



5-2008

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## Recommended Citation

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# Competing Visions: The CIA, the Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Non-Communist European Left, 1950-1967

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Senior Thesis and Honors Thesis

May 2008

During the tense early years of the Cold War, the United States government, utilizing the newly formed Central Intelligence Agency, covertly provided the majority of the funding for an international organization comprised primarily of non-communist left (NCL) intellectuals known as the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF). The CCF based their primary mission around facilitating cooperative networks of NCL intellectuals and sought to draw upon the cultural influence of these individuals to sway the intelligentsia of Western Europe away from its lingering fascinations with communism and its sympathetic views of the Soviet Union. The CCF stressed that totalitarian governments such as the Soviet Union presented an urgent and dangerous threat to the tradition of cultural-intellectual freedom venerated by Western intellectuals. In the words of Michael Josselson, Executive Secretary and CIA liaison for the organization, the CCF “could seize the initiative from the Communists by reaffirming the fundamental ideals governing cultural (and political) action in the Western world and the repudiation of all totalitarian challenges.”<sup>1</sup> While the Congress consisted of a quarrelsome collection of intellectuals with often-divergent views, they were united in opposing the popular belief among European intellectuals at the time that communism was more accommodating to culture than bourgeois democracy. At the height of its operations, the Paris-based CCF had offices in thirty-five countries, employed dozens of prominent individuals, published over twenty magazines and

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Warner, “Origins of the Congress for Cultural Freedom 1949-1950”, *Studies in Intelligence* 38 (CIA in-house journal, 2007): 93. The author explains in a footnote that this article is an excerpt from a larger classified draft study of CIA involvement with anti-Communist groups in the Cold War.

journals, held exhibitions of art, organized international conferences, and provided patronage as well as public performances opportunities for musicians and artists.

The question of how overt and aggressive of a stance the organization should take against the ideology of communism and communist governments such as the Soviet Union represented one of the most polarizing issues dealt with by the Congress. At the onset of the CCF, leadership rested on two prominent European writers with opposing visions for the organization: the Anglicized Hungarian writer, Arthur Koestler and the Italian writer, Ignazio Silone. Like many of the members of the Congress, both Koestler and Silone had once been card-carrying Communist Party members. Koestler supported a rhetorical frontal assault on communism, often described as sparing neither friend nor foe. Silone favored a more gentle and subtle approach, urging the West to promote social and political reform to mitigate the moral and social appeal to intellectuals that communism often held over capitalist democracy.

Following the inaugural Berlin Conference in 1950, the CCF, under the direction of Josselson, moved away from the aggressively anti-communist approach characterized by Koestler and towards the subtler and more tolerant approach characterized by Silone. While Koestler played one of the most significant roles in the organization of the Berlin Conference and was the primary contributor to the Freedom Manifesto presented there, he became an increasingly marginalized figure in the Congress following the Berlin Conference. The embrace of Silone's direction by the Congress made clear that the battle over the direction of the organization that Koestler and Silone had engaged in at the Berlin Conference could be called in favor of Silone. While

Koestler stood in opposition to the ongoing overall direction of the CCF and largely became an irrelevant fringe figure in the organization, he remained a nominal member until the 1970s.

Interestingly, the CCF embraced Silone's less overtly aggressive opposition to communism came at a time when hardline opposition to communism was taking a firm grip on political discourse in the US. The CIA's funding of the Congress can be seen as all the more extraordinary as it occurred during a time when McCarthyism, an ideology that promoted a vigilant approach to communism and would certainly have condemned the Congress for being soft on communism, was exerting a great deal of influence in the American political landscape. The CIA's decision to fund the Congress covertly rather than overtly helped its cause on both domestic and foreign fronts. Covert funding allowed the Agency to overcome the domestic issues that would have arisen from overt American sponsorship of what many mainstream American political figures would have written off as "motley bands of former communists".<sup>2</sup> On the foreign front, covert funding allowed the US government to reach out to significant portions of the European intelligentsia who viewed the US as an overly materialistic capitalist society with frightening ambitions of economic imperialism. Given this generally poor standing of the US government with European intellectuals, covert sponsorship allowed the CCF to gain the support of European intellectuals who would have refused to support any organization they knew was receiving funding from the US government.

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<sup>2</sup> Giles Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture: The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the CIA and post-war American hegemony*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), 100.

While the notion that culture can have tangible social and political influence has been long supported by philosophers such as Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and widely accepted by the Soviet Union, it is an idea that has not often received a great deal of attention in the US. The decision of the newly formed CIA to fund the CCF demonstrates that influential figures in the CIA embraced the notion that culture has the ability to exert tangible influence. The purpose of this essay is to demonstrate that by utilizing cultural influence and adopting Silone's vision, the CCF was able to pursue the support of left-leaning European intellectuals, writers and artists who were often alienated by the policies of both the US and the USSR. The ability of the CCF to reach out to these individuals made it an extremely valuable asset to the CIA and contributed to the CIA's emerging strategy of promoting the NCL as a reliable anti-communist force that would come to be the theoretical foundation of the CIA's political operations against communism over the next two decades.

### **The Cold War and the Birth of the Congress for Cultural Freedom**

The CCF was an organization shaped by and born out of the political demands of the Cold War that was emerging between the United States and the Soviet Union following World War II. The end of WW II brought about the end of large-scale direct military confrontation on the European continent. While the gunshots and explosions of WW II had ceased, a Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States was developing that challenged the relative peace that existed in Europe. The Cold War was unlike any war that had been fought in the past. The most obvious difference was that the two participants never

engaged in direct combat with each other. The Cold War was largely an ideological war, pitting the American system of democratic capitalism against the Soviet system of totalitarian communism. Owing to the Cold War's unique ideological basis, the United States was forced to explore new methods to thwart the expansion of Soviet influence. While both the Soviet Union and the United States bolstered their nuclear arsenals and conventional military capabilities, both nations were keenly aware that the Cold War was a struggle that would be fought with words, ideas and political philosophies as much, if not more so, than fought with nuclear war-heads, aircraft carriers and jet fighters.

Chief among the foreign policy objectives of both the Soviet Union and the United States was the task of winning over the hearts and minds of Europeans. In working towards this objective, one of the most successful US efforts was the Marshall Plan. By helping to get the non-Soviet bloc countries of Europe back on their feet economically, the Marshall Plan played a significant role in thwarting the expansion of Soviet influence in the region. In similar fashion to the way in which the Marshall Plan sought to influence the material conditions of Europe during the Cold War, the CCF sought to influence the cultural conditions of Europe during the Cold War. While the material and economic conditions of the Cold War often receive greater attention, the cultural conditions of the Cold War played an influential role in the struggle between the world's two superpowers. The struggle over the cultural conditions of the Cold War has come to be known

as the Cultural Cold War.<sup>3</sup> Wedged between the United States on one side and the Soviet Bloc and Soviet Union on the other, Western Europe represented an area of high strategic importance during the Cold War. In particular for the fate of Western Europe, the Cultural Cold War is an important although often overlooked facet of the Cold War in which the United States and the Soviet Union sought to use the influence of culture to win the hearts and minds of individuals.

While there is no doubt that popular culture wields an immense influence over vast numbers of people, study of the Cultural Cold War generally refers to examination of the specific cultural initiatives undertaken by the Soviet Union and the United States to influence writers, artists and intellectuals. In the early years of the Cold War, the United States lagged far behind the Soviet Union in the emerging Cultural Cold War. The Soviet Union was well versed in cultural warfare. Years of initiatives for international communist revolution provided the Soviet Union with a great deal of experience in exerting influence through front organizations and the nation developed a well-oiled propaganda machine that promoted Soviet ideology and culture throughout the world. A number of Americans were aware of the Soviet Union's advantage in the Cultural Cold War and feared the resulting advantage that it held in influencing intellectuals.

Beginning in 1948, the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) increased its efforts to generate support for communism in the international community with a series of Soviet-sponsored cultural conferences that called for

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<sup>3</sup> The phrase "Cultural Cold War" was coined by Christopher Lasch, author of the first scholarly study on the topic. See Christopher Lasch, *The Agony of the American Left* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968).



world peace. These conferences asserted the Soviet Union's moral superiority and intellectual appeal and argued that the aggressive imperialistic nature of capitalist countries, such as the United States, presented a grave challenge to world peace.<sup>4</sup> The World Peace Conference, held at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City in March of 1949 was the first of such conferences to be held in a Western country and was not coincidentally the first to meet organized and articulate opposition.

Following this Cominform-sponsored rally, American and European NCL intellectuals responded with an ad-hoc counter-rally at the Waldorf Astoria, organized by New York University Philosophy Professor, Sidney Hook, and attended by T.S. Elliot, Karl Jaspers and other prominent American and European intellectuals. Hook and the other participants strongly believed in the potential of the NCL in the struggle against Stalinism and they espoused many of the ideas that would later come to form the foundation of the CCF. Hook expressed his confidence in the influence that could be wielded by the NCL in this struggle when he rallied the counter-rally participants, saying:

Give me a hundred million dollars and a thousand dedicated people, and I will guarantee to generate such a wave of democratic unrest among the masses-yes, even among the soldiers- of Stalin's own empire, that all his problems for a long time to come will be internal. I can find the people.<sup>5</sup>

Hook and others at the counter-rally harassed the Soviet sponsored Peace Conference by asking embarrassing questions of the Soviet delegates at the conference's panel discussions and staging their own rally at nearby Bryant Park. Media reactions to the counter-rally were largely positive. Arnold Beichman, one

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<sup>4</sup> Warner, 90.

<sup>5</sup> Sidney Hook quoted in Untitled, *Politics*, no. 4 (1949): 36.

of the key organizers of the counter-rally, claimed that only the *New York Times* was against their counter-rally and recalled that it turned out years later that the *Times* reporter who had written the article was a member of the Communist Party.<sup>6</sup> While significantly lacking in funding and organization compared to the Cominform-staged Peace Conference, the ad-hoc counter-rally planted the seeds for a larger scale effort on the part of NCL intellectuals to play an important role in the struggle against communism by promoting the importance of cultural freedom and opposing totalitarian government efforts to restrict cultural freedom. The seeds planted at the impromptu Waldorf counter-rally bore fruit at the 1950 inaugural CCF conference, held behind the Iron Curtain in West Berlin. Sidney Hook and the other participants at the Waldorf Astoria counter-rally decided that there was an urgent need for anti-communists to set the tone by organizing their own conference rather than simply harassing the conferences put on by the Communists. Original plans called for the conference to be held in Paris, but Hook and the other organizers decided that Paris as a whole would not likely provide a receptive response for their message. The influence of communism in France was expressed by Arthur Koestler who quipped that the French Communist Party (PCF) could take over all of France with a single phone call.<sup>7</sup>

Wary of the sort of reception that Paris might provide for the conference, West Berlin was chosen largely on the basis of the message that could be sent by conducting the conference in a city that was “an island of freedom in a

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<sup>6</sup> Warner, 90.

<sup>7</sup> Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*, (New York: The New Press, 1999), 70.

Communist sea.”<sup>8</sup> The original 1950 Berlin Conference saw hundreds of prominent, largely left leaning intellectuals from around the world gather to promote the importance of cultural freedom and to oppose those who sought to restrict cultural freedom. The mission of the Congress grew out of an acknowledgement of the allure that the Communist Party held for European intellectuals and hoped to stress the importance of cultural freedom for intellectuals as well as the threats posed to cultural freedom by the Soviet brand of totalitarian communism. The conference was willing to defy the influential opinion at the time that Communism was more congenial to culture than was bourgeois democracy.

In order to understand how the CCF sought to oppose this popular opinion among writers, artists and intellectuals in Europe it is important to understand the appeal the appeal that communism held for many intellectuals and the reasons why they believed it to be more “congenial” to culture than capitalist democracy. While it would seem that the Soviet history of censorship and cultural control would forever turn intellectuals and artists away from communism, many were drawn towards communism because of the tendency of Communist Parties to support artists and acknowledge the importance of culture. While State censorship surely did not help the appeal of communism to artists, many were highly supportive of the funding and opportunities provided to artists by the Soviet government and other Communist Parties. These artists often viewed capitalist democracies such as the United States as overly materialistic societies that did not care about or support culture. This view often

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<sup>8</sup> Warner, 92.

lead individuals to believe that a capitalist democratic government would not fund cultural production, as it generally did not overtly further the material economic development upon which capitalism is based. An example of the allure of the Communist Party to artists can be seen in France during the early 1950s where a large number of writers, artists and intellectuals supported the French Communist Party in no small part because they envisioned tangible advances in the wake of Communist victory in the form of an audience or state funding.<sup>9</sup>

Building on earlier smaller-scale initiatives to sway intellectuals, the 1950 Berlin Conference was to be the most prominent and significant attempt to thwart the allure of communism for writers, artists and intellectuals yet undertaken. Ruth Fischer, one of the key organizers of the Berlin conference, described her plan for the opening conference to a diplomat friend as, “a gathering of all ex-Communists, plus a good representative group of anti-Stalinist American, English and European intellectuals...giving the Politburo hell right at the gate of their own hell.”<sup>10</sup> Josselson largely agreed with sentiment of Fischer’s vision for the conference but argued in favor of an explicitly cultural and intellectual conference to be called the “Congress for Cultural Freedom.”<sup>11</sup>

The opening day of the Conference happened to coincide with North Korea’s invasion of South Korea, which certainly did not harm the cause of the participants who sought to convince their fellow intellectuals of the urgent nature of the struggle against communism. On the final day of the Berlin

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<sup>9</sup> Charles A. Micaud, “The Bases of Communist Strength in France,” *The Western Political Quarterly* 8, no. 3 (1955): 365.

<sup>10</sup> Warner, 92.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 93.

Conference, prominent author and former member of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD), Arthur Koestler presented the organization's liberal, anti-communist, anti-neutralist "Freedom Manifesto" to a cheering crowd of 15,000 people at a public park in the British sector of Berlin. What was unknown, although possibly suspected, by the individuals in this crowd was that the CCF, which touted itself as an independent organization, was in fact receiving the bulk of its funding through channels that originated with the CIA.

## **CIA Funding and Influence**

The degree to which the CIA exerted influence over the CCF through their funding of the organization is a difficult issue that has been widely debated by scholars but remains with no definite conclusion. Exploration of the question of CIA influence requires one to examine the actions and documents of the CCF itself, as CIA documents still remain largely unavailable.<sup>12</sup> Attempts by the popular media to examine the CCF have often focused on the CIA's influence over the CCF and frequently stressed that CIA funding inherently meant a significant degree of CIA influence.<sup>13</sup> While these media outlets have often

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<sup>12</sup> Peter Coleman, author of *The Liberal Conspiracy: The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Struggle for the Mind of Postwar Europe*, (New York: The Free Press, 1989), one of the most extensive studies on the CCF, wrote that when he applied to the CIA under the Freedom of Information Act for records related to the CCF from 1950 to 1967 all he received was a clipping from the *New York Times* about the dissolution of the Congress for Cultural Freedom in 1967 and the message, "No other records responsive to your request were located" in Coleman, 220.

<sup>13</sup> An example of such coverage can be seen in Saunder's *The Cultural Cold War*. While Saunder's work is the bestselling book on the CCF, it has received a great deal of criticism for being poorly researched and over simplifying the relationship between the CIA and the CCF. More recently, the widely viewed

painted the CCF as a front for the CIA, evidence exists to suggest that despite CIA funding, the CCF was largely free to act independently. Roselyne Chenu, who served as the assistant to CCF Literature Director, Pierre Emmanuel, argued that the Congress was in fact more free to act independently during the years of covert CIA funding than they were in the years after 1967, when the CCF no longer received CIA funding. From her experience in working with Emmanuel and in his involvement in the publication of the French CCF published magazine, *Preuves*, Chenu maintained that the CIA exerted no editorial influence over the content or direction of the magazine.<sup>14</sup> This view is also supported by Peregrine Worsthorne, who wrote for the British CCF magazine, *Encounter*. Echoing Chenu's stance that CCF magazines were largely free to exert editorial independence, Worsthorne insisted that there was "nothing worse than very occasional CIA interference in the editorial decisions [of *Encounter*...]"<sup>15</sup>

While the CIA provided the principal funding for the CCF from 1950 until the public disclosure of its funding in 1967, the CIA was not responsible for the formation of the Congress. Stemming from the ideas that brought about the Waldorf Astoria counter-rally and a general interest among NCL intellectuals to organize a movement to promote cultural freedom and oppose communist totalitarianism, the CCF came about not by the design of the CIA but on account of its own efforts. When the Congress decided to create a standing organization

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2006 Franco-German produced television documentary, *Quand la CIA Infiltrait la Culture* (In English: *When the CIA Infiltrated Culture*), relied heavily upon Saunder's work and likewise has contributed to the popular but oversimplified and inaccurate view that the CCF can be described as a CIA front.

<sup>14</sup> Personal interview with Roselyne Chenu, February 15<sup>th</sup> 2008, Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>15</sup> Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam, eds. *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe*, (Portland: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003), 56.

and continue its activities after the Berlin Festival in 1950, it had no reliable source of funds. With its left of center political views, the CCF had no hope of getting adequate funds from the US State Department, US Congress or most private foundations.<sup>16</sup> The pervasiveness of McCarthyism in the US during the early 1950s assured that funding the left-leaning CCF would have presented an unacceptable political risk to figures residing in the mainstream of American politics.

Similar to the question of how much influence the CIA exerted over the CCF, the question of who in the CCF was aware of CIA funding remains a widely debated and controversial issue. Significant evidence and support exists both to support and refute the notion that most high-level members of the CCF were aware of the primary source of their organization's funding. Although Josselson was officially the only member of the CCF to be aware of CIA funding, it is likely that a number of prominent Congress members were observant and intelligent enough to connect the dots.<sup>17</sup> This argument is supported Peter Coleman in *The Liberal Conspiracy: The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Struggle for the Mind of Post-War Europe*, who argues that Congress members must have been observant enough to wonder how at a time when Europe was still recovering economically from WW II, money was liberally spent to cover travel costs, provide meals at high end restaurants and host attendees of CCF conferences in five-star hotels. Coleman also points out that Hook later noted that even at the time of the 1950 Berlin Conference there was "a culpable

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<sup>16</sup> Coleman, 220.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

incuriosity about funding in Congress circles.”<sup>18</sup> While the members of the Congress, for obvious reasons, did not openly confess whatever awareness they may have had of CIA funding, more information concerning their knowledge of CIA funding has become available in the years since the dissolution of the Congress. One such example can be seen in the case of Silone, whose defenders long argued that he was ignorant of the CCF’s hidden sponsors. Contradicting such claims of ignorance, Silone’s widow, Darina, later recalled that he had originally been reluctant to attend the 1950 Berlin conference because he strongly suspected that it was a US State Department operation.<sup>19</sup>

While personal reports, such as the one from Silone’s widow, suggest that Silone and other prominent CCF members were most likely indirectly aware of CIA funding, other personal reports exist to support the official proclamations of ignorance made by CCF members after the public disclosure of CIA funding. In recounting the reaction of her colleague and friend, CCF Literature Director, Pierre Emmanuel, to the public disclosure of CIA funding, Roselyne Chenu makes certain that she believes that Emmanuel had not been aware of CIA funding. Chenu described her long time friend as “looking green” and appearing visibly shaken when she met with him immediately after the news of CIA funding was printed in the *New York Times*.<sup>20</sup>

At the time of the CCF’s conception, mutual suspicions existed between significant elements of the US government and many European intellectuals. The McCarthy-influenced political climate of the US led many government figures to

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<sup>18</sup> Sidney Hook, *Out of Step*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 451.

<sup>19</sup> Saunders, 221.

<sup>20</sup> Personal interview with Roselyne Chenu, February 15<sup>th</sup> 2008, Chicago, Illinois.



be suspicious of or afraid to support left-leaning European intellectuals. For their part, European intellectuals were often suspicious of the motives and foreign policies of the US government. The CCF would have faced major hurdles in gaining the support of European intellectuals if they were aware that the primary source of funding was a US government agency.

Running against the main political current in the US, Allen Dulles, Frank Wisner, Thomas Braden and others in the CIA saw the Congress as just the sort of group they needed to wage the Cultural Cold War for the hearts and minds of European intellectuals. They had faith in the viability of the NCL as a viable anti-communist force and viewed the CCF as a group of committed anti-communist liberals and leftists.<sup>21</sup> The interest shown by key figures in the CIA towards the CCF and the CIA's ability to provide covert funding facilitated the cooperation of European intellectuals who would have otherwise refused to work with an organization funded by a US government agency. Covert funding of the CCF was the obvious answer to the CIA's dilemma of winning the support of European intellectuals without doing so directly and thus losing their support.

### **The CIA, Intellectuals and Cultural Hegemony**

The belief of prominent CIA individuals such as Dulles, Wisner and Braden that the CCF could be a reliable anti-communist force with the potential to affect tangible influence in the struggle against Soviet influence in Europe, represents a belief that culture has the ability to exert tangible social and political influence. As the influence of culture is often not overt, it can be difficult to

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<sup>21</sup> Coleman, 220.

distinguish the ways in which culture can be utilized to achieve social and or political ends. The ideas that formed the direction and set the initiatives undertaken by the CCF, are firmly rooted in an acknowledgement that culture has the potential for tangible influence.

Through their funding of the CCF by means of the CIA, the US government became involved in the utilization of cultural influence to an unprecedented degree. This involvement was largely intended to counteract the existing dominance of the Soviet Union in the sphere of cultural influence, particularly in Europe. Realizing that the Cold War was unlike any previous war the US had been involved in; the US government acknowledged that the struggle would be waged in ways, such as cultural influence, which had previously played little part in the formation of American foreign policy. The decision of the CIA to provide funding for the CCF in 1950 represents the emergence of significant US participation in the struggle over cultural influence with the Soviet Union. Taking into account the advantage in experience that the Soviet Union had in the realm of cultural influence, an examination of the Soviet understanding of cultural influence and the cultural initiatives undertaken by the USSR can be beneficial in understanding the ideas behind the American initiative. In addition to exploring the history of Soviet cultural initiatives, greater understanding of how cultural producers, such as artists and writers, are able to influence existing social and political systems can be found by examining the theories of cultural hegemony developed by prominent Italian political scientist, Antonio Gramsci.

Long before the US government concerned itself to any significant degree with cultural influence, the notion that culture could wield social and political

influence was a widely held and powerful idea in the government of the Soviet Union. As the political and economic system of the Soviet Union owed significantly to theories developed by Marx, it is not surprising that the ideas of Marx as well as those who influenced him, such as Hegel, and those who were influenced by him, such as Gramsci, were widely studied and applied. An exploration of the theories developed by Marx concerning the potential influence of intellectuals and culture can be useful in understanding how many in the Soviet government viewed the ability of culture to exert influence. Marx wrote that, “a popular conviction often has the same energy as a material force” and that it can be seen throughout history that the battle of ideas has been as influential in affecting social change as the battle over control of productive forces.<sup>22</sup> Marx’s emphasis on the hegemony of intellectuals and culture can be seen as a reason why political thinkers heavily influenced by Marx, such as those in the Soviet Union, acknowledged the importance of culture in fostering popular conviction and engaged in cultural warfare long before the United States became significantly involved in such a struggle.

Many years before the US government became directly or indirectly involved in cultural warfare through involvement with organizations such as the CCF, the Soviet Union had stressed the importance of culture in shaping society. Beginning in 1932, socialist realism became the officially approved school of art in the Soviet Union. State endorsement of socialist realism was meant to utilize writers and artists as “engineers of human souls” for the advancement of

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<sup>22</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Notebooks*, trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), 376-7.

communist society. The description of socialist realism in the Statute of the Union of Soviet Writers in 1934 provides insight into the way in which this school of art sought to transform popular conviction. In describing the function of socialist realism in Soviet society, the statute states, “the truthfulness and historical concreteness of the artistic representation of reality must be linked with the task of ideological transformation and education of workers in the spirit of socialism.”<sup>23</sup>

The Soviet Union’s utilization of socialist realism to foster popular conviction is relevant to the CCF in two ways. On the one hand, it explicitly acknowledges the influence that can be exerted through cultural activity. This supports the theoretical basis upon which the Congress believed it could exert influence and foster popular conviction. On the other hand, it represents the very government control and utilization of culture by the Soviet Union that the Congress was specifically opposing. It is also possible that the communist background and familiarity with the writings of Marx common to most members of the Congress were springboards for the organization’s focus on cultural warfare. The leftist background of the majority of the members of the Congress may have led them down the route of cultural warfare, which in the eyes of the CIA, made the organization a valuable force that differed in perspective and method from other anti-communist forces that were rooted in mainstream American politics.

Writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, Gramsci drew on the

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<sup>23</sup> Quotation of the 1934 Statute from the Union of Soviet Writers in Herman Ermolaev, *Soviet Literary Theories 1917-1934: The Genesis of Socialist Realism*, (New York: Octagon Books, 1977), 197.

works of earlier political thinkers such as Marx and Hegel to develop a more thorough theory of the means by which culture exerts social and political influence. As Gramsci's theories particularly focus on cultural hegemony, they are even more pertinent to the ideas upon which the CCF was based than those of Marx. When looking at the CCF and their initiatives, one might question how a group of writers, artists and intellectuals often perceived as elitist or irrelevant to the "real world" could exert tangible social or political influence. Exploration of Gramsci's theories of cultural hegemony can help in answering that question as well as facilitating a greater understanding of the theoretical basis upon which the CCF believed it could exert influence on the political and social conditions of post-war Europe.

The complex theory of cultural hegemony put forward by Gramsci in *Prison Notebooks* drew upon the works of Marx and Hegel as well as his observations of the 1917 Russian Revolution and the Soviet Union's utilization of culture. An important element in Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony is his acceptance of a wider, more practical interpretation of what can be considered political. Gramsci considered all people to be political beings in that everyone who is living contributes to modifying the social environment in which they live by modifying certain of society's characteristics or preserving others, which consequently tends to establish "norms" or rules of living and behavior.<sup>24</sup> This definition of politics involves more than the explicitly political actions of the State and deals to a large extent with how ideas become transformed and

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<sup>24</sup> Gramsci, 265.

ultimately institutionalized as norms of social thought and behavior.<sup>25</sup> It is in the transformation of ideas into institutionalized norms of social thought and behavior that intellectuals, such as the members of the CCF, play a significant role.

The theory of cultural hegemony put forward by Gramsci in *Prison Notebooks* seeks to explain the ways in which the cultural activity of intellectuals can influence social and political spheres. This theory is beneficial in understanding how the CCF related to the political landscape of its time and the basis upon which its members believed the organization could exert actual influence on political conditions via cultural activity. Drawing heavily from Hegel, Gramsci viewed civil society as the public space that existed between the spheres of the government and the economy on one side of the spectrum, and the private sphere of the family on the other. Gramsci's theory explores the function of civil society by examining the process by which organizations in civil society generate opinions and objectives with which they aim to not only influence the public opinions and policies of greater society within the constraints of existing system, but sometimes also to alter the system itself. In this view, civil society can be seen as a field of cultural-political struggle.<sup>26</sup> Gramsci maintained that while forms of coercion could be used to keep disaffected parties in line, this method for maintaining social stability should be seen as a last resort. He contended that a more feasible and sustainable method for maintaining social stability could be found in fostering a sense of consensus around certain shared values and

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<sup>25</sup> Scott-Smith, 4.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 23.

interests. Intellectuals and their works of culture put them in a favorable position from which to shape a society's consensus around shared values and interests, which allows them the hegemony to maintain or undermine specific hierarchies of power.<sup>27</sup>

In the framework of this theory, intellectuals have the potential to shape a society's consensus of shared values and interests by institutionalizing norms of social thought by transforming, by means of their influence and compromises with other groups, their own specific sectional interests into an accepted "general interest" for the whole of society that seeks to overcome divergent interpretations of the world.<sup>28</sup> In order for this transformation of sectional interest into "general interest" to take place, the majority of society must be convinced that the sectional interest in question is relevant to them and important for them. This theory can be applied to the CCF by examining the way in which the organization sought to transfer their sectional interest in cultural and intellectual freedom into an accepted "general interest" for society as a whole. The Congress sought to convince the rest of society of the relevance and importance of cultural and intellectual freedom by stressing that social stability depended upon the protection of intellectual and cultural freedom.

Before the CCF could work towards fostering a general consensus on the importance of cultural freedom amongst society as a whole, the Congress had to consolidate its sectional interest by fostering such a consensus among intellectuals. In the late 1940s, before the creation of the Congress, a method to

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<sup>27</sup> Gramsci, 161.

<sup>28</sup> Scott-Smith, 5.

consolidate intellectuals into a united front was being formulated by Hook and others who were involved in the Waldorf-Astoria counter-rally. This method was based on the goal of fostering a broad consensus among those involved in all areas of cultural activity that because of the threat posed by the increasing influence of totalitarian communism, the freedom to be an intellectual in the Western tradition was now something that had to be openly and vigorously defended. By this line of reasoning, it was argued that those who stayed outside of this consensus should be presented as betraying the same Western cultural-intellectual tradition.<sup>29</sup>

Without cooperation and covert funding from the CIA, the CCF's ability to foster this consensus around the Western cultural-intellectual tradition would have either been greatly limited or non-existent. Historians have put a great deal of emphasis on the Cold War era CIA's willingness to work with unsavory allies as long as they were anti-communist. As one CIA officer later put it, "It was a visceral business of using any bastard as long as he was anti-Communist."<sup>30</sup> The CIA's support for the CCF should not be lumped into this category with examples such as American support for the Shah in Iran or other examples of American support for allies who other than their anti-communism had little in common with American interests or foreign policy. The CCF and the CIA had other common values and interests in addition to their shared opposition to totalitarian communism. The members of the early CIA seemed to demonstrate a

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 99.

<sup>30</sup> Harry Rositzke, former head of CIA secret operations inside the USSR, quoted in Christopher Simpson, *Blowback: America's Recruitment of Nazis and its Effects on the Cold War*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1988), 159.



connection between “profound intellectual sophistication and an understanding of power” and consequently were drawn to the CCF largely thanks to the group of liberal, Ivy League alumni who held heavy sway in the early years of the CIA.<sup>31</sup> In describing the mutual interests of the Ivy League based CIA and the NCL based CCF, Coleman wrote:

Now, at a unique historical moment, there developed a convergence, almost to a point of identity, between the assessments and agenda of the ‘NCL’ [Non-Communist Left] intellectuals and the combination of Ivy League, anglophile, liberal can-do gentlemen, academics and idealists who constituted the new CIA.<sup>32</sup>

The CCF and the CIA both stressed their belief that an intellectual and cultural alliance based on the shared values and interests between the US and Europe would help in the protection and strengthening of a traditional Western cultural-intellectual consensus that would provide opposition for Soviet influence. This consensus of shared values and interests between Europe and the United States has come to be called the Atlanticist consensus. By cooperating with the Atlanticist political-economic elites of the CIA, the Atlanticist intellectuals in the CCF were able to increase the influence of their initiatives. Such cooperation thus represented more than simply an ideological justification for Atlanticism. The cooperation of the CIA and CCF should rather be seen as a practical alliance that could amplify the influence of intellectuals. This cooperation was made possible by the compatibility of the interests of the CCF and the CIA.

The Atlanticist cultural-intellectual focus stressed by both the Congress

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<sup>31</sup> Scott-Smith, 80.

<sup>32</sup> Coleman, 46.

and the CIA echoed the vision for the CCF promoted by Silone. Obvious similarities can be found between the ideology of Atlanticism and the address made by Silone at the 1950 Berlin conference. Acknowledging the urgent threat posed to the conception of cultural freedom valued by “men of the West”, Silone stressed the importance of defending such cultural freedom by facilitating and increasing relationships with “friends who come from other countries” and also urged intellectuals and artists to “find new ties.”<sup>33</sup> His address also makes apparent his preference for developing international cooperation over the method of direct confrontation with communism preferred by Congress hardliners such as Koestler. The emphasis on international cooperation supported by Silone made for a nice fit with the Atlanticist notion of basing the opposition to communist influence on fostering an Atlanticist consensus stressing the importance of cultural freedom. The compatibility of Silone’s view for the Congress and the ideology of Atlanticism supported by the CIA can be seen as one of the reasons the Congress moved towards Silone’s approach and away from the direct approach favored by Koestler.

The International Organizations Division (IOD) of the CIA, headed by Dartmouth graduate Tom Braden along with his deputy, Yale graduate, Cord Meyer, have been described as having a “firmly liberal coloration.”<sup>34</sup> The IOD, which was involved with the CIA’s cultural initiatives, sought to attract those

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<sup>33</sup> Ignazio Silone, “Address by Mr. Ignazio Silone at the Inaugural Meeting of the Berlin Congress for Cultural Freedom”, June 25, 1950, Series III, Box 1, Folder 2, p6, “International Association for Cultural Freedom Collection”, Special Collections Research Center, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago, Chicago Illinois. (From here on noted as IACF)

<sup>34</sup> Scott-Smith, 78.

voters who supported social and political change away from communism and back to the democratic socialism of the West. This goal strongly endorses Silone's commitment to encouraging political and social reform in the West as a means of mitigating the moral appeal of communism. Meyer stressed the importance of supporting European socialists when he stated that, "the real competition for votes and influence was focused on the left side of the political spectrum, where the struggle for allegiance of the European working class and liberal intelligentsia would be decided."<sup>35</sup> Demonstrating a thorough understanding of the nature of the political landscape in post-World War II Europe, Braden later remarked, "In much of Europe in the 1950s, socialists, people who called themselves "left" – the very people whom many Americans thought no better than Communists – were the only people who gave a damn about fighting Communism."<sup>36</sup>

The policy supported by Braden, Meyer and echoed by Congress members such as Silone maintained that the best method to undermine support for the Communist Parties could be found in solidifying an Atlanticist, center-left and center-right coalition. By basing their method on this policy, the CIA and the CCF acknowledged that the struggle would have to take place within certain political boundaries. Koestler's hardline message delivered at the 1950 Berlin conference put him well outside of these boundaries. When Koestler argued that European Liberals and Social-Democrats who refer to themselves as "the

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<sup>35</sup> Cord Meyer, *Facing Reality: From World Federalism to the CIA*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 57.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Braden, "I'm Glad the CIA is 'Immoral,'" *Saturday Evening Post*, May 20 1967, 37.

moderate-Left” only differ in degree but not in kind from those on the “extreme Left”, he alienated himself from those in Europe and the US Government who were aware of the value of center-left and center-right social democratic governments for forming some sort of post-war stability.<sup>37</sup> In light of the political landscape of post-war Europe and the CIA’s policy of support for the European NCL, it is not surprising that behind-the-scenes moves to remove the Congress from Koestler’s influence were already taking place during the 1950 Berlin conference.

### **Competing Visions: Koestler and Silone**

Exploration of the competing visions held by Silone and Koester and the ideas and experiences upon which these visions were based can be useful in understanding why the CCF moved away from Koestler’s aggressive direction and towards Silone’s approach. After Braden and others influential CIA figures had acknowledged the ability of culture to exert cultural influence and embraced the general ideas upon which the CCF was based, they were presented with two distinctly visions of how the CCF should exert cultural influence. Koestler and Silone provided these competing visions and were polarizing figures in the early years of the organization. Pulling from both sides, the opposing views of Koestler and Silone made life difficult for Executive Secretary Josselson, who was the organization’s CIA liaison and ultimately responsible for policy decisions.

Nestled between the opposing views of Kostler and Silone, Josselson was given the immensely difficult task of holding together a quarrelsome group of

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<sup>37</sup> Scott-Smith, 117.

intellectuals who held a wide variety of views of what the Congress should be and how it ought to conduct its business. Josselson, as the Executive Secretary and the CIA's liaison, was the only member officially aware of the true source of the CCF's funding. He was responsible for holding up the "necessary lie" upon which the CCF's funding was based. The environments from which these three key individuals came and their life experiences had a tremendous influence on their views concerning the Congress and how they sought to influence it. An exploration of their respective backgrounds can be useful in understanding the basis for their views and how these individuals interacted with each other in the Congress.

Josselson's diverse background and his time in the State department provided him with the experience he drew upon when he worked to reconcile the differing views of the often quarrelsome individuals of the Congress. Born in Tartu, Estonia, in 1908, Josselson received the majority of his education in Germany. His work as a wholesale purchaser in various European countries allowed him to become fluent in German, Russian, French and English. Seeking to escape Nazi Germany, Josselson and his French wife immigrated to the United States in 1937. He became a US citizen in 1942 and was drafted into the US Army in 1943. In the Army, Josselson received military intelligence training and his language capabilities resulted in him being assigned to a communications unit in Europe as an interpreter. After World War II, Josselson worked as a cultural affairs officer for the US War Department's Office of the Military Government in Berlin. During this time Josselson gained experience in the field of cultural diplomacy. His position in Berlin required him to be responsible for the "de-Nazification" of top German intellectuals and leaders as well as the editing and

distribution of anti-communist propaganda. It is also during this time that many believe he became involved with the CIA.<sup>38</sup> In 1950, Josselson left the State Department to help guide the newly created CCF.

Koestler's background was a major factor in his aggressive anti-communist views. Koestler was born into a German speaking, middle-class, Jewish family in Budapest in 1905. He attended the University of Vienna and was a member of the Communist Party of Germany from 1931 until 1937. Although Koestler still agreed with many of the positions of the Communist Party when he left the Party in 1937, he was disgusted by Stalin's mass arrests and show trials and had become disenchanted with the Party. Despising the Nazis and everything they represented, Koestler gave up all support for the Communist Party when the swastika was raised at Moscow airport in honor of Joachim von Ribbentrop's arrival to sign the German-Soviet Non-aggression pact in 1939.<sup>39</sup> While detained in France during the war, he wrote his most famous, influential and heavily anti-communist novel, *Darkness at Noon*. The novel, a chronicle of abuses performed in the name of ideology, is set in 1938 during the Stalinist purges and the Moscow show trials. The novel reflects Koestler's personal disillusionment with Communism, and became one of the most influential books of the period.<sup>40</sup> After writing the novel, he moved to England to work as an anti-Nazi propagandist and became a British citizen.

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<sup>38</sup> "Biographical Sketch", *Michael Josselson Papers*, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas: <http://research.hrc.utexas.edu:8080/hrcxtf/view?docId=ead/00064.xml> (accessed December 27, 2007).

<sup>39</sup> Saunders, 61.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

In the 1940s, Koestler became one of the most outspoken British anti-communists and differed from many left leaning intellectuals in that he attacked neutrals, fellow-travelers and those who sympathized with the Communist Party as much if not more so than he attacked Communist Party members themselves.<sup>41</sup> His strong stance against neutrality is well represented in a speech in which he compared those neutral to communism to “clever imbeciles who preach neutrality toward the bubonic plague.”<sup>42</sup> Although Koestler’s writing was generally acknowledged as brilliant and his anti-communist rhetoric often regarded as highly effective, his militant anti-communism and personal demeanor were equally irritating to many people. Sidney Hook, who often rallied to Koestler’s defense, acknowledged that Koestler could be infuriating to many and remarked that his friend could, “recite the multiplication table in a way to make people indignant towards him.”<sup>43</sup>

Silone played the role of the counterpoint to Koestler’s ardent anti-communism. While his background contributed to his strong stance against fascism and other forms of totalitarian government, his acknowledgement of the prevalence and acceptability of communism in Italy led to a less aggressive approach and openness to neutrals that made him a much less alienating figure than Koestler. Silone was born as Secondo Tranquilli in the poor rural town of Pescina in the Abruzzo region of Italy in 1900. He changed his name to Ignazio Silone as young adult in order to break with his past and devote himself to

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 62.

<sup>42</sup> Arthur Koestler, “Address by Mr. Arthur Koestler at the Inaugural Meeting of the Berlin Congress for Cultural Freedom”, June 25, 1950, Series III, Box 1, Folder 2, p3, IACF

<sup>43</sup> Saunders, 79.

communist revolution.<sup>44</sup> Silone, like Koestler, was a prominent and widely read author who had once been a member of the Communist Party. Silone was an early member of the breakaway Italian Communist Party (PCI), and became one of its covert leaders when the party was forced underground during Benito Mussolini's Fascist regime.

The CCF was not the first time a US intelligence agency sought to utilize culture to exert political influence. During World War II, the predecessor to the CIA, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), noted the popularity of Silone's work in Italy and acknowledged the potential for political influence that the writer's work represented. Seeking to shape the political climate of Italy through cultural influence, the OSS organized the dissemination of Silone's influential and heavily anti-fascist novels, *Fontamara* and *Bread and Wine*. In an effort to combat the political dominance that fascism held in Italy, the OSS helped the US Army to print and distribute unauthorized copies of these novels to Italians in liberated regions during the Allied invasion of the Italian peninsula in 1943.<sup>45</sup> Like many of the Italian members of the CCF, Silone's roots in promoting cultural freedom and opposing totalitarianism were based on opposition to fascism formed during Mussolini's reign.

Silone and Koestler as well as the majority of members of the CCF, were either former Communist Party members or had strongly sympathized with the Communist Party. While it may appear strange at first that the majority of the

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<sup>44</sup> Maria Paynter, *Ignazio Silone: Beyond the Tragic Vision*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 32.

<sup>45</sup> Brian Richardson, *Unnatural Voices: Extreme Narration in Modern and Contemporary Fiction* (Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State University Press, 2006), 44.



members of an anti-communist organization were former communists, the communist past of many CCF members was in fact one of the organization's greatest strengths. Dulles and other influential individuals in the CIA saw the usefulness in former communist intellectuals disassembling communist rhetoric and dampening the Party's appeal and allure to leftists and intellectuals by telling the personal stories of why they once joined the Communist Party, why they left the Party, and why they no longer supported it.<sup>46</sup> The idea of utilizing former communists in the battle against communism was given form in August of 1948 when British politician, writer, and hard-left socialist intellectual Richard Crossman proposed to his publisher a book that would consist of, "a series of autobiographical sketches by prominent intellectuals, describing how they became communists or fellow-travelers, what made them feel that communism was the hope of the world, and what disillusioned them."<sup>47</sup>

The book, published in 1949 and predating the CCF by one year, was titled, *The God that Failed*. The "autobiographical sketches" featured in the book were contributed by Ignazio Silone, André Gide, Richard Wright, Arthur Koestler, Louis Fischer and Stephen Spender. Most of the contributors would go on to become influential members in the CCF. All but one of the chapters featured in the book had previously been published in the US government sponsored, German monthly magazine, *Der Monat*.<sup>48</sup> Despite the insistence of the editor, Crossman, that the contributors "were not in the least bit interested either

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<sup>46</sup> Saunders, 65.

<sup>47</sup> Richard Crossman to C.D. Jackson, August 27<sup>th</sup> 1948, C.D. Jackson Paper and Records, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas, quoted in Saunders, 64.

<sup>48</sup> Saunders, 64.

in swelling the flood of anti-communist propaganda or in providing an opportunity for personal apologetics”, the book clearly achieved both of those two disavowed objectives. Saunders notes that Crossman’s friend from the US Office of War Information, Cass Canfield, was responsible for the publishing of the American edition of *The God that Failed*. Canfield and his publishing company would later publish the work of CIA director, Allan Dulles, and Saunders described *The God that Failed* as a work that “was as much a product of intelligence as it was a work of the intelligentsia.”<sup>49</sup>

An analysis of the contributions of Koestler and Silone to *The God That Failed* can be useful in understanding their respective methods to opposing communism and ultimately their different views for the method and mission of the CCF. In the introduction to the book, Crossman writes of a conversation he had with Koestler. He provides an example of both the potential for ex-communists in the battle against communism and Koestler’s characteristic style of aggression when he quotes Koestler as saying to him, “It’s the same with all you comfortable, insular, Anglo-Saxon anti-Communists. You hate our Cassandra cries and resent us as allies-but, when all is said, we ex-Communists are the only people on your side who know what it’s all about.”<sup>50</sup>

While this quotation of Koestler represents his typically militant stance, Koestler’s contribution to *The God That Failed* is surprisingly low-key compared to the rhetoric he later displayed in the CCF. In similar fashion to the other contributions in the anthology, Koestler acknowledges the appeal of communism

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<sup>49</sup> Saunders, 65.

<sup>50</sup> Crossman, 2.

and describes how he became involved with the Party in his youth. Compared to some of the other contributors, Koestler surprisingly dwells more on his time in the Party and why it appealed to him and devotes less of his text to his reasons for leaving the Party and coming to oppose communism. Despite the amount of text devoted to describing his time as a devoted communist, Koestler details the slow process by which he came to turn away from the Party. Throughout the text, Koestler compares communism to a religion in which one is bound by faith rather than reason.<sup>51</sup> When he describes his first exposure to reading Karl Marx, Fredrich Engels and Vladimir Lennin he parallels the experience to a spiritual experience of seeing the light.<sup>52</sup> Repeatedly in the text, Koestler makes connections between religion, faith and the appeal of communism.

By comparing communism to faith and religion, Koestler works to dispel the appeal of communism to those intellectuals who are drawn to communism because of its apparent focus on rationalism. Koestler acknowledges the way in which communism takes the place of religious faith for many and describes the way in which the Communist Party draws in intellectuals who are interested in a system based on logic and truth and then flips those ideals and tries to warp their view of the world and obscure facts. Examining his experience after a few years in the party, Koestler reflects on an order from higher ups in the Party, writing, "We did not realize...because our brains had been reconditioned to accept any absurd line of action ordered from above as our innermost wish and

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<sup>51</sup> Crossman, 15.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 23.

conviction. <sup>53</sup>

As an autobiographical narrative of his experiences in joining and leaving the Communist Party, Koestler's contribution to the *God that Failed* does not display the militant anti-communism typical of his rhetoric in the CCF. Contrary to his traditional approach, Koestler's chapter attacks communism in abstract ideological, rather than personal, terms. However, his contribution is successful in acknowledging a number of the elements of the Communist Party that appeal to leftist intellectuals and in describing how, in his experience, these ideals and appealing elements became warped once he was "in the trenches" of the Party. He also highlights elements of the Communist Party that would contradict many of the values venerated by intellectuals. When he describes the last public appearance he made as a member of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD), Koestler successfully brings attention to the elements of communist practice that would be unappealing to many intellectuals. During the spring of 1938 in the hall of the Société des Industries Françaises in Place St. Germain de Prés, Koestler made a speech about his experiences in the Spanish Civil War before an audience of several hundred refugee intellectuals, half of whom were communists. In this speech, Koestler pointedly displayed the ways in which the Communist Party's views were incompatible with the views of liberty, cultural and intellectual freedom held by many intellectuals when he comments on three phrases he said, that he choose deliberately "because to normal people they were platitudes, to Communists a declaration of war."<sup>54</sup> The first was: "No movement, party or

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 44.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 73.

person can claim the privilege of infallibility.” The second: “Appeasing the enemy is as foolish as persecuting the friend who pursues your own aim by a different road.” For the third, Koestler quoted Thomas Mann: “A harmful truth is better than a useful lie.”<sup>55</sup> Koestler’s decision to bring attention to these seemingly innocent phrases brings attention to ideas that would commonly be accepted as undoubtedly true by freedom seeking intellectuals but were considered a form of heresy by the Communist Party.

Silone begins his contribution to *The God that Failed* with a detailed narrative of the living conditions of his youth and the origins of his interest in the Communist Party. He acknowledges how in many ways his interest was based on a youthful desire for rebellion and that the underground and revolutionary aspects of the Party were very appealing to him. Silone connects some of the reasons the Communist Party appealed to him with thoughtful generalizations about the allure of the Communist Party to intellectuals and other individuals. In his insightful observations concerning the appeal of the Communist Party, Silone provides strong criticism of the approaches commonly taken to oppose the attraction of Communism. He describes the radical commitment and sacrifice required to be a part of the communist movement and comments:

This explains the attraction exercised by Communism on certain categories of young men and of women, on intellectuals, and on the highly sensitive and generous people who suffer most from the wastefulness of bourgeois society. Anyone who thinks he can wean the best and most serious-minded young people away from Communism by enticing them into a well-warmed hall to play billiards starts from an extremely limited and unintelligent conception of mankind.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 99.

While Silone describes how his concerns over Communist Party policies and methods increased over time, he pins down his break with the Communist Party to a more specific event than Koestler. Silone's commitment to the Roman Catholic faith and moral concerns led him to try and live honestly. The Italian Communist Party (PCI) and many other European Communist parties viewed their cause as desperate in nature and were often forced to work by underground means. These circumstances often led Communist Parties to place little value on honesty. The prevalent use of the "necessary lie" and other dishonest methods of the Communist Party presented a problem for Silone, who strove to live a moral and honest life.

Silone highlights his experience as a representative of the Italian Communist Party at a meeting of the Executive of the Communist International in Moscow as the pivotal event in his break from the Communist Party. Silone along with the senior leader of the Italian Communist Party, Palmiro Togliatti, and other delegates from the Italian Communist Party met at the office of the Communist International Headquarters to discuss a proposed resolution that condemned Leon Trotsky in the most severe terms. The Italian representatives, including Silone, apologized for having arrived late and thus not having had the chance to be able to read Trotsky's document, which was to be condemned. Silone could not believe his ears when the leader of the German Communist Party, Ernst Thälmann, who was proposing the resolution, told him, "To tell the

truth...we haven't seen the document either."<sup>57</sup>

The Russian delegation at the meeting was filled with influential Soviet figures such as Stalin, Rikov Bukharin and Manuilsky. After seeing Silone's shock, Stalin intervened and told the delegates in the room that "The Political Office of the Party...has considered that it would not be expedient to translate and distribute Trotsky's document to the delegates of the International Executive because there are various allusions in it to the policy of the Soviet State." After quoting Stalin, Silone notes that the document was later published abroad by Trotsky himself and that it plainly contained no mention of the policy of the Soviet State.<sup>58</sup> Silone and Togliatti maintained that before taking the resolution into consideration they needed to see the document concerned. Stalin and the other Russian delegates tried but failed to convince Silone and the Italian delegates to condemn the document anyway. After failing to convince the Italians, Stalin assured them that the resolution could not be put forward without unanimous support from the delegates of the Communist International and told them that without the support of the Italian delegation the resolution would be withdrawn.<sup>59</sup>

Despite assurances that the resolution would not be issued, Silone read in a newspaper in Berlin on his way back to Italy that the Communist International had severely rebuked Trotsky for a document he had recently written. Silone went to the offices of the German Communist Party and asked for an explanation. Thälmann told him that the statutes of the International authorized

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 107.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 107-108.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 110.

the Presidium, in the case of urgency, to pass any resolution in the Executive's name.<sup>60</sup> While this experience of deception was not the sole reason for Silone's decision to leave the Communist Party, it was the breaking point that put him over the edge.

Silone's writing about his experience of leaving the Communist Party provides a great deal of insight into the way that he would view communism and work to oppose it during his years in the CCF. Leaving the Communist Party in 1927 was a difficult decision and a sad event for Silone. Reflecting on the event, he wrote, "The truth is this: the day I left the Communist Party was a very sad one for me, it was like a day of deep mourning, the mourning for my lost youth."<sup>61</sup> Likewise, his reflections on political philosophy provide insight into the socialistic views that he would continue to hold during his years with the Congress and provide the basis for why he took a less aggressive approach towards neutrals and fellow travelers of the Communist Party than Koestler. Silone writes of how consideration of the experience he had been through led to a deepening of the motives for his separation from the Communist Party, which were more deeply rooted than the circumstantial reasons stemming from his experience as a delegate in Moscow. He then affirmed his political philosophy, writing that despite his decision to leave the Communist Party, "My faith in Socialism (to which I think I can say my entire life bears testimony) has remained more alive than ever in me."<sup>62</sup>

In writing about a conversation he had with Togliatti after his decision to

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 111.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 113.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.



leave the Communist Party, Silone foreshadows what would come to be one of the major elements of the CCF. Silone reflects on the role and traits of ex-communists and, in similar fashion to Koestler, makes a parallel between communism and religious faith. Silone acknowledged the connections between losing faith in a religion and losing faith in Communism and wrote, "One can, in fact, notice how recognizable the ex-Communists are. They constituted a category apart, like ex-priests...."<sup>63</sup> Silone then foretells what would come to be one of the main initiatives of the CCF when he jokes to Togliatti that "the final struggle...will be between the Communists and the ex-Communists".<sup>64</sup>

The convergence of the contrasting views and approaches of Koestler and Silone, as well as the mediation of those views by Josselson can be seen in the manifesto presented by Koestler at the first meeting of the CCF in Berlin in 1950. The original Berlin conference concluded with Koestler declaring to the crowd of 15,000, "Friends, freedom has seized the offensive!" followed by a reading of the fourteen point "Freedom Manifesto". The Manifesto was primarily the work of Koestler but also included contributions and influence from other members of the Congress. As stated in the fourteenth declaration, the manifesto was addressed to "all men who are determined to regain those liberties which they have lost and to preserve and extend those which they enjoy".<sup>65</sup> The Manifesto began with the affirmation, "We hold it to be self-evident that intellectual freedom is one of the inalienable rights of man."<sup>66</sup> This declaration is followed

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> "Freedom Manifesto", Series III, Box 1, Folder 1, IACF.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

by, "Such freedom is defined first and foremost by his right to hold and express his own opinions, and particularly opinions which differ from those of his rulers. Deprived of the right to say 'no', man becomes a slave."<sup>67</sup> Such declarations put the Manifesto in direct opposition to the policies and methods of totalitarianism. In framing the importance of the battle against totalitarian governments, the authors of the Manifesto spared no expense in strength of language, writing, "We hold that the theory and practice of the totalitarian state are the greatest challenge which man has been called on to meet in the course of civilized history."<sup>68</sup>

The final form of the Manifesto shows the significant sway that Koestler held at the beginning of the Congress' existence but also reconciliation between the views of Koestler and Silone. The Manifesto makes numerous rhetorical attacks on totalitarianism that certainly imply attacks on communist governments but never mention communism specifically. This was not the case with the original draft prepared by Koestler. The original draft was written by Koestler at an all-night session at the suite of fellow Congress member, Melvin Lasky at the Hotel am Steinplatz in Charlottenberg. According to Koestler's wife, Mamaine Koestler, the Manifesto was "pushed through by him, Burnham, Brown, Hook and Lasky by forceful offensive tactics, so that virtually no opposition was encountered."<sup>69</sup> Despite Koestler's largely successful push to get the Manifesto approved by the Congress in its original form, the British members

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Mamaine Koestler, *Living with Koestler: Mamaine Koestler's Letters 1945-1951*, ed. Celia Goodman (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1985), 88.

of the Congress vigorously contested one article of declaration, which specifically expressed intolerance of Marxist ideas. The British delegation, led by Hugh Trevor-Roper, objected to the assumption that guided both more aggressive anti-Communists in the CCF and many American foreign-policy makers, that the writings of Marx and Lenin were not a political philosophy but rather a “field manual of Soviet strategy”.<sup>70</sup> Ayer, Lie, Fröde, Jacobson, Silone and others in the Congress supported the British objection. In order to preserve unanimous support for the Manifesto, Koestler withdrew the offending declaration.<sup>71</sup>

While certainly implying opposition to totalitarian communist governments such as that of the Soviet Union, the Manifesto steers clear from committing specifically to the battle against communism or specifically mentioning communism in anyway. The wording of the sixth declaration, “No political philosophy or economic theory can claim the sole right to represent freedom in the abstract” makes no specific mention of communism but certainly leaves little doubt about the fact that it is implied. The communist doctrine of the Party as the vanguard of the proletariat is certainly attacked with the declaration, “We likewise hold that no race, nation, class or religion can claim the sole right to represent the idea of freedom, nor to deny freedom to other groups or creeds in the name of any ultimate ideal or lofty aim whatsoever.”<sup>72</sup>

Despite the concessions made by Koestler in order to garner unanimous support for the Manifesto, the documents survived with Koestler’s strong anti-neutralist views intact. After asserting the importance of the struggle against

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<sup>70</sup> Saunders, 82.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> “Freedom Manifesto”, IACF.

totalitarianism by declaring that the totalitarian state poses the greatest challenge in the course of civilized history, the Manifesto indirectly denounces those who are neutral towards the Communist Party with the declaration, "We hold that indifference or neutrality in the face of such a challenge amounts to a betrayal of mankind and to the abdication of the free mind."<sup>73</sup> The Manifesto then reaffirms the importance of this struggle with the declaration, "Our answer to this challenge may decide the fate of man for generations."<sup>74</sup>

Josselson's ability to reconcile the sharply opposing views of Koestler and Silone in order to facilitate the composition of a manifesto that received unanimous support from Congress members is even more impressive when one examines the polarizing opening speeches made at the Berlin conference. At the opening public ceremony on June 25, 1950 at the Titania Palace, The Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra started the event with the *Egmont* overture. Koestler, in injecting his vigilant stance into his preference for the music to be play, had wanted Congress members, Benjamin Britten and Louis MacNeice, to compose a "Free Europe Anthem" but nothing came of it.<sup>75</sup> Following the overture and a moment of silence for those who had died in the struggle for freedom, Silone and Koestler made their opening speeches in which they stated the competing themes of the conference.

In his opening speech, Silone presented his more neutral vision for the CCF when he argued that the Congress could work to defend and further cultural freedom by concentrating its energies on solving the root problems that

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Coleman, 27.

thwarted cultural freedom rather than getting directly involved in combating the powerful governments and organizations that restricted cultural freedom. Silone's opening speech also presented an approach that ran contrary to the approach favored by Koestler and the more vigilant anti-communists of the Congress by stressing that the Congress would "intend to attack the problems of cultural liberty without the usual restrictions imposed by fanaticism or propaganda."<sup>76</sup> In commenting on individuals, such as Koestler, who preferred to fight for cultural freedom rather than work towards solving the problems that thwarted it, Silone said, "The best way of dealing with these problems is certainly to solve them - but those who lack courage, wisdom and daring seem to think that it would be easier and quicker to fight."<sup>77</sup>

While his opening speech is less than completely clear on how specifically he hoped to solve the problems that thwarted cultural freedom he proposed that the work of looking for a solution should begin with the Congress serving as a means of connecting intellectuals from around the world and enrolling them in the cause of looking for the solution. Silone asked the question, "What can we, the writers do?" In answering his question, he attempts no false claims that the solution will be easy, saying, "We are here to fulfill a duty which is imperious and which tolerates no skepticism. The Congress responds to an imperious desire, creating a necessity for many of us to consult our friends who come from other countries, to renew the ties of friendship of the time of resistance, and to

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<sup>76</sup> Silone, "Address by Mr. Ignazio Silone at the Inaugural Meeting of the Berlin Congress for Cultural Freedom", 3.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 6.

find new ties.”<sup>78</sup>

While his pronouncement against those who would rather fight for cultural freedom than work to find solutions in support of it does amount to a direct attack on Congress members such as Koestler, Silone’s position on the diversity of views in the Congress presented in his opening speech helped to make his speech less polarizing than it would have otherwise been. Silone acknowledged the political and ideological divergences, which separated the Congress members at the 1950 Berlin conference, but stressed that these divergences could represent the strength and not the weakness of the Congress. In describing the strength that could be drawn from the diversity of views in the Congress, Silone said, “The greatest contribution to freedom consists in the differentiation of the energies it stirs up. Freedom certainly does not exclude agreement but it does exclude synchronization.”<sup>79</sup> He then proceeded to rally against those who sought to use methods he compared to totalitarian methods to stifle divergent views in order to achieve synchronization, eloquently stating, “A democracy which, in order to be efficacious, imitates totalitarian actions and reveals a uniform, behaves, in fact, like a man who, through fear of death, commits suicide.”<sup>80</sup> Silone argued that synchronization of ideas in a democracy undermines its potential and maintained that the same was true of the Congress and the divergent views held by its members.

Koestler followed up Silone’s speech with a more challenging and polarizing theme that expressed his desire for the Congress to represent a

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

historic turning point when intellectuals abandoned their “contemplative detachment” and acknowledged the urgent international emergency generated by aggressive totalitarian governments. To make clear his belief in the urgent importance of immediate action for the present situation, Koestler described the emergency using Ludwig van Beethoven’s words, “fate knocks at the gate of existence” and stressed that it was necessary for intellectuals to act with “the unhesitating assurance of an organic reflex.”<sup>81</sup> In strong language he scorned intellectuals who maintained neutral views towards totalitarian governments, such as the of the Soviet Union, famously describing them as, “clever imbeciles who preach neutrality toward the bubonic plague.”<sup>82</sup>

### **The Potential for Influence in Italy**

Much of the basis for Silone’s vision for the Congress and his approach to opposing communism stems from the political atmosphere of Italy and the opportunities and challenges this atmosphere provided for the Congress. The social and political conditions of Italy are also extremely important to the CCF as Italy, along with France, represented one of the most important American allies with widespread and deeply entrenched support for communism. In the early stages of the CCF’s existence, Italy was one of the most prominent Western European nations lacking an affiliated association. The international structure of the Congress was based around its headquarters in Paris, which worked with and asserted a debatable degree of authority over affiliated associations in

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<sup>81</sup> Koestler, “Address by Mr. Arthur Koestler at the Inaugural Meeting of the Berlin Congress for Cultural Freedom”, 3.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

countries in North America, Western Europe and Asia. Having established affiliated associations in the United Kingdom, France, West Germany and the United States, the Congress sought the creation of an affiliated Italian Association for Cultural Freedom.

In late 1950, the Congress dispatched Francois Bondy and Geroges Altman, editor of *Franc-Tieur*, to Italy to assess the political landscape and generate support for an Italian affiliate of the CCF. The prominence of a neutral approach to opposing communism and the unfeasibility of aggressive and direct action in Italy can be seen in the meeting that occurred between Bondy, Altman and the editors of the progressive Italian weekly magazine, *Il Mondo*. In order to understand the political landscape of Italy and how groups such as the editors of *Il Mondo* fit into such a landscape, it is important to make a distinction between the terms liberal and progressive in the context of Italian politics. In Italy, unlike the United States, the term liberal generally refers to liberalism in the classical sense, which implies a heavy emphasis on laissez-faire government control, particularly in the economic realm. In the Italian political context, an individual labeled as a liberal would generally have more in common with an American Republican or Libertarian than a progressive American Democrat. In order to make sense of how the CCF and Italians associated with the organization fit into the political landscape of Italy, it is necessary to make this distinction and not assume that the terms of liberal and progressive are interchangeable with one another, as they often are in American political discourse.

Politically, the editors of *Il Mondo* shared a great deal of common ground with Bondy, Altman and much of the CCF as a whole. The magazine was the principal organ for Italian socialists and progressive intellectuals who opposed



the dominant political forces of the Communists and the Christian Democrats. Despite the political commonalities between the *Il Mondo* editors and the CCF, Altman and Bondy reported that the group of editors expressed numerous reservations concerning the potential political nature of the proposed Italian affiliate. They noted in particular the extreme antagonism that existed between pro-clericals, who sought a greater political role for the Roman Catholic Church, and progressives who opposed any involvement of the Catholic Church in the secular political affairs of Italy.<sup>83</sup>

The reservations expressed by the *Il Mondo* editors provide a strong example of the problems that the CCF ran into in seeking support among Italian intellectuals who otherwise shared many of the same political views and a strong appreciation for cultural freedom championed by the Congress. Reporting on their trip to Italy, Altman and Bondy wrote that in the minds of many progressive and socialist Italian intellectuals, clericalism presented a much greater danger than communism. These Italian intellectuals feared the consequences of greater political power for the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>84</sup>

Altman and Bondy reported that these progressive and socialist groups rejected anything in the activity of the Congress that tended towards support of political Catholicism, which would limit the free play of the argument between themselves and the clericals.<sup>85</sup> In trying to convince this group of the importance of the struggle against communism, Altman and Bondy wrote, "We attempted to

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<sup>83</sup> Georgs Altman and Francois Bondy, "Report on the Trip to Rome, 7<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> of October", Series III, Box 1a, Folder 2, p1, IACF.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid,

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 2.

tell these people, that in the present world context, Soviet imperialism and the Communist danger present specific problems, far more disturbing than the traditional, century-old struggle between clericalism and anti-clericalism in Italy. But our remarks were greeted with many reservations."<sup>86</sup> Among Italian progressives and intellectuals, opposition to communism often took a backseat not only to the struggle against the political influence of the Roman Catholic Church but also the struggle against fascism.

In addition to struggling to convince Italian intellectuals of the importance of the fight against communism in comparison to issues such as clericalism and fascism, Altman and Bondy faced widespread suspicions from Italian intellectuals concerning the nature of the CCF's relationship with the US government. After meeting with the editors from *Il Mondo*, Altman and Bondy addressed a group of over eighty Italians that were primarily Italian Socialist Unity Party writers, lawyers and doctors. After addressing the group, Altman and Bondy reported that the questions that quickly sprung up included, "Is your liberty that of American capitalism?" and "Who pays for your organization?"<sup>87</sup>

The same day that Altman and Bondy faced these difficult questions, *Corriere della Sera*, the most widely read Italian national newspaper, wrote an article entitled "L'Errore di Berlino" (In English: "The Berlin Mistake"), which denounced Koestler's reckless attacks on communism and supported Trevor-Roper's efforts to reign in the more aggressive nature of Koestler's original draft

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 3.

of the "Freedom Manifesto".<sup>88</sup> The commonalities between the view expressed by the popular *Corriere della Sera*, the reception given to Altman and Bondy by the Italians they encountered, and Silone's vision for the Congress make clear that Silone was not acting in a vacuum and that his vision was greatly shaped by the political attitude and landscape of Italy. The hostility shown towards Koestler's approach by the *Corriere della Sera* and the Italians encountered by Altman and Bondy leaves little doubt that Silone's approach had a much more realistic chance of making progress in Italy. In the struggle for support in Europe between the United States and the Soviet Union, it was countries with left-leaning political climates, such as Italy and France, which presented the best opportunities to the superpowers for either the expansion or reduction of their respective spheres of influence. In light of the political attitude and position prevalent in these Western European countries, it is not surprising that the CCF and the CIA came to move away from Koestler's hardline rhetoric and towards Silone's more realistic approach.

On the final day of their trip to Italy, Altman and Bondy sat down for a long conversation with Silone during which he outlined his plan of action for Italy. Altman and Bond describe his plan as centered on an honorary committee, consisting of many of the distinguished names in Italian intellectual life, and a working committee. Silone believed that at that time in Italy the establishment of an organization that would require official membership and contributions would not be feasible. Silone and other prominent Italians who would come to form the

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<sup>88</sup> G.A. Borgese, "L'Errore di Berlino", *Corriere della Sera*, October 8, 1950, Series III, Box 1, Folder 10, IACF

Italian Association for Cultural Freedom believed that the best chance for the organization to influence Italian intellectuals laid with taking an indirect approach to opposing communism by providing funding, publication and exhibition opportunities for writers and artists. They believed that a great opportunity for the CCF could be found in providing opportunities to writers and artists who at that time in Italy often had no choice of patrons besides the Roman Catholic Church and the Italian Communist Party. Many of these writers and artists collaborated with clerical or communist organizations against their own convictions because they had no other viable options. Silone believed that the CCF could make great strides in winning the support of this relatively large segment of the Italian intellectual community.<sup>89</sup>

Altman and Bondy had mixed thoughts on the potential for action that existed in Italy for the CCF. After meeting with the editors from *Il Mondo*, they made the generalization that Italian intellectuals were “obsessed with their own special problems.” They believed that Italian intellectuals would be willing to participate in the CCF on an international level but conceded that it would be much more difficult to ferment a large movement in support of the CCF inside Italy itself.<sup>90</sup> In the concluding remarks of their report on their trip to Italy, Altman and Bondy largely agreed with Silone’s plans and his assessment of viable actions for the CCF in Italy. They stressed that Italy offered great possibilities for the work of the CCF but that the indirect approach, largely in the form of discrete help to like-minded organizations and publications, would be

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<sup>89</sup> Altman and Bondy, 6.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

more successful than the establishment of a large organization apparatus engaged in a direct rhetorical battle against communism. In describing the feasibility of the Congress' mission in Italy, Altman and Bondy wrote, "It is possible to break down Italian provincialism by stressing the international aspect of our Congress. It is possible to draw a large part of the artistic world in Italy away from Communism, which today is almost exclusively in its fold." They supported Silone's approach and concluded that the best course of action was "the establishment of an international basis of understanding" that would engage in, "slow, indirect, diversified and extremely discreet action in Italy".<sup>91</sup>

Embracing the slow, indirect and diversified approach supported by Silone, Altman and Bondy, La Associazione Italiana Per la Libertá della Cultura (Italian Association for Cultural Freedom) was formed in late 1951 under the direction of Silone. The Italian Association organized around one hundred independent cultural groups. The Italian Association promoted its international ethos to these groups and provided them with speakers as well as publishing and exhibition opportunities. While most of the Italian Association's action was performed indirectly through the support of these independent groups it also developed its own publications in the form of the bulletin, *Libertá della Cultura* (In English: Cultural Liberty), and later *Tempo Presente* (In English: Present Time), edited by Silone and Nicola Chiaromonte.

*Tempo Presente*, the principal magazine published by the Italian Association, was largely successful in gaining the support of significant elements of the Italian intelligentsia. The magazine's popularity and support amongst the

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 6.

intellectual community is quite extraordinary considering the political climate of post-war Italy. Although many Italian intellectuals acknowledged the virtues of liberal and progressive causes and admired them elsewhere, they often believed they had little to do with Italy's political situation, which they felt had more in common with Latin America or Eastern Europe than the United States or other Western European nations. For those that held this view of liberal and progressive values, the communism represented by the Soviet Union offered the promise of a better life than the bourgeois democracy of the US. This prominent view provided a major source of support for the Italian Communist Party, which was believed to offer a more practical solution to the poverty and suffering of Italy than liberal and progressive democratic parties.<sup>92</sup>

Along with co-editor, Chiaromonte, Silone was successful in reaching out to Italian intellectuals primarily as a result of his indirect and internationalist approach as well as the dissident view of American foreign policy often taken by the magazine. *Tempo Presente*, like other magazines sponsored by the CCF, provided one of the few reliable sources of information on life in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union as well as analyses of the political development events taking place in the Western world. Favoring this international ethos, *Tempo Presente* was virtually silent on Italian politics, opting to remain above partisan bickering and avoiding ties with any particular political party,<sup>93</sup> In addition to depicting the hardships of life in the communist countries of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the magazine also sought to stress the importance of cultural

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<sup>92</sup> Mark Lilla, "The Other Velvet Revolution: Continental Liberalism and its Discontents", *Daedalus* 123, no.2 (1994): 136.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, 137.

freedom, particularly for intellectuals, writers and artists, despite whatever practical economic advantages they might see in the communism.

Validating Silone's stance that there needed to be an outlet for Italian writers and artists who had previously collaborated with Communist or Catholic organizations against their own convictions, *Tempo Presente* gained a great deal of support from publishing those individuals who had previously been forced into the two prevalent "ideological ruts" of Italy. Publishing defectors from the Italian Communist Party, such as Italo Calvino and young Catholic liberals who were fed up with Vatican sponsored censorship and the harassment of religious minorities such as Andrea Caffi, contributed greatly to the magazine's popularity and support amongst the Italian intelligentsia.<sup>94</sup>

A variety of sources proclaimed the success of *Tempo Presente*. In 1957, Giovanni Gronchi, President of the Italian Republic and a Christian Democrat, sent Silone his personal congratulations on the success of the magazine, despite the significant differences in political philosophy between the two individuals. When reporting to the Executive Committee of the Congress in Paris, Silone and his fellow editors made clear references to the success achieved by *Tempo Presente*. They attributed the magazine's success to its being "the first experiment of its kind in Italy", which was an international review that was possible only because of the international setup of the Congress and its emphasis on international cooperation. Such international cooperation was based on the fraternal support of *Ecounter*, *Preuves* and the German *Der Monat*. The international collaboration of these magazines showcased the success achieved

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<sup>94</sup> Coleman, 91.

by the Congress in realizing its dream of a “world family of magazines.”<sup>95</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In seeking to sway the intelligentsia of post-war Western Europe away from their lingering support and sympathy for the Soviet Union and communism, the CCF undertook a thoroughly difficult challenge. Prominent European intellectuals and artists from Pablo Picasso to Jean-Paul Sartre professed support for communism and voiced their opposition to what they viewed as the materialistic and imperial tendencies of the capitalist United States. In terms of political disposition, many prominent European intellectuals rejected the binary political logic of the Cold War, which was dominated by the world’s two polarizing superpowers. These individuals were often as equally disillusioned by the social and racial inequalities that existed in the democratic capitalist system of the US as they were by the restrictions on democratic representation and freedom of expression in the totalitarian communist system of the USSR. For many of these individuals, the world’s two superpowers were both polarizing and alienating, with neither one appearing particularly appealing. Still despite the faults many of these individuals found in the USSR, the social and intellectual appeal of communism and the belief that a communist society could be more accommodating to culture than bourgeois democratic society led many of these individuals, if pressed, to choose the USSR over the US.

The principle task of the CCF was to gain the support of these individuals

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.



whose political dispositions were somewhere in the middle ground liminal that existed in the political spectrum between the US and the USSR. To do this, the CCF had to convince these individuals that despite whatever social or moral advantages they saw in the communist system of the USSR, the restrictions placed on cultural freedom by the totalitarian Soviet government were too important to ignore. In examining the two main elements that comprise this challenge, it is not surprising that the two main currents of thought in the CCF came from Koestler and Silone. Koestler single-mindedly acknowledged the very real danger presented to cultural freedom by the USSR and sought to protect cultural freedom by whatever means necessary. Silone sought to facilitate international co-operation and to encourage social reform in the framework of democratic socialism in an attempt to mitigate the social and moral appeal that the Soviet Union held for many European intellectuals.

Covert funding provided the means by which the CIA was able to compete for support in the vacuum that existed in the political spectrum between the US and the USSR. Acknowledging that the US government would not appear to be a particularly appealing ally to many European intellectuals, the CIA utilized covert funding to support the CCF. The CCF was able to win support amongst European intellectuals that would never have been possible through any kind of direct involvement of the US government as the CCF did not associate itself with or promote US policy but rather sought to harm the standing of the USSR with European intellectuals by promoting the importance of cultural freedom and condemning Soviet restriction of cultural freedom. In examining this arrangement, it can be seen that Braden and other influential CIA figures of the early post-war period acknowledged that their best possibilities for

influencing the struggle for the support of the European intelligentsia could be found not in seeking to improve the standing of the US with European intellectuals so much as it could be found in harming the standing of the USSR.

Despite the influence imposed on the political discourse in the US by McCarthyism, the newly formed CIA resisted the popular impulse to jump at condemnations of being soft on communism and embraced the NCL as a reliable anti-communist force. Unlike the American political mainstream, which was largely blinded by the single-minded focus of McCarthyism, Braden and other influential CIA figures recognized the usefulness that could be found in organizations such as the CCF that blunted their anti-Soviet edge in order to have the ability to have any influence at all. In taking what can be seen as both an enlightened and pragmatic approach, these CIA figures, like many European intellectuals, rejected the binary logic of the Cold War.

James Burnham, one of the original members of the CCF and a one-time CIA consultant, attributed the CCF's loyalty to NCL ideals to the influence of the CIA.<sup>96</sup> While Burnham certainly did not regard the CCF as a CIA "front" and agreed with Hook that it was, "simply preposterous to believe that men like Ignazio Silone, Raymond Aron, Nicola Chiaromonte, Michael Polanyi, Haakon Lie, or Carlo Schmid...would dance to anyone else's tune," he maintained that in the later years before the dissolution of the CCF, it was the influence of the CIA that kept the organization close to the NCL.<sup>97</sup> Burnham's stance supports both the freedom and independence of the CCF from the CIA, and exemplifies the

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<sup>96</sup> Coleman, 245.

<sup>97</sup> Hook, 451.

contradictory results found by attempts to evaluate the autonomy of the CCF from the CIA. Until CIA records become available, it is unlikely that the question of CIA influence will be answered with any reasonable clarity.

While the question of CIA influence will likely remain unanswerable for the foreseeable future, exploration of the questions of how the CCF sought to influence the Cold War struggle between the US and the USSR and why the CIA came to embrace a group of former-communist writers, artists, and intellectuals takes into account the many important cultural aspects of the struggle and can lead to a broader and more complete understanding of the Cold War. The theories of cultural hegemony developed by Gramsci and others political philosophers, the visions for the CCF put forward by Silone and Koestler, and the CCF's plan for potential action in Italy are beneficial to understanding the ways in which the CCF sought to pursue the support of European intellectuals who were disillusioned by the world's two polarizing superpowers. Embracing these notions of cultural hegemony and the methods pursued by the CCF, the CIA choose to fund the CCF in the hope that it could sway the allegiance of European intellectuals who would have been unreachable by more direct means. In the end, the CCF and the CIA spent the better part of their years of co-operation trying to answer Silone's question, "What can we, the writers do?"

## Manuscript Collections Consulted

The most important archive consulted was the "International Association for Cultural Freedom Collection" in the Special Collections Research Center of the Joseph Regenstein Library at the University of Chicago. Although the collection is titled the "International Association for Cultural Freedom Collection," the collection contains documents from the organization's time of formation as the Congress for Cultural Freedom through its later years of activity in the 1970s.

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