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AGAINST PSYCHOPOLITICS

In recent decades, numbers of historians, social scientists, psychologists, and political analysts have increasingly relied on psychology to explain political phenomena. In doing so, they tend to treat political realities as surface happenings under which there lurk deeper and more compelling dynamics. Supposedly leaders and masses are driven by deeper emotive forces that have little to do with the manifest content of public issues. I believe that this reliance on psychoanalytic or "depth" psychology produces little that is reliable, reduces the significance of political life, and retards our understanding of it.

Among the foremost pioneers in political psychology was Harold Lasswell, a political scientist by training but heavily influenced by Freudianism, and himself a lay analyst. Over sixty years ago Lasswell postulated the following formula to explain "political man": p} *d*} *r* =*P*. The private motives of the individual, *p*, "nurtured and organized in relation to the family constellation and the early self" are displaced, *d*, onto public objects. The displacement is then rationalized, *r*, in terms of public interests to produce political man, *P* (Lasswell 1930, 74).

As an example of political displacement Lasswell notes: "The prominence of hate in politics suggests that we may find that the most important private motive is a repressed and powerful hatred of authority, a hatred which has come to partial expression and repression in relation to the father." And "the repressed father hatred may be turned against kings or capitalists." Individuals who condemn "the merciless exploitation of the toolless proletariat by the capitalists" may be just voicing "the rational justification" of earlier unresolved family animosities (75-76). Not just individuals but whole "political movements derive their vitality from the displacement of private affects upon public objects"(173).

Consider some examples of how this displacement-rationalization model has been applied: in 1969, the noted psychologist Bruno Bettelheim ascribed the student anti-war protests that were sweeping the nation's campuses to the influence of a permissive society and to the "guilt" the students suffered because they had avoided military service. As Bettelheim explained to a special House Education Subcommittee: the guilt-ridden students, having evaded military service, "feel like parasites of society and hence come to hate a society which they think makes them feel this way" (Bettelheim 1969).

Reaching beyond Bettelheim, Lewis Feuer diagnosed practically every student rebellion in the twentieth century as suffering from irrational hostility toward surrogate parental figures. He observes that Fidel Castro, who developed his rebellious ways during his student days, "repeatedly blamed others, that is, his father, for his own entry into legal study" a field he did not really wish to pursue. This "suggests some of the roots of Castro's own generational conflict and indirectly his anti-Americanism. In his blaming of others for having misled him, the United States became a surrogate father to be blamed" (Feuer 1969, 250). Not all student rebellions have pursued such "pseudo-goals," however. According to Feuer, student rebellions in communist countries were the exception; they represented a "quest for real freedom" (311).

Depoliticizing the Political

As the previous illustrations might suggest, psychopathological explanations tend to ignore the political content of the phenomenon in question and conjure a latent apolitical need which is presumed to have a predetermining hold over political participants. Thus Lasswell does not deal with the seemingly more evident possibility that people hate kings or capitalists not because of filial conflicts but because they find the social conditions imposed by autocracy and plutocracy to be hateful. Likewise with Feuer: In a Cuba ruled by a much-hated American-backed tyrant like Fulgencio Batista, where the major industries, markets, land, labor, and capital were dominated by U.S. corporations and a large segment of the populace lived in poverty, are we to believe that a Cuban's grievances toward the detested "Yanquis" were primarily a displacement of filial hostility anchored in a resentment about being required to go to law school? And what of the many thousands of others who join revolutionary ranks? Are they all bestirred principally by unresolved familial antagonisms — as Feuer claims? If so, history owes a remarkable debt to the deficiencies that might exist in father-son relationships.

Psychologistic investigators presume that the filial relationship not only precedes but supersedes the experiences of later life and the influences of the wider social sphere. But that premise remains unexamined: it is a self determining psychologism. It not only *fosters* political ignorance by offering a reductionist apolitical explanation of political history, it also relies on political ignorance for its credibility. Only by ignoring important political data does such psychological speculation win a moment's plausibility. To illustrate: anyone who listened to the outrage that students expressed against the Vietnam war, who witnessed what they were actually saying, reading, writing and doing can be forgiven for rejecting Bettelheim's contention that they were motivated by guilt feelings about not being drafted to fight in the very war they detested. The

observable evidence of their words and deeds suggests that they opposed the war because they believed it to be unjust and destructive of innocent lives. What is missing from Bettelheim's view is just such observable evidence. All we have are imputations that deny the actual content of political struggle and ascribe some psychic motive best known only to Bettelheim through a process of discovery he does not reveal.

Hidden Political Presumptions

While these kinds of psychological explanations tend to depoliticize political reality, they do so in a politically selective way. For example, Bettelheim has never thought it necessary to sift through the psyches of those who ordered and conducted the B-52 carpet bombing of Indochina. Nor did the anticommunist Feuer ever consider searching for hidden motives among dissident students in Communist countries — whose rebellions he supported and deemed free of psychopathology. Similarly, Arnold Rogow seems to equate political deviancy with psychological abnormality when he writes: "While most political leaders neither require nor merit a psychobiography, the form is particularly appropriate when we are dealing with odd or deviant political careers . . . right and left extremists" (Rogow 1968, 605). A political judgment is being made here. The leaders referred to by Rogow are "odd and deviant" politically speaking, not psychologically. That political deviance is in special need of psychological investigation is the thing that has to be demonstrated rather than assumed. Whether a leader is acting with admirable "firmness" or "aggressive rigidity" in a situation will often depend on the political values and views of the observer (George 1974, 235-36). In a word, what is or is not a "psychological displacement" may often be determined less by the psychology of the political actor than by the politics of the psychologist.

Prime Facie Guilt

Society's view of who is psychologically disturbed rests to a great extent on existing standards of normality. Not surprisingly, rebels who challenge conventional beliefs are more likely to be diagnosed as driven by aberrant private motives than those who do not. Rycroft observes that many "world-shakers" and other exceptional people have been "manhandled by psychiatrists and [psycho]analysts. . . . Jesus Christ has been diagnosed schizophrenic, Beethoven paranoid, the Old Testament prophets (collectively) schizophrenoid, Leonardo da Vinci schizoid-obsessional, etc. etc." (Rycroft 1971, 8).

Some of us believe that people usually rebel because all is not well in the world. In contrast, the psychopolitical belief is that people rebel because *they* are not well. Rebels are diagnosed as troubled because they are so troublesome.

Because they see a particular authority as unjust, it is concluded they oppose all established authority — which is not the case with most political dissidents or revolutionaries. For the political psychologist, rebellion against authority becomes *prime facie* evidence of rebellion against parental authority once removed. There is no need to demonstrate the linkage; it has been established by a reference to "clinical evidence" that itself has no command over political data unless one assumes it does.

The psychological explanation, then, harbors the fallacy of "affirming the consequent": the political rebel is really rebelling against parental authority: proof? the rebel is rebelling. This problem obtains in all "innate drive" theories that purport to explain observable behavior. Thus we are told that people are impelled by a drive for power or love or wealth. Evidence for such claims are then found in instances of people pursuing power, love, and wealth. The theory uses the very phenomenon it is trying to explain as evidence of its explanation.

Dubious Clinical Data

Aside from how "depth" psychology has been applied to politics, we might question its reliability as a science. In so doing, we share the company of none other than Harold Lasswell, who admits that his formulations are asserted in "rather dogmatic fashion" and that they rest on "the highly unsatisfactory nature" of the materials and methods of contemporary psychopathology" (1930, xxv). After thirty years of psychoanalytic labor, he noted, there still did not exist a body of documents which might be consulted by specialists who could resolve their differences about what went on in treatment session.[1] Notes taken of interview sessions are often inadequate and inaccessible. Nobody knows "the value of the published scraps" or what processes distort the reporting practices of different clinical investigators. And there is no follow-up data on post-treatment conditions of clients (Lasswell 1930, 205).

As Lasswell was not the first to observe, patients tend to produce the kind of material the analyst suggests. Hence, they dreamed of anima figures if analyzed by Jung, relived birth traumas when treated by Rank, talked of their inferiority feelings for Adler, and dealt with their Oedipal anxieties and castration fears under Freud's supervision. Thus, different investigators, ostensibly using the same methods produce different data or arrive at widely varying conclusions when looking at the same data.

The rules for attributing meaning to data remain obscure, as Lasswell points out. Thus when someone reports he was warned during childhood that his nose would be cut off if he persisted in "handling himself," Lasswell asks: "How do we know what importance to assign to this alleged reminiscence?" Are we to accept this as a historical statement or are we to construe it as a fabrication that

shows what he supposed would happen if he disobeyed orders? Is the recollection, Lasswell continues, just a sign of the patient's fear of the therapist couched in the memory of the past? or maybe a self-inflicted fantasy to punish himself for hostile feelings toward the therapist? or an attempt to win approval by producing what he thinks the therapist finds important? or an original trauma which once uncovered will decrease the patient's anxiety? (1930, 206-07).

Consider the question of "reaction-formation," one of the "defense mechanisms of the ego" that political psychologists refer to (e.g. Greenstein 1975, 84). This concept might be singled out as emblematic of the dubious nature of much clinical data. Through reaction-formation a person, who might be expected to show one form of behavior, may react away from that form even to the point of showing the very opposite behavior. For instance, one might be expected to manifest hostility and jealousy toward a sibling but through reaction-formation will show friendliness and loyalty — supposedly a compensatory psychological cover-up for unconscious negative feelings. Thus the clinician can assume that an underlying motive exists, and then can find evidence for it in contrary behavior patterns (Eysenck 1953). Both A and the opposite of A stand as evidence of the same thing. Diametrically opposite patterns can be treated as supporting the theoretical claim, making the theory nonfalsifiable.

But how do we know when actions and attitudes harbor unconscious motives that relate to earlier experiences? When are they, if ever, what they seem to be? (Even Freud, a heavy cigar smoker, noted that sometimes a cigar is just a cigar). Behind such questions looms the problem of validation: how do we know we are observing the thing we say we are observing — especially in regard to submerged psychic forces which by their nature are not observable? Furthermore, can we ever think of individual action and attitude as existing apart from the larger configuration of social relations? If a given behavior is a response to both the imperatives of social reality and interior psychic motives, how much weight do we ascribe to larger social forces and how much to family relation? For instance, how much to oppressive class conditions and how much to filial conflicts? And what are we to make of psychological pronouncements about presidents, prophets, and revolutionary leaders, about whom the psychological data is fragmentary and the possibilities of clinical investigation are nonexistent, since most leaders have taken their dreams and fantasies and hidden conflicts to the grave with them? (Rogow 1968, 605).

Since almost anything about a person can be endowed with psychopathological significance, what decides the process of selectivity and embellishment? What role do such things as ideology, a desire for justice, economic self-interest, and religious and ethical teachings play? Can we make a reliable interpretation

of pathology by treating the individual as someone relatively untouched by these wider forces?

If psychology "is behind everything," we might wonder whether the psychological has any boundaries. Seeming to permeate everything it loses much of its discriminating value and explanatory power. But psychological characteristics are no substitute for social ones. Thus people often perceive reality and act upon it in accordance with the position they occupy within the social structure, frequently because there is no other way they can act, not even if they be persons endowed with exceptional personalities. It remains an unresolved question that individuals who do act in exceptional ways are doing so because of rationalized emotions displaced from early life needs rather than because of a host of other reasons having to do with talent, intelligence, family advantage, skill, stupidity, class interest, or whatever.

Lenin as Oedipus

By way of illustrating some of the problems already touched upon, let us consider Victor Wolfenstein's psychological study of Lenin, from his book on Lenin, Trotsky, and Gandhi, three leaders who "came to have revolutionary identities as a result of essentially interminable conflicts with parental authority" (Wolfenstein 1967, 49).

Lenin was raised in a family "not bothered by unusual stress or disruption." It consisted of a "considerable brood of children" who got along well together (36-37). Lenin's father is described by Wolfenstein as a warm, patient, loving parent, "who devoted substantial time to gently teaching his children how to behave. He taught his children to play chess, and played other games with them as well" (34). Lenin's mother is described as being of steady disposition, relatively well educated, and "devoted to the well-being and advancement of her children." She too spent a good deal of time with the children, teaching them to read, play the piano, leading them in family singing, and helping them compose a weekly handwritten family magazine (35).

Wolfenstein's picture of Lenin is also generally positive. As a child Lenin appears to have been jovial, humorous, loud, a practical joker, "given somewhat to boasting and bullying, but on the whole well liked and likeable." He easily performed well in school work and was esteemed by teachers. In all, Lenin, was "a bright assertive but not unusual lad" (37-38). Whence the pathological revolutionary?

The problem, it turns out, was that Lenin's father occasionally was kept away from his family for long periods of time by his official duties. This pattern of a loving attentive parent suddenly absenting himself "must have had a strange effect on young Lenin's mind" (39). Wolfenstein does not consider the

likelihood that while Lenin and the other children may have missed their father during his job-related travels, they seemed securely enough placed in his affections not to have reacted with deep feelings of abandonment and betrayal.

Another "problem": Lenin's father never used corporal punishment on him but resorted to "firm moral suasion" which left little room for anti-paternal rebellion with a clear conscience." Apparently Lenin would have been better off had his father beat him occasionally. The gentle father's "high moral rectitude undoubtedly resulted in an unusually demanding superego for the son," so young Lenin probably was unable to express the resentment he felt about his father "without experiencing guilt as a consequence" (39).

Even before all this, when Lenin was but eighteen to twenty months old he "had already developed a basically mistrustful nature." He was a late walker out of a need to emulate the behavior of a newly born sister in order to get the maternal attention she received. This slow walking demonstrated an early mistrust for his environment and shows that "Lenin's adult behavior, above all his mistrustfulness and the aggressiveness which grows out of mistrust .... had deep roots indeed in his life experiences. A predisposition would exist towards viewing the world in kill-or-be-killed terms" (40-41). Wolfenstein does not reveal how he arrived at these breathtaking conclusions.

Lenin's loving identification with his older brother and father — frequently expressed by him both verbally and in the way he emulated each — becomes yet another source of pathology in Wolfenstein's hands. The death of both father and brother, it seems, evoked intense guilt feelings in Lenin who, according to Wolfenstein, harbored a love-hate ambivalence for both older men that was "the central problem of his life." Wolfenstein eventually lowers the Freudian boom: "Lenin, it must be remembered, felt he bore the double responsibility for the deaths of his father and brother — whom he had wished dead in order that he might possess his mother" (113).

What is missing is any evidence that Lenin nursed such compelling feelings of guilt, aggression, ambivalence, hate, and murder toward his brother and father and incestuous love for his mother.[2] Nor, for Wolfenstein, is any evidence needed since the Oedipus complex has been declared a universal thing, part of every son's psychic heritage. Thus a common affliction is used to explain a most uncommon man. One wonders why Wolfenstein bothered to construct the other interpretations when all along he could apply, as if by fiat, the prefabricated Oedipal judgment.

Wolfenstein seems to suggest that revolutionary Marxism was the therapeutic cure for the Oedipal psychopathology Lenin suffered. Lenin found "a benevolent, omniscient father" in Marx, and a "vengeful Oedipal father in the Czar, "over whom, however, Marx promised victory" (117).

This treatment of Lenin invites the criticism offered earlier that almost anything about a person can be endowed with psychopathological significance and then weaved into his or her political life. Both A and the opposite of A can be treated as evidence of pathology. Both a loving, gentle father and a harsh unloving one, both a positive identification with familial figures and a negative one. And at times no data at all will do quite well as when we invoke the universal Oedipal curse. Behavior in later life is presumed to be motivated not by a quest for justice or a desire for a better world, but by an acting out of earlier unresolved scenarios. Even if an individual like Lenin creates a new and greater drama in his engagement with life, in the psychopathological view, he is still bound to an old script, a hapless victim of an interior demonology that needs a lifetime and sometimes a whole revolution for its proper exorcism.

The Generic Fallacy

Discovering a hidden psychological need in political personages tells us very little about the *political* significance of what they are doing. Nevertheless, the psychopathological explanation does cast a pale on political things. Once convinced that revolutionaries are impelled by unresolved feelings about their fathers, we cannot help but wonder about the value of the revolution itself — even though nothing is established about the revolution's substantive issues. When Bettelheim or others reduce the student protest movement to a collective guilt trip or to some infantile or adolescent disorder, the inevitable impact is to devalue the protest, making the protestors the issue rather than the thing they are protesting.

This kind of *argumentum ad hominem* tells us very little if anything about the political worth of an issue or action. We might decide that people opposed the Vietnam war because they (a) had an irrationally displaced hatred of authority or (b) a sense of justice and a love of peace. And we might conclude that people supported the war out of (c) love of country and a desire to stop communism or (d) a taste for violent activity. But none of this brings us to an informed position regarding the war itself, for the question of whether to support or oppose armed intervention as a *policy* rests on a body of data that extends beyond the interior motives of particular participants.

Persons involved in public protests are often accused of just seeking to escape boredom or vent their anger, or whatever. Indeed, politically active people do sometimes feel more engaged with life. Communists, revolutionaries, radicals, liberals, centrists, conservatives, reactionaries, and fascists have all testified to the personal invigoration experienced in active political engagement, especially when the effort brought results, but this tells us nothing about the political value of their particular actions and ideologies. In sum, personal

motivations — as opposed to political ones — are, if not irrelevant, then certainly of marginal importance for evaluating public policy.

The Compulsive Hoover

Psychopolitics is not just a matter of mainstream investigators psychologizing about rebels. Persons of centrist and liberal persuasion have analyzed U.S. presidents and conservative leaders. The results are hardly more encouraging than the treatment accorded radicals.[3] Let us consider one of the best of the political psychologists, James David Barber, specifically his treatment of Herbert Hoover, a man he categorizes as an "active-negative president." The active-negative president is one who experiences severe deprivation in childhood and who subsequently tries to wring from his environment a sense of self-worth through achievement and a search for power over others (Barber 1972, 99-100). According to Barber, Hoover suffered from a fatal flaw of character that caused him to discard an earlier flexibility for a latter-day self-defeating rigidity and compulsion. Who would have anticipated, Barber asks, "that Herbert Hoover, the pragmatic miracle worker who negotiated relief for war-torn Europe in the midst of World War I, would freeze in opposition to relief for jobless Americans?" (Barber 1973).

Barber informs us that Hoover was orphaned by the age of eight, lived with relatives, liked the outdoors, and had an upbringing that stressed "a close restraint of emotions." Barber maintains that as a child Hoover was scarred by the loss of his parents and experienced "a sense of powerlessness, an inability to guide his own fate, a vulnerability to sudden externally imposed radical changes in his life" (Barber 1972, 128-29). To overcome these feelings he strove to establish control over the world around him, a pattern that persisted into college, where he also supposedly manifested an "extreme individualism." Actually, based on the data Barber presents, one could conclude that Hoover showed himself able to work in close unison with schoolmates, had a normal number of friendships, displayed exceptional skills as a student organizer, and exercised an effective campus leadership. If anything, at Stanford, Hoover developed his exceptional gifts in seemingly creative and self-rewarding ways.

Barber believes the fatal flaws in Hoover's character surfaced most pronouncedly when he was in the White House. As a President, Hoover appeared to be trying "to make up for something, to salvage through leadership some lost or damaged part of himself" and to struggle "against an inner sense of inadequacy." "His power-seeking reflected a strong compensatory need for power." Like other active-negative presidents such as Wilson and Johnson, according to Barber, Hoover harbored "a felt necessity for the denial of self-gratification" (a trait I find hard to imagine in Lyndon Johnson).[4] Hoover

struggled to control aggressive impulses" and was a perfectionist who was "supposed to be good at everything all the time." Actually Hoover himself had a rather nonperfectionist view of his own limitations. Thus he refused to try to excel in the presidency's every role. He made no attempt to fulfill the dramatic needs of the office, remarking on one occasion: "You can't make a Teddy Roosevelt out of me" (1972, 69).

Barber tells us Hoover was an emotionally blocked man, taciturn, humorless, reserved, and seldom capable of crying. But the sparse evidence he offers seems to contradict this picture. Hoover could express anger, as on the occasion he threatened to fight a heckler in the 1932 campaign. Hoover could cry. Barber cites two instances when he was moved to tears in public. (How often might a less emotively blocked president be expected to cry in public?) And Hoover was profoundly moved, both emotionally and to action, when visited in the White House by three children who were pleading to have their unemployed father released from jail. Curiously, the one contemporary testimony Barber offers is that of Eugene Lyons who said that Hoover was not cold, but "a sensitive, soft-hearted person who craves affection, enjoys congenial company, and suffers under the slings of malice" (77-78).

In sum, the data Barber offers on Hoover's life are not only sketchy and selective but lend themselves to a contrary interpretation. He fails to make a convincing case that the traits he ascribes to Hoover are the dominant components of his character or are endowed with the significance he attributes to them. The consequence is that one comes away with the feeling that Barber *tells* rather than *shows* us. And we are left asking: how does he know that?

The Political Hoover

Barber's question remains: how could Hoover, the man who administered relief to the children of war-torn Europe, refuse to allocate relief funds to alleviate the hunger of millions of Americans during the Great Depression, thus helping to bring down his own presidency? Before proposing some psychological compulsion, let us investigate the political Hoover, for therein may rest the clues to his political behavior.

When Hoover was president he once said: "The sole function of government is to bring about a condition of affairs favorable to the beneficial development of private enterprise" (Barber 1972, 74). Indeed, a look at Hoover's career reveals a consistent life-long dedication to the private enterprise system at home and abroad. As head of the private organization, the Belgian Relief Commission, and later as director of the American Relief Administration, Hoover administered aid in a highly opportunistic way. His commission did not give but *sold* food to the Belgians for cash at wartime prices, as though the

supplies had been bought on the open market. Belgium was drained of funds in exchange for food. Among the Belgians who could not pay, drastic shortages arose by 1916, followed by hunger riots among the poorer classes (Knox 1932, 115; Hamill 1931, 327-28).

As early as November 1918, Hoover made it clear that food was to be used as a political weapon "to stem the tide of Bolshevism" (Weissman 1974, 29). When Hoover's American Relief Administration sent aid to Russia, it was for a purpose never intended by Congress, to areas occupied by General Yudenich's counterrevolutionary White Guard army, and in the Baltic to areas held by General von der Goltz's German expeditionary corps. Both these armies were dedicated to overthrowing the Soviet government, and both engaged in widespread pillaging and execution of civilians. By 1919 Yudenich's army subsisted totally on Hoover's aid (Weissman 1974, 36-37; Sayers and Kahn 1946, 106). In a report to Congress in January 1921, Hoover admitted using U.S. relief funds to supply the reactionary White armies (Liggett 1932, 260-267). His manner of distributing relief moved the *Nation* (June 7, 1919) to criticize him editorially for refusing to deliver tons of food to starving inhabitants of Russia until "they surrender to the ideas and armies" of the western powers.

Similarly Hoover withheld financial aid and food intended for Hungary until the short-lived revolutionary Bela Kun government was overthrown — even though the supplies had been purchased with funds advanced by that government. Aid was forthcoming only after the reactionary Admiral Horthy was installed, backed by the bayonets of the Romanian army, which instituted a "White terror," executing hundreds of Hungarian revolutionaries and Jews (Liggett 1932, 255; Weissman 1974, 215).

In similar spirit, Hoover characterized his relief efforts in support of the Allied-sponsored government in Austria as "a race against both death and Communism." He had posters plastered up all over Vienna announcing that food shipments would cease should an uprising occur. He also placed large sums at the disposal of the rightist Polish militarists during their invasion of Soviet Russia in April 1920. Senator James Reed of Missouri charged on the Senate floor that $40 million of relief funds voted by Congress to feed the hungry "was spent to keep the Polish army in the field" (Sayers and Kahn 1946, 93; Weissman 1974, 37). The political psychologist Alexander George (1974, 257) described Hoover as a "sincere humanitarian." He might better be described as "a selective humanitarian," capable of using or withholding funds as political ideology dictated.

While hailed as someone who did good, Herbert Hoover did well. Frequently described as a "engineer," he was in fact a multimillionaire with

business ventures in Burma, Nigeria, Australia, South Africa, Nicaragua, the United States, and Czarist Russia. Prior to World War I he had secured a major interest in no less than eleven Russian oil corporations, along with major concessions in Russian timberlands, mines, railroads, factories, refineries, and gold, copper, silver and zinc reserves (Hamill 1931, 298-300; Knox 1932, 97-99). Had the October Revolution not happened and the Bolshevik government not canceled the vast concessions, Hoover would have been one of the world's top billionaires. Whether motivated by concern for his personal investments or a more generalized class interest or an ideological conservatism or some blend of these — and there is no reason to assume they are mutually exclusive — Hoover manifested an unswervingly militant opposition to communism and to any revolutionary change that might limit the prerogatives of private enterprise. During the period after the Russian Revolution, he remained a persistent supporter of the military campaigns against Soviet Russia.[5]

During his tenure as president, Hoover repeatedly voiced his opposition to public ownership and government regulation of the economy. At the time of the depression, political and corporate leaders were divided as to what strategy to pursue in the face of economic collapse and growing public unrest. There were those who advocated reforms in the hope that by giving a little they could keep a lot. Others believed that the private enterprise system should not be tampered with, that reports of popular suffering were greatly exaggerated, and that the economy was basically sound and would soon right itself.

Hoover was firmly in this latter camp. What Barber considers to be his "freeze," "inflexibility," and "compulsion" were attitudes not personal to him. In his refusal to spend the billions needed to ease the plight of the destitute, Hoover shared an opinion that prevailed within most of the business community right up to 1932 and beyond. Like so many other conservatives then and now, Hoover preached the virtues of self reliance, opposed the taxation of overseas corporate earnings, sought to reduce income taxes for the higher brackets, and opposed both a veteran's bonus and aid to drought sufferers. He refused federal funds for the jobless and opposed unemployment insurance and federal retirement benefits. He repeatedly warned that public assistance programs were the beginning of "state socialism" (Liggett 1932; Warren 1959). Toward business, however, he suffered from no such "inflexibility" and could spend generously. He supported multimillion dollar federal subsidies to shipping interests and agribusiness, and his Reconstruction Finance Corporation doled out a couple of billion dollars to banks and corporations.

The above information, all a matter of public record, provides us with a portrait different from the one sketched by Barber. Rather than moving from flexibility to rigidity because of some psychological flaw, Hoover maintained

a position that was consistently in line with his class ideology, one shared by most other members of his class. As an administrator of emergency relief he used aid to buttress autocratic capitalist governments and armies, while starving out revolutionary governments and movements in Central and Eastern Europe, yielding very little even in the face of repeated criticisms from Congress and the press.

The man who, for political reasons, could withhold funds from starving populations in Eastern Europe and Soviet Russia, could, for political reasons, deny relief to American workers. Having fought but a decade before against socialist revolutions in Austria, Hungary, the Baltic, and Russia, President Hoover was not about to introduce what he and many of his supporters considered to be insidious forms of socialism at home. (Even here, Hoover's "characterological rigidity" gave way to political expediency when, faced with a national election, he belatedly moved in the direction of federal relief in the summer of 1932).

In sum, the mystery about Hoover's character appears not to be a mystery at all. Herbert Hoover was very much a political animal. Unyielding and uncompromising he could be, but in a politically self-serving manner. The "pragmatic miracle worker", who supposedly was suddenly beset by a compulsion when in the White House, was all along a hardline, anti-communist, multimillionaire conservative who operated in an ideologically consistent way, taking class positions that even today are not unfamiliar ones. On behalf of the things he believed in and cherished, Hoover knew what he was doing. (That he acted rationally does not mean he acted infallibly. It certainly can be argued that subsequent events demonstrated how wrong he and his supporters were about both economic conditions and the popular mood).

Once again we see that the psychological explanation achieves plausibility only by slighting — rather than explaining — important political realities.

Reversing Lasswell: the Political Affects the Personal

The Lasswellian model assumes that since childhood antedates adulthood it creates a more compelling and enduring nexus than the experiences of adult life. This presumed progression from apolitical-formative childhood to political-reactive adulthood treats the individual as the generic entity, a notion compatible with the liberal model of the market society as an aggregation of individuals acting out their desires and demands, thereby shaping the larger reality in accordance with their private desires.

But what is primary in time sequence is not necessarily primary in formative power. Chronological primacy may not be a sure indication of effectual primacy. For many important political phenomena one could seriously

qualify the Lasswellian formula and argue that the causal progression goes both ways. There are numerous studies indicating that the anxieties generated during times of nuclear escalation and cold-war confrontations penetrate the unconscious minds of American children, investing many youngsters with unnervingly pessimistic prognoses about humanity's survival (Beardslee and Mack 1982 and 1983; Yudkin 1984, Escalona 1965). Other political developments like recession, unemployment, poverty, loss of family income, police repression, political assassination, and war have a discernible impact on the psychic dispositions of whole populations of adults and children (Brenner 1973, Bernstein 1970, Brown and Harris 1978).

To posit an apolitical childhood as the crucial antecedent to political adulthood is to ignore the fact that childhood is likely to be no more apolitical than the rest of life. That American children are not usually active in political life does not mean they are insulated from its formative effects. In fact, they undergo an early political and ideological socialization from television, movies, grade school, community, and from the social experiences and prejudice to which they are exposed in the family itself. Much of the political socialization literature indicates that the family is far from apolitical and that it has an important impact on political loyalties — not through the circuitous route of a psychopathological ontology but more directly as a socializing mediator of political opinions, social images, gender roles, racial attitudes, and class values.

All this suggests that *socialization* and *internalization* may be more crucial mechanisms than displacement and rationalization for linking private and public worlds. Putting Lasswell in reverse, our formula might read: $P\} s\} i\} = p$. Political forces, P, have a socializing effect, s on individuals who through a process of internalization, i, embrace particular images and interests of political life so that these become compelling components of their private motives, p. I submit that the explanatory power of this model is greater and less mysterious than the Lasswellian one. It requires one to make fewer and less embellished assumptions; it is supported by more readily available evidence and by interpretations devoid of the overextended extrapolations found in psychopolitics. It recognizes that individuals and families do not antedate the social reality into which they are born nor exist in a prepolitical vacuum.

For Politics

Focusing too closely on personality causes us to overlook the wider institutional imperatives of power and interest that shape our options and our performances. But a purely structuralist view leaves out the crucial role that individual personalities or group psychology might play. In other words, we should have no argument with those who assert that differing personalities may

under certain circumstances effect different social and political outcomes. But it is one thing to say that personality may affect political reality — who can deny the impact of a Lenin or a Gandhi — and quite something else to argue that political actors, both leaders and masses, are really displacing their unresolved hidden psychological agendas onto political life. It is this latter assertion I have taken to task, without wishing to dismiss in toto the role of psychological factors *in the timing, formulation, and expression of political actions. After doing* correlations of political, social, and psychological attitudes, Sutherland and Tannenbaum (1984, 177, 194) conclude that:

> Political scientists who study mass political preferences in relation to "basic" personality dimensions . . . are mining an area of negligible potential... Political preferences will more likely be shown to arise from *rationally held "cognition" about how society itself functions, than from* deep seated personality needs... It seems obvious that "personologists" in political science have been hasty in focusing on supposed universal effects of "personality" variables like political efficacy and authoritarianism, which have turned out on reflection to be class-based.

In sum, psychopolitics tends to reduce large social phenomena to simple personal causalities. It is reductionist, although in a tortuously indirect manner, for psychopolitics takes an elaborately convoluted path, preferring explanations that are far removed from the events and realities to which the explanations are directed. Psychopolitics tends to underplay manifest content. It is simplistic in its interpretation yet highly esoteric and rarified in the nature of the evidence (or nonevidence) upon which it rests.

In reversing Lasswell, I am not claiming that the formative causality goes only from the political to the private but that we give a new definition to the private, recognizing its social dimensions. Certainly people are not passive absorbents of politico-economic forces. People synthesize, challenge, and even create anew their social experience. But the existing literature on psychopolitics is too deeply flawed to be of much help in understanding political realities.

Having taken note of the inaccessibility of reliable data and the plentitude of questionable interpretations, both in the science of depth psychology and in its political applications, and having noted the tenuous and seemingly arbitrary linkage of causalities, and the way sweeping conclusions might rest on frail suppositions and the way political data are slighted, we might be forgiven if we choose not to tread the path opened by the practitioners of psychopolitics. They promised us a secret garden and instead gave us a swamp.

NOTES

[1] Fifty-nine years after Lasswell made this observation, the American Psychiatric Press published a four-volume reference work intended as a manual for treatment. It contains contributions by more than four hundred experts, mostly psychiatrists, and seems close to being the body of documents Lasswell thought specialists should have available for consultation. But the work evoked heated controversy, including complaints from psychologists who felt certain theories were slighted and new approaches would be discouraged. The manual was published with a disclaimer saying that it was not an official publication of the American Psychiatric Association (Task Force on Treatments and Psychiatric Disorders, 1989).

[2] For a much different view of Lenin's adult personality see the contemporary portraits by Krupskaya (1960), and Trotsky (1971).

[3] See for instance, Wolfenstein (1967), Chesen (1973), Abrahamsen (1977), Brodie (1973), Clinch (1973), Mazlish (1973). For a critique of Clinch and Mazlish see Coles(1987, 96-99, 102-04). Barber (1972), to be treated in the pages to follow, is I believe one of the stronger efforts in political psychology. Another work worthy of respectful attention but deserving of some of the same criticisms made herein is George and George (1964); see the critiques of George and George by Tucker (1977) and Weinstein, Anderson, and Link (1978-79) and the response by George and George (1981-82), all reprinted in Cocks and Crosby 1987).

[4] The assertion that presidents as ostensibly different in personality as Wilson, Nixon, Johnson and Hoover are strikingly similar in character" (Barber 1973) raises a question about the use of "character" as a psychological construct and its relation to personality. If we think of "personality" in the lay sense to mean the observable expressions of temperament and attitude, and "character" in the more clinical sense of "the form of the typical reaction" used by individuals to mediate reality and psychic conflict (Reich 1969) or the enduring and early developed structured "stance toward life" (Barber, 1972, 10), then the claim that these four rather different presidential personalities are of similar character is not an impossible one. But it could be established only by an in-depth character analysis of all four presidents, something that of course has not been done. Barber's character topology deals not only with surface manifestations of activity-passivity and positive-negative expressions but deeper psychodynamic patterns. As George points out, "the data are not always good" in supporting Barber's contention that a particular presidential style also contains the deeper psychodynamics that Barber associates with it (George 1974, 251). Both Lasswell and Barber sometimes emphasize the biographical specificity of some displaced and rationalized childhood sentiment or experience, and other times refer to the habituated, structured modes of response that are what Wilhelm Reich called the individual's "characterological" way of mediating between outer life and inner self (Reich 1969). In a word, the political psychologists are dealing with both developmental psychology and ego adaptive psychology, relying now on the idiosyncratic features of the individual's psychic history and now on the generalizable forms of

character defenses. Greenstein (1975) notes that these are interrelated but conceptually separate approaches. But as applied to political psychobiographies it is not always clear why and when it should be one or the other.

[5] Hoover eventually did offer relief to Soviet Russia during the Bolshevik government "in a form more devious than frank counterrevolution" (Filene 1967, 78). Hoover believed that the Bolsheviks were about to lose their grip on the reins of power. The hope was that some large international relief body would be able to take over economic control in Soviet Russia, in what became known as a "bread intervention" (Weissman 1974, 44-45, 49-51). In a memorandum to President Wilson (one that seems remarkably contemporary in its counterinsurgency approach), Hoover demonstrated that the containment of communism was uppermost in his mind. He mapped out how aid might serve to moderate the militancy of a new revolutionary government, especially after bitter experience has taught the economic and social follies of present [revolutionary] obsessions" (Fisher 1927, 11-14). Within two years after the food program began, when it became evident that the Soviets were not about to collapse or be subverted, Hoover abruptly canceled all aid to Russia while continuing to assist conservative regimes in Austria, Poland, and Czechoslovakia.

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