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Why Paleo?

The Life and Death of the Old Right

by Murray N. Rothbard

The libertarian movement was once a mighty movement, hardcore but not kooky, part of the mainstream of American ideological and political life. In the 18th and 19th centuries (for example, in the Jeffersonian and Jacksonian movements), libertarians were even the dominant political force in the country. America was, indeed, conceived in liberty. But right now, I'm not going back that far: I'm talking about the origins of the modern 20th-century movement. For various reasons, the Progressive movement had wiped out 19th-century intellectual and political libertarianism, and, by the 1920s, it was reduced to a few vibrant but lone intellectuals such as H.L. Mencken and his friend, Albert Jay Nock.

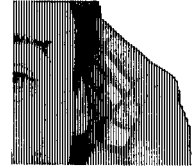
But then something happened to shock libertarianism back to life—the cataclysmic Great Leap Forward into collectivism hailed as the New Deal. It's a process of historical reaction: a sudden social change will often give rise to a fierce opposition. Opposition to the New Deal was, necessarily, a coalition politics united on a negative: hatred of the socialism of the New Deal. Increasingly gathering into that coalition were the few libertarian or individualist intellectuals, the

heritage and the remnants of the old Jeffersonian Democracy left from the days of Grover Cleveland—men such as Senator James A. Reed of Missouri and Governor Albert Ritchie of Maryland, and Republicans, including formerly stalwart statists and Progressives such as Herbert Hoover, who condemned FDR for going much too far.

As the New Deal intensified and was championed by the Democrats, the opposition inevitably coalesced around the Republican Party. It was a strange transformation, since, from its inception in the 1850s, the Republican Party had always been the party of statism and centralized Big Government. Well, life is strange sometimes, and this shift was no stranger than what had happened to the Democrats, during the 19th century the party of minimal government and laissez-faire.

When Roosevelt dragged America into World War II, the growing opposition, which I have called the "Old Right," shifted its moorings and changed some of its alliances. Some economic free-marketeers, such as Lewis

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THE EAR

by Sarah Barton

Libertarian Charles Murray was fired by the Manhattan Institute for coming to unfashionable conclusions about black IQs in a new book. Charles then called his old friend Edward H. Crane, head of the Cato Institute, who had tried to recruit him many times. But Ed told Charles to drop dead, for Ed's boss, the billionaire owner of Cato, had long ago decided that unfashionable ideas must never be allowed to threaten access to Power.

Marshall Fritz, head of the Advocates, would-be franchiser of private schools (?!), and the Movement's Mr. Bois-

terous, has been arrested. Caught making an illegal exit from a California freeway, he drove off while being ticketed. When the cop pulled him over again, there was an argument (presumably not about the Nolan Chart), and Marshall was arrested, hand-

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Libertarianism was shocked back into life by the collectivist New Deal.

(THE EAR cont. from P.1)

cuffed, and jailed for resisting arrest.

After consulting some libertarian legal luminaries, Marshall demanded a jury trial, acted as his own lawyer, and sought "jury nullification." The jury took *eight minutes* to find him guilty, and the judge set bail at \$5,000, which Marshall couldn't make. After being jailed again, however, he hired a non-libertarian lawyer and was released. But he still faces a \$1,000 fine and 90 days in jail.

Marshall says he was fighting for libertarian principle. Lessons from his "martyrdom": 1) Check your "principles." Do they include messing with traffic regulations or being obnoxious to cops? 2) If you insist on addressing the jury, make darn sure it's not going to consider you a pain in the butt. 3) Most important, *never* consult a libertarian lawyer.

Andre Marrou snuck Perry Willis, the LP's direct-mail dud, and Alexis Thompson, the LP's telemarketer, into Las Vegas for a meeting, at which he signed them up for his LP presidential campaign. It was kept secret because party employees are supposed to be neutral. Naughty, naughty!

The Alaska LP, once the strongest in the country, couldn't muster the measly number of signatures necessary to stay on the ballot this year. And the Illinois LP also flopped at getting on the ballot, despite being home to Ballot (de)Access chairman Steve Givot. Early this year, the national LP talked about concentrating on "electable" candidates throughout the country. Name One! ●

(WHY PALEO cont. from P.1)

W. Douglas, became ardent pro-war New Dealers; while former progressives, mainly Republican, who opposed the war, began to see the deep connection between interventionism and Big Government in domestic as well as foreign policy. As a result, by the end of World War II, the Old Right, largely Republican but still including Jeffersonian Democrats (such as Rep. Samuel Pettingill of Indiana), was consistently libertarian, opposing statism at home and war and intervention abroad.

The Old Right was a strong and vibrant movement, dominant in the Republican party in Congress (especially in the House of Representatives) and constituting roughly the Taft wing of the party. The Old Right was firmly opposed to conscription as well as war or foreign aid, favored

free markets and the gold standard, and upheld the rights of private property as opposed to any sort of invasion, including the despotism of coerced integration in the name of "civil rights." The Old Right was socially conservative, middle class, welcoming people who worked for a living or met a payroll, and was the salt of the earth. What the Old Right lacked was not a political mass, but rather an intellectual cadre, and the small but increasing number of hard-core libertarians influenced by Mises and Rand and

Nock after World War II provided a growing intellectual foundation for that movement.

What we have to realize, and we almost have to shake ourselves to believe, is that hard-core libertarians were not considered kooks and crazies; we were treated only as extreme variants of a creed that almost everyone on the Old Right believed: peace, individual liberty, free markets, private property, even the gold standard. And since we were simply consistent upholders of a creed which the

entire Old Right believed, we were able, though small in number, to influence and permeate the views of the broad mass of Old Right Americans. It was a happy symbiosis.

That's why, politically, all libertarians, whether minarchists or anarcho-capitalists, were happy to consider our-

selves "extreme right-wing Republicans." [The general term for the broader movement was "individualist" or "true liberal" or "rightist"—the word "conservative" was not at all in use before the publication of Russell Kirk's *Conservative Mind* in 1953.]

It was a great time for a libertarian to be politically active. Neither did the Old Right collapse with the onset of the Cold War. On the contrary, the Old Right reached a peak in its last days: for it was virtually the only opposition to the Korean War. [Only the Commu-

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nist Party and I.F. Stone opposed U.S. entry into the Korean War; the entire rest of the Left, including Henry Wallace, supported it in the name of the old interventionist slogan: "collective security against aggression."] Major opponents of the Korean War were such libertarian and Old Right publicists as Garet Garrett and John T. Flynn, F. A. Harper and Leonard E. Read; influential newspapers such as the *Chicago Tribune*; and major political opponents such as Senators Bridges and Wherry and the libertarian Congressman Howard H. Buffett of Omaha.

It was after the Korean War that the Old Right collapsed. The catalyst was the literal theft of the Republican presidential nomination in 1952 from Senator Taft by the Wall Street elite behind Eisenhower; the deaths of Taft and Colonel McCormick, owner of the *Chicago Tribune*; and the capture of the political reins of the Republican Party by the "conservative" New Dealers constituting the Eisenhower movement. Whereas the right-wing Republicans aimed to repeal and abolish the New Deal, the Eisenhower forces aimed at consolidating the New Deal and fastening it permanently upon American life, and in this they succeeded all too well.

But probably the most important reason for the collapse of the Old Right was not external

blows, but the loss of its own soul and principles. As the older intellectual and political leaders died or retired, a powerful new force arose in 1955 to fill that vacuum. This new force—people grouped around *National Review*—set out to transform the nature of the American Right, and they succeeded brilliantly. Headed by a brace of shrewd ex-Communists, steeped in Marxist-Leninist cadre organizing tactics, allied to youthful Eastern seaboard Catholics, the New Right determined to crush isolationism, and to remold the right-wing into a crusade to crush Communism all over the world, and particularly in the Soviet Union.

At first, *NR* had a patina of individualism, in order to capture the considerable amount of Old Right libertarian sentiment and wed it to a policy of global war. The Buckley machine founded Young Americans for Freedom as its youthful political arm. The Intercollegiate Society of

Individualists for libertarian-minded student intellectuals, and headed by *NR* publisher Bill Rusher, moved to capture the College Young Republicans, then the YRs nationally, and finally moved to dominate the Republican Party with the Goldwater movement.

Early in this process, moreover, *National Review*, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, moved quickly to read out of the

New Right, or "conservative" movement, all "extremists" who would prove an embarrassment in its march to power. And so, in a series of purges, the Birch Society, the Randians, and the libertarians (those who remained isolationists) were ousted from the right wing. *NR* and the New Right were ready to achieve power, which they eventually would attain in the Reagan administration. But the point is that the ideological transformation—into a warmongering and vaguely theocratic movement—was achieved by the early 1960s. The Old Right was dead, and those libertarians who still remembered and cleaved to their principles, were out in the cold.

In the Wilderness

Where were principled libertarians to go? Most of the Old Right libertarians who were still active were co-opted into the Buckleyite New Right, especially by the siren song of my friend Frank Meyer's "fusionism"—the most libertarian wing of the Buckleyite coalition, but which retained the new ferocious pro-war policy intact.

What to do? Politically, I had been active in the Young Republicans from 1946 on, but left the Republican Party in high dudgeon when the Eisenhower forces stole the nomination from Taft. In 1956, I supported the last political gasp of the Old Right, the Andrews-Werdel third party ticket for the presidency, but they were not on the ballot in New York. For years, I became interested in nascent third-party movements on the Right, often attending the first organizing meeting, which turned out to be

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the last. One was a Constitution Party meeting held in some midtown restaurant owned by a sympathizer.

As these movements fizzled, and the Right became increasingly pro-war, I began to support candidates based mainly on which were more pro-peace. A quirk of fate propelled me into a top spot among organized Stevensonian Democrats. I had not been involved in the three Stevenson races for President (two as nominee in 1952 and 1956, and one for the nomination against Kennedy in 1960), although I had preferred him to Eisenhower on two grounds: (a) as being more pro-peace, and (b) to punish and try to get rid of New Deal Republicans. As time went on, and the New Right grew triumphant, (b) began to fade as an operative motive for me. At any rate, after Kennedy's defeat of Stevenson for the nomination in 1960, I noticed a little ad in the *New York Post* announcing a meeting of a proposed new organization—a Stevenson Pledge movement—demanding that Kennedy pledge to make Adlai Secretary of State or else forfeit our support.

Sounds great, I thought, and I showed up at a small meeting of veteran Stevensonian organizers, which even included the nascent Little Napoleon of Democratic campaign managers, Dave Garth. Dumbfounded that I had a Ph.D., the organizers quickly vaulted me into the No. 2 spot of a new organization: the League of Stevensonian Democrats. The highly intelligent and charismatic leader, John Kuesell, was a young business executive and highly knowledgeable parliamentarian (always useful in political maneuvering); I

was chief theoretician for the LSD, vice-chairman, and head of the national and international issues committee.

The Stevenson Pledge campaign naturally failed, and, after exerting maximum noise against the Kennedy people, we beat a strategic retreat, in return for which we were granted proprietorship over the main Kennedy store in Times Square, where right-wing libertarian friends of mine were confused to see me hawking Kennedy buttons. That was the farthest extent of our political patronage, however; after the Kennedy election, the LSD fell apart, and our Maximum Leader, Kuesell, moved upstate to rise up the corporate ladder. For many, it seemed like light years from "extreme right-wing Republican" to "leftish Democrat," but to me, opposition to war, as mass murder and as the health of the State, had been uppermost, and I was convinced that the Right had abandoned libertarians and not the other way around.

The most interesting incident of my months as an LSD activist came during the campaign. I wrote a letter to the *Wall Street Journal* urging right-wing Republicans to smash the New Deal by dumping Eisenhower and perhaps taking back the Republican Party. Reading the article, Kuesell was outraged and ready to expel me, and I was called on the carpet. "What is this?" he asked, "are you a right-wing spy?"

We have to remember that this was a period when no one, I

mean *no one*, had ever heard the word "libertarian." It was not the relative household word that it is

now. In fact, the first time the word "libertarian" had ever been mentioned outside of our tiny movement had been in a chapter "God and the 'Libertarians'" in a book *Apostles of Discord* (Beacon Press, 1953), by a professional

"anti-extremist" (there were a lot in those days) attacking "extremism" rampant in the Protestant churches; that is, Commies and right-wingers, equally evil. Particularly under fire were two genuinely libertarian periodicals, *Faith and Freedom* and *Christian Economics*.

Confronted by Kuesell, I was not at all upset (after all, being a big shot in the League of Stevensonian Democrats was not exactly my life work). But I figured I owed him, as my mentor in the organization, an explanation. So I started in on what I figured would be an hour lecture: "Well, you see, I'm a 'libertarian.'" Immediately, Kuesell interrupted. No one could ever accuse him of being slow on his feet, but I was still dumbfounded. "Say no more," he said, "I'm a libertarian, too." Then he showed me an article he had written as head of some libertarian group in high school, entitled *Quo Warranto?* [by what right] hurled at the government. From then on, I continued happily as No. 2 man in the organization. [Where are you now, John Kuesell? The nation needs you.]

Ideologically and personally, libertarians were soon to become isolated and stranded.

Ideologically and personally, libertarians were soon to become isolated and stranded. Libertarians were either dying off or becoming co-opted into the pro-war New Right. Ever since the early 1950s, I had been privileged to work for a magnificent, now long-forgotten organization—the William Volker Fund—which single-handedly sought out, revived, and nurtured conservative and libertarian scholars, gave them grants to work on projects, organized conferences to meet with each

other and discuss common concerns, and, in 1960, published those scholarly books and collections of articles that were unable to find a publisher in an intellectual atmosphere dominated by left-liberalism.

I wrote *Man, Economy, and State* and *Power and Market* on a grant from the Volker Fund (as well as getting launched on *Ethics of Liberty*). Just on the brink of transferring its assets to endow a libertarian think-tank, the Volker Fund tragically collapsed in the winter of 1962, and the libertarian movement has never yet recovered from this terrible blow. For despite the strides made since, we have never attained the status of having a fully endowed libertarian think tank to sponsor, advance, and publish scholarship.

Some day the full story of the rise and fall of the Volker Fund should be told; suffice it to

say that part of the collapse reflected the crisis in the broader movement: that is, the dramatic shift from Old Right to New, and the consequent sundering of the old, harmonious joint conservative-libertarian movement that had flourished from the mid-1930s through the mid-1950s.

As a full-time analyst for the Volker Fund, I was on the beach; one of the Volker stalwarts then secured me a multi-year grant for what became my four-volume *Conceived in Liberty*. After that, in the mid-1960s, I moved

into academia.

Politically, the capture of the Republican Party in 1964 by the *National Review*-dominated Goldwater movement was for me (and for the remnant of Old Rightists such as Felix Morley) a nightmare, and I did the best I could within the embryonic libertarian movement to denounce the Goldwater movement as presenting a grave threat of nuclear war. I wrote an article blasting Goldwater for *The Innovator*, a California newsletter that served as one of the few libertarian periodicals at the time. I also spoke before a group of Chodorovian libertarian Georgists, who were philosophically opposed to voting and had not cast their ballots in years. What I accomplished was a fierce argument, with elderly Chodorovians brandishing their canes in my direction and declaiming: "Young man, I haven't voted in

thirty years, but after hearing you tonight I'm going out and voting for Barry Goldwater."

I was particularly concerned to set forth my views on a libertarian foreign policy, but there were then virtually no outlets for long libertarian articles. My theoretical defense of an isolationist foreign policy, "War, Peace, and the State," was published in 1963, in a short-lived University of Kansas libertarian student magazine, *The Standard*, and my sounding the alarm at the "Transformation of the American Right" could only be published in an obscure, now-forgotten pro-peace Catholic journal, *Continuum*.

Soon, however, conditions were to change, as the intensification of the Vietnam War led me to sound the call for an alliance with the emergent New Left on the war and the draft. The New Left phase of the modern libertarian movement was about to begin. (N.B: this is the second part of a multi-part article.) •

"Free-Market" Environmentalists

by M.N.R.

Free-market economists tend to scorn moral arguments, and to stick to strictly economic arguments in public policy. They contend that "moral arguments never convince anyone," whereas utilitarian, economic arguments are persuasive in converting others. And yet, no one has ever done an effective study of what sort of arguments convince or convert people, and there is certainly no evidence that moral arguments have no persuasive power. On the contrary, people

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