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Reading Between the Lines:

Negotiating National Identity on American Television, 1945–1960*

As thousands of readers picked up their copies of the 20 August 1945 issue of *Newsweek* magazine—the first postwar issue—they probably flipped the pages a little more slowly around the article titled "A New Era: The Secrets of Science." In the past week, the editors reminded readers, the Japanese met an Allied "conquest by atom." Amid the articles detailing how American bombers flew over Japanese cities to unleash this new power, readers also found a map showing planes cruising at 30,000 feet to "blanket" the United States with airborne antennas for television sending stations. In this, the same week that the Japanese surrendered, Westinghouse engineers joined with aircraft manufacturers to build B-29-sized planes for this new mission, called Stratovision. The map, duplicated in *Time* magazine as well, showed aircraft hovering over New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Memphis, Dallas, Salt Lake City, Portland, and other cities. *Time* reported that only fourteen planes could cover 78 percent of the American population.

The "new era" in *Newsweek*'s title certainly referred to the atomic age, but Americans quickly realized that modern science also ushered in a "new era" that promised to transform the nation in other fundamental ways. Americans who were fascinated with scientific achievement could marvel at two brilliant flashes of light: the atomic bomb and the television screen. The former ended war, the latter symbolically inaugurated peace. The two devices emerged in the national consciousness at the same time, both were seen as groundbreaking, and both developed in a Cold War environment.[1]

"If it works," NBC's president Niles Trammell said of Stratovision, "it will be revolutionary."[2] With the war over, Trammell informed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) a few weeks later, a new technological age was

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1. *Newsweek*, 20 August 1945, 37–38; *Time*, 20 August 1945, 67.
2. *Time*, 20 August 1945, 67.

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dawning in television transmission. Today, he explained, "for the first time in five years, the priorities, first of national defense and then of war, are behind us. We no longer are required to predicate plans for television on the winning of the war." Trammell gushed, "Victory has been won. Peace is here. Television is ready to go."[3] And the public was ready for television.

My attempt has been to heed the proposals made in SHAFR and in this journal to broaden the scope of the study of foreign relations in general and of the Cold War in particular. In his presidential address to SHAFR members, Michael J. Hogan offered encouragement to those "who are looking not only beyond the nation but also beyond the state, and not just to those organized interest groups that influence the formation of state policy." Professor Hogan offered an "open door policy" to decentralized histories that are "less preoccupied with the state or with the national project and more preoccupied with non-state actors and international relations."[4] As for Cold War studies, in an article in *Diplomatic History* Tony Smith called for a pericentric framework for the study of the Cold War. Smith implored historians of American foreign relations to broaden and to complicate our studies of the Cold War by looking beyond the traditional bipolar, or government-dominated, framework. True, there is value in considering the actions of those outside of Foggy Bottom and Red Square. While internationalizing our perspectives and our archival sources will produce a new understanding of the Cold War, forays into the domestic sphere will do likewise. The shapers of public opinion, especially the Cold War critics referred to in this article, to borrow Smith's words, "had principal roles to play that gave the Cold War the character it came to have." We can still expand our view of the Cold War and reinvigorate the field even as we remain situated in the domestic.[5]

That is not to say that historians have neglected Cold War dissent on the home front. Notably, Justus Doenecke's study of so-called isolationists and Thomas Paterson's edited volume about Cold War critics serve to remind us that internationalism, anticommunism, and containment were far from unanimously-supported policy initiatives. There is much evidence to show that by 1950 advocates of global anticommunism had successfully discounted, demonized, and demoralized opponents across the political spectrum, including George Kennan, Henry Wallace, Robert Taft, and scores of radicals with ties to "subversive" organizations.[6]

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3. NBC President Niles Trammell to FCC, "Television Is Ready to Go," 11 October 1945, NBC collection, Sound Division of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC (LC), Folder P185.

4. Michael J. Hogan, "The 'Next Big Thing': The Future of Diplomatic History in a Global Age," SHAFR presidential address, Washington, DC, 2003.

5. Tony Smith, "New Bottles for New Wine: A Pericentric Framework for the Study of the Cold War," *Diplomatic History* 24 (Fall 2000): 567–591.

6. Justus D. Doenecke, *Not to the Swift: The Old Isolationists in the Cold War Era* (Lewisburg, PA, 1979); Thomas G. Paterson, ed., *Cold War Critics: Alternatives to American Foreign Policy in the Truman Years* (Chicago, IL, 1971).

While many histories end here, what happens if we turn the page of the story? By looking into the cultural arena in the late 1940s we find that the budding television industry provided a hospitable, mainstream environment for lesser-known Cold War critics to work outside traditional institutions of foreign policy-making power. Individuals in television worked relentlessly to engage the public, sometimes under the notice of even the most vigilant Cold Warriors. The purpose of television's dissenters was in part to steer the nation's involvement in world affairs onto a different course, one informed by liberal internationalism: a progressive world view that encompassed anticolonialism, self-determination, humane capitalism, and impartiality in dealing with all nations. Liberal internationalists downplayed petty nationalism, preferring instead to look at all the citizens of the world on generally equal terms.[7]

After 1950, televised dissent underwent a significant change. The Cold War invaded television and produced an environment that required revisions to oppositional content. But foreign policy dissenters, especially writers, did not retreat. They raised issues when they could, compromised on some, and encoded messages in other genres for growing numbers of viewers. By the late 1950s, as writers became frustrated, they looked for alternative outlets overseas in burgeoning foreign television markets. Once abroad, the persistence of dissent and the reception of European audiences prompted Cold Warriors to deal with televised opposition in significant ways. Ultimately this is not just a story of what happened to critics, but of how their activities and perceptions of audience reception affected the national security state waging the Cold War.

In more theoretical terms, I view television as a site of contestation where various groups, recognizing the importance of mass communication in the construction of a national identity, fashion programs to complement their own social, political, and economic perspectives. *The nation* is a palpable feeling whose character changes over time. Popular culture plays an important role as an audiovisual language through which individuals offer representations of the nation and construct *the nation*. During the Cold War, most agreed this was of

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7. While I emphasize the Cold War environment to help explain the development of the television industry and program content, several other factors also contributed: unprecedented postwar prosperity, the "baby boom" and suburbanization, Hollywood's antitrust woes, and civil rights. For the popularity of television and anthology dramas in particular, see Tom Engelhardt, *The End of Victory Culture: Cold War America and the Disillusioning of a Generation* (New York, 1995), 146. For a discussion of postwar prosperity, see Alan Brinkley, "The Illusion of Unity in Cold War Culture," in *Rethinking Cold War Culture*, eds. Peter J. Kuznick and James Gilbert (Washington, DC, 2001), 61–73. For a discussion of the crumbling situation in postwar Hollywood, see Thomas Schatz, *Boom and Bust: American Cinema in the 1940s* (Berkeley, CA, 1999). For a discussion of Cold War civil rights, especially for the important distinctions between radicals and Cold War liberals, see Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, MA, 2001); Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ, 2000); Penny Von Eschen, *Race against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937–1957* (Ithaca, NY, 1997).

primary significance. Popular culture productions are inevitably the result of negotiation and collaboration. As one producer explained, those involved in the production process "wish to see their own way of life validated, their own interests protected." Therefore, audiences see themes "which are repressive and reactionary, as well as those which are subversive and emancipatory," especially given the diverse perspectives of those watching.[8]

Historian William O'Neill once wryly noted that television was "where families stayed together by staring together."[9] Given this practice, television became a popular medium of shared experience in which new programs had a remarkable impact on a family of citizens. Perhaps it is no coincidence that during the early years of the Cold War, the paternal John Cameron Swayze, with carnation in his lapel, concluded his *Camel News Caravan* tenderly each night with "That's the story, folks. Glad we could get together." In this warm environment of the 1940s and 1950s, audiences witnessed an ideological debate waged between committed Cold Warriors and their liberal-internationalist critics over the national character and its direction in foreign relations. Writers Paddy Chayefsky, Rod Serling, Gore Vidal, Horton Foote, and Reginald Rose articulated Cold War dissent for popular, weekly anthology drama programs such as *Playhouse 90*, *Studio One*, and *Kraft Television Theater*. Early television served as a community-building site where, despite formidable obstacles, liberal internationalism flourished. And like a good drama, this contest played itself out each week on the television situated in the American living room.[10]

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8. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983), 6–7; James Carey as quoted in Horace Newcomb and Robert Alley, *The Producer's Medium: Conversations with Creators of American Television* (New York, 1983), 21–23, 26.

9. William O'Neill, *American High: The Years of Confidence, 1945–1960* (New York, 1986), 77. See also Newcomb and Alley, *The Producer's Medium*, 34–35.

10. Several scholars and critics have suggested that most Americans missed the "Golden Age" of television for the simple reason that they did not own a television set. Therefore, these observers argue, programs only appealed to this imagined audience: a relatively few, highly-educated, upper-income, urbanites who could afford television sets. (Were these the same highbrow snobs who also enjoyed wrestling, roller derby, and Milton Berle's borscht-belt variety show?) Actually, studies confirm that the number of television homes rose from ten thousand in 1946 to one million in 1949, and from four million in 1950 to twelve million in 1951. One NBC survey shows that as early as 1948, on average, each set entertained four viewers during primetime. Almost half of the entire population had seen a television program by 1949, even if they did so in a neighbor's house, from a bar stool, or through a store window. Television ownership grew rapidly from 12 percent of the population in 1950 to 71 percent in 1955. Television reached smaller metropolises in every region of the country by 1951: Providence, Lansing, Birmingham, Omaha, Albuquerque, Norfolk, Seattle, Fort Worth, Ames, Dayton, Salt Lake City, and Kalamazoo among them. Perhaps most surprising is the fact that by 1955 more Americans owned television sets than owned telephones, a statistic that has held true ever since. Ownership reached 86 percent in 1958, still before the sun had set on the "Golden Age," and just shy of 90 percent by the end of the early Cold War period. Furthermore, almost anyone who saw television immediately understood that mass communications had changed forever. The rising popularity of television threatened and injured newspapers, motion pictures, and radio. Over 81 percent of Americans who recently had seen television predicted that television would affect radio if not outright kill it. This view was expressed by a generation of

Government officials, network executives, and the artistic community believed that television held great promise as a democratizing medium. In particular, National Broadcasting Company (NBC) archives show that network executives viewed themselves as stewards of the public interest and guarantors of quality television. Their rivals at the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) were little different in this regard. As will be shown, the networks institutionalized censorship as a means to promote liberal themes rather than to excise them hastily. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, these groups of individuals believed television should promote an educated populace, avoid racial stereotypes (especially of America's allies in the industrializing world), and reject exaggerated advertising claims by overzealous corporations.

The political philosophies of anthology writers coincided with the views of many others, including progressive talents Arthur Miller, Norman Corwin, and Orson Welles, but also atomic scientists, Henry Wallace, and Wendell Willkie, as expressed in his best-selling book, *One World* (1943). To these and other Americans, the war was an epochal moment that provided an unprecedented opportunity to shape the world community that followed. Universalism, a transnational union emphasizing the world's common humanity, could fill a vacuum once populated by fascism and militarism. The United States had garnered a "reservoir of good will" that Americans could use to triumph over historic social ills—in short, to create One World.[11]

These individuals took the Allies to task for ignoring self-determination in their own empires. Americans also maintained what Willkie called "our own

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loyal listeners who had been weaned on the indispensable radio, had marveled at its instant transmission, had been comforted by its fireside chats. Despite anxiety over reconversion to a domestic economy, insecurity over housing and job shortages, and dread over media reports of a renewed depression, many Americans soon looked to television as virtually a necessity. For statistics supporting the popularity of early television, see Tino Balio, ed., *Hollywood in the Age of Television* (Boston, MA, 1990), 15; the NBC publication "What Do We Know about Today's Television Audience?", May 1948, NBC Collection (LC), Folder P507; *Public Opinion Quarterly* 13 (Fall 1949): 56. The percentages of television households vary depending on the source, but according to Richard Balkin and Ross Gregory, eds., *Almanac of American Life: Cold War America, 1946–1990*, dramatic increases in American television ownership cannot be denied: 9 percent of the population in 1949–1950, 23.5 percent in 1950–1951, 34.2 percent in 1951–1952, 44.7 percent in 1952–1953, 55.7 percent in 1953–1954, 64.5 percent in 1954–1955, 71.8 percent in 1955–1956, 78.6 percent in 1956–1957, 83.2 percent in 1957–1958, 85.9 percent in 1958–1959, 87.1 percent in 1959–1960, and 88.8 percent in 1960–1961. See table 17.27 on the number of television households and table 17.28 on the hours of television viewing, both on page 469. See "Map of TV Cities," 1 October 1951, A.C. Nielsen Company Collection, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin (SHSW), Box 23, File 2. See also Rod Serling, *Patterns: Four Television Plays with the Author's Personal Commentaries* (New York, 1957), 6, 18; Eric Barnouw, *Tube of Plenty: The Evolution of American Television* (New York, 1990), 163; Jeff Kisselhoff, ed., *The Box: An Oral History of Television, 1920–1961* (New York, 1995), 236; Newcomb and Alley, *The Producer's Medium*, 34–35; O'Neill, *American High*, 77, 254; Christopher Sterling and John Kittross, *Stay Tuned: A Concise History of American Broadcasting*, 2d ed. (Belmont, CA, 1990), 268, 295–296, 304; and Thomas Schatz, "Desilu, *I Love Lucy*, and the Rise of Network Television" in *Making Television: Authorship and the Production Process*, eds. Thompson and Burns (1990), 119–121, 128.

11. Wendell Willkie, *One World* (New York, 1943).

domestic imperialisms" by perpetuating racism and poverty. In so doing, as Penny Von Eschen has shown, many connected the domestic issue of civil rights to the global issue of decolonization. They also attacked the apparent hypocrisy of fighting wars against totalitarianism and militarism abroad while threatening democratic principles at home. Ideas matter, they would say, and popular culture could help win the "hearts and minds" of the world's citizens with the power of universal truths.[12]

Willkie concluded, "We may feel certain that when [soldiers] have battled over the world, they will not return home as provincial Americans." Just as the horror of war aged young men, exposure to internationalism educated them. At one point during the war, Rod Serling, then a young soldier stationed in the Pacific theater, faced a near-fatal experience when a Japanese soldier aimed his gun at Serling from only a few yards away. As Serling froze in fright of his impending death, a fellow G.I. shot the enemy soldier. Serling later recalled how he survived "through no dint of my own courage." Mixed with his relief were feelings of shame, anger, and a belief in pacifism. In December 1945, Serling wrote to his mother that he was coming home "scratched up a bit, a little older and more worldly." He later viewed the motion picture *Back to Bataan* (1946) "to test himself," but was disgusted to discover how John Wayne's war differed from his own real experiences. Thousands of other hardened veterans joined Serling on the trek home, not just to make a living but to make sense of the war they had just won. Some of those young veterans—Paddy Chayefsky, Robert Alan Arthur, Gore Vidal, and Tad Mosel among them—formed a community of influential playwrights who came of age in the late 1940s. As they discovered the writing profession, in many cases the writers' liberal-internationalist world views later found their way into television programming.[13]

Looking back, several of these anthology writers expressed their world views in their earliest works. Gore Vidal examined his wartime tour on a freight supply ship in the Aleutians in his novel *Williwaw* (1946). Paddy Chayefsky wrote humorous poems about the postwar housing crisis, the G.I. Bill of Rights, and Senator Robert Taft. He studied the controversial work of blacklisted playwright Lillian Hellman, who wedded politics and social commentary to art. While working at Universal Pictures in Hollywood, Chayefsky attended meetings to protest the blacklist in the motion picture industry, helped cash-strapped

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12. See Von Eschen, *Race against Empire*.

13. Willkie, *One World*, 187; Rod Serling interview with Linda Brevelle, 4 March 1975; Gordon F. Sander, *Serling: The Rise and Twilight of Television's Last Angry Man* (New York, 1992), 52. The group of progressive writers discussed here, I think, complement the group of New York intellectuals working at the same place and time: C. Wright Mills, Hannah Arendt, Dwight MacDonald, Norman Mailer, and others. For the commonalities between these two groups see Richard Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age: American Intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s* (New York, 1985). For Serling's 8 December 1945 letter to his mother, Esther Serling, see Rod Serling Papers, SHSW, Box 22, File 1; Rod Serling interview with Linda Brevelle, 4 March 1975.

blacklisted friends, and signed a telegram to President Truman protesting the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC). As a result, the American Legion targeted Chayefsky, and the FBI opened a file on him. Themes of frustration, justice, and artistic freedom filled his earliest scripts.[14]

As Serling recalled later, a script is "an extension of his own mind" and "the writer's role is to menace the public's consciousness. He must have a position, a point of view. He must see the arts as a vehicle of social criticism and he must focus on the issues of his time." And there was much on Serling's mind while he worked at a radio station in Cincinnati and attended college during the late 1940s. He openly admired liberal internationalists such as radio personalities Norman Corwin and Orson Welles, and fretted when both were blacklisted. In one paper Serling blamed the "yellowish" print media for promoting "distrust" and "a belligerent attitude of open hostility" to the Soviet Union. He labeled the loyalty oath "ludicrous" and "demeaning." For one college assignment, Serling wrote a courtroom drama—"In the Case of the Universe versus War"—a pacifistic play with God presiding as judge. War was little more than "legalized murder" to a man embittered by his experience in the Pacific theater. Serling, the victorious G.I., asked an anonymous casualty to take the literary witness stand. What glory is there for the dead soldier?

> Soldier: I am told that my grave is littered with flowers. But I can't see or smell them. My lungs were rotted away by mustard gas and my eyes were blown out by a mortar shell. I am told that I am lauded by the world's greatest men, but I can't hear their praises. My ears were torn off by a shell concussion. But far worse I would want to speak to all these people and tell them that their emotions are misdirected—I deserve nothing but pity, but my mouth is stilled by the eternal silence of death.[15]

Serling wrote the script in the muddled period between 1945 and 1948, as many Americans attempted to make sense of the past war while preparing for the new Cold War. The "worldly" veteran penned his play just weeks after publication of George Kennan's "Mr. X" article and after President Truman signed the National Security Act. In this play Serling expressed skepticism for any nation presuming to be "destined to rule," a designation that many Cold Warriors avowed. Writing during the same week as the HUAC hearings in Hollywood, Serling decried rampant "domestic fascism" at the hands of petty

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14. Paddy Chayefsky, c. 1945–1946, Paddy Chayefsky Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin (SHSW), Box 1, File 3. For further discussion of the early political influences on Paddy Chayefsky, particularly those during the late 1940s, see Shaun Considine, *Mad as Hell: The Life and Work of Paddy Chayefsky* (New York, 1994), particularly chapters 2 and 37.

15. Rod Serling interview with Linda Brevelle, 4 March 1975; Sander, xvii-xviii, 65–67; c.1945–1946, Paddy Chayefsky Papers, SHSW, Box 1, File 3; 21 October 1947, Serling Papers, SHSW, Box 39, File 6; 21 October 1947, Serling Papers, SHSW, Box 39, File 6; 3 December 1968, Serling speech to Moorpark College in California. Rod Serling, "In the Case of the Universe versus War," 21 October 1947, Rod Serling Papers (SHSW), Box 39, File 6.

authoritarians who worked within the boundaries of "winning" nations. To him, extreme nationalism is an enemy to its citizens; he questioned "a colorful flag waved in front of my eyes . . . the empty platitudes of politicians exhorting us to fight for right, and honor, and homeland." From his perspective, Serling believed the Cold War was being waged for "false virtues." At the conclusion of Serling's play, God delivered a damning verdict for all humanity living in the late 1940s. Television writers' ideas percolated during the late 1940s, and many believed they could express their world views in their scripts and plays, thereby offering an alternative to the developing Cold War consensus.[16]

The writers were, of course, only part of a collaborative process that produced anthology dramas. Producer Fred Coe was instrumental in partnering talent, experimenting with technology, and especially insulating his writers from aggressive network censors and sponsors throughout the period. Other broadcasting personnel mattered just as much. Several returning veterans—Marc Daniels, Martin Ritt, Franklin Schaffner, Fielder Cook, Paul Bogart, George Roy Hill, and John Frankenheimer—became important television directors. Many viewed television as an opportunity that combined creative freedom, progressive activism, and good pay. In 1946, tired of school and loath to become a lawyer, the impatient Franklin Schaffner was in New York City working for an organization called Americans United for World Government when he wrangled a job as a radio producer, before entering television. Martin Ritt entered television after having worked with the *March of Time* war documentaries that emphasized realism. While Hollywood and Broadway appeared restrictive for various reasons, the blacklisted Ritt believed that in television "I could do virtually anything I wanted." In the coming years, these partnerships among progressive talent in television gained influence and challenged the views of Cold Warriors.[17]

Another critical force that allowed for televised dissent could be found elsewhere. During the years 1945 to 1952, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the networks created a stage on which Cold War dissent thrived. The commissioners placed an imagined national audience at the forefront of their thinking by expressing the mantra of programming in the "public interest."[18] In March 1946, as the television industry began to build after the wartime hiatus, the FCC issued what scholars have called the "single most important programming policy document" in its history. The "Blue Book" of standards

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16. Rod Serling, "In the Case of the Universe versus War," 21 October 1947, Rod Serling Papers (SHSW), Box 39, File 6; Rod Serling interview with Linda Brevelle, 4 March 1975; c.1945–1946, Paddy Chayefsky Papers (SHSW), Box 1, File 3; 21 October 1947, Rod Serling Papers (SHSW), Box 39, File 6; 21 October 1947, Rod Serling Papers (SHSW), Box 39, File 6; Rod Serling speech to Moorpark College in California, 3 December 1968.

17. See Jon Krampner, *The Man in the Shadows: Fred Coe and the Golden Age of Television* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1997), particularly part two. The Ritt, Schaffner, and Frankenheimer oral histories are all contained in Ira Skutch, ed., *The Days of Live: Television's Golden Age as Told by 21 Directors Guild of America Members* (Los Angeles, CA, 1998), 4–5, 10–13.

18. Barnouw, *Tube of Plenty*, 112; Balio, ed., *Hollywood in the Age of Plenty*, 15.

and practices urged broadcasters to consider the "public interest" when programming. They defined the "public interest" with great specificity: to provide a balance to advertising-supported material; to showcase the "unsponsorable"; to "serve minority tastes and interests"; and to "allow experimentation with new types of programs." The commissioners concluded with an implied threat: "The FCC would favor renewal applications from stations that had met their public service responsibilities," which included a "discussion of public issues, and no excessive advertising."[19] At the same time, the FCC rejected appeals by staunch anticommunists to turn the young industry into a political weapon, prompting anticommunists to scold the FCC "thought police" for its apparent "misuse of power" and liberal regulation.[20] Beginning in September 1948 and lasting until April 1952, the FCC further maintained control over the new industry by declaring a "freeze" on station licensing, and thus on television expansion.[21] During this freeze, industry insiders fashioned important standards and precedents under the watchful eye of a progressive FCC. The freeze created a progressive laboratory in which liberal internationalism could grow.

Like the FCC during the late 1940s, network executives undertook a conscious effort to democratize the medium in the name of the "public interest." However, high atop their Manhattan building in their fifty-third floor offices, David Sarnoff and other network brass were not nearly as open to progressive ideology as were writers and directors on the lower floors. Indeed, many executives considered themselves patriotic Cold Warriors. But neither Sarnoff nor William Paley of CBS was a high priest of anticommunism in the late 1940s. On the very day that the government indicted Alger Hiss in 1948, and while newspapers reported the ongoing Berlin airlift, Sarnoff told an audience in New York City that "we should be willing to carry on discussions and negotiations" with the Kremlin.[22] He still believed in a deliberative process that revealed Soviet intentions. Both Sarnoff and NBC president Niles Trammell served on

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19. James L. Baughman, *Television's Guardians: The FCC and the Politics of Programming, 1958–1967* (Knoxville, TN, 1985). Baughman makes the point that the FCC "never applied the Blue Book to its license renewal procedures, and the violations it had uncovered continued unabated" (p. 11). While certainly true, the perception in 1946 was different. Many believed, the commissioners and broadcasters included, that government would regulate the young television industry with the purpose of "democratizing" the medium in ways they failed to do with radio. See also Sterling and Kittross, *Stay Tuned*, 268, 295–296, 304.

20. General Counsel Frank T. Bow to Representative Forest A. Harness, chairman, House of Representatives, 80th Congress (1948), 23 July 1948, RG 233 Select Committee to investigate the FCC, Box 1, Correspondence with Chair [Forest A. Harness] File; RG233, Box 1, Final Report of Congressional Investigation into FCC, 1948 File; RG46, Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, Box 110, FCC 1945–1948 File; *Washington Daily News*, 12 May 1948; *Washington Times-Herald*, 1 September 1948;, *Washington Post*, 3 September 1948; *Washington Times-Herald*, 19 September 1948.

21. The freeze stemmed from signal interference and other technological difficulties.

22. "Peace in a Changing World," speech to Phi Beta Kappa alumni in New York City, 15 December 1948, David O. Selznick Papers (Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin), Box 2366, File 3.

the Committee for the Marshall Plan with notable Cold War liberals, including Hubert Humphrey and theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, people who expressed disdain for red-baiters. The group included Hollywood producer Walter Wanger, a friend of blacklisted writers and State Department diplomats alike.[23] Both networks competed to televise daily broadcasts of the United Nations General Assembly sessions in 1949.[24] Network executives believed that the United Nations, the Marshall Plan, and television remained three noble enterprises well-suited for promoting democratic principles.

Network executives courted controversy, promoted education, and welcomed voices of opposition. "As you know," an NBC vice president wrote a colleague in October 1947, "I have thought from the beginning that it may not be prudent of us to attempt to ban dramatization of controversial issues."[25] In one article Trammell giddily detailed television's powerful promise as "the most potent tool ever developed for man's education."[26] In 1948 NBC issued network policies under the title "Responsibility," including policing its own program content and insisting that all "continuities, including the words of all songs or spoken lines as well as the wording of commercial copy, must be submitted for clearance and distribution" to the network bureaucracy before broadcast. In other words, continuity acceptance, as NBC called its role as censor, was in the network's domain, an area populated in the late 1940s and early 1950s by top executives open—for the time being at least—to controversial subjects.[27]

Chief programmer Sylvester "Pat" Weaver promised "to bring more class to the mass" with his "Operation Frontal Lobes" and "Operation Wisdom" programming strategies. Weaver believed entertainment, social progress, and profits were all compatible, and he appropriated the "public interest" discourse when he programmed educational, relevant, and controversial shows. "With television," Weaver wrote enthusiastically, "another step in the grand design of the liberals, making *all* people members of privilege, is taken."[28] For audiences

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23. Committee for the Marshall Plan to Aid European Recovery, "Who Is the Man against the Marshall Plan?" pamphlet, c. 1947–1948, NBC-Trammell Files, Box 115, File 18.

24. *New York Times*, 13 November 1949; Sarnoff to NBC President Joseph McConnell, 14 November 1949; Benjamin Cohen, assistant secretary-general of the United Nations for public information, to David Sarnoff, 21 November 1949; David Sarnoff to Niles Trammell, chairman of the board of NBC, 29 November 1949; Niles Trammell to Benjamin Cohen, 29 November 1949, NBC-Trammell Files (SHSW), Box 115, File 47; Sarnoff to NBC president Joseph McConnell, 14 November 1949, NBC-Trammell Papers (SHSW), Box 115, File 47.

25. Robert D. Swezey to Harold Fair, 20 October 1947, NBC- Trammell files (SHSW), Box 115, File 21.

26. "Television's Progress," 23 May 1949, NBC-Trammell Files (SHSW), Box 106, File 17.

27. "Responsibility: A Working Manual," 1948, NBC-Eiges files, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin (SHSW), Box 156, Files 21 and 23.

28. Davidson Taylor to James W. Young of the Ford Foundation, 2 May 1951, NBC-Weaver, SHSW, Box 120, File 16, emphasis added; Sylvester "Pat" Weaver to Allen Kalmus, 19 October 1949, NBC-Weaver, SHSW, Box 118, File 6, emphasis added.

in the atomic age, "Television can help our people face the real world and cast aside ancient prejudices, fictions and reactions," he told a group of advertisers. "[W]e must use television to make every man a member of his own times, understanding its issues, facing its challenges."[29]

NBC relied on Stockton Helffrich and his staff of forty editors, researchers, and other specialists at the network's office of Continuity Acceptance. Beginning in the fall of 1948, these guardians of television's "Golden Age" issued weekly CART reports from their offices. At first the networks employed censorship as a tool to satisfy their commitment to progressive television. For example, NBC policed program content in order to moderate unfettered capitalism. Pat Weaver even suggested in one memo, "It is possible that television will not develop as an advertising supported medium." Of course, as television followed the radio model, advertising became standard. That, however, did not keep the network from constantly seeking to reject exaggerated advertising claims and prevent some products from being hawked at all. NBC's censor labeled one ad "completely commercial" before rejecting it outright. Initially, at least, the networks believed they had the duty to curb the excesses of capitalism.[30]

With an eye on American foreign policy and the developing struggles for decolonization and self-determination, the networks promoted a more realistic portrayal of people of color. Network censors were undoubtedly influenced by America's wars against fascism and authoritarian communism. America's vulnerability to international criticism for civil rights abuses at home also influenced Helffrich and his associates at NBC. Helffrich urged his staff to "keep as alert as possible to avoid not only clichés but those caricatures and exaggerations which tend to annoy some parties and hence work against audience good will towards NBC and its clients." These stereotypes are "lacking in humor" and are "potentially malicious," he wrote.[31] In one instance, Stockton Helffrich took the *Philco* show to task for its portrayal of South Americans as "naïve." Dialogue about whether Peruvians could be classified as "dark," "white," or "light" was stricken for insensitivity. "All of this chit chat," Helffrich hastened to add, "was in no way essential to the plot and seemed to us very undiplomatic" given "these days of the Marshall Plan."[32] Even after the Korean War began, Helffrich informed his staff that the use of the term "gooks" offended America's "Asiatic" allies. NBC executives firmly believed they had a responsibility to

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29. Weaver to Advertising Club of New York, 15 March 1950, NBC-Weaver, SHSW, Box 125, File 37.

30. Weaver to Joseph McConnell, 11 January 1950, NBC-Weaver, Box 125, File 37; 2 February 1949, 1, NBC-CART Report (all CART Reports were authored by Stockton Helffrich), SHSW, Box 1, File 2; James McConnell to Niles Trammell, 10 August 1949, NBC-Weaver, Box 118, File 56; Stockton Helffrich to various NBC executives, 23 August 1949; NBC-CART, Box 1, File 2, November–December 1949, 2; Weaver to Stockton Helffrich, 21 February 1950; 18 October 1950, 2, NBC-CART, Box 1, File 3.

31. NBC-CART Report (SHSW), 15 February 1950, 2.Box 1, File 3,

32. NBC-CART Report (SHSW), 10 November 1948, 1.Box 1, File 1,

broadcast with racial and ethnic sensitivity because it served both national and network interests.[33]

Such common values—shared by a congregation of writers, directors, producers, federal regulators, network executives, programmers, and censors—allowed for the dissemination of liberal-internationalist themes in anthology dramas. But when the Cold War hardened, as will be shown, the networks' sensibilities in this regard retreated. While network executives altered their views to reflect the Cold War entrenchment, the writers' views remained remarkably consistent. Though anthologies continued to present an alternative national identity to that of the Cold War consensus, liberal internationalists experienced many frustrations, to say the least, throughout the 1950s.

From the summer of 1949 to the summer of 1950, the communist issue profoundly altered both American foreign policy and the domestic scene. Cold War crises threatened to stifle progressive world views as expressed in the television industry. The aftershocks of the fall of China, the detonation of the Soviet atomic device, the discovery of the Fuchs spy ring, the delivery of McCarthy's Wheeling speech, and the invasion of South Korea left policymakers reeling, especially in the State Department. Having served previously in the Office of War Information (OWI) and as an editor at *Newsweek*, Assistant Secretary of State Edward Barrett complained, "There is not enough unity within the non-Communist world," and he represented others who believed the government must use culture as a weapon in the Cold War. In response to global threats and domestic politics, Truman's national security advisers crafted the well-known policy document NSC 68. By giving NSC 68 a cultural reading, as Emily Rosenberg has urged, one discovers that Paul Nitze viewed Communism not only as a threat to American military and economic capabilities globally, but also to "our values." The United States had to complement military and economic containment by "demonstrating the integrity and vitality of our system to the free world." He urged the "development of programs designed to build and maintain confidence among other peoples in our strength and resolution, and to wage overt psychological warfare calculated to encourage mass defections from Soviet allegiance and to frustrate the Kremlin design in other ways." By 1950 the foreign policy establishment recognized that culture could be used to unite Americans, to unite the West under American leadership, and to undermine the Soviet bloc.[34]

President Truman inaugurated a worldwide "Campaign of Truth," and Congress increased appropriations for the United States Information Agency

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33. NBC-CART Report (SHSW), 15 September 1950, 2, Box 1, File 3.

34. *Department of State Bulletin* 22 (24 April 1950), 646–649; NSC 68. The belief that NSC 68 marked some noteworthy change in American foreign policy by redefining the terms of containment is a view not shared by some historians. For an alternative view see Melvyn Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, CA, 1991), 355ff.

(USIA), the Voice of America (VOA), and other government-sponsored cultural programming. Questioning this new approach, George Kennan wrote with dismay in *Life* the following May that by overreacting to the Soviet menace at home and abroad, the nation may become "rather like the representatives of that very power we are trying to combat; intolerant, secretive, suspicious, cruel and terrified of internal dissension because we have lost our own belief in ourselves and in the power of our ideals."[35] While Kennan's career stalled because of such views, anthology writers articulated similar concerns on a daily basis to growing numbers of Americans.

Traditional diplomats such as George Allen, who served as secretary of state for public affairs prior to Edward Barrett, concluded that old entertainments became new weapons in the war against the Soviet Union. Diplomacy, he told one audience, was no longer conducted among ambassadors who were "supplied with a pair of striped pants and a top hat," who "dwelt in foreign capitals and dealt with a small group of people in the foreign office of that country." Allen understood that the structure of diplomacy had changed in such a way as to incorporate every aspect of each American's life. Diplomatic negotiations were just as likely to take place over a textbook or on a television screen as in a palace or on a warship. Instantaneous television transmission became another component of American strategic policy. Representations of the strong, united nation were even more important than the reality.[36]

The new environment, one that inaugurated a cultural weapon, prompted congressional Cold Warriors to take a closer look at television with an eye toward cleansing the medium of alternative visions.[37] The FCC redefined the "public interest" in such a way as to legitimate existing social institutions and to extol the virtues of capitalism. This effort was facilitated by a number of Eisenhower appointments to the commission, including John C. Doerfer and Robert E. Lee. While FCC regulators were notoriously ineffectual, the one weapon in their oversight arsenal was the threat of nonrenewal of broadcast licenses. This allowed commissioners' rhetoric to take on meaning beyond their real power. Doerfer used the transmission of McCarthy's speeches by affiliates as a litmus test of loyalty to country and anticommunism. Commissioners undertook an information campaign, preaching their gospel to businessmen, sponsors, and television affiliates around the country in the mid-1950s. One commissioner likened the public to "shareholders" who owned the American

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35. *Life*, 17 May 1951. For a thorough discussion of government-sponsored cultural programs, see Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War* (New York, 1996). The extent to which an American garrison state existed is an issue explored by historians recently. In particular see Michael J. Hogan, *Cross of Iron: Harry S Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945–1954* (Cambridge, 1998).

36. Ambassador George V. Allen, quoted in Barnouw, *Tube of Plenty*, 240–241.

37. RG46, Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, Box 129, House Internal Security Committee (formerly HUAC) 1948–1959 File, Annual Report of the Committee on Un-American Activities for the year 1951 (17 February 1952), 7–9.

airwaves, the national ether. Another commissioner called upon "Mr. and Mrs. United States" as he deputized them into the anticommunist crusade. The receptive elements in the industry and the public became media watchdogs, encouraged as they were to "lend a hand" in reforming "bad taste programming."[38]

While audiences may not have concerned themselves with the inner workings of the FCC, several columnists and organizations responded with zeal: the American Business Consultants, the American Legion, AWARE, Inc., White Citizens Councils, Harvard's Conservative League, the Queens College's Intercollegiate Society of Individualists, Yale's Conservative Society, and others cast eyes on the media. Anticommunist activists promised to patrol the airwaves for fellow travelers, inform the public of their findings, judge the loyalties of transgressors, and organize boycotts against "soft" sponsors. Together, these consumer-enforcers made it difficult for network executives to ignore the fact that anticommunism made good business sense. In 1950 anticommunists issued their infamous blacklisting bible: a 200-page report, entitled "Red Channels: The Report of Communist Influence in Radio and Television."

Aside from employing a blacklist, the networks redefined the "public interest" ethic in terms that turned artistic presentations into commodities. Executives transformed their role from that of an educator uplifting a student to that of a middleman transporting the sponsor's product to the consumer's eyes. Sarnoff argued in 1950 that executives must "convert [their] *products* into the necessary *weapons* of war."[39] If executives viewed cultural productions as weapons, they also came to view cultural producers as soldiers. Networks checked virtually all talent before allowing them to work on a project. Those not cleared seldom knew why, for blacklists, as common as they had become, remained extralegal.

The threat of a boycott, as well as a desire to appeal to different segments of the population, convinced many sponsors and ad companies to take charge of programs. Director Arthur Penn remembered, "In the beginning, the dra-

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38. Broadcasters' perceptions of FCC power outdistanced the commissioners' real regulatory power, but given the environment of the times, perceptions mattered more. And proof that this perception existed rests on the repeated improprieties revealed to the public: alleged misdeeds related to the granting of licenses in Boston, Miami, and St. Louis; the majority-Republican panel favored Republican applicants; commissioners fraternized with applicants; commissioners accepted gifts and loans. Such incidents led President Eisenhower to demand the resignation of John Doerfer. See Baughman, *Television's Guardians*, 13–14, 44–45, 75–76. For Cold War rhetoric, see 30 March 1954, Robert E. Lee Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin (SHSW), Box 1, File 1. See also Lee speech to Tennessee Association of Broadcasters in Nashville, Tennessee, 28 March 1955, Box 1, File 1; Webster speech to Lions Club of Miami, 13 August 1951, NBC-Eiges Files (SHSW), Box 162, File 37; John C. Doerfer speech, 22 October 1953, John C. Doerfer Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin (SHSW), Box 1, File 1. Counterattack, quoted in Sterling and Kittross, *Stay Tuned*, 307.

39. Sarnoff quoted in Michael Ritchie, *Please Stand By: A Prehistory of Television* (New York, 1994), 167.

matic shows were not of any great interest to the advertising agencies. Philco had a benign agency until the end of 1953 when they discovered people were indeed watching, and, lo and behold, we felt their hot breath. . . . The pressure got worse and worse."[40] Consequently, content changed.

While anthology writers may have ignored or been unaware of the rants of particular FCC commissioners, ample evidence proves that the writers certainly perceived a threat to their artistic freedom and dealt with that challenge for the remainder of the 1950s. Although writers for anthologies escaped the blacklist, networks did "gray list" them in some ways. In other words, networks tried to balance the concerns of anticommunist activists with the sustained popularity of anthologies among the silent majority of viewers.

While none of these high-profile writers held direct ties to radical political organizations worthy of blacklisting, networks limited their involvement in the production process. Even the most prolific and successful writers felt forced into the tedium of revisions.[41] Many times networks created distance between the writer and their original script, a buffer populated by a committee of proxies. Chayefsky complained that others "frequently mangled" his scripts without his knowledge.[42] Networks kept writers away from rehearsals, leaving them to learn what had happened just as "their" words went out on a live broadcast. Director Delbert Mann explained that networks blithely requested "more conventional" material and "some different kinds of stories" from their writers.[43] These routine frustrations prompted many to seek work in other venues, including overseas.

Despite the changing environment and amid all this meddling, there was compromise. Certainly it frustrated many writers, such as Serling, who wrote that television went from "a medium best suited to illuminate and dramatize the issues of the times" to a "product pressed into a mold, painted lily-white," and one that had "its dramatic teeth yanked one by one." Some writers became satisfied with simply raising issues when they could. Their willingness to compromise, to blunt some edges in their scripts, allowed the dramas to continue, albeit in a neutered form.[44] Playwright Reginald Rose admitted later, "I was surprised I got away with the stuff I did. Television was so sensitive to criticism, and the criticism almost always came from the right. The network people were really petrified for their jobs. Yet, they were also afraid of being that way, so sometimes things got through."[45]

Take Rod Serling's *Patterns* (1955). It pitted a young, up-and-coming executive against "Serling's Willy Loman"—the aging, sickly, naïve businessman he

40. Arthur Penn oral history, ed. Kisselhoff, 260.
41. Serling, *Patterns*, 7, 19.
42. Chayefsky, *Television Plays* (New York, 1955), xii.
43. Delbert Mann oral history, ed. Kisselhoff, 260.
44. Chayefsky, *Television Plays*, ix; Serling, *Patterns*, 38–39.
45. Reginald Rose oral history, ed. Kisselhoff, 248.

hopes to replace.[46] After the old man literally works himself to death, the guilt-ridden young man declines his promotion with a lecture for his corporate boss. Serling questioned a capitalist system that undervalues loyalty, ethics, and the individual, while it over-emphasizes ruthless competition. The play sardonically attacked Defense Secretary Charles Wilson's notion that "what was good for our country was good for General Motors, and vice versa." At a time when comparisons between capitalism and communism became routine, anthologies presented American audiences with a view that challenged acceptance of even the most elementary American creeds.[47]

Another tenet of liberal internationalism, one that Wendell Willkie and Hollywood writers espoused years earlier, was a double-barreled attack on colonialism, regardless of the colonizing country's strategic relationship with Washington. In *The Dark Side of the Earth* (1957), Serling looked at the uprising in Hungary and expressed sadness at American powerlessness to help the "freedom fighters," despite the rhetoric of "rollback." In Reginald Rose's drama for *Playhouse 90*, *The Cruel Day* (1959), he explored the precarious French-Algerian situation as it played out in one family. A dutiful French captain joins an assault force searching for Algerian rebels and cooperates in the bloody massacre of an entire family. Filled with regret, the captain now doubts the morality of maintaining empires. When he returns home he spies his fifteen-year-old son plucking the wings off a defenseless butterfly. He launches into another violent rage and slaps his son because he realizes that the colonial mentality has taken root in the next generation, right under his own roof. Originally titled *The Atrocity*, the play showed colonialism beyond the patriotic platitudes and the supposed "need" for violence when controlling an "inferior" people. It shifted the debate from sympathizing with colonial people—which Rose surely appreciated—and forced viewers to understand that such enterprises wear on the consciences of colonizers as well. Democracies lose their meaning when they engage in or support these endeavors. As embarrassing as this program was to the French, Rose hoped that viewers would ultimately question America's increasing involvement in the affairs of Latin America and in Southeast Asia.[48]

Writers also illustrated America's own "domestic imperialisms." How difficult it must have been for foreign service officers in the summer of 1955 to press

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46. Joel Engel, *Rod Serling: The Dreams and Nightmares of Life in the Twilight Zone* (Chicago, 1989), 84. Serling biographer Engel suggests that Arthur Miller served as Serling's role model and "genuine literary hero." Indeed, there are striking parallels between Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1949), which Serling saw on stage, and Serling's own *Patterns* (1955).

47. This pro-business view was shared, notably, by another Eisenhower appointee—one who formulated broadcasting policy—FCC commissioner Robert E. Lee, who stated in a speech to the Minnesota Employers Association in St. Paul, Minnesota, "I have never been—and never will be—a business baiter. In fact, I have rarely found any conflict between public interest and business interest. Any governmental action favorable to the one is, generally speaking, favorable to the other." Lee Papers (SHSW), 2 February 1955, Box 1, File 1.

48. Reginald Rose Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, WI (SHSW), Box 9, File 1.

France on its dealings with its North African colonies in the very same week that a young African American named Emmett Till was lynched in Mississippi. Civil rights leaders linked their struggle with decolonization, a tie that *Time* recognized when it reported, "Today's drive of the U.S. Negro toward equality is as strong as any social tide in Asia or Africa or Europe."[49] With this background, Americans viewed Serling's *Noon on Doomsday* (1956) and Rose's *Tragedy in a Temporary Town* (1956). Each writer based his teleplay on the notorious Till lynching and endured adjustments. In Serling's case, the word "lynch" was completely omitted from the script, the killer became "just a good, decent, American boy momentarily gone wrong," and editors went so far as to take the episode out of the South altogether and place it in a small, bucolic New England town. Confronting the race issue was part of the much larger global issues of anticolonialism and self-determination. Serling's disappointment contrasts with earlier reactions by the network censors who courted controversy and challenged traditional racial attitudes.[50]

Anthologies also scrutinized the government's atomic policies. Writers chastised officials in the Eisenhower administration who used the bellicose rhetoric of "brinkmanship" and "rollback," given the high stakes of atomic diplomacy. But they also wondered how civil defense programs could downplay the threat and tame the atom.

As historian Paul Boyer explains, from the government's perspective, atomic testing could be portrayed as routine, scientifically important, and a search for knowledge that would be used to allay fears rather than heighten them. He writes of ideas "ranging from the merely unrealistic to the totally bizarre, that quickly took on a formulaic, almost hypnotic quality, as if the entire nation were caught up in a kind of collective trance about the nuclear Utopia ahead." Government spokesmen buried reporters under reams of statistical data: tonnage, distances, radiation levels, numbers of potential victims. Rod Serling, in *Nightmare at Ground Zero* (1953) and *Mr. Finchley versus the Bomb* (1954), personalized atomic testing and showed it as something volatile and potentially catastrophic for ordinary Americans.[51]

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49. *Time*, 5 September 1955, 18–23; *Time* 19 September 19 1955, 23. For further discussion of the links between domestic civil rights, decolonization, and the Cold War, see Penny Von Eschen, *Race against Empire*.

50. The recollection is from director Delbert Mann's oral history, ed. Kisselhoff, 250–251; Kerbel, 55; Serling, *Patterns*, 10, 20–23.

51. Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1985), 114. In *Chain Reaction* (Cambridge, 1991), Brian Balogh observes that most Americans feared the atomic bomb in terms of its initial strike, not its after effects. He cites one poll from September 1945 that showed that 83 percent of Americans surveyed believed the world would eventually be destroyed in an atomic war (p. 30). Later, he writes that press reports on the Bikini tests created the impression that the atomic bomb was like other weapons, only stronger. AEC experts continued to downplay the radiation hazard into the 1950s (p. 34). See also Boyer, *Fallout* (Columbus, OH, 1998), and Allan M. Winkler, *Life under a Cloud* (1993).

In the preceding months, while Serling was busy working on the *Nightmare* script, the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) took pains to reassure Americans about atomic testing by arguing that testing enhanced personal security; it did not necessitate panic. After the atomic test at Eniwetok in May 1951, General James Cooney announced, "The immediate radiation hazard from [an] air burst disappeared after the first two minutes. Rescue . . . work can begin immediately in any area where there is life." The disappearance of danger and the preservation of life were appealing themes amid testing. Yet the AEC went further by essentially domesticating the bomb. In March 1951 the AEC made a public announcement to the American Institute of Architects that "special efforts would be made to gain information useful to architects trying to design atom-resistant buildings." Westinghouse was a pioneer in the development of products to fill those architects' creations. Westinghouse president Gwilym Price declared, "I believe that we are within five years of the beginning of commercial atomic power." The company envisioned a day in the not-too-distant future when television spokeswoman Betty Furness would showcase a Westinghouse atomic toaster in what *Time* referred to as her "electrified Utopia."[52]

But Serling's fear of proliferation outweighed his sense of security in 1952, when the British detonated an atomic bomb and the United States successfully tested the "Super," a nuclear fusion device immensely more powerful than previous weapons. The following March, Americans learned that diligent Westinghouse workers toiled on the *Nautilus* nuclear submarine project as well as atomic elevators. In all, the government conducted over one hundred atmospheric tests at a surreal "doomtown" in Nevada's Yucca Flats, where suburban mannequins clothed in neckties and aprons stood beside household appliances and full pantries. When he put pen to paper, Serling questioned bomb tests and concluded that such events were destabilizing forces, not instructive exercises.[53]

Soon thereafter, Serling's *Nightmare at Ground Zero* (1953) appeared on the CBS program *Suspense* as a dark comedy, challenging the government's portrayal of life in the atomic age. It's a warm September evening in the Yucca Flats. Amid the preparations for another atomic test—they occur every two weeks—the audience enters the home of George and Helen. George is a nebbish mannequin-maker who builds "dummies" for the military to gauge the destructive force of their tests. Helen, however, is tired of her absent, atomic-obsessed husband and nags him to the breaking point. Finally, she screams in terror at the possibility of enduring another frightening test without him and demands to accompany him to the next one. George, half hen-pecked, half sadistic, manages to place his sedated wife, disguised as one of his "dummies," into the

52. *Time*, 2 April 1951, 40; *Time* 25 June 1951, 20; *Time*, 2 March 1953, 80.
53. *Time*, 17 November 1952, 28; *Time* 2 March 1953, 80–87.

test house before the blast. The audience hangs in suspense over whether she will be saved from the explosion. How could the audience *not* care about the potential of many more innocent victims in a real explosion?

While the atomic bomb proliferated, and while the government sought ways to domesticate the bomb in the minds of Americans, Serling thus confronted the issue dead-on. In the contest between portraying atomic security and atomic fear, Serling placed himself on the side of fear. The teleplay opens with the picture of a gate. On the outside is a sign: "Restricted Area—Keep Out"; on the inside are armed guards. In effect, he is saying that the bomb is off-limits and can never be contained or used by citizens in the beneficial ways the government and business had promised. Rather, Americans are reduced to nonthinking "dummies" the military has carefully placed inside a home. Indeed, military planners in the teleplay and in the real world became fixated on superficial realism for their tests: a father complete with smoking jacket and slippers; a mother with dress and stockings. A painter complains to another, "Even dummies yet. And not just any place. Father here. Mother there. An' for what? At four a.m. they drop an A-bomb on it—an' there ain't nothin' left anyhow." The other painter responds, "Kinda creepy, ain't it? Looks like a house. Furnished like a house. But it ain't a house. At four in the morning—*it's Ground Zero*!" Serling explains to audiences that George and the advocates of atomic testing are caught up with individual tests and "don't care that I'm frightened to death!" And yet, as real as the mannequins are, they are not human. How bad can the results be if they kill objects that only "bleed plaster-of-paris," Serling wondered.

Serling addressed radioactivity as well. A military officer in charge whispers to the mannequin "father" with a smirk, "Well old man, this is it! By morning you'll be just so much dust. Dangerous dust I'll wager, too," he winks. "Radioactive, you know." It is the secret that few discuss openly or understand fully. Later, after having placed Helen in the house, George, filled with guilt, comforts himself with the knowledge that his comatose wife "won't feel a thing. They tell me it's so quick." The audience knows, of course, that if she survives the blast, this is a false promise indeed.

The next year Serling returned to ground zero with *Mr. Finchley versus the Bomb* (1954), the story of a lone, elderly man who temporarily halts an atomic test. Why return to the topic? For Serling, the issue only grew in importance. By 1954 the nuclear stakes had changed dramatically. In January, John Foster Dulles explained to the Council on Foreign Relations, "Local defense must be reinforced by the further deterrent of massive retaliatory power." By also offering "more security at less cost" (a phrase famously bastardized as "more bang for the buck"), Dulles calmly endorsed the reliance on weapons of mass destruction. This message was made only more clear by the launching of the first nuclear submarine, the *Nautilus*, less than ten days later. Serling's drama accompanied the doctrine of massive retaliation into American homes. The govern-

ment's continuing test schedule confirmed for Serling that he had to reach audiences once again, and his second script, coming as it did on the heels of the first, demonstrated the political nature of his cultural product. In 1955, Serling joined and became an active member of Citizens for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE).[54]

Aside from anticolonialism and atomic testing, writers also emphasized the ambiguity of American involvement in the Korean War. To be sure, unheroic portrayals of soldiers courted controversy; but perhaps the fact so many of these writers and directors served in uniform made them immune to the most blistering attacks by the American Legion. On the tenth anniversary of D-Day in 1954, *The Strike* showed an American soldier's anguish at being forced by his superiors to fire on fellow GIs. Serling's teleplay expressed his opposition to the war: as he explained a few years later, "*The Strike* for example was written in 1953 when the Korean situation in the American mind *was* an emotional problem. Its politics were muddled and unclear; its morality was questionable; its point and purpose lost from view."[55]

During the prior year Serling took viewers inside the mind of *The Sergeant* (1952), an American soldier confined to a prisoner-of-war camp. As belligerents agreed to Panmunjom as the site for truce talks the previous fall, Serling focused on the human element within the unfolding drama. Negotiations bogged down on the nettlesome P.O.W. issue, and amid reports of the Communists "brainwashing" American captives, Serling considered the novelty that a handful of American soldiers might not wish to return. As news circulates around the camp that prisoners will be released, the youngest among them, Ray, sits in silent apprehension. Why is he not jubilant, his friend Rosie asks? Although tormented, tortured, and starved, Rosie wondered, who would dare "crack" and stay with the Chinese? Ray's father, a back-slapping ward boss preparing to run for governor, proudly talked up the imagined exploits of his son in Korea. He told of Ray's courage and success, characteristics Ray knew were not his. Serling showed how American policymakers had sacrificed their sons for a bogus victory. Even though Ray came home—he was no traitor or coward—both men had learned from the experience and grown closer. As Serling concludes, "Men who can conquer fears and can destroy hatreds—they are the brave ones." Teleplays touching on the Korean War allowed audiences to conclude that such brutal conflict opened emotional wounds as much as phys-

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54. *Time*, 25 January 1954, 17. While Serling looked at life among atomic tests, *Playhouse 90* made plans to broadcast its version of the novel *Alas, Babylon!* It is the story of a Florida community that awakens one day to a second sunrise: a nuclear blast. While many survive, they soon realize that all measures of civilization and order have vanished steadily. While it is an inspiring story of persistence, it is also a bleak tale of destruction caused by the hands of humanity. In the end, *Alas, Babylon!* was not used. See also Fred Coe Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, WI (SHSW), Box 20, File 3 (1959).

55. Rod Serling to Alvin Rakoff, 14 March 1960, Rod Serling Papers (SHSW), Box 5, File 8, emphasis in original.

ical ones. Serling showed that this ambivalent war created victims even as it valorized those victims as heroes.[56]

Indeed, writers cast skeptical eyes at hero-worship, especially during the Red Scare. Writers fought to preserve treasured American civil liberties against the abuses of staunch anticommunists. Serling watched the Army-McCarthy hearings with dismay and wrote a letter to the *Cincinnati Enquirer* critical of the senator's tactics. His biographer suggests that the letter, while a token protest, "represented the beginning," and that "from that point on his scripts became bolder and more courageous, even when the censors emasculated them."[57] Serling spent nineteen months, more time than on any other script, crafting an attack on the excesses of anticommunism in *The Rack* (1955). Like Serling, Reginald Rose condemned rabid anticommunism in *An Almanac of Liberty* (1954). The two collaborated on a script attacking loyalty oaths, an issue that Serling had addressed as a college student, but CBS never aired the controversial script, even though McCarthy had been censured by that time. Rose explained, "Issues that bother me are issues concerning people who want to impose their beliefs on others. . . . In a way, almost everything I wrote in the fifties was about McCarthy."[58] Together, Serling and Rose showed that Stalinist-styled "show trials" were hardly alien to Americans.

Writers also questioned subtle notions of American exceptionalism. Portraying the United States as the world's leading democracy fulfilled the designs of NSC 68. By planning "to build and maintain confidence among other peoples in our strength and resolution," Nitze and his successor, Robert Bowie, hoped the West would unite under American leadership. Protection from Soviet treachery provided one rationale for nations to fall in line, but emphasizing American distinctiveness, uprightness, and historical destiny provided another.[59]

Cold Warriors valued themes of unity and conformity, especially on the race issue. But Reginald Rose offered a different perspective in the spring of 1954, when millions of Americans tuned in to CBS's popular anthology drama program, *Studio One*, to watch Rose's original teleplay *Thunder on Sycamore Street*. Rose's story dealt with the quiet community of Eastmount, where an angry mob gathers to remove by force an ex-convict who has just settled in their neighborhood. At a critical moment the protagonist is literally stoned while standing on his front porch. But Rose's main characters are not the man and woman seeking to reside in Eastmount, but Phyllis and Arthur Hayes, two conscience-bound neighbors who undoubtedly represent the viewers at home.

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56. *Time*, 9 May 1952; *Time*, 2 June 1952, 23; *Time*, 4 May 1953, 32–33.

57. Engel, 104–106.

58. Reginald Rose oral history, ed. Kisselhoff, 248; Serling, *Patterns*, 136. For other examples, see Rose's *The Bus to Nowhere* (1951).

59. Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1994), 167.

Phyllis: We're going to be just like everybody else on Sycamore Street.
Arthur (*shouting*): Phyllis! I've told you. I'm not going to be a part of this thing!
Phyllis (*after a pause*): Listen to me, Artie. We're going out there. Do you want to know why? Because we're not going to be next.
Arthur: You're out of your mind!
Phyllis (*shouting*): Sure I am! I'm crazy with fear, because I don't want to be different. I don't want my neighbors looking at us and wondering why we're not like them. . . . They'll look the other way when we walk the streets. They'll become cold and nasty. We can't be different! We can't afford it! We live on the good will of these people. Your business is in this town. Your neighbors buy us the bread we eat! Do you want them to stop?
Arthur: I don't know, Phyllis. I don't know what to think. I can't throw a stone at this man.
Phyllis: You can! You've got to, or we're done for here.[60]

Given the restrictive times, it may come as little surprise that Rose's original script detailed what occurred when an African American family moved into a northern white town. Fearing public criticism, the likes of which they received anyway, sponsors and network officials forced Rose to replace the family with a single parolee. Rose challenged conformity and prejudice, and his views elicited a nationalistic backlash.

The network switchboard lit up that night. "You *Studio One* Commies! If you don't like this place, why don't you get out?!" a viewer reportedly barked to an unsuspecting operator. By invoking a political epithet to characterize the cultural exploration of racial issues—disturbances, this particular individual might say—viewers situated popular culture within a Cold War context. Television had become a political instrument in the eyes of the writers, the sponsors, the government, and the audience. In many cases viewers considered what they saw on television as representative of themselves, their neighbors, their enemies, and their *nation*.[61]

The most famous teleplay, Paddy Chayefsky's *Marty* (1953), is a celebration of American mediocrity over the heroic. In the boy-meets-girl story, the boy is a middle-aged butcher who falls in love with a "dog" girl. Marty is constantly nagged by his mother and neighbors about getting married. "Why don't you find somebody?" they all ask. Marty explains sheepishly, "I'm a little, short, fat, ugly guy." He would rather wallow in pity surrounded by his buddies. "What do you want to do tonight?" one asks another. "I don't know. What do you want to do tonight?" he responds. "I don't know," and so it goes. They are directionless and apathetic, a group of followers devoid of leaders. Finally, Marty

60. Reginald Rose Papers (SHSW), Box 18, File 2.
61. CBS producer Wellington Miner oral history, ed. Kisselhoff, 229.

summons the courage to go stag to a dance and reaches out to a gangly loner, only to find out that his mother disapproves of her.

Calling *Marty* "the most ordinary love story in the world," Chayefsky rebelled against what he called America's "shallow and destructive illusions" by delving into the Oedipal relationship, virility, and homosexuality. Marty lacks ambition and is content with his working-class status. His most satisfying loves are relationships with his best friend and with his mother. He seeks out a girlfriend reluctantly, and only then at the insistence of his neighbors, who recognize marriage as normal. Chayefsky reacted against a cinematic history full of robust masculinity and glamorous femininity. Chayefsky let audiences see Americans like themselves with physical and emotional scars.[62]

Was Marty the exceptional American man who could win the Cold War? No, according to some within the government who hoped to raise confidence among Americans, strengthen leadership over the West, and instill fear in the Kremlin. Recently-released HUAC documents show that *Marty* raised eyebrows all along the anticommunist front, especially after the film version of *Marty* was lauded by audiences and critics in 1955. "I don't know what Chayefsky's present orientation is," one investigator wrote in a memo. "A few years ago, he was the subject of heated discussion in the Communist press . . . and in Communist circles in New York. . . . The motion picture for which he is chiefly famous, 'Marty,' is very highly regarded in the Iron Curtain countries."[63] Just as the American government sought to sanitize national identity for domestic and global consumption, anthologies appeared to focus on nagging social problems and American inadequacies. By formulating themes to spotlight the ordinary and make them acceptable, these writers challenged the developing self-image in Cold War America.[64]

Despite these successes, by the late 1950s the anthologies were in steady decline for several reasons, including commercial imperatives dictated by new technologies, the move from live transmission to videotape, the shift in production from New York to Los Angeles, and the opening of small-town markets. Prestige dramas increasingly became network "specials." In some cases, progressive themes became encoded in seemingly harmless science fiction pro-

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62. Chayefsky, *Television Plays*, 174.

63. Vince Hartnett to Richard Arens, 4 August 1959; Name File Box 129, Paddy Chayefsky File; HUAC; RG 233 (NA). According to documents in File and Reference Box 43, 3 June 1957, Paddy Chayefsky File; HUAC; RG 233 (NA), both HUAC and the SISS of the Senate Judiciary Committee cited Chayefsky for attaching, on 25 March 1950, his name to a leaflet for the New York Council of the Arts, Sciences, and Professions, a group the attorney general labeled as "subversive."

64. Such controversial themes included familial disharmony in Serling's *The Comedian* (1957), directed by John Frankenheimer; juvenile delinquency in Reginald Rose's *Crime in the Street*; implied teenage pregnancy in *The Adolescent* (1954), starring Ida Lupino; alcoholism in J.P. Miller's *Days of Wine and Roses* (1958), also directed by Frankenheimer; and mental illness in Rose's *The Incredible World of Horace Ford*, starring Art Carney.

grams such as *Star Trek*. Beginning in October 1959 on CBS, Rod Serling used his new show, *The Twilight Zone*, as an outlet to express his views on war, atomic testing, race, capitalism, and anticommunism. By the end of the 1950s, anthologies gave way to what one media critic dubbed "Eisenhower *Walden*"—programming genres extolling the virtues of placid, acquisitive domesticity, such as situation comedies, westerns, and quiz shows.[65]

Late in the 1950s even the anthologies had changed. Take the case of *The Plot to Kill Stalin* (1958), which aired as a season premiere on *Playhouse 90*. At a critical moment, Stalin suffers a stroke while his underlings silently watch. The script was even changed to show Khrushchev consciously preventing another from rendering assistance. "Well, Khrushchev was the premier right at that moment," director Delbert Mann recalled, "and here he was being portrayed as the man most responsible for the murder of Stalin." Producer Fred Coe was "shook up" during rehearsals, but eventually consented to proceed because of what his biographer described as a desire "to conform to television's increasingly timorous nature." Diplomatic relations between Moscow and CBS declined precipitously. Calling the program "slanderous," the Soviet ambassador to the United States filed a formal protest with the State Department. Two days later, the Soviets expelled a CBS correspondent in Moscow, and later denied a visa to a CBS engineer. By the late 1950s, American television had changed dramatically.[66]

For many reasons—the blacklist, censorship, increased sponsorship, changing programming strategies, new technologies—anthology writers became frustrated. As the Cold War gripped domestic television content, as well as for reasons of professional ambition, many writers found an outlet for free expression in Europe. One London screenwriter informed a CBS producer that television was "on the point of exploding here." By 1960 *Weekly Television Digest* estimated that almost one hundred million television sets existed worldwide, receiving signals in Britain, the Soviet Union, Japan, Brazil, Honduras, and Nigeria. Viewers in Taiwan, Kuwait, and Aruba did not wait long.[67]

The spread of television technology and the requisite need for material allowed frustrated writers to move beyond the borders of the United States and into the welcoming arms of foreign television. Ironically, the inhospitable environment in the United States caused Cold War critics to plug into the world. The European cultural front was populated by members of the Hollywood Ten and scores of other blacklisted talents who formed expatriate communities there and in Mexico. "Subversive" playwrights Lillian Hellman and Arthur Miller also

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65. For discussion of the illusion behind the so-called "Eisenhower Walden," see David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York, 1993), 515–516; Kisselhoff, 339; Engelhardt, 146; Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York, 1988), 146, 171–172.

66. Krampner, *The Man in the Shadows*, 122–123.

67. Aubrey Cash to Fred Coe, 5 September 1955, Fred Coe Papers (SHSW), Box 42, File 5; *Television Digest*, 18 April 1960.

enjoyed success overseas during the 1950s. (Miller's *The Crucible* won international acclaim and brought congressional scrutiny at the same time.) Collectively, radicals and liberal internationalists became unappointed, roving, cultural ambassadors with progressive portfolios. Equipped with an alternative vision to that of the State Department, they comprised a band of illicit "diplomats" who "negotiated" the national identity on the front lines of the Cold War.

As early as the late 1940s, some officials involved in the Voice of America had spoken with members of private industry about the need for the United States to beat the Russians in the area of international television. This "space race" for global television never materialized, but it showed the desire on the part of both government and business to extend television to the world. Almost a decade later, seven congressional members of the International Telecommunications Commission met in Washington in 1954 to discuss the potential for global television. One member, Senator Alexander Wiley, viewed this as an opportunity "to improve trade, to increase understanding." Indeed, he understood that selling televisions and programs would "improve trade," while conveying positive messages about America would "increase understanding." Nowhere was the potential clearer than in English-speaking countries. The same year in Britain, Parliament passed the Television Act of 1954, allowing for an independent, commercial television network to compete with the state-sponsored British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). There was much opposition to commercial television in Britain. Before the law passed Parliament, Labour politicians and distinguished English actors joined forces claiming that their nation would be swamped by American culture. They warned, furthermore, that what happened in Britain would serve as a model for continental programming decisions.[68]

Media scholar Kerry Segrave shows that interested Americans, particularly the London branch of the American-owned J. Walter Thompson ad agency, "masterminded" the campaign to commercialize British television by tagging the BBC as a broadcasting monopoly. Furthermore, the USIA kept detailed statistics on television operations overseas and provided this information to American distributors and advertisers. The infant commercial television industry in Britain provided a crucial market for imports of American television sets, content, and advertising.[69] At the very moment when Americans knocked, Britons opened the door. By 1954, thirteen nations claimed commercial television systems and another twenty-seven countries were developing industries based on the American standard.[70]

Commercial television came to Britain in September 1955, and before the year was out, American distributors sold twenty-five productions worth $3 million. Within the first eighteen months of commercial television in Britain,

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68. Kerry Segrave, *American Television Abroad: Hollywood's Attempt to Dominate World Television* (London, 1998), 3, 19.

69. Ibid., 49.

70. Ibid., 9–10.

American advertising agencies, including Young & Rubicam and J. Walter Thompson, reaped hundreds of millions of dollars from their clients in the foreign markets. Many of these agencies and sponsors opened foreign offices and fine-tuned their techniques for foreign tastes. With all the American activity in overseas television, *U.S. News & World Report* suggested in 1956, "An American visitor watching television in Britain might almost think he was still back home."[71] By 1959, the American networks had formed their own export association, the Television Program Export Association (TPEA), to work the middle ground between American trade negotiators and foreign governments. Columnists for the trade paper *Variety* likened all of this fevered interest in foreign television to a "colonial policy" for American media.[72] The cultural weapon was well at work.

As it happened, this was a colonial policy that the Eisenhower administration encouraged but did not control. In theory, television sets that exhibited American programs accomplished many things at once. The programs could convey the image of the nation that Cold Warriors so valued, but also situate an important icon of consumer capitalism—the television set itself—inside millions of European homes. An assortment of American businesses profited from the sale of RCA receivers, a backlog of Hollywood films, network programs, and advertisements. Ironically, though, the success at opening foreign television markets for Americans also proved invaluable to Cold War critics who offered an alternative representation of America.

From the beginning, commercial networks such as Britain's independent television network (ITV) relied on purchasing American programs to fill their schedules. That television was new and that ardent Cold Warriors overlooked much of its content allowed many blacklisted writers to work on Britain's small screen. "Most of our scripts had either a progressive idea or at least something human about them," one writer recalled, and their scripts reached an avid following in Europe.[73]

Undoubtedly, anthology drama writers recognized the financial rewards of entering the European cultural scene. But many also understood the relative artistic freedom Europe offered. Although most writers exported their scripts to the European market, Rod Serling's experiences may serve as representative. Serling was pleased to discover that the BBC had no commercial breaks to interrupt his teleplays. Furthermore, without a "sponsor problem," he returned original scenes and dialogue to European productions. Even more significantly, Serling was able to sell his controversial script about the Korean War, *The Strike*,

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71. "British TV Goes U.S.," *U.S. News & World Report*, 20 July 1956, 110–111, quoted in Segrave, *American Television Abroad*, 50.

72. Segrave, *American Television Abroad*, 10, 34.

73. Norma Barzman oral history, in Patrick McGilligan and Paul Buhle, eds., *Tender Comrades: A Backstory of the Hollywood Blacklist* (New York, 1997), 16.

to the BBC after MGM's rights elapsed with no production in sight.[74] To their credit, the BBC and ITV went out of their way to present material as originally intended. When one BBC official learned that a production concerned itself with "Negroes not Mexicans[,] and sheriff suicided [*sic*] not killed," he requested Serling's original treatment because "compromise here unnecessary."[75] Other European countries also chose what elements of American culture to exhibit. The fact that the message of liberal internationalism continued unabated during the 1950s goes a long way toward explaining the difficulty of extending an informal cultural empire over Cold War Europe.[76]

Serling's orientation to British television showed that despite the well-publicized attempts to pull progressive literature off State Department library shelves and to reject passport applications, ardent Cold Warriors failed to silence dissent completely. One force behind this breakdown came from the tenacious and enterprising writers who presented liberal-internationalist ideology overseas. But Serling's situation also reminds us of the important role that receptive Europeans played. European audiences and programmers provided another force that changed the way Washington staged the Cold War.

The complex and dark themes presented in anthologies stood in contrast to standard portrayals of Americans, especially those exported by the USIA, which distributed films including *The Life of President Eisenhower*, religious epics, and the musical-western *Oklahoma!*, to over eighty countries in twenty-seven languages. Government and business, in this case Hollywood studios and distributors, worked closely to cleanse the image of America. Government-sanctioned cultural exports detailed economic assistance programs, dispensed anticommunist propaganda, extolled the virtues of capitalism, hailed the melting pot, and promised the freedoms of consumer choice. Meanwhile, Europeans also favored more subversive offerings such as Brando, jazz, and *Marty*.[77]

European audiences and critics expressed how refreshing American realism appeared in light of state-sanctioned cultural productions. Paddy Chayefsky's *Marty*, for example, became an international sensation because it presented the inverted image to the one put forward by Cold Warriors. What in *Marty* appealed to Europeans? Dialogue rather than song-and-dance routines, black-

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74. Reginald Rose to Lars Schmidt, 10 November 1958, Reginald Rose Papers (SHSW), Box 6, File 4; Alvin Rakoff to Blanche Gaines, 18 February 1957, Rod Serling Papers, Box 7, File 2; Rod Serling to Alvin Rakoff, 23 April 1959, Rod Serling Papers, Box 5, File 8.

75. Alvin Rakoff telegram to Rod Serling, 27 November 1959, Rod Serling Papers, Box 5, File 8.

76. For further discussion of the critical component of audience reception in Europe, see Richard H. Pells, *Not Like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture since World War II.* (New York, 1997); Uta G. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (Berkeley, CA, 2000); Walter Hixson, *Parting the Curtain*; and Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War*.

77. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain*, 124, 155; Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization*, 225; Chayefsky, *Television Plays*, 174, 178.

and-white rather than Technicolor, small people with complex lives rather than prominent people living in abundance. A columnist for the *London Daily Mail* explained that *Marty*'s appeal lay "not in its story alone but the almost clinical exactness with which it lays bare the bankruptcy of life in a part of New York we have not seen before. And yet it is all too familiar to us." The *London Sunday Times* critic wryly noted that he appreciated *Marty* for rejecting "the cheap morality" common to American cultural productions "as almost to constitute an un-American activity." Others appreciated the universality of themes, one noting that characters "are so real . . . they could just as truly be British." An edition of *Life International* labeled Chayefsky "the best ambassador the U.S. has sent abroad in years." Many Europeans accepted anthologies as best representing not only their flawed American ally but also universal truths. They marked an art form far different from the garish displays that Europeans believed typically came from America. Ironically, productions that challenged notions of American exceptionalism helped win the hearts and minds of Europeans, and without intention, Europeans invited American cultural export.[78]

During the mid-1950s, after anticommunist attempts to silence voices and after American allies reacted in disgust to those attempts, the Eisenhower administration came to see such brash efforts at content control as futile and embarrassing. Despite an occasional rhetorical nod, government officials increasingly viewed *any* American cultural export as valuable in the effort to define differences between democratic-capitalism and totalitarian-communism. In the mid-1950s the government eased its tight supervision over cultural exports when it realized that its representation of America could peacefully coexist with alternative visions.

With new weapons for an old purpose, the Eisenhower administration sought to use institutions like the USIA and the VOA to extend American culture abroad regardless of an ideological litmus test. This effort moved beyond film, television, and other visual media. As other studies have shown, American-sponsored jazz tours became valuable weapons in the Cold War starting in the mid-1950s. To officials at the USIA, any American art form that could simultaneously promote rebellion in the right places and convey a message of racial diversity in America could not be all bad. This was the rationale for appointing Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Dizzy Gillespie as "jambassadors."[79]

In 1959 Vice President Richard Nixon opened the American exhibition in Moscow. That same year, Paddy Chayefsky visited the Soviet Union on a tour

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78. *London Daily Mail*, 3 June 1955; *London Sunday Times*, 5 June 1955; *London Observer*, 5 June 1955; *London Evening News*, 2 June 1955; Robert Manning, "A New Era for Playwrights," *Life International*, 25 July 1955, 34.

79. Penny Von Eschen, "Who's the Real Ambassador? Exploding Cold War Racial Ideology," in *Cold War Constructions: The Political Culture of United States Imperialism, 1945–1966*, ed. Christian G. Appy (Amherst, MA, 2000), 110–131; Hixson, *Parting the Curtain*, 115.

sponsored by the State Department. Similarly, Rod Serling became a goodwill ambassador in 1963. While these events annoyed some anticommunists in Congress who wondered how the nation would be represented to the world, they could do little to change things. While Nixon and Khrushchev debated the merits of capitalism and communism in front of David Sarnoff's RCA cameras, viewers watched on television sets. The debate that appeared on the screen was memorable, but the medium that broadcasted the spectacle to audiences around the world—itself an icon of Cold War consumer economies—perhaps held more lasting significance in hindsight. American culture, both in forms of content and as commodities, were formidable weapons in the nation's arsenal. Nixon and Chayefsky accomplished the same goal in 1959. What appeared to be cultural exchanges to further understanding were, in fact, events designed simply to wage the Cold War in a different way.

At the height of its popularity, the anthology drama provided a safe form of protest for a segment of the population. While conventional arenas of politics and popular culture remained closed or hostile to liberal internationalism, television furnished the artistic community with a site to articulate their fears and frustrations about American foreign policy. Anthologies conveyed an alternative message to a Cold War consensus that valued American exceptionalism, benign capitalism, and atomic security.

Historians of American foreign relations have looked only recently at the complicated intersection of foreign affairs and popular culture. For a long time, scholars were too hasty to view American popular culture during this time as merely conformist. Anthology dramas disappeared from the screen altogether. When noticed at all, other scholars viewed these writers as bitter victims of Red hysteria, vulnerable to the blacklist and censorship. But looking more closely, one can see that these critics proved tenacious, their ideology portable, European audiences accommodating, and the national security state flexible. The great irony is that, unknowingly, the writers' involvement in international television coincided with a government seeking to soften its hard-sell of Americanism, but still intent on exporting American culture abroad for Cold War purposes.