liberal" clearly implies (a) that there is a *line*, on one side of which we may fairly expect to find conservatives who are consistently "conservative," standing over against, on the other side,

³ Edition after edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* appears with no article on "Conservatism," though the present writer has documentary evidence that four persons have been invited to write such articles in the past decade and a half.

Liberals who are consistently "liberal," and therefore (b) that the line exists, and falls where it does fall, for *good reason*. It is, in consequence, an intelligible line and makes sense as a line (the words as currently used don't make sense unless that line makes sense). Yet one runs across no one who seems able to say where the line is and why and how it does make sense. So, I repeat, people are wondering, and, paradoxically, the more not the less because they feel fairly certain they can say, and say with assurance, which side of the line *some* things belong on. And my purpose in the present chapter can best be stated in just that context: I am going to try to say where in contemporary America that line is, and why and how it makes sense, as I confidently believe it does. And I believe it does because I believe the people who are being called "conservatives" do have something in common that can be put into words, as also do the people who are being called "liberals." (The Senator Dodd case, the case of the man who really does agree with the "conservatives" about some things and with the "liberals" about others, is of course a spurious difficulty. We do not despair of drawing a line between, e.g., Catholicism and Protestantism because there are persons who agree with the Catholics about everything except remarriage-after-divorce and birth-control. We merely note that they are all mixed up, and get on with the job.)

The present writer is not, of course, the first to notice that current usage of the terms "conservative" and "liberal" presupposes a "line," and so poses the question, "Where exactly is it?" Indeed, one could assemble quite an anthology of recent comments whose authors attempt, in one way or another, to dispel the attendant mystery. I have before me, for example, one from Gettysburg's most renowned Gentleman Farmer, the burden of which is that Yes, current usage does presuppose a line, but that line is in fact nonexistent and we should, therefore, abandon the usage: "We should discard such shopworn terms as 'liberal' and 'conservative' . . . I have never yet found anyone who could convincingly explain his own definition of these political classifications." I have another from Mr. Frank Meyer, the burden of which is that Yes, the usage presupposes a line, that such a line

does in fact exist, and that it is religious in character. "The Christian understanding of the nature and destiny of man," he writes, "is always and everywhere what Conservatives strive to conserve." And still another, with that same burden, from a colleague of Mr. Meyer's: "The Conservative believes ours is a God-centered universe; that man's purpose is to shape his life to the patterns of order proceeding from the Divine Center of Life."⁴

I have several—from Professor Ludwig von Mises, for instance, or adepts of his like Mr. Murray Rothbard or Miss Ayn Rand—the burden of which is Yes, there is a line, and it divides the sheep from the goats, the virtuous from the wicked, but in economics (or, in Miss Rand's remarkable variant of the position, in morals). On the one hand we have those who put their faith in the free market, in free enterprise, in individualism; on the other are those who put their faith in interventionism, in welfarism, in collectivism, in statism. Or, as Miss Rand put it on television some months ago, on the one hand those who believe in competition, in self-reliance, in each for himself and the devil take the hindmost, and on the other, those who believe in the "slave morality" of altruism, in rewarding the weak and the shiftless at the expense of the strong and the industrious. Or, as any of this school might be found stating it, on the one hand those who believe in freedom, on the other those who merely pretend to, that is, pay lipservice to freedom but forward the purposes of unfreedom, of "our enemy the state."

I have yet others from those—Professor Clinton Rossiter, for instance, in one of his many moods—who take the position: Yes, there is a line, but it is, let's face it, faint and zigzaggy. The "conservative" is to a large extent a "liberal," the "liberal" to a large extent a "conservative"; the "conservative" is "pessimistic" about reforms calculated to improve the lot of men, tends to think such reforms won't work, while the "liberal" is "optimistic" about such reforms, thinks they will work. "Conservatives," however, differ in the degree of their pessimism, and liberals differ in the degree of their optimism, so that, Rossiter adds in his ingeni-

⁴ For both quotations see the exchange in *National Review*, "Do-It-Yourself Conservatism," Vol. XII, No. 4, pp. 57-59.

ously confusing way, the line between them is occupied simultaneously by the most optimistic of the pessimists, and the most pessimistic of the optimists—both of whom, one gathers, might very well, and with strict accuracy, be called *either* a "conservative" or "liberal."⁵ I have yet others from those—again Professor Rossiter for instance, but in another of his many moods—who take the position: Yes, there is a line, and it separates those who believe in keeping things as they are, in the old ways, in the wisdom of the fathers, on the one hand, and those who want to change things, to pick and choose among the old ways, to subordinate the wisdom of the fathers to the wisdom of the present generation.⁶

I have a great many—from, for example, speakers at the 1962 Rally of the Young Americans for Freedom—that at least *seem* to take the position: Yes, there is a line, and it separates the tough and genuine anti-Communists from the supporters of post-war American foreign policy. It separates those who want to liberate the world from Communism by utterly destroying Communism, from those who want to contain Communism or coexist with it. It separates those who are willing to risk nuclear warfare rather than permit further advance by the World Communist Empire, and those who are determined that no such risk shall be incurred. I have a great many, too, from spokesmen of those millions of Americans who take the position (Alas! for their task is a veritable task of Sisyphus): There *must* be a line, and it *must* be the line that divides Republicans from Democrats, and we are going to find it at whatever cost, let the Heavens fall!

If, then, people are wondering, they have good reason to wonder, since even those supposedly "in the know" about such matters—I have included in my rundown of the various positions an ex-President, the leading academic authority on Conservatism and several persons whom the *Times* would describe, not inaccurately, as outstanding Conservative spokesmen—come up with mutually exclusive specifications of the supposed line. Not only cannot all of them be right, no *two* of them can be right. And,

⁵ Rossiter, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

⁶ Rossiter, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

worse still, if we leave aside the Republican-Democratic specification (which we may fairly dismiss as silly) and fix attention on the other specifications, we may well feel that each of them, though perhaps partially right, or right as far as it goes, leaves a good deal unexplained.

Take, for example, the notion that the Conservative is the man who believes in a God-centered universe, which we get from a writer who is by general consent a leading spokesman of contemporary American Conservatism. Yet we know, as he must know too, (a) that at least some leading spokesmen of contemporary American Conservatism happen to be unbelievers, and (b) that many *anti*-Conservatives, that is Liberals, are deeply convinced Christians; and we wish he had explained how, on his showing, that can be. Or take the notion that Conservatism is one and the same thing with tough anti-Communism—what, then, do we do with Professor Sidney Hook, among the toughest, surely, of tough anti-Communists, but surely also a leading American Liberal. We could, if we had time, show the inadequacy of each of the other there-is-a-line positions, and with equal ease; and we are obliged to conclude that each of them must be, in Plato's sense, a *vulgar* opinion. That is, an unreflective opinion, even though it may come from a very highly-situated mouth. Each of them, like Plato's *doxoi*, is demonstrably an oversimplification, which is to say that the correct opinion, when we find it, must take into account a more complex and inclusive set of facts. We do not have to conclude, however, that we have been wasting our time. For that same Plato, who remains our greatest teacher in this area, teaches us that the first step toward clarity, on *any* topic, is to get the vulgar opinions in front of you, and start out from them in an attempt somehow to seize on the heart of the matter. And that you are likely to get yourself pointed toward the heart of the matter by seizing upon something fairly obvious that all the vulgar opinions, or most of them, overlook. That, I feel sure, is the case with the topic before us. For all our market-place commentators, except Professor Rossiter, seem to forget that the line in question is a *line of battle*, a line of battle moreover in contemporary American politics and a line of

battle between two sets of *combatants*, each fighting to defeat the other—which, read out in a little more detail, is what the current usage (remember my warning that people generally are wise about their language) clearly implies. Moreover, current usage implies (as we have already begun to notice in an earlier paragraph) that there is a *battle in progress*, even a *war in progress*, one that is about something sufficiently intelligible to all the combatants to seem worth fighting over. Drawing the line, then, if we are willing to be really attentive to our metaphor (which even Rossiter is not) is a matter not merely of locating some point on the line at which the battle is raging, but also of locating the line *in its entire extension*. And furthermore it is a matter not merely of locating the line, but of understanding it—and that includes finding out how the war got started, and what actually will have been decided when the war is over and one side has won.

And we begin, properly instructed by the metaphor, to see what is the matter with (Rossiter apart) our other unreflectives. They are fixing attention on a single sector of a line that they do not treat seriously as a line; they can at most help us see the battle-line as it looks when you are on the ground, on one side—where you may mistake the skirmish over Hill 16 for this week's entire engagement, or this week's engagement for the whole war. What you need, the metaphor implies, is dependable intelligence reports from *all along the line*—reports, preferably, with some historical depth to them plus, if possible, some projection into the future (and, I repeat, some attention at least to the war aim or aims of the respective opponents). Rossiter is the exception; he does embrace the full metaphor, but only, in one mood, to explain the line away, and, in the other mood, to give us what is certainly a phoney war issue. For Conservatism as we shall see cannot be mere opposition to change. If that were so, we should never find Conservatives proposing change—as, according to my intelligence reports, they are doing today in some sectors of the line of battle.

My thesis, then, is that the line we are looking for is a battle-line, and that that line stretches from the bottom of the chart

of American politics all the way to the top, passing through pretty much every issue that enters into our politics. My further thesis is that the battle-line is a battle-line in a war actually in progress, between *Liberal* troops on the *left* of the line (note that the usage on which we are depending is very clear that the line divides a Left from a Right)—and *Conservative* troops on the *right* of the line. My further thesis, based on what I have called intelligence data with historical depth, is that the war began as a war of aggression, launched from positions that for good reason are not visible on the chart, by the Liberals (or, more accurately, by little unrelated bands of Liberals which did not, to begin with, have a name and certainly not *that* name), who began, at some moment, to make inroads into territory to which the people we now see on the right of the line had held undisputed title for a century or more. My further thesis is that the attacking forces, after driving a big salient into the victims' territory in the 1860's and 1870's (emancipation of the slaves in the name of equality, the post-Civil War "equality" amendments to the Constitution), rolled pretty much to a stop at a certain moment—whether because they ran out of steam, or because they ran out of supplies, or because they ran into stubborn resistance, it is not easy to say. All we can say is that there were subsequent offensives by different and unrelated bands of aggressors (e.g., the various movements for expanding the suffrage, and for "democratizing" the political system in the name of "political equality"), who until a fairly recent date did not think of themselves as an army properly speaking, and certainly did not think of themselves as engaged in a war properly speaking (indeed that kind of thinking, even on the American Left, is no older than the second decade of this century). While the attacks did continue, and did drive new salients at various points from bottom to top of the chart, I am saying, even the brightest and most knowledgeable military observers did not think of the attackers as, even potentially, an army—or of their small conquests as other than shall we say land-grabs, analogous to taking land from the Indians for homesteading purposes. Never was the war thought of as analogous to—so the Liberals now think of themselves—a wave of the future, pow-

ered by something called high principle. Bringing the small bands together into a disciplined army, an army conscious of itself as staging a general advance along an extensive front, with a common service of supply and a common general staff, has been, even on the Left, a matter of concern for only the last ten to twenty-five or thirty years.

As for the forces on the Right, their history, for reasons that you would now for the most part easily guess for yourselves, roughly parallels that of the attackers—though always with a very considerable time-lag. (Many of them, it seems, actually supported that earliest aggression—government-enforced emancipation of the slaves—back in the 1860's; many others appear to have been indifferent or what we fashionably call apathetic; only a handful, the Southerners, put up a genuine resistance, and they, as far as that original salient was concerned, were easily not to say ignominiously overcome.) For many decades, it seems safe to say, the men on the Right could not get it through their heads that any major attack was shaping up. Each enemy thrust from off the chart met stubborn resistance to be sure, so that many were completely repelled and even the most successful (e.g., woman's suffrage) had to inch its way to its most advanced position. But the resisters were so-to-speak irregulars, self-recruited, self-armed, and far far too busy *resisting*, in their respective localities, to be concerning themselves with events elsewhere on the chart. That, even as recently as ten years ago, was in strict accuracy still the state of affairs on the Right. The Rightists were engaging the enemy in numerous sectors. They were, sector by sector, for the most part preventing him from making any significant advance, and forcing him, in any case, to expend energies out of all proportion to his gains. But even the Rightists' most experienced and far-seeing commanders (Senator Byrd, Senator McCarran, and Senator McCarthy, for example) were confining their attention to the attackers in their particular sector, conducting you might say their own little local wars against them, and thought of them also as conducting their own little local wars. If, therefore, an advance threatened or occurred at some point further along the line (which, for that matter, they were

not thinking of as a line) it was, each could say to himself, none of his business. Even today, moreover, the forces on the Right constitute an army only in the loosest sense of the word. All we can speak of is an increasing realization among them that they are indeed engaged in a general war, against a disciplined and battle-wise enemy, with crystal clear war-aims and a grim determination to win. On the Right there are as yet no war aims; there is merely *resistance*. Against what? I weigh my words: Against a full-scale revolution, which most Rightists continue to mistake for a series of local rebellions, or, to repeat my earlier phrase, local landgrabs; they continue to mistake it for that although the enemy now makes no secret of the revolutionary and integrated character of his enterprise. He does, clearly, have a general staff that concerns itself with all the engagements being fought, and does show profound awareness of what the war, when it is over, will have decided—that is, what exactly the war is about. What is it about? I say, about the question, *Is the destiny of America the Liberal Revolution, or is it the destiny envisaged for it by the Founders of our Republic? Just that.*

Let me now drop my metaphor, and spell out what I have been saying in terms of the political market-place, in terms of what actually is and has been going on in recent years in American politics. We stand, I am saying, in the presence of a *Liberal Revolution*; that revolution is a revolution *sensu stricto*, and one that means business. Its purpose is to establish in America, in Machiavelli's phrase, *new modes and orders*. Conservatism, I am saying, is first and foremost the *resistance* to that revolution. And the line that divides Conservatism from Liberalism, the line that is implied in current usage of the terms "conservative" and "liberal," is the line that passes through all the battles and skirmishes about this or that issue of public policy, that the resisters are today fighting to prevent further advances by the Revolution. To put it in slightly different terms: The Liberals are the supporters of the Liberal Revolution, the Conservatives are its opponents—not necessarily its conscious opponents, but still its opponents: those who, for whatever reason articulate or inarticulate, do things that block the Revolution, or that frustrate and harass

its leaders, and say to it, "Thus far perhaps but no further," or say to it, as, I repeat, *in some cases I believe the resisters are beginning to say to it (e.g., with respect to Liberal domination of the universities), "This advance on your part we intend to reverse; here on the line we intend not merely to resist but to drive you back."* That I believe to be the correct answer to the question "What is Conservatism in contemporary America?"—which besides being correct, both justifies current usage of our two key terms, *and* makes ample room for the partial answers put forward by our unreflectives.⁷ They speak as they do because they tend to concentrate upon a single issue, while the war, which the current usage recognizes, is being fought over many issues.

I know, I think, what the reader must be thinking by now. That my metaphor—with its armies that don't know they are armies, its attackers and resisters, its salients and penetrations—has turned into a riddle, *and that it's high time I got started reading him the riddle instead of milking the metaphor.* He must be thinking, too, that while he has heard of Liberals he never before heard of a Liberal Revolution, and has his doubts whether any such thing exists. Or again, that while he has heard of Liberals, and perhaps even known some Liberals, he has never thought of them as particularly warlike or bloodthirsty, or as particularly bent upon invading and occupying territory to which other people hold clear title, or as particularly under orders from a general staff somewhere. On the contrary, *he must be thinking, the Liberals are notorious for their love of Peace, for their concern for the lot of their fellow men, for their desire for everyone to be happy and well-fed and well-educated and, above all, free—to say nothing of their devotion to what everyone agrees to be the highest "values" of the American community, namely, "liberty" and "equality."* And all that apart, he must be thinking, *why all this talk about the so-called line of battle being 'way over to the Left of that chart, with the so-called resisters still occupying pretty much all their original territory? Has the au-*

⁷ Except Rossiter, who is so to speak beyond justifying.

thor never heard of the New Deal and its social gains (note, however, the military sound of that word "gains"), of the Fair Deal, of the New Frontier and of how popular our young and handsome President is (and of all the things he would do if only it weren't for the obstructions thrown temporarily in his way by that "rural-dominated" Congress of ours—which obstructions he will, of course, ultimately find a way to circumvent, so that there will be yet further "gains" for the Left). It would be surprising, indeed, if the reader were at this point thinking anything else since, let me concede it at once, my war has been poorly reported to date—not only in those newspapers and journals and books that we should expect to try to conceal the continuous and cumulative defeat of the Left in American politics, but also in those from which we should expect a tendency in the opposite direction. (It is, indeed, hardly too much to say that the great obstacle to clear thinking about the progress of the war to date is by no means the deliberate misrepresentation of the array of forces by publicists on the Left, but rather the now-habitual mood of defeatism among publicists on the Right.) My answer to the reader is, in any case: stay with me until I have read my riddle, and let him then decide what he thinks.

Let me begin to read the riddle by identifying some of those sectors where, on my showing about these matters, the battle between attackers and resisters is now raging.

Take, for example, our long-established immigration policy, with its old-fashioned concept of immigration quotas based on present shares of population. (We let in more British immigrants every year than, say, Albanians, because a great many of us are of British descent, and very few of us of Albanian descent, so that—yes, let's swallow hard and admit it—we largely exclude certain types of immigrants that some of us regard as undesirable.) Now the Liberals, so it says anyhow in my copy of *The New York Times*, are forever mounting, or fighting, or finishing a new attack in that sector, intended to overthrow the "old way"⁸ of han-

⁸ I now and then hear the objection at this point: the quotas are in fact of relatively recent date, and are not an "old way." But that is to overlook two very important points: (a) That quotas or no quotas, the bulk of our immigration, down

dling immigration and substitute for it a new one—to be based on the findings of modern science which, we are told, forbid discrimination on grounds of race. Look around every couple of years and you can see them—the attackers (the sociologists, the anthropologists, the psychologists and biologists from the nation's far-flung universities, the professors)—exulting in the applause from the nation's Liberal-dominated press, demanding a stop to all that quota nonsense. Then, after a while, the smoke clears, and you see that the professors have gone home, to resume the indoctrination of their students, and all you have left is the resisters—Mr. Francis Walter and the members of his sub-committee, bloodstained but victorious, with an unchanged immigration statute in their hands.

Take, for another example, the successive Liberal attempts to close the loopholes in the income-tax laws that would have to be closed in order for the progressive income-tax to have the effects the Liberals intend it to have. (These loopholes, according to a recent article in the *Reporter*, enable the very rich to get away with paying a mere 40% or less of their income instead of the 92% they would otherwise pay.) Here again, loud applause from the press, especially from those organs of virtue: the *New Republic*, the *Nation*, *America*, and *Commonweal*. Yet when Congress goes home, biennium after biennium, the loopholes remain open—so that in the United States it is still possible, as in England for example it is not, for a man to get smacking rich and even, incredible as it may seem in so advanced an age as ours, to will considerable sums to his grandchildren. Here also, it would seem, the resisters always do dusk the day, and the attackers always eat the dust.

Or take MVA, TVA's little sister who was only a twinkle in TVA's father's eye when TVA was born. When, a quarter of a century ago, the attackers forced TVA's passage—in the name of

to a fairly recent date, "behaved" more or less as it would have had there been quotas, because, as is well known, brother followed brother, cousin followed cousin, parents followed sons and daughters (in part, of course, because the followers were financed from the beachhead in America). (b) The quotas, though generally supposed to be quite indefensible on grounds of principle, emerge in this context as entirely consistent with the principled Conservative bias in favor of the family.

publicly-owned power, of welfarism in the stricken Tennessee Valley, of justice for the nation's depressed farmers in the form of government-produced fertilizers, and other such noble slogans—everyone expected, Liberals and Conservatives alike, that MVA, like her big sister, would as a matter of course happen along after the two-year period of gestation appropriate to that species of animal. But twenty-five years have passed, and we still do not have an MVA, or even hear of one very often. Again, the resisters have won every time the attack has been renewed. The line never budes, nor could anything be so dead in America today as the socialism for which, in the silent depths of his heart, the Liberal constantly yearns.

Or take the continuing Liberal attack on the House Committee on Un-American Activities, and its predecessors. Abolish the Committee! they are forever crying. Down with its outmoded notion that all opinions are *not* created equal, and so do *not* have an equal right to toleration! And away with its further outmoded notion that the people of the United States, through their representatives, have a right to keep an eye on and expose the machinations of those who prefer World Communism to our free society. In this sector, more conspicuously perhaps than in any other, the attackers have been fought off, month after month, for upwards of *thirty* years, and the Committee is—well, still there, so that only a few months ago I had the honor to co-author a book about it.⁹

Or take each biennium's proposals that would lead to further inflation of the dollar (what matters, say the Liberals, is full employment, not sound fiscal policy). Or to a further increase in the national debt (we owe it to ourselves, cry the Liberals, so what difference does it make?). Or to a public housing program that would actually build houses for a significant number of people instead of just talking about it (why, ask the Liberals, should people be expected to save money out of their *own* income to buy themselves houses to live in?). Or to federal aid to education,

⁹ William F. Buckley, Jr., and the Editors of *National Review*, *The Committee and Its Critics* (New York: Putnam, 1962; now republished, Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1963). For an account of HUAC's predecessors, see Chapter 4.

which is going to provide equality of educational opportunity everywhere (why, ask the Liberals, should the education a person receives depend on the accident—accident, mind you—of birth?). In each of these sectors, I say, the attackers are always attacking and the resisters always resisting and—the big piece of news of which, to my great surprise, I find myself to be the prime and original bearer—resisting for the most part successfully!

Or take the ten thousand comparable but far more drastic proposals, for this, that, and the other new forward steps toward the omnipotent and omniscient welfare state—the ten thousand comparable but more drastic proposals cooking away in ten thousand bureaucratic heads in Washington that the attackers do not dare even to embody in a bill, do not dare even to mention, because the proposals would not stand a Chinaman's chance. These also are part of the Liberal Revolution, its future war plans, and at the same time the most eloquent testimony we have to the formidability of the resistance to the Revolution.¹⁰

But, the reader may protest, "Revolution" seems a pretty strong word to apply to the Liberal programs you mention. You are playing games with a word that does not lend itself to games—and this regardless of which of the great revolutions, the Industrial Revolution or the French Revolution, you are using as your analogy. The changes we lump together under the heading "Industrial Revolution" all had something in common—namely, the shift to a new principle for organizing production—and the Liberal "attacks" you speak of do *not* involve a common principle. Similarly, if your analogy is the French Revolution, the obvious reply is that there is no question here of an attempt to overthrow an established order, or regime, or form of government. The "attacks" you speak of are merely attempts, tardy attempts for the most part, to remove irrationalities from a social order that we *all* want to maintain and improve. They are exactly the kind of thing our Constitution, in its Preamble, clearly calls for: proposals looking to the ends of justice—that is, liberty and equality—and to the general welfare. Your so-called "resisters," therefore,

¹⁰ For further discussion of this point, see below, Chapter 2, "The Two Majorities."

do not deserve the respectable name of Conservatives; they are, rather, obstructionists, defenders of sordid vested interests that ought to have no defenders. Most of us prefer to think of Conservatives as, at the very least, men of principle, and your resisters are not that at all. So, the reader may conclude, come off it. It is, I concede, a good, sharp protest that, for the rest, I have clearly invited—one, therefore, that calls for a good sharp answer. Which is the kind of answer I am going to make as I read the rest of my riddle.

My analogy in using the word "revolution" is, let us be clear at once, both the French Revolution *and* the Industrial Revolution. I claim there is both a "common principle" involved in the Liberal attacks, and, partly for that reason and partly for another, an intention, hardly concealed any more, "to overthrow an established and traditional social and political order." I am, therefore, using the word "revolution" in the full sweep of its meaning, as witness the following considerations:

First, nothing can be more certain than that the Founders of our Republic bequeathed to us a form of government that was *purely* representative—a form of government in which there was no room, in which moreover there is *to this day* no room, for policy decisions by the electorate—that is, for electoral "mandates" emanating from popular majorities. Or rather there is one thing more certain: namely, that the Liberals intend to overthrow that traditional form of government, have a carefully-worked-out program for overthrowing it, and labor diligently, year-in-year-out, to seize the strategic points they must seize in order to accomplish its overthrow. The only reason that this is not more generally understood, indeed, is that the Liberal proposals in this area are so seldom brought together and looked at as an integrated design. Put an end, the Liberals insist, to "rural overrepresentation" in the lower house of Congress and in the state legislatures—bringing them in line with the principle one-man one-equal-vote. And that principle, once adopted (it is French political philosophy, not American), must call finally for abolition even of the U. S. Senate as a check on majorities, and would in any case make the House the creature of numerical majorities

at the polls. Abolish the electoral college, the Liberals insist further, and so make the President also the direct agent of the popular majority. Reform the party system, the Liberals insist still further, so that each of our parties shall be programmatic, ideological—like those of the "real" democracies in Europe—and that the two parties together shall submit, at election time, a genuine choice to the electorate. Abolish the filibuster—so runs the next point in the program—because it frustrates, serves no other function except to frustrate, the will of the majority. Rescind the seniority-principle in congressional committees, the program continues; it also obstructs the will of the majority. Now give the Liberal attackers their way on all these points, and the form of government explicated in the *Federalist Papers* will be no more. In at least this area, then, the question "Is Liberalism a Revolution?" can have only one answer. Since it seeks a change of regime, the replacement of one regime by another, of a different type altogether, it is, quite simply, revolutionary. And it is in this area above all others, we may note in passing, that my resisters are most conscious of themselves, both as opponents of a revolution and as principled—yes, principled—defenders of a tradition.

Second, Liberal proposals do involve a common principle—moreover which, once you grasp it clearly, appears on the face of it as revolutionary because it looks to the overthrow of an established social order. The principle in question is the *egalitarian* principle—not the equality principle of the Declaration of Independence, which "holds" merely that all men are created equal. That is, as I understand it, are created with an equal claim to be treated as persons (though by no means necessarily as equal persons), with an equal right to justice, and an equal right to live under a government limited by law (and constitutionally excluded from concern with certain major spheres of human endeavor). The egalitarian principle stands over against the equality principle in a relation like that of a caricature to a portrait, or a parody to a poem.¹¹ It says that men are not merely created

¹¹ See Harry V. Jaffa, *The Crisis of the House Divided* (New York: Doubleday, 1959), *passim*, which traces, and traces precisely as an attempt on the part of Abraham Lincoln to re-do the allegedly inadequate work of the Framers, the birth of the egalitarian principle.

equal, are indeed not created equal at all, but rather ought, that is have a right, to be *made* equal. That is to say equalized, and equalized precisely by governmental action, so that if they end up other than actually equal—in political power, in wealth, in income, in education, in living conditions—no one shall ever be able to say that government has spared any effort that might conceivably have made them equal. The equality of the Declaration is the equality to which, say, Abraham Lincoln was born—an equality that conferred upon him merely an equal right to compete with his fellow-men in the race, as we run it here in America, for whatever prize he in his equality chose to go after. Not so the egalitarianism of the Liberals. It must pick Lincoln up at dawn in a yellow bus with flashing lights, so saving him shoe-leather, whisk him off to a remote consolidated school (financed, in all probability, by inflationary bonds), feed him a free lunch, educate him for democracy, protect him from so-called concentrations of social and economic power, eke out his income by soaking the rich, doctor him, hospitalize him, and, finally, social-work him—if, as he probably will now, he turns into a juvenile delinquent. Equality, by offering him the rewards of self-reliance, encourages him to become, above all—self-reliant; egalitarianism encourages him to learn to play the angles. Revolutionary? Yes indeed, and in a three-fold sense: revolutionary, because give the Liberals their way and the American social order will not bear even a cousinly resemblance to that which is traditional among us; revolutionary, because the revolution must go on and on forever, since if you are in the business of making people equal there is and can be no stopping-place; revolutionary, finally, because the job cannot be done by a government of limited powers—any more, to use James Burnham's phrase, than you can use an automobile to dig potatoes.

Third, it is in general true that my resisters make no great showing, to date, on the level of articulate grand principle. The noises they make do, I concede, seldom seem to echo a vital and combat-ready Conservative philosophy, capable of matching the militant moralism of the Liberals. For the most part the Senator

Byrds, the Senator Russells, the Senator Hruskas do not seem even to be trying to explain themselves. In a sense, therefore, they invite the allegation that their motives are sordid and selfish. But it would be rash to conclude from this that they are not men of principle at all, and foolhardy to conclude from it that no respectable case can be made out, in political and moral philosophy, for what they do. Such a case is, I should say rather, ready-to-hand for them, the moment they need it—in the great documents that lie at the root of the American political tradition: the Declaration of Independence, the deliberations of the Philadelphia convention, the Constitution itself, the Bill of Rights, and, above all, the *Federalist*. For my resisters do not, I contend, act otherwise than they would if they had made the *Federalist* their political Bible, and lived with it, steeped themselves in it, modeled themselves upon it—as Liberals appear to do with Mill's *Essay*. And the principles of the *Federalist*, make no mistake about it, are high principles—wrong principles perhaps, wrong principles certainly if Liberal principles are right principles. They are, that is to say, principles projected on a very high level of moral aspiration and discursive circumspection.

The case is ready, I say, the moment it is needed. Ah! the reader may well ask, but when is that going to be? And I can only answer: if and when the Conservative *movement* now shaping up in the United States becomes sufficiently conscious of itself to require an overall doctrine and an overall strategy. Ah! the reader may ask further, when and how would that come about? And I can only answer: when the pools of Conservative resistance I have described above have become fully aware of one another; when they have become ready, instead of going it alone, to make common cause; and when they will have made it their business to establish, back and forth among themselves, the channels of communication without which large-scale warfare is impossible. Or, again, when the Conservative egg-heads, as we know them in *National Review* and *Modern Age*, have learned, which they have not yet done—they also are not much shakes when it comes to philosophy—to make conscious common cause with the

resisters in Congress. That moment, to be sure, is not yet. But things have moved very rapidly in the directions indicated during the past ten years, and there is reason to believe they will move still more rapidly in the years just ahead.

If they do—well, American politics are going to get mighty exciting.

Chapter 2

The Two Majorities in American Politics

My point of departure is the tension between Executive and Legislature on the federal level of the American political system. My preliminary thesis is that the character and meaning of that tension, as also its role in the formation of American policy, has been too little examined during the period in which the tension has been at its highest; that the explanations of the tension that are, so to speak, "in the air," do not in fact explain it, but rather tend to lead us away from a correct explanation (and, by the same token, away from a correct understanding of our recent political history); that the entire matter, once we have the elements of a correct explanation in hand, opens up a rich field for investigation by our "behaviorists," hitherto unexplored because (in part at least) of the latter's lack of interest in what politics is really about.¹

First, then, as to the character of the tension:

A. The tension between our "national" Executive and our "national" Legislature, though as suggested above it varies in "height" from time to time and at one moment seemed to have

¹ This is almost, but not quite, the same point as that involved in the frequently-repeated charge that the behaviorists spend their time (and a great deal of money) studying the trivial and the obvious, a charge too often put forward by writers who are something less than ready with an answer to the question, "What is important?" My point is less that the reader of our behavioral literature finds himself asking "So what?" (though indeed he does), than that he finds himself asking (to quote Arnold Rogow) "What happened to the great issues?" The behaviorists go on and on as if the latter did not exist.