

Paleocon Thomas Fleming, editor of *Chronicles*, recently accused neocons of trying to create a new "elite class that will share power with the left."

The War at Home

By John B. Judis

WASHINGTON

LIKE OLD BLANKETS, POLITICAL MOVEMENTS begin to fray first around the edges. The final collapse of post-World War II liberalism, which didn't occur until the late '70s, was foreshadowed by the collapse of the new left a decade before. Similarly, the collapse of post-war conservatism is foreshadowed in the internecine squabbles and ideological confusion that have beset the individuals and organizations of the far right.

The infighting has become endemic, involving traditional conservatives and new conservatives, political consultants, foundations and academics. They cannot agree on any major issue, from trade to abortion. And there is no longer an acknowledged leader like Barry Goldwater or Ronald Reagan who can unite the warring camps.

Neocons vs. paleocons: The nastiest split, which goes back to the early '80s, is between the traditional conservatives, dubbed the "paleoconservatives," and the former Democrats, called the "neocon-

servatives." While the paleocons charge that the neocons are not really conservatives, but rather welfare-state liberals and Wilsonian internationalists, the neocons charge that the paleocons are restoring what author Richard John Neuhaus calls the "forbidden bigotries once confused with conservatism."

The feud between the two groups broke out in 1982 when the paleocons backed University of Dallas scholar M. E. Bradford to be chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities and the neoconservatives backed William Bennett, now the nation's director of drug-control policy. Besides patronage, the differences boiled down to civil rights: Bradford, the more credible scholar, was an anti-Lincoln, pro-Confederate former George Wallace supporter, while Bennett was a former Democrat and civil-rights activist. But the paleocons proved no match for the neocons, who marshaled the Washington media in their favor.

But at conservative meetings, the paleocons used their movement pedigree to ad-

vantage. At a 1986 meeting of the Philadelphia Society, chaired by Bradford, the paleocon speakers characterized the neocons as "interlopers" who were opportunistically trying to dominate the conservative movement and the Reagan administration. University of Michigan historian Stephen Tonsor declared in a speech, "It is splendid when the town whore gets religion and joins the church. Now and then she makes a good choir director, but when she begins to tell the minister what he ought to say in his Sunday sermons, matters have been carried too far."

The two factions differed on foreign as well as domestic policy. The paleocons were neo-isolationists, opposed to foreign aid and involvement except where U.S. interests were directly threatened, while the neoconservatives were global democrats who believed that America's mission should be to spread free-market capitalism and parliamentary democracy around the world, by force if necessary.

A particular sticking point between the two sides was Israel. The paleocons accused the neocons of subordinating America's national interest to Israel's. The dispute over Israel quickly took on anti-New York and anti-Semitic undertones. In October 1988, paleocon Russell Kirk, the author of the 1954 movement classic *The Conservative Mind*, attacked the neocons' commitment to Israel in a speech at the Heritage Foundation. "Not seldom it has seemed as if some eminent neoconservatives mistook Tel Aviv for the capital of the U.S.—a position they will have difficulty in maintaining as matters drift," Kirk said.

Until last spring, however, the two sides saw themselves as feuding factions within the same movement. Their hostile co-existence was symbolized by neoconservative Neuhaus's connection with the paleoconservative Rockford Institute in Rockford, Ill. Under Rockford's name and funding, Neuhaus published a regular newsletter out of his Center for Religion and Society in New York. But a series of incidents caused an open break between the Rockford Institute and Neuhaus and a full declaration of war between the factions.

In March 1989, Neuhaus and *Commentary* editor Norman Podhoretz took strong exception to two articles published in Rockford's glossy journal *Chronicles*. In one of them, *Chronicles* editor Thomas Fleming called for stricter quotas to prevent the U.S. from "being dominated by Third World immigrants," and in the other article novelist Bill Kauffman defended Gore Vidal, who had earlier attacked Podhoretz for putting Israel's interests before America's. Podhoretz then wrote to Neuhaus: "I know an enemy when I see one, and *Chronicles* has become just that so far as I am concerned."

Last May, the Rockford Institute made the next move by locking Neuhaus out of the center and confiscating his files. While he claimed that the lockout was politically motivated, Rockford Institute officials charged Neuhaus with misusing institute funds. When Neuhaus left, three foundations linked to the neocons—Olin, Smith Richardson and Bradley—withdrawed their funding for the Rockford Institute. Fleming claims that over the last year the Neuhaus battle has cost Rockford \$700,000 in grants.

In the aftermath, both sides also began firing angry polemics at each other. In the

September issue of *Chronicles*, Fleming accused the neocons of wanting to expand rather than reduce government and of trying to create a new "elite class that will share power with the left." "The American people, in their view," he wrote, "must be willing to bear any burden, pay any price in carrying on a crusade for global democracy, eliminating all trade barriers and opening the country to unrestricted immigration."

This month, Neuhaus fired back in the first issue of his new journal *First Things*. The paleocons, Neuhaus wrote, "are at war with modernity. Theirs tends to be a patrician view of republican governance conducted by men of tested genetic stock. ... With Henry Adams a century ago and Gore Vidal today, they believe that modernity and her rapacious consorts, democracy and capitalism, have sold America into bondage to immigrant newcomers."

Neuhaus accused Fleming and the paleocons of reviving "forbidden bigotries." "One notes renewed attempts to invite back into the conservative movement a list of uglies that had long been consigned to the fevered swamps," he wrote. "The list includes nativism, racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, a penchant for authoritarian politics and related diseases of the *ressentiment* that flourishes on the marginalia of American life."

Buckley vs. Weyrich: To rally conservatives against the paleo threat, Neuhaus organized a dinner meeting at New York's Union League Club on January 22. He invited most of the East Coast conservative elite, including *National Review* editor in chief William F. Buckley, Jr., *Public Interest* editor Irving Kristol, Podhoretz, former State Department official Elliott Abrams, Heritage Foundation President Edwin J. Feulner and Paul Weyrich, the president of the Coalitions for the Americas.

For six hours participants debated the future of the conservative movement, demonstrating in the end that they were as divided as the paleocons and the neocons. Those differences were epitomized in position papers presented by Buckley and Weyrich. Both began with the premise that the movement had to move beyond its former anti-Communist moorings, but they offered diametrically opposed directions for conservatives. Buckley, aside from his McCarthyite anti-Communism, has always been a Tory libertarian. In his position paper he called on conservatives to defend the free market and free trade and to "beware of the inclination to side with the executive in matters of dispute over public policy."

Buckley urged conservatives to consider legalizing drugs ("It is a duty of conservatives to give running attention to the loss of derivative liberties as a result of the general mayhem caused by traffic in illegal drugs," he wrote) and to take a prudent rather than rigidly principled view of abortion. "Conservatives must once again be willing to listen, and to accommodate themselves to reasonable moral compromises," he argued.

Weyrich, a former Wallace supporter from Racine, Wis., has always been an authoritarian populist. Weyrich, who proposed tax breaks for working families, displayed concern for average Americans and skepticism about the free market that was totally absent from Buckley's proposal.

But Weyrich also advanced autocratic measures to stem what he called the "cul-

tural breakdown." For instance, to combat crime, he proposed that college scholarships be contingent upon service in police ROTC forces and that high school students be banded together "into platoons under military leadership to undertake direct, non-violent action in support of the civil police." To combat drugs, Weyrich proposed more police, stiffer penalties and what he called "drug contamination." "The DEA [Drug Enforcement Administration] should contaminate drugs with a substance that makes users wretchedly ill, preferably with distinctive symptoms."

He stood firm on abortion. Abortion, Weyrich wrote, "is the symbol for a cultural cleavage between those with a sense of community and responsibility and the votaries of imperial individualism ... those who accept our culture and those who want to tear it down."

Participants at the Union League meeting could not agree on abortion or the importance of Weyrich's cultural conservatism. They differed on the importance of foreign policy and of American commitment to democratic revolution ("The safety of our own nation is of paramount concern, and the strategic relevance of other nations to that concern has to be the operative consideration," Buckley wrote). And, of course, they disagreed with Buckley on legalizing drugs and restraining the imperial presidency.

Socialists vs. traitors: Conservatives in Washington have suffered from a kind of overproduction crisis caused by the spread of organizations and consultants during the Reagan years. Currently there are too many conservative leaders and too few followers and funders, which has led to bitter turf battles.

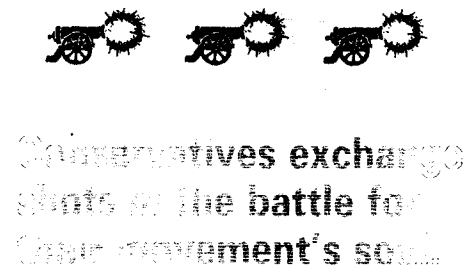
Since the mid-'70s, for instance, conservatives have flocked every year to Washington for the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), which is sponsored by the American Conservative Union (ACU), the Young Americans for Freedom, the conservative *Human Events* and *National Review*.

But last fall, disillusioned with ACU Chairman David Keene's management of the 1989 CPAC conference, Weyrich, Reed Irvine of Accuracy in Media, and Morton Blackwell, president of the Leadership Institute, held a counter conference called the Conservative Leadership Conference. Weyrich, Irvine and Blackwell then boycotted this year's CPAC conference, held March 1-3 at Washington's Shoreham Hotel. The differences were not about ideology—the two conferences had virtually the same agenda—but about clout within the movement.

There are also major political splits within Washington's conservative community. The most significant is over trade and foreign investment—the key issues of the '90s. The old-right Business and Industrial Council, which draws its inspiration from the right's isolationist and protectionist past and derives its funding from conservative Southern and Midwestern businessmen, has joined the AFL-CIO in pressing for an aggressive American trade strategy and for regulation of foreign investment. Although opposing minimum wage and labor-law reform legislation, the Council has also backed rudimentary forms of industrial policy.

On the other hand, organizations like the Heritage Foundation and the American En-

terprise Institute have opposed any government measures to open foreign markets, protect American industries or regulate foreign investment. Their position reflects both an application of conservative free-market doctrine to the world economy and the growing dependence of Washington foundations on Japanese, Korean and Taiwanese contributions. The Heritage Foundation is reportedly heavily funded by South Korean business.



This division over trade and investment has sparked heated exchanges in conservative circles. Heritage officials have accused anti-New Dealer Anthony Harrigan, the president of the Business and Industrial Council, of being a socialist, while officials of the Business and Industrial Council have charged Heritage with selling out to foreign interests. The dispute prompted one of Heritage's earliest financial backers, textile magnate Roger Milliken, to reduce his contribution because of Heritage's free-trade position.

The dispute between Heritage and the Council roughly parallels that between the paleocons and the neocons. While Heritage has sided with the neocons, the Council's Harrigan wrote an article for the January *Chronicles* attacking multinationals. But neither Heritage nor the Council have become embroiled in the seamier sides of the Fleming-Neuhaus dispute.

Moon stumbles: While the discord grows, institutions backed by the Rev. Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church are playing an increasingly prominent role in Washington conservative politics. Over the last five years the *Washington Times* has become the conservative publication of record, eclipsing both *Human Events* and *National Review*. At this year's CPAC, the most prominent display outside the ballroom was from the Unification Church-backed American Freedom Coalition (AFC). And with the folding of the Moral Majority and the collapse of Conservative Union into a Washington letterhead group, the AFC is probably the only remaining national grass-roots organization on the right.

Although many conservatives are embarrassed by the church's prominence in their movement, few are ready to do anything about it. *National Review* planned, but then put off, an article critical of the church's role. The Heritage Foundation has relaxed its rules about participation by staff and fellows in Moon-backed events and organizations.

For their part, however, Moon and his church have done little publicly to arouse controversy. They have not held any mass weddings in the U.S. since 1982, and they hide rather than advertise their role in the *Washington Times* and the AFC. And like the conservative movement itself, they appear to be stumbling in the dark, looking for a new political agenda to complement

their financial-theological agenda.

The Unification Church's politics used to be based on anti-Communism, but Moon has recently made overtures to both Chinese and Soviet leaders. His principal anti-Communist organization, CAUSA, is floundering, lacking funds as well as direction. And both the AFC and the *Washington Times* appear to reflect the eccentricities of their appointed leaders as much as that of the church. The *Times'* current obsession, for instance, is pillorying Dr. Elizabeth Morgan, who remains locked in an ugly child-custody battle.

Incompatible hypotheses: The basic cause of the conservative malaise is the disappearance of the social conditions and political conflicts that initially inspired the post-war conservative movement. For the last three decades, conservative leaders were united by fear of a world communist takeover, support for free-market capitalism and opposition to the welfare state and cosmopolitan social mores.

The Cold War's end has left conservatives without a cause that unites the different factions. If anything, conservatives are now divided between revisionists—like former U.N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick—who believe the Cold War is over and the nostalgic stalwarts—like Sen. Jesse Helms (R-NC)—who insist that Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachov is merely retreating be-

fore staging a new offensive.

At the recent CPAC conference, Kirkpatrick had to fend off pathetic questions from an audience that was unwilling to abandon its old-time religion. Consider the following exchange.

Question: "A couple of years ago I took your advice and read the book *Perestroika* by Mikhail Gorbachov in which Lenin is quoted on very page, and *Perestroika* is the very essence of Leninism. ... The reforms which he advocates are simply consistent with Lenin's New Economic Policy as a tactical way of strengthening Soviet power in the world."

Kirkpatrick: "Your comment on Gorbachov's book is one I made myself, but I believe that Gorbachov's own thinking and policy have substantially changed since then. I believe that a number of Gorbachov's policies are not consistent with basic Leninist dogmas about the role of the party."

Question: "You also have not commented on President Gorbachov's attempt to consolidate power in his presidency. ... You don't think he can become a greater totalitarian?"

Kirkpatrick: "No. If you look at the totality of his policies, it is simply not compatible with that hypothesis."

Conservatism has been equally shaken

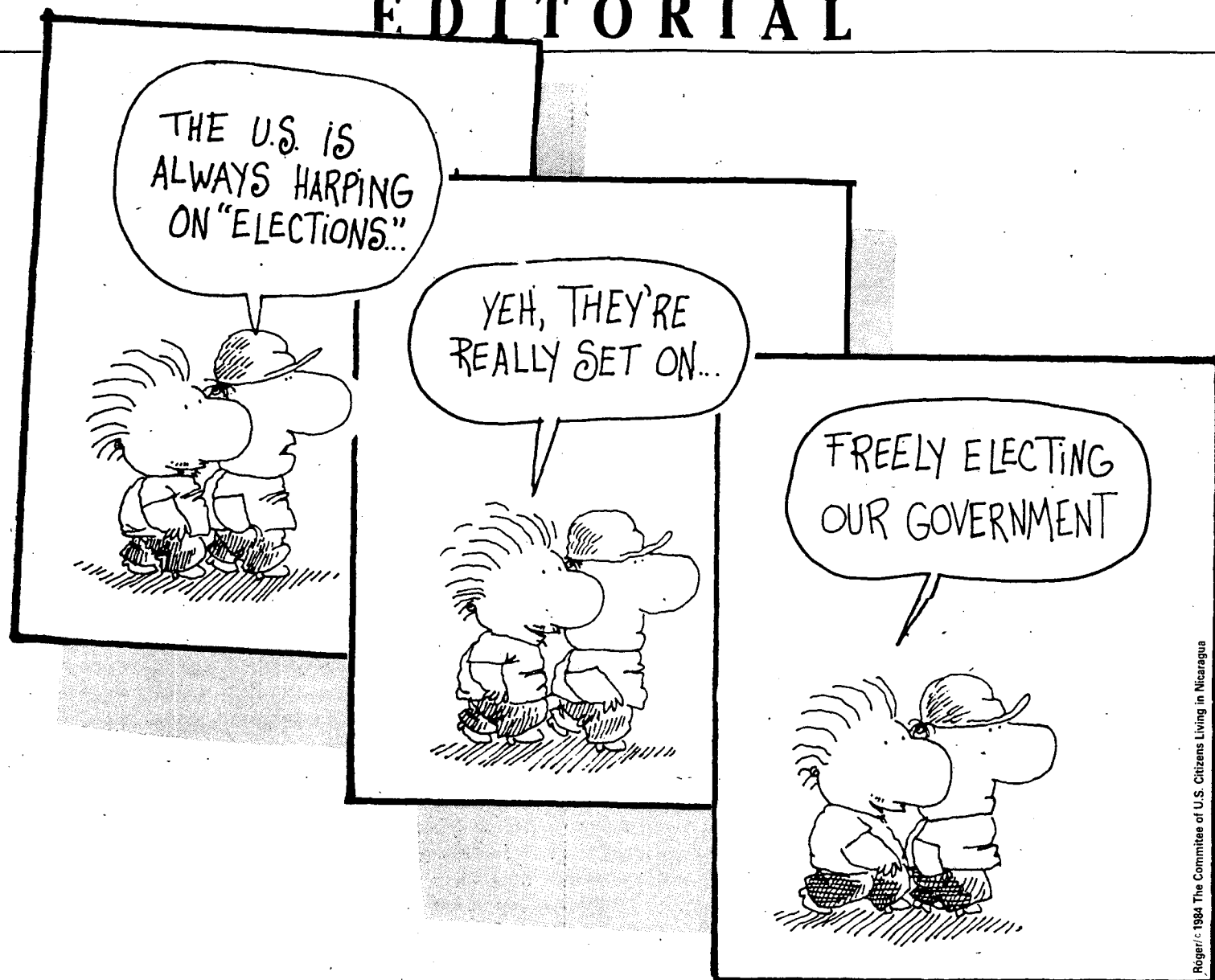
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Former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Jeane Kirkpatrick says her thinking, like Mikhail Gorbachov's, has changed recently.



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EDITORIAL



Ortega's defeat doesn't end Nicaraguan history

The defeat of Daniel Ortega two weeks ago surprised most people and shocked those on the left. The U.S. media and the Bush administration, of course, have joyously gloated over Ortega's defeat and Violeta Chamorro's election, calling it a victory for democracy and a repudiation of the basic principles upon which the Sandinistas built their revolution. But in fact, Chamorro's triumph had little to do with democracy, except that it came in the form of an election.

The victory was not democracy's but that of a superpower intent on crushing the attempt of one of its empire's lesser provinces to achieve genuine independence and self-determination. This was done by the Reagan and Bush administrations with a combination of proxy war, economic embargo and relentless pressure on their client states in Central America that destroyed Nicaragua's economy and compromised Sandinista promises of a pluralist society and a better life.

For many if not most of those who supported UNO in the election, the issue was not one of political principle—of socialism vs. capitalism—or of national sovereignty. Nicaraguans understood all too well that Ortega's re-election would mean a continuation of the embargo and the possibility of continued war and a militarized state. And they hoped that an UNO victory would mean an end to armed conflict, a resumption of normal trade and an influx of U.S. foreign aid. Quite rationally, most of them chose an end to hyperinflation, shortages and terrorism over thwarted Sandinista principles and frustrated sovereignty.

Not only for the Sandinistas but for all who believe that Nicaragua should be free to determine its own destiny, the election of Chamorro is a sad defeat. Yet it does not necessarily signal the end of Nicaragua's movement toward independence and a true democracy, nor is it an unmitigated disaster. Like the nominally socialist governments in Eastern Europe when faced with a clear expression of popular opposition in recent months, the Sandinistas have shown that they are willing to give up control of the government peacefully. Such transfers of power by nominally socialist governments were thought to be all but impossible only months ago. Yet this willingness is the essence of democracy and is much more fundamental than the charade of "free elections" conducted by client govern-

ments of other countries who make up the provinces of empire.

The fate of the Sandinistas is not like that of Eastern Europe's Communist parties, which were despised and driven from office by a nearly unanimous popular demand. The Sandinistas retain substantial popular support and remain the largest single political party. With 39 out of 91 seats in the National Assembly, they have enough votes to protect the basic reforms that are embodied in Nicaragua's revolutionary constitution. And they have institutional strength in civil society, as well as control of the army, which should prevent the UNO government from using military force to reduce Nicaragua to its former semi-colonial status. The country's future will now be determined by internal political struggles that pit a socialist-oriented party against an array of pro-capitalist parties enjoying substantial support from the United States.

For the time being, at least, this contest should go on without the danger of military intervention from the North, and therefore on something close to level ground. In short, this is not the end of history for Nicaragua but the beginning of a new and unprecedented phase in the struggle for self-determination and democracy. ■

Diana Johnstone takes a partial leave

Diana Johnstone, who has been our European editor for more than 10 years, is taking a partial, and we hope short-term, leave of absence to become the press representative for the Green Party delegations to the European Parliament. For us, this means that Diana will appear less frequently in our pages—we expect it to be once every four weeks—as a columnist writing exclusively for *In These Times*. For Diana, this is an opportunity to experience European politics in a new and stimulating way and to increase her already vast knowledge of European society from the inside of an important institution. We have mixed feelings about this development. There is no one writing for us whom we value more highly or from whom we have learned more. Yet we share Diana's excitement over this opportunity to learn and to expand her horizons so that when she returns to writing for us every week she will be better than ever. ■

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