AMERICAN MYTH, AMERICAN IDEOLOGY AND THE VIETNAM WAR

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The purpose of this study is twofold. The larger part of the study is given to development and explanation of a particular view of American politics. This view, first posited by H. Mark Roelofs, states that American politics is characterized by the irreconcilable contradiction which exists between American ideology and American myth. As used in this study, ideology denotes the set of ideas which guide and enable Americans as they "do" politics. Myth refers to the ways Americans understand and proclaim what their political activity means.

While American politics is largely pervaded by Lockian liberal ideas, this dominant ethic is split into ideological and mythic segments. That Americans undertake their politics in a bourgeois ideological fashion while explaining their political activities in terms of Protestant

morality leads Roelofs to describe American politics as guided, and sundered, by the Protestant-Bourgeois syndrome. It is shown that this syndrome is America's political inheritance from the Protestant Reformation and the development of capitalism.

Although the implications of such a contradictory amalgam are manifold, the most important is that occasionally the actual operation of bourgeois American politics can not plausibly be explained by America's Protestant myth. When this disparity between myth and ideology becomes glaringly obvious it may frequently issue into attacks on the legitimacy of American government and politics.

But the consequences of such an attack are likely to be quite drastic. As a consequence, many Americans have adopted an uncritical view which allows them to ignore the irreconcilability of American ideology and American myth.

The second purpose of the study is to show that in the case of America's involvement in the Vietnam War the disparity between American myth and American ideology became evident. Attacks on the American political system ensued. But more important is that the vast majority of Americans did not attack the political system. It is shown that many Americans came to view America's involvement in Vietnam as an aberration, and temporarily got off the horns of the contemporary Vietnam dilemma. But in doing so they left

unexplored and unacknowledged the cause of America's Vietnam discomfiture - the disparity between our ideology and myth - and hence left themselves in the position of being continually on the horns of the systemic dilemma of American politics.

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I owe a larger, and consequently less easily specified debt to my family, and particularly to my parents. Having ill-advisedly exposed me to the Scriptural admonition: "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind," they have shown remarkable patience in dealing with my frequently wrong-headed operation-alizations of Paul's call. It is with a certain sense of

shared vindication that I dedicate this study to my parents.

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INTRODUCTION

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purposes of this study are twofold. The first purpose of the study is to develop an analytic framework through which can be understood (1) the idea that American politics is characterized by the irreconcilable contradiction which exists between American myth and American ideology, and (2) the reasons this irreconcilability has not been recognized or acted upon in a sustained manner by most Americans. The second purpose of the study is to employ the findings reached through the use of this analytic framework in examining three explanations of the causes of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. These findings will be used as a means of demonstrating that several aspects of these three explanations cause them to be inadequate. The inadequacies of these explanations will be shown not to stem from their actual content, but from the fact that they allow Americans to deny or ignore the existence of the irreconcilable contradiction between American ideology and American myth.

MYTH AND IDEOLOGY

The analytic framework through which this study will approach American politics is developed by H. Mark Roelofs in Ideology and Myth in American Politics: A Critique of a

National Political Mind. In the text Roelofs refers to the distinction between " . . . what a people may think and sincerely believe they are doing, and what they are doing in operative idea . . . , "[1] as the distinction between myth and ideology respectively. Roelofs, in discussing this dichotomous relationship states, " . . . this cleavage can cut to the very bottom of a political mind and lock a whole nation into fundamental war with itself."[2]

Roelofs, whose innovative text will be used extensively in this study, expresses the distinction between the ideas by which a people proclaim what they are doing politically and the ideas by which they actually undertake purposive political activity, as the dichotomy between myth and ideology. Obviously this assertion calls for an extensive undertaking in regard to developing a fuller understanding of Roelofs' conceptions of myth and ideology. This will be done in Chapter 1.

For the purpose of this introduction, somewhat simplified definitions of myth and ideology and a brief discussion of their interrelationship will be advanced. Ideology is defined as the shared framework of political consciousness by which a people perceive and act upon attaining their political wants. This is to say that

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[1]H. Mark Roelofs, Ideology and Myth in American Politics: A Critique of a National Political Mind (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1976), pp. 35-36.

[2]Ibid., p. 36.

ideology has both a cognitive or perceptual role and a prescriptive role. Ideology is an operative, or operationalized, idea.[3] Myth is the set of ideas by which a people understand and proclaim what their goals are and what their political activity means.[4] In a complex representative democracy, such as the United States, myth becomes the means by which rulers explain and the people understand and proclaim what is being done at the people's behest or on their behalf. Myth is not an operative idea. It explains and proclaims, but it does not organize people for, or cause, purposive political activity.

Obviously myth and ideology are functionally different from each other. But as Roelofs points out, they are bound together by the role of myth in legitimating ideology. Put another way, the way in which a people understand and judge the operation of their political system is crucial to the survival of the system. Since it has been stated that myth is the set of ideas by which a nation's people understand their nation's politics and that ideology is the set of ideas by which a nation's politics is 'done,' it can be seen that myth's most important role and function is its ability to legitimate, or not legitimate, an ideology.

To the extent that myth is a simplified, hence distorted, means of expressing and understanding the political activity prompted by ideology, myth contradicts

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[3] Ibid., p. 36.

[4] Ibid., p. 36.

ideology. This contradiction becomes important when it is recalled that myth must plausibly and supportively coalesce with ideology before any ruler or ruling element may operate legitimately. Although it is an odd usage of the word 'contradictory,' it may be said that ideology and myth, as defined, are 'merely contradictory.' This is to say that contradiction is the inherent and predictable nature of the relationship which exists between ideology and myth.

One important premise of this study, already mentioned in the statement of purpose, is that not only are American ideology and American myth predictably contradictory, they are irreconcilably contradictory. This to say that the inherently contradictory relationship between ideology and myth has been exacerbated to a state of irreconcilability by the actual substantive content of American myth and American ideology. This irreconcilability, and the substantive content of American myth and American ideology which causes it will be considered at length in Chapter 2. But one observation, a central one, can be made now. This irreconcilability, when recognized and understood by Americans, can have no other effect but to erode the legitimacy of American ideology and the system of government which operates on the basis of that ideology.

EXPLANATIONS OF U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN THE VIETNAM WAR

The national domestic debate fostered by the divisive and controversial U.S. policy of involvement in the Vietnam War involved almost every American old enough to express an opinion. For most Americans the urgency of either winning or ending U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War precluded the possibility of any rational or systematic discussion of how the U.S. initially came to be involved. Those explanations which were offered were either explicit weapons in the debate or were quickly adopted for the purpose of argumentation.

Now--despite the more sweeping and self-important assertion by IBM that we live in 'The Age of Information'--Americans are living in a time that might be labeled the 'post-Vietnam era.' As with most historical episodes that come to be regarded as unmitigated national disasters there has been no great rush to explain the causes of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War.

A few explanations of the causes of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War have been sufficiently well articulated or have been held by large enough numbers of Americans that they can be identified and described. Interestingly, these explanations were much in evidence during the time period of actual U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. This fact again attests to the silence which has replaced the rancor of the national debate over U.S. policy in Vietnam.

The Bitter Heritage by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. and The Making of a Quagmire by David Halberstam, trace the seemingly irreversible drift of American policy toward involvement in the Vietnam War. The 'quagmire' explanation, as these treatments may be labeled, prominently features the idea that a cumulative series of decisions and indecision--none of which can individually be called a cause of involvement--dragged the U.S. into the Vietnam War. Another frequently expressed, but less systematically presented, view of the cause of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War may be termed the 'evil man' thesis. This outlook variously attributes U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War to personal duplicity, motivations of self-aggrandizement, or mental incompetence, on the part of U.S. leaders. A typical expression of this view was written by James Simon Kunen in The Strawberry Statement in which he writes, "President Johnson's a fool anyway. The old fool's up against the wall. He's practically crazy. Everyone knows that. Even crazy people. Everyone."[5]

A third explanation of the cause of U.S. involvement, in Vietnam and other foreign policy debacles, is advanced by Irvin Janis in his book Victims of Groupthink. Janis states that poor decision-making techniques led to ever-deepening U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. As opposed to the

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[5]James S. Kunen, The Strawberry Statement: Notes of a College Revolutionary (New York: Avon Books, 1968), p. 67.

quagmire explanation which emphasizes incrementalism and indecision, Janis' decision-making theory focuses on group dynamics and group leadership as important factors in understanding the policy-making process which led to U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War.

Perhaps the most jarring, hence least popular, explanation of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War states that U.S. involvement was a natural manifestation of a flawed American political system and an immoral American society. Kunen states, "Let's not put our country down. It happens that the United States is the scourge of the earth, but let's not put it down."[6] Hunter S. Thompson narrowed the focus of his criticism even further, placing blame for U.S. Vietnam policy quite squarely on the American people. In 1972 he wrote,

> This may be the year we finally come face to face with ourselves; finally just lay back and say it--that we are really just a nation of 220 million used car salesmen with all the money we need to buy guns and no qualms about killing anybody else in the world who tries to make us uncomfortable.[7]

Obviously many Americans would have trouble accepting Thompson's scathing assessment. But his concept of Americans coming 'face to face with ourselves' is particularly apt. Thompson implies that if Americans really

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[6] Ibid., p. 73.

[7] Hunter S. Thompson, quoted in The Boys on the Bus, Timothy Crouse, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1973), p. 336.

wanted to they could see themselves as they really are. Thompson is, at least tacitly, positing that a duality exists between the way Americans, as a nation, behave, and the way that Americans, as a nation believe they behave. Thompson's view of this duality has much in common with Roelofs' conception of the relationship between ideology and myth. Just as Americans did not come face to face with themselves during the national debate often provoked by U.S. involvement in Vietnam they have not recognized the irreconcilable contradiction between American myth and American ideology.

THE MANNER OF PROCEEDING

Chapter 1 of this study will discuss ideology and myth in considerable depth. An important portion of the 1st Chapter will be devoted to a discussion of the validity and importance of ideology and myth as topics for and tools of analysis. Chapter 1 will also more fully discuss and develop Roelofs' definitions of ideology and myth, and his view of their interrelationship.

Chapter II of the study will discuss the substantive content of American ideology and myth. Principal sources cited will be Roelofs, Louis Hartz in The Liberal Tradition in America, R. H. Tawney in Religion and the Rise of Capitalism, and Max Weber in The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. This discussion will assess Hartz's

assertion that liberalism, in the classical sense, is adhered to almost unanimously by Americans as their ideology. This will be followed by an explanation and defense of Roelofs' view that American liberalism consists of two major components bound to each other in what he calls the Protestant-bourgeois syndrome. The elevation, in America, of the bourgeois ethic to the status of operative ideology, and the consequent relative diminution of the Protestant ethic to a mythic role, is one of Roelofs' major topics of concern. Chapter II will also discuss the separation of powers as an example of American interpretation of John Locke's liberal thought. It will be seen that this governmental arrangement has denuded the average American of any meaningful political power.

In Chapter III the concepts of government by consent, contingent obligation, and popular elections will be discussed as a means of exploring the irreconcilable contradiction between American myth and American ideology. This contradiction will be illustrated by showing that these concepts, while seemingly serving as points of entry for mythic inputs from America's mass citizenry, actually serve to exclude and render politically impotent, expressions of mythic political expectations.

It will be shown that this situation can, at least potentially, undermine the legitimacy of American national government by revealing the contradiction between, and hence preventing the legitimating coalescence of, American myth

and American ideology. The resultant extra-systemic political activity--frequently involving attacks on the legitimacy of American government--will be discussed. More importantly, the reasons that most Americans have not recognized or acted upon the irreconcilability of American myth and American ideology will be explored.

In Chapter IV the previous finding that most Americans cannot, or will not, recognize the irreconcilability of American myth and American ideology will be discussed in the context of America's Vietnam tragedy. It will be asserted that America's involvement in the Vietnam War revealed the contradiction between American myth and American ideology. The ways in which Americans have come to understand the causes of U.S. Vietnam involvement will be discussed as a classic example of American denial, on a mass scale, of the irreconcilability of American myth and American ideology.

The concluding section of the study will draw conclusions on the findings of the study. Particular attention will be given to the seeming absence of potential for transcendence or change which so characterizes American ideology, and hence, American politics. A discussion of the possible consequences of this viscosity[8] of the American political mind will conclude the study.

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[8]Roelofs, op. cit., p. 33.

Chapter I

IDEOLOGY AND MYTH

The asserted existence of irreconcilable contradiction between American ideology and American myth is a major premise of this study. In order to discuss the development of this irreconcilability an examination of the functional relationship between ideology and myth must be undertaken. Hence, this chapter will discuss ideology and myth in abstract and theoretical terms. The relationships which we discover in this chapter will then be placed in the American context in Chapter II.

In attempting to discuss ideology and myth a number of problems are immediately encountered, among which is that of definition. Both ideology and myth are terms apt to elicit all manner of connotative, epithetical, and imprecise definitions. But even before the problem of definition may be addressed, the importance of ideology and myth as valid focuses and tools of analysis must be established.

Particularly in the case of ideology, a concept which in the recent past has been a subject of controversy, an extensive justification for attention to its nature and function will be necessary. Although this comprehensive discussion will temporarily detain the reader from the discussion of ideology and myth outlined in the Introduction,

it is a necessary antecedent to Roelofs' conception of ideology and myth and their interrelationship. Roelofs' view of ideology and myth is simultaneously an extension of, and a departure from, traditional views of ideology and myth. Hence, a somewhat involved recounting of the history and development of the concepts of ideology and myth is an important preliminary to the discussion which this study envisages.

THE CASE FOR CONSIDERING IDEOLOGY

The case for considering ideology will be made, in part, by examining the consequences of the relatively recent effort, both explicit and implicit, by some American political scientists to ignore ideology as a tool in understanding and predicting political behavior. Having considered these consequences, it is hoped that the importance of ideology will be further illustrated by the introduction and discussion of several traditional and contemporary definitions of ideology. This will be done with a view toward introduction and discussion of Roelofs' different conception of ideology.

Recent History

The 'end of ideology' movement within American political science during the 1950s was the most explicit attempt by parts of the discipline to minimize, or completely write off, the importance of ideology in American politics. Daniel Bell, in The End of Ideology, states,

> In the Western world, . . . there is today a rough consensus among intellectuals on political issues: the acceptance of a Welfare State; the desirability of decentralized power; a system of mixed economy and of political pluralism.[1]

As Wills indicates, the 'end of ideology' movement was only one branch of the broader 'consensus' context which characterized American social science during the 1950s. Wills states,

> To understand what happened we must watch the currents of 'mainstream' thinking converge--in history (the consensus historians), in political science (the end-of-ideology movement), in social psychology (the status-politics school of thought), in sociology (the reconsideration of individualism), in public planning (the writers for The Public Interest), in Republican circles (the "New Conservatism').[2]

All these schools of thought were, to an extent, responses to the general somnolescence which characterized the 1950s.

The general absence of political conflict and turmoil in the United States during the 1950s was believed to indicate a growing American consensus in regard to societal goals and values. Unfortunately, political science, the discipline which presumably should have known better, accomodated the only school of thought which explicitly proclaimed that this absence of conflict marked the 'end of ideology.'

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[1]Daniel Bell, The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties (New York: Collier Books, 1962), pp. 402-403.

[2]Garry Wills, Nixon Agonistes: The Crisis of the Self-Made Man (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1969), p. 559.

The events of the 1960s shattered the fairy-tale world which Wills aptly called 'Consensus Land.' Not only did urban and campus upheavals rend the tenuous fabric of consensus thought, but the destruction was prophesied by scholars, and proclaimed by students in terms which were ideologically apocalyptic. C. Wright Mills in his 1960 "Letter to the New Left" foreshadowed the demise of the 'end of ideology' outlook when he wrote, "The Age of Complacency is ending. Let the old women complain wisely about 'the end of ideology.' We are beginning to move again."[3] An example of the highly ideological self-proclamation which characterized the 1960s is the following passage from the SDS publication, The Mass Strike:

> The coincidence of Columbia and Paris should dispel the dominant illusion of the left in this country: That our radicalism is derived mainly from the particular issues of the Viet Nam war and racism . . . In fact, our Viet Nam and racism issues are only particular manifestations of far deeper forces simultaneously energizing mass actions in diverse parts of the capitalist sector.[4]

Although the content of this passage may be regarded by many people with considerable dubiety, the coherence and consistency of its particular ideological viewpoint flew in the face of assertions proclaiming the end of ideology.

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[3]C. Wright Mills, "Letter to the New Left," in The End of Ideology Debate, ed. by Chaim Waxman (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1968), p. 140.

[4]James S. Kunen, The Strawberry Statement: Notes of a College Revolutionary (New York: Avon Books, 1968), p. 101.

The events of the 1960s had a similar, if less decimating, impact on empirical and quantitative approaches to political analysis. These analytic techniques, with their implicit hostility to consideration of ideology, were seen to have only partial explanatory power. The inadequacy of Dahl's 'pluralist democracy' empiricism became evident as previously unrecognized and unorganized political actors refused, violently, to play the political game according to the tenets of pluralist democracy. C. Wright Mills condemned what he termed the, "Fetishism of empiricism. . . . a pretentious methodology used to state trivialities about unimportant social areas."[5]

None of this recent history is cited in an attempt to damn empirical or behavioral approaches to political science. However, the shortcomings of 'a-adeological' political analysis have provided the momentum for "post-behavioral' approaches to political questions. This study, by virtue of its general orientation, and its specific attention to ideology, can be termed 'post-behavioral.'

Even given the asserted inadequacy of those approaches to political science which have denigrated or ignored the importance of ideology, the case for ideology is still not consummated. In order to complete the argument on behalf of the importance of ideology, a definition of ideology must be posited that verifies ideology's role as an

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[5]Mills, op.cit., p. 132.

important factor in political behavior. In order to achieve this goal, attention will first be turned to a review of traditional and contemporary conceptions of ideology. Following that discussion, the contribution of Roelofs will be discussed.

Traditional and Contemporary Views of Ideology

The definition of ideology has varied and been transformed throughout modern history. Mannheim traces the term 'ideology' to the French Enlightenment conception of ideology as the science of ideas, as he states,

> The word 'ideology' itself has, to begin with, no inherent ontological significance; it did not include any decision as to the value of different spheres of reality, since it originally denoted merely the theory of ideas. The ideologists, as we know, were members of a philosophical group in France, . . . who rejected metaphysics and sought to base the cultural sciences on anthropological and psychological foundations.[6]

The term 'ideologue,' originally intended to designate those philosophers who believed they could best understand human activity in terms of logical and philosophical constructs, was turned into a pejorative term by French conservatives, notably Napoleon, when the ideologues began to undermine his imperial intentions. This criticism of the ideologues basically asserted that ideology was, " . . . a naive logical construct notable for its abstract

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[6]Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1936), pp. 63-64.

neatness but lacking a genuine understanding of the complex givens of human nature and of historical reality."[7]

Chronologically, the next major usage of the term, and ironically the next major critique of, ideology came from Karl Marx. Marx believed that ideology was either deliberately or unwittingly tainted with class interests and biases. Unlike Napoleon who condemned ideology because of its alleged irrelevance to actual human behavior, Marx criticized the intrusion of day-to-day interests and biases into ideology. Hence for members of a particular class to adopt the ideology of another class was to adopt a distorted view of the world and one's condition in it: 'false consciousness.' Describing Marx's critique of ideology, Bluhm states,

> Rather than a product of rationalist naivete, it is seen as the conscious or unconscious rationalization of class interests, a weapon with which to dupe the unwilling into supporting those interests and to give a color of legitimacy to what are basically politically imposed views.[8]

Mannheim, in Ideology and Utopia, refers to ideology in the 'total conception' as a 'total construction of the mind,'[9] a Weltanschauung, a world view. In this regard

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[7]William T. Bluhm, Ideologies and Attitudes: Modern Political Culture (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974), p. 2.

[8]Ibid., p. 3.

[9]Mannheim, op.cit., p. 50.

Mannheim's view of ideology has some affinity with the earlier conceptions of the French ideologues. Mannheim, however, additionally posits a 'particular' conception of ideology which, much as Marx did, takes into consideration such biases as class and personal interest. But Mannheim, unlike Marx, does not stridently condemn this 'soiling' of ideology. Rather Mannheim uses this 'particular' conception of ideology as a part of his larger framework of the sociology of knowledge.

Proceeding from Mannheim's findings, ideology has ceased to be viewed as a rationalistic, logical, theory of ideas. Rather it is seen as a value laden set of ideas by which people understand, express, and act upon, their particular political wants.

Contemporary definitions of ideology proceed from the assumption that ideologies are value laden. These definitions vary chiefly in terms of the number and breadth of factors comprising, and functions performed by ideology. Three contemporary definitions of ideology will be cited. The purpose being to illustrate this mentioned variation, and to highlight areas of agreement and disagreement among the definitions.

Lyman T. Sargent, in Contemporary Political Ideologies: A comparative Analysis, states,

> An ideology is a value or belief system that is accepted as fact or truth by some group. It is composed of sets of attitudes toward the various institutions and processes of society. It provides the believer with a picture of the world as it is and as it should be, . . .[10]

In Sargent's view the major role of ideology is one of selective perception and normative understanding. Ideology, in this conception, is a cognitive apparatus by which the established institutions and processes of a social order are understood.

Dolbeare and Dolbeare, in American Ideologies: The Competing Political Beliefs of the 1970's, define ideology as,

> . . . a more or less coherent picture of (1) how the present social, economic, and political order operates, (2) why this is so, and whether it is good or bad, and (3) what should be done about it, if anything.[11]

This definition, much like Sargent's, emphasizes ideology's role as a means by which people understand an extent societal order. Additionally, it goes beyond Sargent's evaluative role for ideology, and at least recognizes a possible remedial or prescriptive role for ideology.

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[10]Lyman T. Sargent, Contemporary Political Ideologies: A Comparative Analysis (Homewood, Illinois: The Dorsey Press, 1969), p. 3.

[11]Kenneth M. and Patricia Dolbeare, American Ideologies: The Competing Political Beliefs of the 1970's (Chicago: Rand McNally Co., 1976), p. 3.

Christenson et al. in Ideologies and Modern Politics, narrows ideology into a focus on a preferred political order and political strategies for its attainment. As Christenson states,

> Political ideology is a belief system that explains and justifies a preferred political order for society, either existing or proposed, and offers a strategy (processes, institutional arrangements, programs) for its attainment.[12]

While Christenson's definition of ideology is not vastly different from the other cited definitions, it does make one significant departure. Christenson views ideology not only as the set of normative ideas by which a political order may be changed, but also as the normative ideas by which an extant political order operates. As will be shown shortly, this view of ideology, seemingly involving only a minor distinction, is a bridge that links, and at the same time denotes a significant separation of, Roelofs' view of ideology from the others cited.

Roelofs' Conception of Ideology

Roelofs' development of his concept of ideology involves a rather radical paring down of the scope of ideology. He states,

> Ideology is being used here to denote a very broad range of phenomena. Nevertheless, the limits on this usage should also be made clear. Ideology is not being used to refer to the totality of

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[12]Reo M. Christenson, and others, Ideologies and Modern Politics (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1971), p. 5.

> social memory and understanding by which a society identifies and organizes itself as a communal whole. Ideology denotes only that portion of the totality of social memory by use of which the society organizes itself for action. In this sense, ideology is an abstract from the historical materials and refers not to what was done and by whom, but to how, and to how only in the political realm--to that range of social action involving deliberate and authoritatively maintained action.[13]

And,

> . . . it is the framework of political consciousness, the set of ideas by which a people, or at least its dominant, governing element, organizes itself for political action. . . . Ideology gives patterns for political action.[14]

Roelofs is making an important distinction between operative and non-operative ideas. By operative, Roelofs is referring to ideas which can potentially, and actually do, guide and cause purposive political activity. Hence, it can be said that ideology is the 'set of ideas,' the 'framework of consciousness,' which evokes and channels purposive political activity. Roelofs is making a basic distinction between ideology as a politically operative set of ideas and the non-operative milieu within which ideology 'operates.' This is to say that although non-operative values and beliefs may help a people to determine what, if any, political action should be taken, it is ideology which provides both the predisposition to action, and then guides (makes purposive)

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[13]H. Mark Roelofs, Ideology and Myth in American Politics: A Critique of a National Political Mind (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1976), p. 36.

[14]Ibid., p. 4.

that action. Roelofs states, " . . . to say a nation has an ideology is to state merely that it has political capability."[15] He adds that ideology is " . . . concerned with defining actual wants and specific, reasonably consistent ways of obtaining them."[16]

What has this conception to offer for the purpose of the present study? Above all, it distinguishes between the operative ideas which guide a people as they 'do' politics, and the non-operative ideas by which they understand, justify, and proclaim what they are doing. For instance, the legal process by which eminent domain operates is an operationalization, a manifestation, of a set of ideas, an ideology, regarding the relationship of government to private citizens and their property. Justifying government condemnation of private property 'in the name of Progress' is not an example of the operation of an ideology. A 'dedication to progress' does not condemn private property. The shared acceptance of, and purposive operation of the legal process of eminent domain condemns private property.

This distinction is a challenging one. But wrestling with it is crucial for this study. Hopefully the previous discussion of ideology has, by now, indicated that it is a concept worthy of continued consideration. More

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[15] Ibid., p. 14.

[16] Ibid., p. 37.

important, Roelofs conception of ideology allows us to view purposive political activity as an observable manifestation of ideology.

MYTH

As the opening section of this chapter stated, myth, like ideology, is a term likely to evoke a number of imprecise definitions. However, myth, with its links to the concepts of common identity and political socialization has maintained a fairly important status in political science in particular, and in the behavioral sciences in general. Myth's role in fostering feelings of communal cohesion and loyalty has been prominently featured in writing on political development, and within the literature of social anthropology.

Application and definition of the term 'myth' varies. Lewis, in Social Anthropology in Perspective, states, "Symbols achieve their most elaborate and compelling public currency in myths--those 'sacred tales' with which men seek to invest their lives with cosmic grandeur."[17] Andrain, too, subsumes myth, under the heading of 'expressive symbols,' as he states, "Expressive symbols--myths, flags, national anthems, heroes, and ceremonies--give concrete expression to abstract values."[18]

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[17]I. M. Lewis, Social Anthropology in Perspective: The Relevance of Social Anthropology (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 121.

[18]Charles F. Andrain, Political Life and Social Change: An Introduction to Political Science (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., Inc., 1970), p. 55.

Lowi, like Andrain, speaks of myth, at least implicitly, in terms of folklore, historic incidents, and famous people. He states,

> A myth is not necessarily a falsehood. It is a belief that does not depend for its acceptance upon its truth or falseness. Many myths are of course based upon falsehood, but probably a larger number rest upon events that actually did take place.[19]

Lowi adds that " . . . myths . . . serve the purpose of elevating the attitudes of people toward themselves and toward their system."[20] All of these views of myth emphasize the role of myth as being one among a plethora of 'expressive symbols.' Again Roelofs' view of myth is a significant departure.

Roelofs' Conception of Myth

Rather than placing myth under a heading such as 'expressive symbols,' Roelofs uses myth as the organizing concept under which a number of ideas are categorized. Roelofs states, "Myth denotes the nationally shared framework of political consciousness by which a people becomes aware of itself as a people, as having an identity in history . . . ."[21]

Myth then is the shared outlook by which a people view themselves as 'we' and others as 'they.' Obviously,

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[19]Theodore J. Lowi, American Government: Incomplete Conquest (Hinsdale, Illinois: The Dryden Press, 1976), p. 55.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Roelofs, op. cit., p. 4.

the factors within a society which initiate and perpetuate this sort of communal feeling may include, but also extend well beyond, mere folklore. Roelofs adds that " . . . myth denotes the ideas, the forms of consciousness, by which they understand and proclaim what they are doing."[22]

Myth according to Roelofs is the set of ideas which explains to a people that they <u>are</u> a people, that they <u>should</u> be a people, and what they as a people are <u>doing</u>, what they are accomplishing. Roelofs, however, attributes an additional role to myth,

> . . . the ruling element must persuade the community that it is the nation's proper governance. They will seek legitimization not just of themselves as persons, but also of their system of operation, their regime.[23]

Rulers seek legitimation through bringing their system of operation into congruence with national myth. Roelofs states,

> It is essential in thinking about myth to keep in mind its origin in the dialogue between rulers and ruled. Rulers create myth, and impose it for their own purposes, but they do so by drawing on materials indigenous and vital to the ruled.[24]

Recalling the definition of ideology posited by Roelofs, it can be seen that myth's most important role is

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[22] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 36.

[23] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 39.

[24] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 40.

in legitimating an ideology and the political system through which that ideology is operationalized. Using Roelofs' expressions, myth legitimates the manifestations of an ideology: a 'system of operation,' 'a regime.' The intimate interrelationship of myth and ideology now becomes apparent. The exigencies of that interrelationship of ideology and myth, and a fuller discussion of myth will be displayed in the immediately following section.

LEGITIMATING COALESCENCE AND CONTRADICTION

It has just been stated that myth has an important role in legitimating ideology. Expressed in different terms it may be stated that myth serves as the normative yardstick against which the operation of a regime, an operationalized ideology, is measured. The interrelationship of ideology and myth, and the on-going process by which myth legitimates ideology, may be called 'legitimating coalescence.' A hypothetical chronology of the interplay of ideology and myth will aid in the illustration of legitimating coalescence. Recalling Roelofs' assertain that this process has its origins in dialogue between rulers and ruled, the steps leading to legitimating coalescence may be described as follows:

1. The ascendant ruling element in an emerging community uses myth as a means of encouraging national identity; a sense of communal self-identification and unity.

2. Within this myth are a number of value laden conceptions of why the community should exist, and what its proper governance would be. The likelihood that the content of this ruler-imposed myth will incline the ruled toward viewing their rulers as legitimate can hardly be overestimated.
3. The rulers must, however, operate on the basis of an ideology which is consistent with the myth it has created and fostered. For instance, a regime which creates unity and loyalty through a strong mythic emphasis on freedom of political expression can hardly expect legitimacy to attend the operation of an ideology which prominently features political repression.
4. When rulers operate on the basis of an ideology which achieves congruence with the myth which brings people together in a communal entity legitimating coalescence has taken place. It should be noted immediately that this legitimacy is not for all time, or for all people. Governments can become illegitimate, and they may, in the eyes of fairly large numbers of people, be perpetually illegitimate.

Charles Andrain, on the basis of the writings of Guglielmo Ferrero, illustrates the evolutionary nature of

legitimacy by characterizing ruling elements and ideologies as pre-legitimate, legitimate, post-legitimate, or illegitimate.[25] These labels again emphasize that legitimacy is a subjective, and highly variable feeling toward a government or ideology which may be bestowed and withdrawn by the ruled. Roelofs points out the importance of the ruler-ruled dialogue as a means of developing and maintaining legitimacy when he states, "The ruling element will have to explain to the populace what they are doing and how their activities conform to the community's developing sense of itself."[26]

It is in the ways in which rulers convey their intentions and actions to the ruled, and in the manner by which the rulers explain to the ruled how these intentions and actions achieve congruence with the mythic expectations of the ruled, that the contradiction between myth and ideology is born. This contradiction, as Roelofs points out, develops for two reasons. First, in explaining to the people what it is doing, the ruling element frequently engages in sloganizing. This may be done for reasons of sheer expedience, or as a means of conveying complex ideas simply. Roelofs cites an example of this simplification as he states,

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[25]Andrain, op.cit., p. 138.

[26]Roelofs, op.cit., p. 39.

> . . . in a modern representative democracy, the complex of electoral processes and connected institutions of government may be put to the general populace as a system of 'popular government' through which 'the people rule.'[27]

Again, it can be stated that this type of simplification is not, of necessity, a means of deceiving the masses. Nor is this simplification a manifestation of a thinly veiled belief by the rulers that the people are idiots. These types of simplifications are, as with all myths, designed to create social cohesion, and to help legitimate ideology. After myth has become sufficiently ingrained through the process of political socialization political activity need not be accompanied by specific mythic declarations or justifications. The people, in time, attach the necessary mythic explanation to ideological acts.

To the extent that any simplification distorts reality, myth contradicts ideology. This is true because ideology is the specifically actualized set of ideas by which people 'do' politics ('electoral processes,' and 'connected institutions'), and myth is the general set of ideas and beliefs by which a people understand and proclaim what is being done ('popular government,' and 'the people rule').

The second way in which myth contradicts ideology is that, according to Roelofs, " . . . while myth is socially

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[27] Ibid., p. 40.

functional . . . it is not 'operative' in the direct sense that the possession of a shared ideology permits those who run society to go about their work."[28] Recalling the cited slogans of 'popular government' and 'the people rule,' Roelofs states,

> These mythic slogans may be effective and pardonable simplifications of what actually happens. But they are not operative. They neither describe nor constitute and control what happens. . . . What actually happens is controlled by the ideology of representative government, a very different business.[29]

Any person or group which has ever attempted to influence government policy by shaming the government with its own slogans knows what a crucial distinction Roelofs is speaking of. Roelofs calls attention to the root of the contradiction between ideology and myth when he states, " . . . ideology is the thought pattern of persons whose work must be done day by day. Myth is the ancient memory and the generational hope of the whole people, its 'civil religion.'[30]

CONCLUSION AND AGENDA

It can be concluded that ideology and myth, as they have been defined on the preceding pages, contradict each other. It has been shown that this contradiction is the inherent and predictable relationship between ideology and myth. This contradiction becomes important when we

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[28] Ibid., p. 40.

[29] Ibid., pp. 40-41.

[30] Ibid., p. 4.

understand that they are intricately interrelated by the exigencies of perpetuating social unity, undertaking purposive political activity, and maintaining legitimacy. Thus, the contradiction exists in a 'symbiotic' relationship. Not a comfortable business.

Implicit within this discussion of the contradiction between ideology and myth is the possibility that 'mere' (in the sense that it is inherent and expected) contradiction can expand into utter irreconcilability. The political landscape of history is littered with regimes which were sundered by such an irreconcilable contradiction. The inherent contradiction between ideology and myth can become so grossly contradictory that it overtaxes the flexibility of human thought to view them in a credible or plausible legitimating coalescence. The exacerbation of contradiction into irreconcilability may be caused by any number of factors.

This study will attempt to show that the actual substantive content of American myth and American ideology have caused them to be irreconcilably contradictory. In order to illustrate and verify this assertion the next chapter will undertake an extensive exploration of the content of American myth and American ideology. From this discussion, and as the study progresses, it will be shown that numerous factors cause an American aversion to recognition, and action in accordance with recognition, of the asserted irreconcilability.

Chapter II

IRRECONCILABILITY

To say that American myth and American ideology are irreconcilably contradictory is, in fact, to say quite a lot. As the previous chapter indicated, contradiction is the inherent state which exists between myth and ideology. More importantly, we have seen that ideology and myth must plausibly coalesce, contradictions and all, in order for a people to view its ideology and its government as legitimate.

A fundamental assertion of this study is that American ideology and American myth are irreconcilably contradictory due to their substantive content. What this means, put simply, is that under serious scrutiny American myth cannot be said to enter into a legitimating coalescence with American ideology. When one comes to grips with this irreconcilability, one major conclusion can be reached: American myth--the way Americans understand and proclaim what their nation's political activity means--is perpetually inaccurate. The disparity between ideology and myth practically makes myth a lie. But the word 'lie' implies a deliberate attempt to mislead, and the ways in which Americans manage to ignore the irreconcilability of American myth and American ideology comes closer to a form of national self-deception. This self-deception becomes important only

when it breaks down and Americans are confronted by the glaring irreconcilability of their myth and their ideology. As will be shown later, this irreconcilability, when recognized, erodes the legitimacy of American ideology and American government.

The twofold task of exploring this irreconcilability and the reasons its existence is denied will be undertaken in this and the following chapter. This chapter will be devoted to an exploration of the substantive content of American myth and American ideology. The purpose of this exploration will be to discover the manner in which the inherent contradiction of myth and ideology was exacerbated into a state of irreconcilability by the substantive content of American myth and American ideology. This exploration, which must be simultaneously rigorous and summary in nature, will begin with a discussion of Louis Hartz's assertion that Americans adhered, from the very birth of America, almost unanimously, and with 'bizarre' tenacity, to the Americanized ideology of Lockian liberalism. While Hartz recognizes that Lockian liberalism is obviously not an American product, its introduction into the American environment and its easy attainment of dominant status has had uniquely American consequences for its content and operation.

With reference to R. H. Tawney, Max Weber, and Roelofs, it will be argued that the two major phychological components of America's political mind are bound to each other in an uncomfortable, incongruous amalgam which Roelofs

calls the 'Protestant-bourgeois syndrome.' This difficult situation is exacerbated by the gradual evolution of the bourgeois ethic to the status of American ideology, and the consequent relative diminution of the Protestant ethic to the role of American myth. Recalling Roelofs' view of the roles of ideology and myth we confront an effort by Americans to understand and proclaim the operation of a bourgeois ideology in terms of a Protestant myth.

Hence, to view American ideology and American myth in a plausible and legitimating coalescence calls for a rather grueling combination of mental gymnastics and selective perception, and an extremely forceful process of political socialization. Amazingly, Americans have been equal to this task for over two hundred years. This propensity for denial of the irreconcilable contradiction between American ideology and American myth will be explored in the following chapter.

LIBERALISM'S DOMINANCE IN AMERICA

In The Liberal Tradition in America Louis Hartz states as the main premise of the text that, " . . . the American community is a liberal community."[1] Hartz's text is perhaps the most influential of any work by the consensus historians of the 1950s. In Chapter I of this study the

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[1]Louis Hartz, The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1955), p. 3.

declining influence of the 'end of ideology' movement, one school of thought within the broader 'consensus' scholarship of the 1950s, was discussed. To a large extent it may be said that the 'rug' of American political quiescence which partially served as the basis for 'end of ideology' thought was jerked from under the feet of that movement's thinkers, as political upheaval, frequently expressed in ideological terms, increased. The tumult of the 1960s had less disastrous consequences for consensus history, and particularly for Hartz's view of American liberalism. His work was grounded in a broad survey of European and American history and political thought.

The bulk of Hartz's argument is predicated on three basic assertions:

1. The dominant influence of Lockian liberalism--which will be discussed in more detail later--in the United States was assured by the absence from the American environment of a feudal ancien regime and the ideologies that would be necessary to defend and perpetuate such a feudal arrangement.
2. This ideological sterility caused Americans to interpret and embrace Lockian liberalism in a 'bizarre' manner. By 'bizarre' Hartz means that the lack of intellectual 'perspective' (due to the clean ideological slate which was the American environment) caused Americans to interpret Locke

with no reference to the social context within which Locke lived and wrote. Further, because Lockian liberalism had no ideological competition it was embraced by Americans almost unanimously.

3. The American Revolution was not a revolution at all. With minor exceptions it made no changes in the extant political, economic, or social arrangements of American society. Those changes caused by the American 'Revolution' hardly warrant the use of the term 'revolution.' American liberalism, lacking a revolutionary heritage, became a conservative ideology; conserving liberal ideas.

Hartz, speaking of interpretations of American history, states,

> What . . . is more interesting is the curious failure of American historians, after repeating endlessly that America was grounded in escape from the European past, to interpret our history in the light of that fact.[2]

In Hartz's approach to American history and politics it is this non-European uniqueness which is crucial. America's escape from feudal European society is, according to Hartz, the key to its ideological uniformity. Hartz views this escape from European feudal influence as an achievement of some historic moment. He states,

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[2] Ibid., p. 4.

> We are confronted, as it were, with a kind of inverted Trotskyite law of combined development, America skipping the feudal stage of history as Russia presumably skipped the liberal stage.[3]

Hartz moves from assertions regarding the absence of feudal European thought right into a discussion of European Lockian liberalism in America. According to Hartz, Lockian liberalism was introduced into the American ideological void with some remarkable consequences. Liberalism, in filling this void, was so pervasive as to be almost unrecognizable. The fact that Lockian liberalism carried the day without revolutionary tumult (which was unnecessary in America's non-feudal society) caused Americans to view liberalism's dominance as a natural occurence. As Hartz notes, speaking of American liberalism,

> Its liberalism is what Santayana called, referring to American democracy, a 'natural' phenomena. But the matter is curiously broader than this, for a society which begins with Locke, and thus transforms him, stays with Locke, by virtue of an absolute and irrational attachment it develops for him, . . .[4]

He adds,

> . . . in America the devotion to it has been so irrational that it has not even been recognized for what it is: liberalism. There has never been a 'liberal movement' or a real 'liberal party' in America: we have only the American Way of Life, a nationalist articulation of Locke which usually does not know that Locke is involved, . . . This is why even critics who have noticed America's moral unity have usually missed its substance. Ironically, 'liberalism'

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[3] Ibid., p. 3.

[4] Ibid., pp. 5-6.

> is a stranger in the land of its greatest realization and fulfillment.[5]

This observation is particularly lucid. Where but in a society absolutely pervaded by liberalism--so easily attained that its liberalism is called natural--could the writings and thought of an English gentleman be so guilelessly labeled as the basis of 'Americanism?'

Hartz cites a compelling example of American ideological unanimity when he states,

> Pragmatism, interestingly enough America's greatest contribution to the philosophic tradition, . . . feeds itself on the Lockian settlement. It is only when you take your ethics for granted that all problems emerge as problems of technique.[6]

Hartz applies his findings of American ideological uniformity in a dazzling three hundred page treatment of American history. As an historian, Hartz gives relatively less attention to the actual content of liberalism as a political ideology. Rather, writing during the McCarthy years, he seems vaguely discontented with the conformitarian nature of America's devotion to liberalism. America's 'irrational' and 'bizarre' attachment to Lockian liberalism is Hartz's bogeyman. His concern stems not from the content of American liberalism, but rather from the suffocating social unanimity which attends America's devotion to it.

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[5] Ibid., pp. 10-11.

[6] Ibid., p. 10.

On the last pages of his text Hartz offers a hopeful prognosis in regard to the likelihood that Americans can transcend their irrational attachment to American Lockian liberalism. Finding hope in adversity, he finds in a shrinking world, and increasing American contact with other cultures and ideologies, the possibility for American transcendence of its narrow and uniform ideological commitments. Summing up his view America's non-feudal, non-revolutionary, and non-transcendent heritage, Hartz poses two questions, "Can a people 'born equal' ever understand peoples elsewhere that have to become so? Can it ever understand itself?"[7]

Hartz's findings on American liberalism provide the beginnings for our discussion of the content of American liberalism. Attention will now be turned to the substantive content of American liberalism.

THE CONTENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF LOCKIAN LIBERALISM

While Hartz speaks at length of America's escape from European feudal structures and ideologies, his discussion of American adherence to Lockian liberalism clearly ties American political ideology to European liberalism. The important point for Hartz is the dominance in America of a particular set of ideas. For the current study something different is demanded. In order to get at the content,

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[7] Ibid., p. 309.

and not simply the presence, of American liberalism this study must back up and look at the antecedents of the European liberalism which America inherited. For as will be seen, the content of American liberalism is infinitely more troublesome than Hartz's approach indicates. The European antecedents to Lockian liberalism will be emphasized as a means of understanding the development of Lockian liberalism.

Unleashing Capitalism: European Antecedents to Liberalism

Liberalism is a modern ideology. In fact its impact was decisive in bringing medieval feudalism to an end. As Roelofs states,

> The fundamental tenet of modernity (and the one by which it most decisively turned against medieval thought) was anthropocentricism. Man-centeredness in general philosophical orientation was translated into radical individualism in practical ethics and politics. This was true of modernity's Protestant emphasis as it was of its bourgeois emphasis.[8]

The interrelationship of Protestantism and capitalism goes much beyond the affinity for individualism which Roelofs notes. Capitalism, which predated Protestantism was, nonetheless, to an extent dependent for its survival on the reaction of Protestant thought. R. H. Tawney and Max Weber exhaustively illustrate the on-going and tangled inter-relationship of Protestantism and capitalism.

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[8]H. Mark Roelofs, Ideology and Myth in American Politics: A Critique of a National Political Mind (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1976), p. 50.

European liberalism evolved from the interaction of a variety of factors and ideas: Protestantism, capitalism, and a separate and discernible emphasis on the natural rights of the individual. To attempt to definitively ascertain a time, or even an epoch, during which these factors began their interplay is both futile and desultory. There is always one 'earlier' instance of their interplay. For the purpose of this study, the time during which the interplay of capitalism and Protestantism became important is the time of the Protestant Reformation.

As Tawney points out, capitalism was extant before the Protestant Reformation. The crucial question for the development of capitalism was the extent of tolerance or legitimation the capitalist ethic would receive from Protestant thought and doctrine. As Tawney states,

> The question of the attitude which religious opinion was to assume toward these new forces was momentous. It might hail the outburst of economic enterprise as an instrument of wealth and luxury, like the Popes who revelled in the rediscovery of classical culture. It might denounce it as a relapse into a pagan immorality, like the Fathers who had turned with a shudder from the material triumphs of Rome.[9]

As might be expected, given the general religious malaise of the Reformation era, the response of religion to capitalism was, as Tawney says, 'loud, but confused.' But even given this confused response, the economic ethic of

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[9] R. H. Tawney, Religion and the Rise of Capitalism (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1926), p. 80.

Reformation religious thought generally supported, though often only tacitly or for non-economic reasons, capitalist endeavor.

Ernst Troeltsch in The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches, states,

> The economic ethic, finally, teaches (likewise from the general Christian point of view) that labour is the result of the Fall, and is to be regarded as the penalty and the discipline of sin. But this idea is here developed into that of a rational, systematic discipline of labour, evolved, above all, in Puritanism, and thence taken over in a more or less logical manner; this ethic regards laziness and idleness as the source of all evil, and the result of a failure to impose discipline. With this systematic view of work, a strong and systematic impulse was given to production, while, on the other hand, with the same asceticism there is united a considerable limitation of consumption and a complete avoidance of luxury. . . . An ethic of this kind placed at the disposal of the nascent modern bourgeois Capitalism both energetic and courageous entrepreneurs, and men who were willing to endure exploitation if only they could get work.[10]

Troeltsch is speaking of an eventual outcome. The Protestant doctrine and capitalism did not, in fact, mesh so smoothly. Girvetz sums up the desires of the emerging middle class of Northwest Europe when he writes,

> . . . they sought a world in which their characteristic activities would be regarded as normal and necessary, not as marginal and even disreputable. . . . As much as anything, they needed a philosophy which would demonstrate that the welfare of the community was dependent on their efforts: their pecuniary zeal notwithstanding, they wanted to feel that they were making

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[10]Ernst Troeltsch, The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches, Vol. II., trans. by Olive Wyon, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), pp. 812-813.

an indispensable contribution to society.[11]

Such Protestant legitimation of capitalism was not, however, immediately or unanimously forthcoming. Luther was particularly hostile to capitalism, especially the practice of charging interest. Calvin was a more financially worldly man and viewed capitalism with less antipathy. Speaking of the Calvinists, Tawney notes,

> Unlike Luther, who saw economic life with the eyes of a peasant and a mystic, they approached it as men of affairs, disposed neither to idealize the patriarchal values of the peasant community, nor to regard with suspicion the mere fact of capitalistic enterprise in commerce and finance.[12]

The temptation in discussing the relationship of Protestantism to capitalism is to view them as combining with a thunderclap and propelling Europe headlong into modernity. In point of fact their relationship has never been a very comfortable one. Protestantism, at the outset, had much the same relationship to capitalism that a parking brake has to the drivetrain of an automobile. It initially had the power to stop the movement of the capitalist engine, but it grew progressively weaker, finally becoming a distracting, screeching mechanism which, more and more, lost its ability to restrain the superior power of capitalism.

As Max Weber illustrates, the ascetic ethic of Protestant thought was not easily, nor ever totally,

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[11]Harry K. Girvetz, The Evolution of Liberalism (New York: Collier Books, 1963), pp. 25-26.

[12]Tawney, op. cit., p. 104.

reconciled to bourgeois acquisitiveness. Weber, recounting Presbyterianism's uneasy peace with capitalism, states,

> Wealth as such is a great danger; its temptations never end, and its pursuit is not only senseless as compared with the dominating influence of the Kingdom of God, but it is morally suspect. . . . The real moral objection is to relaxation in the security of possession, the enjoyment of wealth with the consequence of idleness and the temptations of the flesh, above all of distraction from the pursuit of a righteous life.[13]

As Weber points out, it was asceticism, a by-product, but not the real essence, of Protestantism, which unleashed capitalism. Ascetic self-denial and thrift, the hallmarks of Protestant practice, became the pillars upon which capitalism was erected. As John Wesley wrote,

> I fear wherever riches have increased, the essence of religion has decreased in the same proportion. . . . the Methodists in every place grow diligent and frugal; consequently they increase in goods. Hence, they proportionately increase in pride, in anger, in the desire of the flesh, and the pride of life. So although the form of religion remains, the spirit is swiftly vanishing away. Is there no way to prevent this--this continual decay of pure religion? We ought not to prevent people from being diligent and frugal; we must exhort all Christians to gain all they can, and to save all they can; that is, in effect, to grow rich.[14]

The parking brake lost its purchase. And it screeched louder.

Why, if capitalism was seen in Protestant thought as, at least potentially, an absolute spiritual evil, was

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[13]Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (New York: Scribner, 1958), pp. 156-157.

[14]Ibid., p. 175.

Protestantism so unable to restrain individual acquisitiveness? It has already been shown that the ascetic practice under Protestant thought was an important factor in the development of capitalism. A more important factor was that the Protestant Reformation had a singularly liberating effect on the individual. Luther's attack on the Catholic church changed much of the church's role as an intermediary between God and man. If according to Luther all men may commune with God, are they not all equal in the eyes of God?

With this claim of equality was born a radical individualism. It was this individualism which meshed so well with capitalism's call for pursuit of one's self-interest. And how were the Protestant sects to restrain this pursuit of individual capitalist enterprise? Much of Protestantism's thought was predicated on Luther's attack on the authority of the Catholic church. Any effort to legitimate inordinate authority by Protestant churches over the lives of men would be a very difficult idea to sell in the aftermath of Luther's attack. Admittedly, some Protestant sects exercised a rigid authority over their members, but that authority was seldom so powerful that it successfully blunted the continuing development of capitalism.

Unleashing the Capitalist: Locke

Having traced the evolution of thought by which capitalism eventually overpowered the restraints of Protestantism we may now turn our attention to John Locke's effort

to release bourgeois man from the restraints of government. As Dolbeare and Dolbeare point out, Locke wrote on behalf of the capitalist middle class which had emerged as a result of capitalism's triumph over, and via, Protestantism. Despite this triumph, bourgeois man still had to contend with European governments dominated by kings and nobles. As they state,

> Locke's perspective was that of a mercantilist financier and businessman, caught in the middle between lords and peasants. No such social group had existed under the social and economic conditions of feudalism, and legitimating and protecting the rights of such financiers and merchants to do business seemed a heavy task.[15]

Locke attempted to legitimate the operation of capitalist business on the basis of arguments about the nature of man and government. Locke clearly states his view of natural rights and the individual when he states,

> To understand political power right, and derive it from its original, we must consider what state men are naturally in, and that is, a state of perfect freedom to order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of nature, without taking leave, or depending upon the will of any other man.[16]

The extension of this view is Locke's discussion of the role of government. According to Locke, men may only be governed on the basis of their own consent. That is, men

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[15]Kenneth M. and Patricia Dolbeare, American Ideologies: The Competing Political Beliefs of the 1970's (Chicago: Rand McNally Co., 1976), p. 38.

[16]John Locke, John Locke on Politics and Education, comp. Howard R. Penniman (New York: Walter J. Black, 1947), p. 76.

may leave the state of nature and by compact agree to live in a society of laws. But upon leaving the state of nature man neither relinquishes his natural rights, nor is government to restrain man as he obeys the immutable laws of nature. Government's role, then, is to serve as arbiter and punisher of men who infringe upon the rights of other men. Locke states,

> The state of nature has a law to govern it, which obliges every one: and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, liberty, or possession. . . .[17]

According to Locke, when a man has sought to do harm to another, it is the government's role to punish. Even in attributing this power to government, Locke returns attention to the consent basic to government,

> For the law of nature would, as all other laws that concern men in this world, be in vain, if there were nobody that in the state of nature had a power to execute that law, and thereby preserve the innocent and restrain offenders. And if any one in the state of nature may punish another, for any evil he has done, every one may do so: for in that state of perfect equality, where naturally there is no superiority or jurisdiction of one over another, what any man may do in prosecution of that law, every one must needs have a right to do.[18]

What Locke asserts, by implication, is that the power of any one to punish is given over to every one. And government as the creation of every one hence inherits the power to punish.

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[17] Ibid., p. 76.

[18] Ibid., p. 78.

The crucial question in Locke's discussion is not one of the proper manner of dealing with criminals. It is rather one of the relationship of man to government, and government to man. The societal context in which Locke lived and wrote must at all times be remembered in order to keep his real intent in sight. These intentions become clearer in Locke's discussion of property. On the origin of private property Locke writes,

> Though the earth and all inferior creatures be common to all men, yet every man has a property in his own person: this nobody has any right to but himself. The labor of his body and the work of his hands we may say are properly his. Whatsoever he then removes out of the state that nature has provided and left it in, he hath mixed his labor with, and joined to it something that is hiw own, and thereby makes it his property.[19]

As Roelofs states, "No argument can shade or qualify this doctrine into other than what it is, a law of seize, have, and hold."[20]

It is for protection of his property, and perpetuation of a rather avaricious means by which that property is acquired, that men join together in societies. Locke states,

> The great and chief end, therefore, of men uniting into commonwealths, and putting themselves under government, is the preservation of their property; to which in the state of Nature there are many things wanting.[21]

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[19] Ibid., p. 89.

[20] Roelofs, op.cit., p. 64.

[21] Locke, op.cit., p. 139.

The obvious thrust of this statement is that government is established to protect property, and not to threaten it. Men join societies only because they cannot protect their property in the state of nature. Hence, if men join a society, and create a government based on their own consent, then any government which unduly restrains men or endangers their property may be destroyed; it is illegitimate.

Roelofs summarizes the thought of Locke in the following manner,

> The main tenets of Liberalism are an overriding assertion of the claims of the Protestant-Bourgeois individual, the purely consequential rights and obligations of governments, and an elusive conception of society.[22]

The writings of Locke and innumerable other liberal thinkers provided the impetus for the struggle for greater individual freedom in Europe. It was a struggle in Europe. When Lockian liberalism was brought to America by colonists the outcome was quite different. As Hartz showed, liberalism was unleashed in America like it never was in Europe. It is to the implications of Lockian liberalism's free play in America that attention is now turned.

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[22]Roelofs, op.cit., p. 61.

AMERICAN IDEOLOGY AND AMERICAN MYTH: CAPITALISM AND PROTESTANTISM

Even the least acquisitive man must have had severe temptations to avarice when he arrived in America. It was all here! Just waiting. The case was much the same for Protestant man, who operated on a clear plan (if there was Puritan dogmatism there was also Rhode Island). More fertile ground never existed for Lockian liberalism that that provided in America.

But the operation of Lockian liberalism was destined to undergo strange transformations in America. The Lockain argument was essentially clinched from the outset. On the American continent there was no government to be overcome or restrained, and capitalism's triumph over Protestantism in Europe was a given, from which Americans proceeded.

The factor which will be most emphasized in this discussion of American ideology and American myth is the impact of the American environment on the manner in which ideology and myth operated and legitimated, respectively. Much of this discussion will be undertaken in terms of Roelofs' discussion of ideology and myth.

American interpretation and implementation of Locke's thought had pervasive influence: from describing the proper nature of one-to-one relationships to describing the ideal relationship of government to man. The development of transactionism was an important consequence of the emphasis

on individualism shared by Lockian liberalism and Protestantism. Quid pro quo emerged as [the] dominant in relationships between equal individualism.

Roelofs speaks to the fundamental problem of Americans as they attempted to interpret and operationalize the thought of Locke when he states,

> When Locke talked of every man, they thought he meant every man. How were they to know that he meant every middle class English gentleman? What could they know of the social context he assumed, . . ? The most important example of this process is the way in which Americans took Locke's prime declaration that men are created equal, a point he put mainly in abstract terms, and stretched it into an absolute declaration of egalitarianism.[23]

Roelofs makes this point perhaps too categorically. Even as Roelofs concedes, this egalitarianism did not extend at the outset to women, children, slaves, indentured servants, or Indians.

America's devotion to egalitarianism has always been a mythic one. This is to say, according to Roelofs' view of myth, that America's commitment to egalitarianism is not an operative idea, but instead has its roots in America's larger non-operative Protestant myth. Egalitarianism in America has basically consisted of a belief that 'all men are equal in the eyes of God.' In an operative sense, that is, in actual ideological terms, American egalitarianism has been watered down to an emphasis on 'equality of opportunity.' Which is to presume that all the runners were

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[23] Ibid., pp. 68-70.

at the starting line when the starter fired the gun (a presumption that is demonstrably false). The distinction between America's bourgeois emphasis on 'equality of opportunity' and Protestant America's belief in egalitarianism is shot through all American life. An example of this distinction is the employer who drinks with his employees (because in the egalitarian sense he likes them and values their camaraderie), then drives home to a mansion (because in the 'equality of opportunity' race he has been more fleet than his employees). This man may not think about the contradictory beliefs he holds. But if he did he would note that the bourgeois belief in 'equality of opportunity' is the idea that is operative in his life. Since he cannot actually behave in compliance with both the bourgeois and Protestant conceptions of egalitarianism he must choose between the two. In America that decision has come down overwhelmingly on the bourgeois side of the fence. The fact that both the Protestant and bourgeois instinct are present in the national political mind of America has led Roelofs to speak of the 'Protestant-bourgeois syndrome' in the American political mind.

This syndrome, unified by the shared emphasis of Protestantism and liberalism on the individual, is at the very base of the American political mind. The power of the bourgeois ethic is explosively active. Protestantism in America inherited European Protestantism's weak and noisy

mythic role. The bourgeois ethic dominated all human interests and interaction. As Roelofs notes, "All human relationships must be reducible to mutually satisfying pay-offs, transactions in which quid for me matches quo for you."[24]

In early America, with a vast continent to be conquered (and the bourgeois assumption that it should be conquered), American bourgeois man was turned loose--almost. Roelofs speaks of American bourgeois man unleashed on the American continent as he states,

> On the one hand he was Bourgeois man, and in the American environment there was virtually no stopping him. The land awaited his coming and the laws and government were made for him, a man on the make, to use Woodrow Wilson's words. The record of his reckless achievement in this country is amazing. So is the cost. And this has not been lost on him, because wherever Bourgeois man went, his Protestant shadow went also.[25]

But it was only a shadow. A shadow does not control the actions of the man. It cannot turn the man around. The earlier cited analogy of the parking brake may be counter-posed to Roelofs' 'shadow.' Although the parking brake could not turn around the direction of European history, it did, for a time, serve as a Protestant restraint on bourgeois behavior. If nothing else, its presence was audible. Such is not the case of the Protestant shadow

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[24] Ibid., pp. 64-65.

[25] Ibid., p. 75.

which attends the operation of America's bourgeois liberalism. Roelofs' analogy is right on target. American bourgeois man is not restrained by his shadow, but neither can he escape it. It is there if he cares to notice it, and sometimes when he would rather not be troubled by its moral and ethical expectations.

In addition to those effects on human interaction and individual activity which have just been described, Lockian liberalism had important American consequences in describing the proper realm of governmental activity. Proceeding from Locke's contention that government is created in order to protect private property, the Founding Fathers constructed a hamstrung and unresponsive national government. Without regard to Locke's social context the Founding Fathers created a national government which could not move quickly, or at the instigation of mass opinion, to endanger private property. The interest of the Founding Fathers in protecting private property was certainly well rooted in Lockian thought, but as Charles Beard pointed out, Locke's proposed strictures on Government power meshed well with the bourgeois propensities of the Founding Fathers. Dye and Ziegler, via Beard, present in Table 1 a listing of the economic interests of the Founding Fathers. No 'false consciousness' here.

Table 1

Founding Fathers Classified by Known Membership in Elite Groups[26]

Public Security Interests		Real Estate and Land	Lending and	Mercantile Mfg. and	Planters Slave
Major	Minor	Speculation	Investment	Shipping	holde
Baldwin	Bassett	Blount	Bassett	Broom	Butler
Blair	Blount	Dayton	Broom	Clymer	Davies
Clymer	Brearley	Few	Butler	Ellsworth	Jenifer
Dayton	Broom	Fitzsimons	Carroll	Fitzsimons	A. Mart
Ellsworth	Butler	Franklin	Clymer	Gerry	L. Mart
Fitzsimons	Carroll	Gerry	Davie	King	Mason
Gerry	Few	Gilman	Dickinson	Langdon	Mercer
Gilman	Hamilton	Gorham	Ellsworth	McHenry	C. C. Pi
Gorham	L. Martin	Hamilton	Few	Mifflin	C. Pinc
Jenifer	Mason	Mason	Fitzsimons	G. Morris	Randolp
Johnson	Mercer	R. Morris	Franklin	R. Morris	Read
King	Mifflin	Washington	Gilman		Rutledg
Langdon	Read	Williamson	Ingersoll		Spaight
Lansing	Spaight	Wilson	Johnson		Washing
Livingston	Wilson		King		Wythe
McClurg	Wythe		Langdon		
R. Morris			Mason		
C. C. Pinckney			McHenry		
C. Pinckney			C. C. Pinckney		
Randolph			C. Pinckney		
Sherman			Randolph		
Strong			Read		
Washington			Washington		
Williamson			Williamson		

Much of Beard's An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States was attacked and discredited by Robert E. Brown in Charles Beard and the Constitution. But if Beard missed the point from a methodological standpoint, Brown misses it from a substantive standpoint.

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[26]Thomas R. Dye, and L. Harmon Ziegler, The Irony of Democracy: An Uncommon Introduction to American Politics (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., Inc., 1972), p. 37.

For while Beard ascribes too much concern for the self-interest of property owners and merchants to the Founding Fathers, conversely Brown underrates property as a concern of the Founding Fathers. Given what both Hartz and Roelofs have intimated about the nature of America's irrational devotion to, and unique interpretation of, Locke, it seems conceivable that Beard and Brown find the Founding Fathers too guileful or too guileless, respectively. As Roelofs points out, Locke's emphasis on mixed government as a means of cooling mass passion and protecting property was given an interesting twist in America,

> . . . once again Locke's American readers missed the saving assumptions of context, took his teachings literally, and stretched his theorems to the verge of absurdity. The logic of Locke's system was a hope of functionally delineated branches. The logic of the American reading of his words was every branch of government for itself, and the devil take the hind-most. This logic prevails even today.[27]

As Dye and Ziegler state,

> If the checks and balances system seems to handcuff government, make it easy for established groups to oppose change, and make it difficult . . . to exercise authority over private interests, then the system is working as intended.[28]

It is indeed working as intended, but its operation would be more appropriate to the time and situation of Locke than to

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[27]Roelofs, op. cit., p. 73.

[28]Dye and Ziegler, op.cit., p. 243.

the environment in which American government was framed. The obvious reticence of the Founding Founders in regard to strong and responsive government is even further accentuated when it is recalled that the Antifederalists almost succeeded in defeating ratification of the Constitution on the grounds that the government it created was too powerful.

The consequence of the American interpretation of Locke, whether intended or not, was to simultaneously guarantee the continuance of bourgeois activity while denuding the vast majority of Americans of meaningful political power. How is the average American to have any impact on American national government aside from choosing among the successful bourgeois men who fill the offices of the White House and the Congress?

The result of the powerlessness of the average American has been to lead him into other outlets for his bourgeois, transactionist inclinations, and has brought his Protestant fervor to bear on government. As Roelofs points out, contrasting the American citizen to the American politicians,

> On the other hand there is the American citizen, the central figure in American politics. He also is a man divided against himself. But unlike the American politician, he has little power. He therefore works out his bourgeois proclivities in his private occupations. In politics, he is free to be a saint. It is in the broad and relatively powerless democratic base of American politics that Protestantism, with its

> enthusiasm, hope, and despair, is given free rein. There it springs up eternally to castigate rascals, cheer champions, and dream of great works to come.[29]

But Protestantism, for all its emotive power, is myth, not ideology. The clash over whether Protestantism or bourgeois liberalism would become the operative ideology of American political life was decided long before there ever was a United States. Protestantism was quickly, if unwittingly, demoted to mythic status in the years following the Protestant Reformation. While the materialist avarice of bourgeois man was distasteful, or even sinful, in the view of Protestantism, Protestantism shared too much common ground with the bourgeois spirit to effectively blunt that spirit. With its emphasis on individualism and egalitarianism, Protestantism was very poorly armed to deal with a bourgeois ideology which emphasized, in degrees, the same things. As Roelofs comments,

> The contest in America between Bourgeois man and Protestant man is a draw. As a result, the tensions between them go on, and in the thin cultural environment of America they thrash, rage, and grow. Their tensions are not between opposing parties or opposing people. They are soul-racking tensions inside the national political mind we all inhabit. . . . Moreover, their presence in our political life is direct and important, and not just by way of those Protestant crusades with political overtones.[30]

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[29] Roelofs, op.cit., p. 78.

[30] Ibid., pp. 77-78.

CONCLUSION AND AGENDA

This discussion has now progressed to the point where it can state the finding which was implied in the opening of this chapter: American myth and American ideology are, by virtue of their substantive content, irreconcilably contradictory.

Put quite simply, it is patently absurd for Americans to believe, or harbor expectations, that America's national government has, or will, operate on the basis of Protestant ethics. There is not a shred of evidence to justify these beliefs or expectations. The most forceful role Protestantism could have played in America would have consisted of restraining the bourgeois individual which Locke sought to unleash. The possibility of Protestantism playing this role was virtually obviated by the evolution of European Protestant thought into a stance which justified capitalist economic activity.

Recalling Chapter I it can now be said that a legitimating coalescence between America's bourgeois liberal ideology and America's Protestant myth is an unlikely outcome of their relationship. But just such a coalescence is required by the exigencies of maintaining the legitimacy of American ideology and American national government.

During the 1960s the disparity between America's operative ideology and America's non-operative myth became

apparent (though not in those terms) to many Americans. The 1960s witnessed an almost unprecedented (the Civil War being a notable exception) attack on the legitimacy of American national government. This attack ranged over questions of the foreign policy manifestations of bourgeois liberalism, critiques of the values of bourgeois society, and attacks against an unresponsive national government which was a classic manifestation of Lockian American liberalism. All this criticism and discontent resulted from the lack of congruence between American political expectations (formed by myth) and American political actualities (shaped and guided by ideology). This attack was, in its most superficial intellectual form, responsible for some reform efforts. But probing minds struck, at least intellectually, at those very bourgeois liberal views of government and man which are at the very base of American government and society. Why were so many caught up in reform, and so few in revolution? And why were so many more at home in front of an air conditioner 'sitting it out?'

The point is that legitimacy is in 'the eye of the beholder.' What this chapter has attempted to convey is the idea that American ideology and American national government are legitimate only in the minds of those Americans who will not open their eyes and minds to what is going on around them. In the next chapter it will be seen that a combination of ideological, mythic, and historical factors

have consistently prevented Americans from recognizing and acting upon the irreconcilable contradiction between American ideology and American myth. Further, we will consider the reasons that it is so difficult for Americans to sustain the vision and action necessary to deal, in a sustained manner, with this irreconcilability.

Chapter III

DENIAL

As was discussed in the previous chapter, American myth and American ideology are irreconcilably contradictory. To what may we attribute their on-going, uncomfortable relationship? From a purely theoretical perspective it would seem reasonable to expect this irreconcilability to issue into denunciations of American national government as illegitimate. Given the importance of legitimating coalescence of ideology and myth as necessary for legitimacy, this study confronts a major question. If American myth and American ideology are irreconcilably contradictory, how can American government be viewed as legitimate.

The answer, as the Conclusion of Chapter II indicated, seems to be that legitimacy is in the 'eye of the beholder.' Either Americans do not recognize this irreconcilability or they, for various reasons, choose to deny or ignore it. This chapter will explore the question of the failure of Americans to recognize, understand, and act upon the irreconcilability of American myth and American ideology.

PROTESTANT MYTH AND AMERICAN POLITICS

In discussing the Protestant-bourgeois syndrome, Roelofs makes the distinction between the pious individual

liberated by the Reformation and the secular individual liberated by liberalism. He states,

> The task of pious man is to find, meet, and come to terms with that which is wholly other than the self, namely God. The terms are absolute adoration and service to God and absolute abnegation of the self. To meet these terms requires total dedication of the self to search for them. Even then they are not found, until, at the point of despair, all faith in self if lost and through the intervention of grace faith in God is granted. . . . The task of the secular man is much more concerned with the power of the self. Life is an opportunity to demonstrate personal potency and subdue nature. The secular man is a materialist in the sense that his material product records his progress best.[1]

In Chapter II the incomplete synthesis of these two views of man was traced. Capitalism, due to the traits of thrift and diligence which were emphasized by Protestant asceticism, achieved an uneasy peace with Protestantism. But Protestantism's strictures on the enjoyment of wealth--or in Roelofs' terms the 'power of the self'--were the price of Protestantism's acquiescence in bourgeois activity.

America's Protestant myth has had much the same view of American politics. Protestant myth has led most Americans to take a dim view of politicians who seek personal self-aggrandizement, and--with the exception of brief periods of crusading--has frowned on America's national bellicosity. An important observation would be that America's Protestant myth has seemingly evolved into an amorphous,

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[1]H. Mark Roelofs, Ideology and Myth in American Politics: A Critique of a National Political Mind (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1976), p. 58.

yet powerful and fervid, moralism and pietism. Recalling Roelofs' conception of myth we can see that America's moralistic myth cannot initiate political action. Rather it may influence American politics by its expectations of the outcomes and outputs of American politics. In the case of American politics this sort of 'restraint through expected outcomes' boils down to a rather rudimentary demand that politicians and the political system 'do what's right.'

This sort of expectation of American national politics, however incongruous it may seem, is nonetheless a powerful normative yardstick, and to the extent that American politics is effected by American myth it is through this expectation. In fact, Americans do understand their national politics in terms of this moralistic American myth. That Americans are capable of expressing moralist expectation about a government based on bourgeois liberalism and then proclaim governmental outputs as being based on these expectations is quite remarkable. This is all the more surprising when it is recalled that America's national governmental system is predicated on American interpretation of the bourgeois liberal thought of Locke, and that the system was arranged in such a manner so as to limit and fragment the input of average, moralistic American citizens.

Much of this chapter will be devoted to an exploration of the absence of meaningful points of entry for mythic

morals into American national politics. It will be shown that Americans, thinking, in terms of moralistic myth may--much like a referee--attempt to enforce a few rules, but they can't change the game being played, nor have they had much luck at punishing those players who decide to play as if there is no referee.

PROTESTANT-MORAL INPUTS: WHERE AND HOW?

It was shown in Chapter II that the separation of powers, thought by many to be a means of protecting Americans from government, has actually had the effect of limiting access by America's mass citizenry to the government. This section of the study will discuss 'consent and obligation' and 'elections' as additional obstacles to significant input of American mythic expectation into the operation of American national politics. As will be shown, these tenets of American politics, which presumably are gates through which Americans are provided an opportunity to articulate their expectations, quite effectively block mythic demands on American government and politics.

Consent and Obligation

John Locke, speaking of the manner in which men form political societies, states,

> Men being, as has been said, by nature all free, equal and independent, no one can be put out of this

> estate and subjected to the political power of another without his own consent, . . ."[2]

For Locke and for Americans a basic element of their belief in popular government is the idea of government by consent. The idea that government can legitimately rule only on the basis of consent of the governed was at the heart of Locke's system of restraints on the power of government.

The Founding Fathers adopted Locke's view of consent as a means of asserting that government was ultimately accountable to the governed. History has confounded their belief in government by consent.

Joseph Tussman, in Obligation and the Body Politic, draws an interesting distinction between the Americans of 1787-89 and those of 1978. He writes,

> The difference is roughly the difference between becoming a charter member and becoming a member of going concern, between forming a body politic and joining an already existing body politic.[3]

Tussman's point is that few Americans ever formally give their consent to American government. He points this out through the use of a distinction between native and naturalized citizens,

> Let us consider the case of the person, not born a citizen of the United States, who, through the process of naturalization, becomes a member of the body

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[2]John Locke, John Locke on Politics and Education, comp. Howard R. Penniman (New York: Walter J. Black, 1947) p. 123.

[3]Joseph Tussman, Obligation and the Body Politic (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 33.

> politic in full standing. At the threshold of citizenship he is called upon to give and does give explicit consent. . . . For the naturalized citizen, therefore, the question 'when did I agree?' has a clear and easy answer. At a particular time and place he gave his express consent. But for the native citizen the problem seems more difficult. We commonly distinguish the minor from the adult citizen, but we seem to drift or grow into full citizenship without ceremony.[4]

This distinction is not a word game being played by a coy disputant. Locke wrestled with the same problem of tacit consent. Locke addressed the problem of tacit consent from the standpoint of rebutting Filmer's assertion that men don't have, and can't have, any say about the government or society into which they are born. To Filmer's call for resignation and obediance to extant authority, Locke counterposed the idea of tacit consent as a means of maintaining his view of the natural freedom of men. Locke writes,

> Every man being, as has been showed, naturally free, and nothing being able to put him into subjection to any earthly power, but only his own consent, it is to be considered what shall be understood to be a sufficient declaration of a man's consent to make him subject to the laws of any government. There is a common distinction between an express and a tacit consent, which will concern our present case. . . . And to this I say, that every man that hath any possession or enjoyment of any part of the dominions of any government doth hereby give his tacit consent, . . .[5]

The idea of tacit consent seems to have less relevance today. This is due to the fact that few Americans have an

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[4] Ibid., p. 34.

[5] Locke, op.cit., p. 135.

alternative to the obligation that tacit consent, or any consent, implies. Obligation is the other side of the coin of consent.

The importance of the present discussion of consent and obligation lies in what it can disclose about the ability of Americans to withdraw consent from American government when they find its operation--and the ideology by which it operates--has lost congruence with American myth. But do Americans have the right to withdraw their consent?

This question can be addressed in several situational contexts. One obvious way an American can withdraw consent from American government is to renounce citizenship and leave the country. For Locke this is the primary way of withdrawing consent. As Locke writes,

> . . . he is at liberty to go and incorporate himself into any other commonwealth, or agree with others to begin a new one in vacuis locis, in any part of the world they can find free and unpossessed; . . .[6]

But where is the 'empty place' to which disgruntled Americans may retire? More important for our discussion of mythic inputs into American politics, the 'Love it or leave it' options of government by consent in America provide almost no room for mythic inputs or expressions of total disatisfaction.

A second means of withdrawing consent involves withdrawing consent and staying put. A systematic and sweeping

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[6] Ibid., p. 137.

withdrawal of consent by the states of the Confederacy provoked the American Civil War. To withdraw consent, and behave in accordance with that withdrawal, while remaining in the United States is, by almost any standard, a risky business.

A third way that Americans may manifest their withdrawal of consent is to refuse to carry out the obligations which attend membership in the American body politic. Speaking of obligation as the corollary of consent, Dawson and Prewitt state,

> . . . the remarkable thing about democracies is that in assuming a policy of contingent obligation they generate so few problems of disaffection and withdrawal. The reason for this is that most nations do not permit the citizen's sense of obligation to be contingent.[7]

If consent can theoretically be withdrawn, then obligation is theoretically contingent. Contingent obligation, simply put, means that citizens may refuse to fulfill obligations which they find objectionable. When they refuse the responsibility of obligation, they are, by implication, stating that government has violated the terms of the agreement to consent. This relationship of citizen to government bears the unmistakable marks of the contractual, bourgeois mentality.

The important point for this study is that obligation ceases to be contingent, just as consent becomes

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[7]Richard E. Dawson, and Kenneth Prewitt, Political Socialization (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1969), p. 212.

non-withdrawable, as soon as an American has enjoyed any fruits of citizenship. A recent example of this fact is that American draft resisters who stated that they could not consent to, hence would not accept the obligation to serve in, the Vietnam War, were imprisoned. The odd dilemma of Americans dealing with the entire question of consent and obligation can be captured in one example. One way in which Americans 'enjoy' the fruits of citizenship, and hence become obligated to the American body politic, is through the use of America's free public educational system. The first eight years are compulsory.

Given the sanctions facing Americans who withdraw their consent while insisting on staying in the country it would seem that government by consent, as operationalized, militates against withdrawal of consent as an efficacious means by which Americans may express mythic opposition to American politics or American ideology.

Elections

In the previous chapter the role of the separation of powers in limiting inputs into government from the mass citizenry was discussed. The crucial point in discussing the separation of powers is not that this arrangement closes down mass input, but rather it fragments the impact of that input. As Roelofs points out, the separation of powers sets each branch of government at war with each other. This does not make for particularly responsive government. This

arrangement, which has left the American voter largely powerless and 'unresponsible' (in the sense that the voter is not entrusted with much power), has as a consequence made the American voter 'irresponsible' in expressing mythic, moral expectations of American national government.

Some Americans have criticized American elections by saying that Americans are not participating in direct decision-making through elections. But as Schumpeter points out,

> . . . we now take the view that the role of the people is to produce a government, or else an intermediate body which in turn will produce a national executive or government. And we define: the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of competitive struggle for the people's vote.[8]

It is not the fact of electing decision-makers rather than voting on national referenda on issues which has hobbled Protestant-moralistic input into American national government. Rather, it is in the fragmentation and diffusion of the electoral process that myth is weakened. As Dye and Ziegler point out,

> . . . a complete renewal of government by popular vote at one stroke is impossible. The House is chosen for two years; the Senate is chosen for six, but not in one election, for one third go out every two years. The President is chosen every four years, but judges of the Supreme Court hold office for life. Thus the people

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[8]Joseph A. Schumpeter, Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy (Harper and Brothers Publishers: New York, 1950), p. 269.

> are restrained from working immediate havoc through direct elections; they must wait for years in order to make their will felt in all of the decision-making bodies of the national government.[9]

The importance of the American voter's electoral input into national government is further mitigated by the few choices in candidates presented them. As Lowi states,

> Centricity prevails, first of all, because the candidates give the voters no choice but centricity. Even if the pools did not tilt responses in favor of moderation, the candidates would. They hang together so closely around a mean that voters must vote for a middle-of-the-road position or stay home.[10]

Lowi asserts that widely used polling practices evoke responses which are moderate due to lack of specificity on complex issues, and an inadequate scale of alternative responses to questions.

Voter impact on legislators may vary widely depending upon how each legislator views his role. As Ripley notes,

> At the one pole are members who perceive themselves to be 'delegates'--that is, individuals who are simply instructed in one way or another by their constituents how to behave and how to vote and who willingly do it. At the other pole are members who perceive themselves to be 'trustees'--that is, they consider constituency opinion and makeup as they understand it but they take final responsibility for reaching decisions, on the grounds that they hold the welfare of their constituency

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[9]Thomas R. Dye, and L. Harmon Ziegler, The Irony of Democracy: An Uncommon Introduction to American Politics (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., Inc., 1972), p. 51.

[10]Theodore J. Lowi, cited in Conflict and Consensus in Modern American History, ed. by Allen F. Davis, and Harold D. Woodman (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Co., 1972), p. 412.

> in trust and should do what is best for the constituency regardless of the constituents' own perceptions or misperceptions.[11]

Centricity, various perceptions of roles by legislators, and the exigencies of being elected all help to explain

> . . . the paradox of political quiescence in the midst of social disorder. When they can, politicians avoid polarized issues; when avoidance becomes impossible, they lump controversies together and thus cancel out the extremes. This is probably the controlling reason why American electoral and party politics are so stable, and so isolated from the big issues of the day.[12]

The voters may change the players, albeit not all at once, but more important, they can't change the game.

Not only are Protestant-moralistic inputs largely powerless, irrelevant and unwanted in American bourgeois politics but when they are expressed through the voting act they play a surprisingly supportive role in the system they seek to influence. Milnor, in Elections and Political Stability, writes,

> It is through elections that members of a polity have the opportunity to express their acceptance of the decisions of party or elite, and to endorse the formal structure of the political system as a viable method for making acceptable decisions.[13]

As Milnor indicates, the voting act is ultimately a legitimating act. Even the most dictatorial governments have recognized the utility of allowing their citizens to

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[12]Lowi, op.cit., p. 414.

[13]Andrew J. Milnor, Elections and Political Stability (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1969), p. 1.

validate their structure and activity through elections. He later asserts, "Commitments of the population to support government, expressed through the act of voting for its leadership, lead directly to government power, or as it will be called here, governmental capacity."[14]

Milnor calls attention to the American party system when he states, regarding voting for a party,

> . . . insofar as that party is also a party which agrees to act within the confines of the government, to accept in short the prevailing political system, the voter is also casting his vote in favor of the political system and against those who would change it. The voter, then, has executed an exchange not only with his own party preference but also with his own political system, and that process of exchange may be vastly important.[15]

It is important to note that given the current state of the American political system there exist no politically significant parties that are committed to changing 'the prevailing political system.' Hence, most votes in American elections become votes of support. Even votes cast as moral inputs turn into supports.

Easton and Dennis point out that voters provide, through the act of voting, both 'specific' and 'diffuse' support of the political system. They state,

> The rewards and disadvantages of membership may be attributed to something that those thought to be responsible for making decisions do or fail to do. The responses of the members are in part a quid pro quo

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[14] Ibid., p. 5.

[15] Ibid., p. 6.

> for what they see themselves as obtaining from membership in the system. In this sense the support the members extend is specific.[16]

Specific support is, then, the archetypical sort of 'what's in it for me?' approach to American politics.

A second type of support, implicit in the act of voting, is explained by Dennis and Easton as they state,

> By diffuse support we mean the generalized trust and confidence that members invest in the various objects of the system as ends in themselves. The peculiar quality of this kind of attachment to an object is that it is not contingent on any quid pro quo; it is offered unconditionally.[17]

This sort of diffuse support is heightened in the American case by the natural affinity of Protestantism for the democratic process. As Schumpeter notes,

> . . . Christianity harbors a strong equalitarian element. The Redeemer died for all: He did not differentiate between individuals of different social status. In doing so, He testified to the intrinsic value of the individual soul, a value that admits of no gradations. Is not this a sanction . . . of 'everyone to count for one, no one to count for more than one.'[18]

With this shared emphasis on the individual, which permeates the Protestant-bourgeois syndrome, the case against a meaningful Protestant attack on Americans politics and America's electoral system, even when that system violates or betrays Protestant expectation, is clinched.

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[16]Jack Dennis and David Easton, Children in the Political System: Origins of Political Legitimacy (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1969), p. 61.

[17]Ibid., pp. 62-63.

[18]Schumpeter, op.cit., pp. 265-266.

It is important to recall that although Protestant-moralistic American myth has no meaningful input in terms of withdrawing consent, refusing obligations, or through elections, Americans still expect bourgeois liberalism, as operationalized through the American national political system, to produce outcomes which achieve congruence with Protestant-moralistic myth.

This study has thus far examined the manner in which American myth has been precluded from becoming politically operative (ideological) in American national politics. If Protestant ethics have little change for meaningful participation in the bourgeois liberal politics of America, how then can Americans continue to believe, understand, and proclaim that American government and politics produce outputs which achieve congruence with these ethics?

The answer is, not all Americans do believe, understand, and proclaim that American politics operates on the basis of Protestant-moralistic ethics. These Americans (though they would not put it this way) have recognized that American myth and American ideology are irreconcilably contradictory. What fate awaits those who think and act in accordance with this discovery?

OUTSIDE THE SYSTEM: DAMNED AND DEFENSELESS

If Protestant-moralistic inputs are not politically operative within the American political system, what alternatives present themselves to the disgruntled Protestant man? Quiet resignation is one alternative. But this has not been a hallmark of America's Protestant myth. Roelofs speaks of the power of Protestant myth by returning to Luther's view of the relationship of God and man. He states,

> By recovering Biblical Christianity's concern for salvation achieved through a personalized confrontation between man and God, Luther outraged the medieval world. He threatened not only that world's theological principles but the substructure of its social order as well. But Luther's conceptions of man and his tasks in this life went beyond even these threats. Luther was revolutionizing the very quality of the self's being. A man who could declair, 'Here I stand! I can do no other!' is doing more than braving the wrath of popes and princes. He is putting his fist into the wind.[19]

Luther states,

> . . . it is impossible that anyone would write well of it or well understand what is correctly written of it, unless he has at some time tasted the courage faith gives a man when trials oppress him.[20]

For those who eventually recognize, against considerable odds, that American myth and American ideology are irreconcilably contradictory, and act accordingly, American politics holds a number of rude shocks. A discussion of the

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[19] Roelofs, op.cit., p. 56.

[20] Ibid., pp. 51-52.

political fate awaiting the moralist outside the American political system returns us to the ideas of Louis Hartz.

Damned

Hartz's concern that American devotion to Lockian liberalism is irrational in its unanimity and tenacity is recalled when Hartz states,

> Here is a doctrine which everywhere in the West has been a glorious symbol of individual liberty, yet in America its compulsive power has become so great that it has posed a threat to liberty itself. Actually Locke has a hidden conformitarian germ to begin with, since natural law tells equal people equal things, but when this germ is fed by the explosive power of modern nationalism, it mushrooms into something pretty remarkable.[21]

As was seen in the previous chapter, the name 'Americanism' has been attached to the Lockian liberal creed in this country. How much room does this leave for Protestant-moralistic man who finds America's bourgeois political system as impossibly immoral and unresponsive system?

As Tussman states,

> We are not unfamiliar with the spirit which takes orthodoxy as loyalty and which considers disagreement with or criticism or rejection of certain common beliefs as disloyalty. It is this demand for uncritical acceptance which gives to the life of the intellectual its distinctive tension.[22]

The context from which Tussman and Hartz write is the McCarthy era. This McCarthyist response to an imagined

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[21]Louis Hartz, The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1955), p. 11.

[22]Tussman, op.cit., p. 48.

communist challenge to the bourgeois liberal American political system gave ample evidence of the power of American society in dealing with those suspected of less than total loyalty to the political order. It can only be, and is, worse for those who really seek to influence or transform the operation of American politics from outside the system. Slain Black Panthers are but one example of what American society is capable of doing in response to perceived threats to its political order.

Defenseless

As Hartz points out, the almost unanimous adherence of Americans to Lockian liberalism effectively precludes the existence of alternative ideological rallying points for Protestant-moralistic man. Un-American activities are, given liberalism's monopolistic status as "Americanism' in operation, any activities which do not involve devotion to, or involvement in, American bourgeois politics. Liberalism transformed into Americanism allows few challenges. As Hartz states, " . . . when a liberal community faces military or ideological pressure from without it transforms eccentricity into sin."[23] If Americanism is clearly the virtue, then what is the nature of ideological eccentricity? In fact, in America, ideological eccentricity (by attempting to operationalize mythic expectations) is a sin. Further, and more

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[23]Hartz, op.cit., p. 12.

important, ideological eccentricity is bound to relegate one to a lonely and largely ineffectual role. Most Americans simply are not equipped to respond favorably, or even neutrally, to ideological alternatives to American bourgeois liberalism. In America, the socialist and the rightist are likely to share lives of alienation and frustration. In contrast, those who accept the bourgeois liberal political system as they find it are likely to be achievers in American society. As Hartz writes, "But the point remains: if Fitzhugh and De Leon were crucified by the American general will, John Marshall and John Dewey flourished in consequence of their crucifixion."[24]

CONCLUSION AND AGENDA

In this chapter it has been seen that several basic tenets of American politics: government on the basis of consent, contingent obligation, and popular elections, provide few opportunities for Protestant-moralistic inputs into the system of American bourgeois politics. In fact, although the demands and expectations of American myth are not necessarily welcome and clearly not powerful in the American political system, the articulation of these mythic expectations through the voting act provides support to the American political system.

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[24]Hartz, op.cit., p. 10.

The absence of meaningful points of mythic entry into the American political system again verifies the assertion that American myth and American ideology are irreconcilably contradictory. We have seen however, that recognition of this irreconcilability--and political activity in accordance with this recognition--may have serious consequences. Not only is extra-systemic political activity likely to evoke societal opprobrium, it is also likely to be largely ineffectual.

How then can Americans expect that their Protestant-moralistic expectations are really being turned into Protestant-moralistic outputs by a bourgeois liberal political system? Seemingly, Americans either do not recognize, or deny recognizing, the irreconcilability of American myth and American ideology. Those Americans who have seriously attempted to impose America's mythic standards on American politics almost surely have recognized this irreconcilability. But acting upon this recognition holds no possibility of broad societal acceptance and less chance of real political efficacy.

How do Americans deal with this uncomfortable situation? This study asserts that they view amoral or immoral political behavior as an aberration. This view is likely to look for personal shortcomings among politicians as a way of avoiding criticism of the structure and values of America's political system.

In order to illustrate this assertion, the following chapter of this study will consider three explanations of the causes of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. These three explanations, which may be termed the quagmire explanation, the groupthink hypothesis, and the evil man thesis will be discussed as a means of explaining and illustrating the denial of the existence of the irreconcilable contradiction between American myth and American ideology. It will also examine societal response to those Americans who recognized this irreconcilability and as a consequence of this recognition attacked the legitimacy of American ideology and American national government.

Chapter IV

DENIAL: THE VIETNAM EXPERIENCE

Sam Brown, who from 1969-1970 was Coordinator of the Vietnam Moratorium Committee, and who now serves as the Carter administration's head of ACTION, writes in his article, "The Defeat of the Antiwar Movement,"

> The headlines about demonstrations and trials implied that great events were taking place. And they were, as antiwar activists finally helped make the war an issue for all America. The movement was worthwhile for its impact at the height of American involvement in Vietnam . . . . Yet our protests against the war had a broader purpose, and we failed. For we seem to have had little lasting influence on the nature either of American society or its approach to the world.[1]

The title and content of Brown's article reflect his insight into America's Vietnam experience. The moral outrage of American myth had little impact on American Vietnam policy and hardly layed a glove on America's bourgeois liberal ideology.

This chapter will explore the ways in which many Americans recognized without understanding, and consequently denied, the irreconcilable contradiction between American ideology and American myth. It must be noted at the outset

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[1]Sam Brown, "The Defeat of the Antiwar Movement," in The Vietnam Legacy: The War, American Society and the Future of American Foreign Policy, ed. by Anthony Lake (New York: New York University Press, 1976), p. 120.

that this exploration involves no plans for a chronological treatment of the growth of American disaffection with U.S. Vietnam policy, nor will it undertake anything resembling an analysis of that Vietnam policy. Rather than discussing the 'realities' of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, this study will explore the 'cognitive and perceptual realities' of the American political mind as it grappled with the implications of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. These implications became more troublesome to Americans as American myth attempted to explain and justify U.S. Vietnam policy.

The central assertion of this chapter is that during U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, and since that involvement ended, Americans recognized, misunderstood, and consequently denied the existence of the irreconcilable contradiction between American ideology and American myth. As a means of illustrating this assertion, attention will be given to three explanations of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. These explanations hold, in varying degrees, that U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War was an aberration, with little significance for or relationship to typical American politics. These explanations may be termed the quagmire explanation, the groupthink hypothesis, and the evil man thesis.

Before turning attention to these explanations this chapter will trace the growing lack of congruity between

American ideology and American myth in regard to U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War.

IRRECONCILABILITY REVISITED

The irreconcilability of American ideology and American myth fully emerged during U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. In 1966 J. William Fulbright wrote,

> The inconstancy of American foreign policy is not an accident but an expression of two distinct sides of the American character. . . . After twenty-five years as a world power the United States must decide which of the two sides of its national character is to predominate--the humanism of Lincoln or the arrogance of those who would make America the world's policeman.[2]

The point this study makes is that the decision which Fulbright believed America must make had already been made. In fact it was made long before America became a world power. The arrogance which Fulbright notes is a by-product of America's ideology. And that ideology--bourgeois liberalism-was very much on the scene and was active in foreign affairs before the post-World War Two ascension to world power status which Fulbright notes. American adventures in Cuba, the Philippines, Panama, China, and Mexico can all be cited as extreme examples of bourgeois avarice at work prior to World War Two.

America's Vietnam failure, and the domestic tumult over U.S. involvement, are both rather singular occurences

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[2]J. William Fulbright, The Arrogance of Power (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), pp. 245-246.

in the history of American foreign policy. This study is not so much concerned with failure abroad as it is with uproar at home. The ideology which evoked the Vietnam intervention was little different from that which motivated other interventions. What is much more important for the purpose of this study is the inability of American myth to explain or justify the Vietnam intervention.

Roelofs speaks to the constant possibility that American myth may not be able to justify the activities prompted by American ideology when he states, in regard to the Protestant-bourgeois syndrome,

> Its Bourgeois side grasped and defined in its own terms the emerging nation's political institutions, virtually to the exclusion of all other considerations. The Protestant side was thus rendered, in operative political terms, impotent. But it did claim with growing success the right to define the nation's mythic self-understanding. . . . The result was--and is--an extreme of tension between ideology and myth, practice and hope, and action and conscience, that proves, often enough, more than human endurance can handle rationally. The result is that in this situation myth takes on, as if by conscious assignment, the social function of masking ideological practice. That is what we may do, but this is what we aspire to be, what we truly are. Myth becomes virtually a lie, . . .[3]

During the Vietnam War Americans confronted a policy which revealed the gross disparity between American myth and ideology. What is notable is that the disparity could not be explained away by myth. For every claim that the intervention was undertaken to maintain a democracy in

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[3]H. Mark Roelofs, Ideology and Myth in American Politics: A Critique of a National Political Mind (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1976), p. 5.

South Vietnam, there was the counterpoint of Diem, Ky and Thieu. Saigon, allegedly the last stronghold of Vietnamese freedom, bore a striking resemblance to a corrupt police state. And perhaps most irksome, the South Vietnamese did not exhibit the zeal for battle that would seemingly characterize a nation dedicated to defending its freedom and democracy.

The irreconcilability of American myth and American ideology may be more acutely evident in foreign policy matters. This is the case for two reasons. First, American foreign policy is seemingly viewed by Americans as a projection into the world arena of their own political values. Domestic policy is not so likely to be viewed in such a manner because it is not seen as one nation's policy toward another nation. Rather, domestic policy is viewed as a government policy applied to American (often applied to specific groups of Americans). Second, the President serves as the symbolic leader in American foreign policy. As Spanier and Uslaner state, "The President is nationally elected, and he, more than any other figure, represents the national mood and is spokesman for the nation's interests, domestic and foreign."[4] The President is viewed as the standard bearer of American foreign policy, and that policy is viewed by Americans as a reflection of their own values.

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[4]John Spanier and Eric M. Uslaner, How American Foreign Policy is Made (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974), p. 17.

The implications of these views of American foreign policy are important for the ways Americans judge that policy. Farm policy, for example, is not the concern of all Americans, and the success or failure of such policy is not viewed as a yardstick of the ability or worthiness of the American policy. Foreign policy, on the other hand, involves national mythic values, and these values are held up to national and international scrutiny. Hence, Americans are not likely to appreciate policy decisions that seem to reflect some lack of worthiness in America's mythic values.

This view of American foreign policy was often manifested during American involvement in Vietnam. As American mythic justifications (with emphasis on individual freedom, democracy, self-determination, development, and modernization) for U.S. involvement in Vietnam began to lose their persuasive power, Americans faced a crucial question: "Is that us doing that?" "Is U.S. policy in Vietnam a manifestation of our national values?" Put in the terms this study has used, "Is our myth a lie?"

The more these questions regarding myth were raised, the greater became the difficulty of squaring America's mythic morality with the actual prosecution of the war. Americans--at least those who recognized the lack of congruence between American myth and American ideology--answered the above questions in different ways. As the war ground on American society began to polarize on the basis of whether the above questions were answered with a 'yes' or a 'no.'

YES, THAT'S US

If what was discussed in Chapter III under the heading "Damned and Defenseless' is recalled, the theoretical view is provided by which can be understood the fate which awaited those who believed U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War was a product of a flawed political system and an immoral (or amoral) ideology on which that political system was based.

Sam Brown speaks of the division within the antiwar movement when he states, "The fundamental split was between those who saw the war as an inevitable product of our culture and economic system and those who saw it as an aberrational episode."[5] Brown states that those who viewed the war as a product of America's culture and economic system attempted to " . . . shut down the machinery of war through draft resistance, sit-ins, fasts, disruptions of troop movements, and so on."[6]

It hardly needs to be stated that draft resistance, sit-ins, and disruption of troop movements were not activities which were viewed as socially acceptable; nor were they politically efficacious since these were all extra-systemic activities. The natural extension of the view that American

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[5]Brown, op.cit., p. 123.

[6]Brown, op.cit., p. 122.

myth was a lie, and hence could not legitimate the operation of American ideology, was an attack on the legitimacy of American government and the ideology on which it is based. The activities Brown lists are such attacks.

This attack on legitimacy involved no precarious leaps of logic, but behaving in accordance with idea that American government is illegitimate requires a leap of radical courage. Deducing from the irreconcilability of American myth and American ideology that American government is, by virtue of the impossibility of coalescence of the two, illegitimate, is not difficult for probing minds. Putting one's life on the line by attacking that ideology and the government based on that ideology is another matter entirely.

The 1969 'Days of Rage' in Chicago are an example of what Americans are capable of doing when American myth no longer masks or legitimates American ideology. The 'Days of Rage' are also a good example of what American society holds in store for those who openly attack the legitimacy, and hence the authority, of American government. Bo Burlingham recounts his involvement in the 'Days of Rage' as he states,

> I have yet to encounter a single participant in that day's action who did not believe he or she was going to die on October 11, 1969, in the City of Chicago, County of Cook, State of Illinois, at the hands of the police . . . . The march lasted all of about twenty-five minutes. We trooped out of the Square, and then suddenly I heard a shout and everyone in front of me began running east on Madison Street, toward the downtown Loop. . . . There was bedlam for maybe ten minutes. Etched in my memory is an image of a Chicago riot policeman standing in a crouched position in the middle

> of the street. Two Weatherpeople charged him at top speed. At the last moment he dodged to avoid their full momentum, but even so was spun around 360 degrees, his helmet flying. As he came up, I glimpsed a look of utter terror in his face. His right hand held a pistol which he waved wildly about.[7]

What provoked such an attack on authority? Burlingham answers,

> The status quo meant to us war, poverty, inequality, ignorance, famine and disease in most of the world. To accept it was to condone and perpetuate it. We felt like miners trapped in a terrible poisonous shaft, with no light to guide us out. We resolved to destroy the tunnel even if we risked destroying ourselves in the process.[8]

The small membership of the Weathermen organization, its lack of political impact, and the manner in which it was crushed are all evidence of the basic powerlessness of American moralistic mythic inputs into American politics. Americans who recognize the irreconcilability of American ideology and American myth, and who act accordingly, are indeed damned and defenseless in American bourgeois politics.

Radical intellectuals, such as Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy, wrote cogent and probing condemnations of American Vietnam policy. Even those radical intellectuals who did not transgress the rules governing political activity in America fell prey to America's ideological unanimity. Their following was--and is--small.

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[7]Bo Burlingham, "Bringing the War Back Home," in The Sixties: The decade remembered now, by the people who lived it then, ed. by Linda Rosen Obst (New York: Random House, Inc., 1977), p. 300.

[8]Ibid.

DENIAL: THAT'S NOT REALLY US

U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War caused many Americans to see the disparity between American ideology and American myth. But as we have seen, far fewer saw myth and ideology in a permanently irreconcilable relationship. What is the distinction between recognizing the disparity and recognizing the irreconcilability of American myth and American ideology? Those who perceived disparity believed that in the case of a particular foreign policy episode--U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War--American policy had lost its congruence with American morality (myth). Those who recognized the irreconcilability believed that American moralistic myth can never achieve congruence with, and hence can never be used as a means of understanding, explaining, or justifying, the operation of American ideology.

Causes and Reasons

The distinction between those who perceived disparity between American myth and American ideology, and those who recognized their irreconcilability, is manifested in their different approaches to the question of why America became involved in the Vietnam War. This distinction between approaches may be likened to the difference between 'causes' and 'reasons' for U.S. involvement in the war.

Both these approaches proceed from the belief that America's moralistic myth has no explanatory role in

justifying U.S. involvement in the war. The point at which these two approaches to understanding U.S. involvement diverge is on the question of whether myth simply cannot explain U.S. involvement in the war, or whether myth cannot explain anything at all about American politics. If the former is true, myth is inappropriate for use as a means of understanding and proclaiming the reasons for U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. If the latter is true--as this study asserts--American myth is irrelevant for use as a means of understanding or proclaiming anything about the actual operation of American politics. The former sees the immorality of U.S. Vietnam policy as an aberrant episode, and seeks to understand the 'causes' of that episode. The latter views the operation of all American politics as based on America's bourgeois liberal ideology and sees U.S. involvement in Vietnam as an extreme, yet expected, example of 'politics as usual.' This view leads its adherents to seek social, political, or economic--in short, systemic--reasons for U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War.

This study posits the latter view. But for the purposes of this study an exploration of explanations of the 'causes' of America's 'aberrational episode' is called for.

THREE POSITED "CAUSES" OF AMERICA'S "ABERRANT" VIETNAM EPISODE: DENIAL IN THREE ACTS

Roelofs speaks of the recognition and denial of the irreconcilability of American myth and American ideology when he writes, speaking of myth,

> But the masking is never complete. The avaricious transactionism and other features of America's actual, . . . political institutions are regularly uncovered. Then the contradictions between actuality and the aspirations of myth are exposed, and the myth's 'Lincolnesque,' humanistic equalitarianism rages against what it has found. But these bouts of reactive behavior, for all the horrendous dimensions they may on occasion achieve, accomplish little. The American political mind offers few alternatives and the tendency of its political processes is always, after exhaustion, to go back to the beginning.[9]

A brief restatement of Roelofs' view can provide a good point of departure for the discussion of denial:

1. American myth and American ideology are irreconcilably contradictory. Efforts by Americans to understand or proclaim what their bourgeois liberal political activity means in terms of Protestant-moralistic myth will almost inevitably be frustrated. Americans nonetheless expect that their political system will operate on the basis of principles which will allow them to perceive Protestant-moralistic policy outputs.

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[9]Roelofs, op.cit., p. 6.

2. Involvement in the Vietnam War is a recent example of a policy that could not be viewed by many Americans as an operative manifestation of Protestant-moralistic principles.
3. Confronted with the consequent inability of American ideology and American myth to be plausibly viewed in a legitimating coalescence, some Americans attacked--physically and/or intellectually--the legitimacy of American government. But America's ideological uniformity precluded most Americans from accepting or sympathizing with these attacks on American government and its legitimacy. Those small factions which physically attacked the legitimacy of American government were crushed. Those who withdrew their consent and refused to fight in or pay for the war were imprisoned.
4. Many Americans simply lacked an intellect which was flexible and facile enough to recognize the irreconcilability of American myth and American ideology for what it is. America's fervid and nearly unanimous devotion to bourgeois liberalism precluded many from condemning a government based on such an ideology. Still others, who recognized this irreconcilability, also recognized the societal consequences of acting accordingly, and denied what they knew.

5. For many Americans ideology and myth were not viewed as irreconcilable during the war, simply out of whack. The disparity which they noted between ideology and myth was generally viewed as an aberration. In their view U.S. Vietnam policy was amoral, or perhaps even immoral, but the society and government from which it sprang were not. In this view all that was necessary was to jar American politicians back to their mythic senses. As Roelofs states, 'go back to the beginning,' and get it right next time. This view issued no challenges to American ideology, in fact it called for a return to that ideology.

Strange Bedfellows

Americans who were outraged by the 'aberration' of U.S. involvement in Vietnam were joined on common ground by a hard-nosed group of Americans. John Roche calls this group the 'realists.' As he states,

> These people were vigorous patriots, they despised the overt anti-Americanism of some of the antiwar militants, but they simply could not understand why half a million Americans were inconclusively fighting somewhere at the other end of the world. An extremely able representative warned me in 1967 that his constituents (mainly blue-collar and working class) were signing off. Their slogan, he said, was 'let the gooks fight it out.'[10]

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[10]John P. Roche, "The Impact of Dissent on Foreign Policy: Past and Future," in The Vietnam Legacy: The War, American Society and the Future of American Foreign Policy, ed. by Anthony Lake (New York: New York University Press, 1976), p. 129.

If antiwar activists and these 'realists' shared any common view it was that the entire Vietnam enterprise was one hellacious mess--morally bankrupt and/or militarily stupid--and the United States would get out.

Most of the 'realists' who wrote on the war viewed a decision, the lack of a decision, or poor decision-making as causes of America's aberrational episode in Vietnam. It was through these explanation, these intellectual loopholes, that most Americans managed to deny the irreconcilability of American myth and American ideology. It is to these explanations of 'causes' of U.S. involvement in Vietnam that attention is now turned.

The Evil Man Thesis

The evil man thesis basically posits that one evil man, or a group of evil men, entrapped America in the Vietnam War. Presidential dominance in the making of foreign policy, and the President's symbolic role as the elected leader of all Americans, makes the President and the men who surround him the likely targets of the vitriolic condemnations of those subscribing to the evil man thesis. In the case of those explanations concerning America's initial involvement in Vietnam War, Lyndon Johnson is seen as the evil man.

The evil man thesis has been expressed in both vituperative and rational terms. James Kunen wrote,

> How can Johnson sleep? How can he go to bed knowing that 25,000 American boys--and countless Vietnamese--have died because of his 'policies.' He obviously doesn't consider the Vietnemese to be people at all. They're strange, distant, numberless, and yellow, so perhaps he can't know their existence and their joys. But what about the Americans? . . . It's in me that my friends everyday hear gunfire and see others fall and hate the enemy. But when they see the ground spin up at them and feel the wetness of their own blood, whom do you think they hate then? These kids who were and were being and were going to be, suddenly finding themselves ending. . . . Whom do you suppose they hate? Don't the leaders know that?[11]

Kunen is asserting rather categorically that Johnson was simply an evil man.

Two variations on the evil man thesis have been presented in fairly coherent ways. Both of these views seem to ameliorate the assertion of absolute evilness. Rather they ascribe to Johnson a good measure of deceitfulness and duplicity.

The first example of this view of the causes of U.S. involvement in Vietnam revolves around the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. The President's War by Anthony Austin is an attempt to explore the circumstances surrounding the passage of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution. Austin, with frequent reference to the Pentagon Papers, and a stinging sense of irony indicts Johnson for his deceptive management of the entire Gulf of Tonkin episode. According to Austin and the Pentagon Papers (cited here) as interpreted by Neil Sheehan,

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[11]James S. Kunen, The Strawberry Statement: Notes of a College Revolutionary (New York: Avon Books, 1968), pp. 71-72.

> . . . for six months before the Tonkin Gulf incident in August 1964, the United States had been mounting clandestine military attacks against North Vietnam while planning to obtain a Congressional resolution that the Administration regarded as the equivalent of a declaration of war. . . . the nature and extent of the covert military operations and the intent of the Administration to use the resolution to commit the nation to open warfare, if this later proved desirable, were all kept secret.[12]

Austin traces the adoption, under Fulbright's management, of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, by a combined Senate-House vote of 504 to 2. In tracing the labyrinthine nature of the Gulf of Tonkin incident Austin concludes that there probably was no Gulf of Tonkin attack. He states that the Gulf of Tonkin incident was an instance where Johnson and his advisers

> . . . deliberately misled Congress and the American people on the nature of the patrol and the evidence of an attack and through that deception were able to obtain Congressional authorization for a war they had secretly decided on months before, while promising the voters peace.[13]

The Gulf of Tonkin incident has been pointed to by many writers as a particular instance in which Johnson, through personal deceitfulness, escalated U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War.

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[12]Neil Sheehan and others, The Pentagon Papers, as published by The New York Times (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1971), p. 244.

[13]Anthony Austin, The President's War: The Story of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution and How the Nation was Trapped in Vietnam (Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1971), p. 345.

A more conjectural and tentative treatment of Lyndon Johnson, which can be viewed as a sort of evil man thesis, is presented by Doris Kearns in Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream. According to Kearns, Johnson's true commitment was to the Great Society programs which he had moved through Congress with consummate skill, but the momentum of decisions made by earlier Administrations and his desire to fend off the right drew him inextricably into the Vietnam War. Kearns' work places considerable (perhaps a little too much) emphasis on Johnson's psychological makeup and the goals which Johnson had set for himself. She writes,

> Lyndon Johnson had wanted to surpass Franklin Roosevelt; and Roosevelt, after all, had not only won the reforms Johnson envied, he had also waged a war. But there was a critical difference: Roosevelt did not attempt the New Deal and World War II at the same time. Only Johnson among the Presidents sought to be simultaneously first in peace and first in war; and even Johnson was bound to fail.[14]

Johnson's desire to vigorously prosecute the Vietnam War while keeping his Great Society goals before the Congress and the people led him to resort to political chicanery. As Kearns notes, Johnson disguised, even in 1965, the extent of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. She writes,

> The administration would request an additional appropriation of only $1.8 billion, thus deferring the full revelation of the conflict's mounting costs until the following year. It called for announcing only that fifty thousand troops were to be sent immediately, and

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[14]Doris Kearns, Lyndon Johnson and The American Dream (New York: The New American Library, Inc., 1977), p. 299.

> folding that announcement into a crowded press conference held at midday to ensure the minimum TV audience. It called for extending enlistments and increasing draft calls rather than mobilizing the reserves. It called, in essence, for initiating a covert full-scale war.[15]

For Kearns, and her contribution to the evil man thesis, it is Johnson's deceit which constitutes his evilness.

In Kearns' view Johnson betrayed the American democratic process. She states,

> The most important thing about a democratic regime is what questions it refers to the public for decision or guidance, how it refers them to the public, how the alternatives are defined, and how it respects the limitations of the public. . . . The business of war involves the severest sacrifices falling on the ordinary men and women in the country. Here more than anywhere, the people must have an opportunity to make a choice.[16]

The evil man thesis, even in its most understated and rational form can be seen as a particularly simplistic means of denying the irreconcilability of American myth and American ideology. For many Americans whose sense of morality was shocked by U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War it was easy to pin the rap on a President who seemingly duped the country into that involvement. And that view is not necessarily inaccurate, but it obscures much more about American politics than it explains.

The Groupthink Hypothesis

Another way in which Americans have come to view U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War as an aberration is by

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[15] Ibid., p. 295.

[16] Ibid., p. 298.

assessing the decision-making process by which America's involvement was progressively escalated.

Irving Janie in Victims of Groupthink notes several characteristics of Johnson's primary Vietnam policy-making group--The Tuesday Cabinet--which led to poor decision-making. According to Janis, the men who typically comprised the Tuesday Cabinet--Johnson, McGeorge Bundy (later replaced by Walt Rostow), Robert McNamara (later replaced by Clark Clifford), Dean Rusk, Earl Wheeler, Richard Helms, and for several years, Bill Moyers and George Ball--were a highly cohesive group.[17]

Janis finds in this highly cohesive group an atmosphere of mutual supportiveness and friendship. Janis attributes this supportiveness, and its resultant homogeneity of Vietnam policy viewpoint, to several aspects of the dynamics of group decision-making. In Janis' view the Tuesday Cabinet exhibited tendencies toward groupthink for several reasons:

1. The group frequently operated in crisis situations where stress was very high. As Janis states,

> Whenever a decision has to be made that vitally affects the security of his nation, the government executive is likely to undergo a variety of severe stresses. He realizes that

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[17]Irving L. Janis, Victims of Groupthink: A psychological study of foreign policy decisions and fiascoes (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1972), p. 105.

> a great deal is at stake for his country and for the rest of the world and that it also may be crucial moments in his personal career.[18]

Under such pressures, according to Janis, advisers may be hesitant to take positions which put them 'out on a limb.' They seek consensus on policy decisions, and find strength in numbers.

2. Members of the Tuesday Cabinet became increasingly defensive about their collective decisions. Janis notes,

> We know that most individuals become heavily ego-involved in maintaining their commitment to any decision for which they feel at least partly responsible. Once a decision-maker has publicly announced the course of action he has selected, he is inclined to avoid looking at evidence of the unfavorable consequences.[19]

In the case of the Tuesday Cabinet's decision to escalate U.S. involvement in Vietnam, the Tuesday Cabinet exhibited groupthink behavior through its unwillingness to reconsider the bases of their initial decision to escalate.

3. Pressures for conformity of viewpoint were exerted within the Tuesday Cabinet. An example of this pressure is cited by Janis,

> One 'domesticated dissenter' was Bill Moyers, a close adviser of President Johnson. When Moyers arrived at a meeting, . . . the President

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[18] Ibid., p. 114.

[19] Ibid., p. 117.

> gretted him with, 'Well, here comes Mr. Stop-the Bombing.'[20]

Janis adds,

> The non-conformist can feel that he is still accepted as a member in good standing. Unaware of the extent to which he is being influenced by the majority, he has the illusion that he is free to speak his mind. If on occasion he goes too far, he is warned about his deviation in an affectionate or joking way and is reminded only indirectly of his potentially precarious status by the labels others give him ('Mr. Stop-the-Bombing,' 'our favorite dove').[21]

The pressures of the group dynamics within the Tuesday Cabinet caused mutual supportiveness on a personal basis, group defensiveness about previous decisions, and pressures for conformity of thought. The acrimonious departure of Robert McNamara from the Tuesday Cabinet is a classic example of what can happen to an official who transgresses the norms of groupthink. Janis cites Johnson's displeasure with McNamara's change of heart regarding U.S. Vietnam policy,

> To someone on his staff in the White House, the President spoke more heatedly, accusing the Secretary of Defense of playing right into the hands of the enemy, on the grounds that his statement would increase Hanoi's bargaining power. 'Venting his annoyance to a member of his staff, he drew the analogy of the man trying to sell his house, while one of the sons of the family went to the prospective buyer to point out that there were leaks in the basement.[22]

McNamara was viewed by Johnson as a man who broke the norms of loyalty and unanimity within the Tuesday Cabinet. McNamara's change of opinion was particularly offensive to

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[20] Ibid., p. 120.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid., p. 123.

with the sweep of post-World War Two history, while Halberstam, as a journalist, presents an impressionistic text loaded with minutiae.

Predictably, Schlesinger implies that the world came unhinged when F.D.R. died. Schlesinger quotes Roosevelt at Yalta in February 1945,

> I have been terribly worried about Indochina. . . . I suggested . . . to Chiang that Indochina be set up under a trusteeship--have a Frenchman, one or two Indochinese, and a Chinese and a Russian, because they are on the coast, and maybe a Filipino and an American, to educate them in self-government. . . . Stalin liked the idea, China liked the idea. The British didn't like it. It might bust up their empire, because if the Indochinese were to work together and eventually get their independence, the Burmese might do the same thing.[23]

In the absence of a multilateral arrangement for Indochina, the French attempted to reassert their control over the area.

With his view of history as a ponderous, immutable force, and his keen hindsight, Schlesinger unfolds an eerie tale of how every decision not to get involved in Vietnam, and every indicision about Vietnam, moved America inexorably toward involvement. Eisenhower's refusal to commit U.S. troups to save the French Dien Bien Phu resulted in French defeat, the partition of Vietnam, and U.S./SEATO commitment to South Vietnam. Out of a decision not to get involved, America became, at least potentially, and then actually, more involved in Vietnam. Although Schlesinger asserts

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[23]Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Bitter Heritage: Vietnam and American Democracy, 1941-1966 (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Publications Inc., 1967), p. 23.

that the partition of Vietnam and the creation of SEATO did not commit America to defend South Vietnam, it

> . . . did draw a line across Southeast Asia. . . . That line could have been drawn elsewhere--along the Mekong River, for example and the northern border of Thailand. No vital strategic interest required that it be drawn where it was. But it was drawn in South Vietnam, for better or worse; a vital American interest was thus created where none had existed before; and a series of decisions followed in train which ended by carrying the United States into the fourth longest war of its history.[24]

American economic support of South Vietnam, under SEATO, was welcomed by South Vietnam's strongman, Ngo Dinh Diem. But Diem never allowed Americans to buy influence over his domestic policy. As Halberstam states,

> For four years, from 1955-1959, the Americans and Diem marked time. They had failed to prepare for the kind of threat that even the most cursory study of the Indochina war would have shown was likely. The Government had failed to extend its authority to the villages; it had made a stab at land reform, but because of Diem's own conservatism and lack of interest, the program had failed badly and had given the enemy rich opportunities for political subversion among the peasants.[25]

As Vietcong strength grew so did American involvement. As Schlesinger notes,

> At the end of 1961, there were 1364 American military personnel in South Vietnam; at the end of 1962, 9865; at the time of Kennedy's death in November 1963, about 15,500. This was the policy of 'one more step'--each new step always promising the success which the previous last step had also promised but had unaccountably failed to deliver.[26]

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[24] Ibid., p. 31.

[25] David Halberstam, The Making of a Quagmire (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 63.

[26] Schlesinger, op.cit., p. 39.

The most appropriate imagery about, and protest against, the Vietnam quagmire is captured in Pete Seeger's lyric,

"Waist deep in the Big Muddy, the big fool says to push on."

The quagmire explanation is the best of all possible worlds for those Americans who denied the irreconcilability of American myth and American ideology. In its most simplistic form, the quagmire explanation may be articulated by its adherents by stating, "We just seemed to keep drifting into Vietnam, and just couldn't seem to get out."

CONCLUSION AND AGENDA

In some ways this chapter has modest goals. It has not attempted to make judgements on the accuracy of the three described explanations of the causes of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Nor has it offered an alternative explanation for U.S. involvement. Not even Hercules was expected to fill the Augean stables back up.

In some ways the conclusions which can be drawn about the discussion included in this chapter are not so modest. Although the three explanations of U.S. involvement in Vietnam are not implausible or necessarily inaccurate as far as they go, they simply don't go very far. The plausibility and accuracy of these explanations are largely dependent upon what the reader of them is looking for.

The main assertion of this chapter was that many Americans recognized without understanding, and hence consequently denied the irreconcilable contradiction of American ideology and American myth. The three explanations discussed are emiently well suited to the needs of these Americans. But they should not--must not--be accepted by more inquiring minds.

A function of explanations is that they conclude discussions rather than continuing them. The most important conclusion that can be drawn from this chapter is that the explanations which have closed down American debate on our Vietnam involvement do not explain enough.

In the concluding section of this study, attention will be turned to what might have been learned by Americans as a result of our Vietnam tragedy. Attention will also be given, not cynically, but realistically, to the strong likelihood that this self-knowledge has not been, and will not be, learned by Americans.

Conclusion

AMERICA'S VIETNAM LEGACY
AN ON-GOING TRAGEDY

American involvement in Vietnam qualifies, without assistance from other considerations, as an American tragedy. The war was futile and horrifying from the military standpoint, and the dropping of seven and a half million tons of bombs on North Vietnam was a brutal example of killing reduced to a state of impersonal 'technique.' The national tumult over the war settled little. The war battered along as Americans raged and cried against it. But, it would be a mistake to view the domestic tumult engendered by the war as a crisis of American government.

This is largely true because so many Americans managed to convince themselves that American involvement in Vietnam was an aberration, and had little to do with American society or politics. The 'Days of Rage' had little impact on American government, nor were actions of this sort likely to evoke any widespread reassessment of American political values or ideology. While those who peacefully opposed the war may fancy that their action brought the war to a quicker end, it is difficult to prove this by looking at America's foot-dragging withdrawal. Antiwar activists also seem to believe that they have somehow won large

segments of American society over to their viewpoint that the war was wrong. Many Americans would agree that America's involvement in Vietnam was a mistake, but saying that policy was a mistake is a double-edged sword (perhaps one million American soldiers and fifteen million tons of bombs would have kept it from being a mistake?). Much American criticism of American intervention in Vietnam involves questions of technique and outcome rather than moral considerations.

America's Vietnam tragedy is still taking place. This is not the tragedy of a committed act, but rather one of a missed opportunity. The inability of American myth to justify American ideology and its Vietnam manifestations moved the irreconcilability of American myth and American ideology to center stage. This highly visible irreconcilability had broad implications, for as Roelofs states, it showed that

> . . . the American political system is inadequate. It satisfies the claims of neither its myth nor its ideology. Protestant hopes remain unfulfilled, efforts to realize them often bring on disaster. Meanwhile the Bourgeois ethos is lashed for its privatistic materialism; it is even denied that tranquility in the possession of its gains, which is its primary political goal. The final consequence is mostly a political process in which illusion and disillusion chase each other across the spectrum of political consciousness.[1]

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[1]H. Mark Roelofs, Ideology and Myth in American Politics: A Critique of a National Political Mind (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1976), p. 6.

As U.S. Vietnam policy moved the irreconcilability of American ideology and American myth into full view, the massive weight of American history and political experience militated against recognition and action in accordance with recognition, of this irreconcilability. Much of this denial can be attributed to the unanimity of adherence to liberalism which both Hartz and Roelofs, as noted, find in American society. There is almost nothing in the American political past, or present intellectual environment, which prepares Americans for meaningfull discussion of alternatives to bourgeois liberalism.

Even those who glimpsed the disparity between American myth and American ideology during the Vietnam War, were almost incapable of taking action which violated the tenets of that ideology. Ken Kesey, speaking to the first Berkeley rally of the Vietnam Day Committee addressed 15,000 antiwar protesters as follows:

> You know, you're not gonna stop this war with this rally, by marching . . . That's what they do . . . They hold rallies and they march . . . They've been having wars for ten thousand years and you're not going to stop it this way . . . Ten thousand years, and this is the game they play to do it . . . holding rallies and having marches . . . and that's the same game you're playing . . . their game . . .[2]

As Roelofs states, "Given the thinness of the American political culture, it is virtually impossible to generate

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[2]Tom Wolfe, The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973), p. 222.

within it debate with genuinely radical implications."[3] This thinness, as has been shown, characterizes much of American society. But it is also disappointingly prevalent in American academe. As Hartz notes, speaking of the American historian, " . . . he has tended to be an erudite reflection of the limited social perspectives of the average American himself."[4] Much the same might be said of many American intellectuals.

SAVING THE MISSED OPPORTUNITY: REOPENING THE DEBATE

Schlesinger, Janis, Halberstam, Kearns and others either unwittingly or deliberately helped this country get off the horns of its Vietnam dilemma by allowing Americans to view U.S. involvement in Vietnam as an aberrational episode. Their explanations are all, to an extent, valid ways of understanding U.S. involvement in Vietnam. But they do not explain all that an inquiring mind needs to know about U.S. Vietnam policy and its domestic ramifications. The failure of American intellectuals to produce imaginative and searching interpretations of America's Vietnam experience is a most singular American tragedy. For while some authors have gotten Americans off the horns of the Vietnam

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[3]Roelofs, op.cit. p. 241.

[4]Louis Hartz, The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1955), p. 29.

dilemma they have also relegated Americans to live in perpetuity on the horns of the larger dilemma of American ideology and American myth.

This is a failure which has implications for American politics. America's failure to learn anything about its ideology and myth through its Vietnam experience is daily manifested in American foreign policy. Jimmy Carter's efforts to deal with the Soviet Union in the Realpolitik mode during SALT negotiations while beating his breast about human rights is a good example of the irreconcilable contradictions which this country failed to understand and confront when they were most visible. What will be the reaction of Americans when Carter makes the decision--as he must--that a SALT agreement is more important than Scharansky?

Roelofs makes a significant contribution to the understanding of American politics by providing the vocabulary and definitions by which these dilemmas and contradictions may be described and understood. Further, Roelofs learns from his own findings of American ideological uniformity and presents his case in terms which Americans might--possibly--be comfortable with. By living in American society and thinking outside the structures of America's political culture Roelofs makes an important set of findings.

But if these findings are buried under an avalanche of aberrational explanations of U.S. involvement in Vietnam then little is really gained. If Americans can not come to

grips with the irreconcilable contradiction between American myth and American ideology, Roelofs harrowing conclusion about America's future may be verified,

> America's condition is not unique. Recorded history shows numerous examples of societies suffering from the same political immobilism in the face of major problems that afflict this country. We must beware of illusions of freedom. We have no more liberty to make over our future than our history allows us. The past is a prison. If there is to be escape from it, the keys must be found within. Keys of the right size and strength may not exist for us.[5]

It was in the hope of continuing the hunt for the right keys that this study was undertaken. Perhaps none exist. But the Vietnam debacle and the subsequent disaster of silence provide both the material and the impetus necessary for the search.

Be Angry At The Sun

That public men publish falsehoods
Is nothing new. That America must accept
Like the historical republics corruption and empire
Has been known for years.

Be angry at the sun for setting
If these things anger you, Watch the wheel slope and turn.
They are all bound on the wheel, these people those warriors.
This republic, Europe, Asia.

Observe them gesticulating,
Observe them going down. The gang serves lies, The passionate
Man plays his part; the cold passion for truth
Hunts in no pack.

You are not Catullus, you know.
To lampoon these crude sketches of Caesar. You are far
From Dante's feet, but even farther from his dirty
Political hatreds.

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[5]Roelofs, op.cit., p. 242.

Let boys want pleasure, and men
Struggle for power, and women perhaps for fame,
And the servile to serve a Leader and the dupes to be duped.
Yours is not theirs.

- Robinson Jeffers

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