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“Operation Polecat”: Thomas E. Dewey, the 1948 Election, and the Origins of McCarthyism

“Operation Polecat” was the label applied by a coterie of volunteer advisers to a part of their project to help candidate Thomas E. Dewey take command of the emergent issue of domestic Communism in the 1948 presidential campaign. They derived the catchphrase from Dewey’s expressed desire “to make communism as popular as a polecat.”¹ The “polecat,” or more commonly “skunk,” inspired a recurring Cold War-era trope for Communists. Senator Joseph R. McCarthy often asserted that pursuing Communists, like hunting skunks, was dirty and unpopular but a necessary chore. By September 1948, the issue of Communism in the federal government seemed primed to help end the Democratic Party’s dominance in national politics. However, 1948 turned out to be an electoral turning point that didn’t turn.

This article (to maintain the barnyard metaphor) ruminates on what we might term a “dog that didn’t bark.” The mute canine was Tom Dewey, who, while not silent, was reserved on the dawning issue of Communism in government during the fall election campaign. From late July, Communist inroads under the New Deal, as revealed in hearings of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), at which Whittaker Chambers confronted Alger Hiss, were the big story out of Washington. As the campaign loomed, another zoological trope, the phrase “red herring,” endorsed by President Harry S. Truman, entered the headlines and soon the vernacular.² Global and national

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events, the ongoing thrust of politics, and the ambitions and strategies of various candidates all converged to augur a campaign that would highlight the issue of domestic Communism, but the end result proved otherwise. This article addresses why the campaign so evolved and why Dewey slighted his advisers' handiwork, and offers speculative conclusions as to what later imprint on American politics this aspect of the 1948 contest may have left.

This conjectural exercise teeters atop three premises and one imaginary scenario. It assumes that: (1) the Hiss case was a lightning-rod for public concern and a source of political vulnerability Republicans might have exploited vigorously in the campaign; (2) Dewey instead soft-pedaled the Communist issue; and (3) he did so despite strenuous lobbying by the "Operation Polecat" volunteers. The counterfactual fancies that, *had* Dewey made more of the issue and thus changed the election's outcome and so thereafter, with his party now responsible for governing, he might have handled the internal security issue more suavely and irenically than did Truman, so averting much of the partisan rancor of the early 1950s. This is not a novel theorem: political scientist Earl Latham once proposed, similarly, that the Democrats' untoward 1948 victory, by "corking" partisan tensions, led to the "political compression that exploded in McCarthyism."³

The imponderable in this political equation is whether a different strategy by Dewey might have changed the electoral outcome, installed a Republican administration and thus so altered the political dynamic that the coming McCarthy era might have had a very different look. Would McCarthy under these modified circumstances have found the traction for the charges of Communists in high places that gained him prominence in 1950? Indeed, with a Dewey administration likely to move briskly to oust suspect government employees, would there have been any space for such a rogue attack by a fellow Republican?⁴ As a further point of interest, the 1948 campaign offered a learning experience for Senator McCarthy, a part of his career that has received little attention from historians.

So why, then, did Dewey tiptoe around an issue that in both hindsight and the opinion of interested politicians at the time had the potential to sway votes? His tepid treatment of Communism in 1948 was not foreordained, but neither was it wholly out of character. The issue had become a staple in Empire State politics. As early as 1936, some New York Irish Catholics defected from the Democrats "because of charges that the New Deal was radical." New York City mayor Fiorello La Guardia's 1937 reelection contest and several 1938 state races kindled red-baiting, at times with a nativist tinge. Posters entreating "Save Our State for Americans" appeared. Running against incumbent

Governor Herbert Lehman in 1938, Dewey had dissociated himself from such appeals.⁵ Indeed, his reluctance to raise the Communist issue in that race so struck lieutenants of Harold Stassen, a rival for the 1948 presidential nomination, that they hunted for proof of his early laxity.⁶ They combed New York for evidence of the robust presence of Reds under the Dewey regime, even shipping to Stassen's Oregon campaign headquarters photographs of the door and window signs at various New York City offices of the Party and its allies.⁷

Caustic red-baiting in the nasty 1944 presidential contest foreshadowed many campaigns of the postwar era and offered precedent for 1948. Governor of New York since 1942 and the 1944 Republican presidential nominee, Dewey frequently claimed that the Roosevelt administration had shrugged off, if not embraced, growing Communist influence. He labeled a Soviet Red "a man who supports his Government," whereas a U.S. Communist was one who "supports the fourth term so our form of government may more easily be changed." When FDR renounced any Red backing, Dewey scored his "soft disclaimer." Dewey devoted a major speech in Oklahoma City wholly to Communism. His running mate, Ohio governor John W. Bricker, sneered that FDR was the Reds' "political prisoner" for having freed Earl Browder from jail for passport fraud so that he could corral communist votes for him. In that year of "Clear it with Sidney" (FDR's command to aides to seek union leader Sidney Hillman's approval of the short list of possible running mates), GOP orators labeled Hillman and Communist Party chief Earl Browder "Fourth-termites."⁸ A postcard franked by Illinois congressman Fred Busbey challenged: "Browder, Hillman and the Communists will vote—will you?" Catholic priests in the New York area reportedly gave "powerful sermons on Communism" that "did not mention politics but were in effect wonderful speeches for Dewey."⁹

These barbs found tender flesh. Pollster Elmo Roper termed FDR's "'close tie-up' to Communism" a damaging issue. Many top Republicans concurred. Ex-Congressman Bruce Barton praised Dewey's Oklahoma City address as "possibly the best political speech I ever heard."¹⁰ In the 1946 elections, in which Republicans won a stunning victory, recapturing both houses of Congress, the Communist issue made a lively appearance in numerous campaigns.¹¹

Unfolding during the Berlin blockade and amid ongoing acrimony over HUAC's hearings, the 1948 campaign beckoned as a ripe harvest time for the Communist issue. A Gallup poll found 79 percent of Americans wanting Congress to "continue with its spy investigations." Dewey's campaign manager Herbert Brownell urged him to make this his main focus. Other Republicans

agreed on the issue's promise. Nebraska senator Kenneth Wherry found it simmering in the Midwest.¹² Congressman Richard M. Nixon, sponsor of the Mundt-Nixon bill to curb Communist activities, and HUAC's leader in the effort to expose Alger Hiss, also urged Dewey to accent the issue. He showed John Foster Dulles, Dewey's top foreign-policy adviser (and Hiss's boss at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), the transcript of Chambers's testimony in a secret HUAC session. Nixon called for playing up HUAC's findings in the campaign and for Dewey to come out for "strengthening the espionage laws." To Dewey, Dulles passed on inside details from Nixon from "the espionage hearings which might be stressed by you in the campaign."¹³

Democrats too saw danger in the HUAC hearings and Truman's "red herring" dismissals of them. "For the life of me," exclaimed Democratic Party panjandrum Jim Farley, "I cannot understand why the President is taking so determined a stand" dismissing the Hiss controversy.¹⁴ Truman aide George Elsey wrote himself a late August note that the "spy" matter was "a major Republican issue" that "is getting worse, not better."¹⁵ Presidential counsel Clark Clifford met with Attorney General Tom Clark to design a response. At two cabinet meetings, Clark reviewed the "spy hearings" and his effort to get the Loyalty Review Board to "issue a blast" against them.¹⁶

By the summer of 1948, numerous anti-Communist activists were ready to lend their expertise to Dewey. In August, with Dewey's blessing, a "Committee on Communism" formed behind the scenes. Point man was William Loeb, conservative publisher of the *Manchester Morning Union*, seconded by New Hampshire senator Styles Bridges. After talking with Dewey on August 13, Loeb assembled a group of volunteers to take up the "Communist Problem."¹⁷ The circle embraced prominent anti-Communist zealots and publicists: Eugene Lyons of the *Reader's Digest* and author of the influential expose of the 1930s, *The Red Decade*; Frederick Woltman, whose reportage on Communism in the *New York World-Telegram* won him a Pulitzer Prize in 1947; Robert Humphreys, associate editor of *Newsweek*; Isaac Don Levine, editor of the anti-Communist newsletter *Plain Talk*; Alfred Kohlberg, leader of the China Lobby and patron of *Plain Talk* and other anti-Communist and pro-Nationalist Chinese causes; and George S. Schuyler, who wrote for the *Pittsburgh Courier*. Intriguingly, Whittaker Chambers's name appeared once on this roster. His growing embroilment in the Hiss case might well explain his disappearance from it.¹⁸

Remarkably, Operation Polecat has all but slipped from memory and history. Of five books on the 1948 election, just one, by Jules Abels, records the group's existence, and only glancingly. Dewey biographer Richard Norton

Smith notes the candidate's meeting with Loeb and Bridges, but not the broader committee. In 1971, Loeb himself recalled Dewey's complacent campaign, but even he said nothing about the Communist issue or the advisory group.¹⁹

The committee barely registered in Dewey's thinking. When Loeb asked for a meeting, Dewey fobbed him off on his counsel Charles Breitel. Bristling, Loeb replied that for his team to "have any assurance that the governor has confidence in them," he must meet with them before starting his campaign tour. Otherwise, Loeb feared "most of the membership of the committee will decline to serve further." In the face of this scolding, Dewey relented and saw them on September 3.²⁰

When they met, Dewey set them three tasks: devising a "positive" foreign policy by which the United States would take the initiative "rather than always countering Russian attacks"; finding means to communicate with the Russian people "as distinguished from the rulers of the Kremlin"; and facilitating Dewey's goal "to make communism as popular as a polecat." The committee canvassed the broad field of foreign policy, but, since they knew Dewey was served by "John Foster Dulles and numerous other experts," deferred to them and sought to avoid floating ideas that might collide with their approach.²¹

The committee left only faint traces of its deliberations. Was the meeting place, Kohlberg's office, redolent of unvarnished floors, perhaps strewn with the silk embroidery he imported from China? We do know that their final session, on September 21, lasted seven hours. Their work product boiled down to three memoranda. Lyons and Levine drafted a proposal, "Operation Penetration," advocating support for various Iron Curtain exile groups. Kohlberg wrote a memo—one of hundreds he inflicted on public figures—deploring Truman's China policy.²²

But the group's main concoction was "Operation Polecat," written by Frederick Woltman and Robert Humphreys.²³ It proposed that Dewey—President Dewey—create a "presidential commission to investigate communist penetration." For several years, the body would hold hearings "in camera," study, and report on the "effect of communist penetration on all segments of American life." It would seek less to expose individual Reds than to map their influence. It would recruit "real experts" and people of proven reputation and "ethical stature." "Exhaustive preparation" would precede public hearings, in contrast to "the complete lack of preparation, the desire for flash probes, scare-headlines and one-day blazes of publicity from witnesses pulled out of the hat" of current investigating bodies, which "have diminished public confidence in *any* inquiry into communism." The panel would "recognize the

delicate problem of protecting civil liberties while fighting the greatest enemy of civil liberties—communism.”²⁴

Coincidentally, Truman’s White House staff was mulling a similar idea: “referring the question of Soviet espionage ... to a bi-partisan commission.” Nothing came of it in 1948, nor in the next two years, when it repeatedly surfaced as a means to depoliticize the increasingly bitter Communist issue. Not until late 1950 did Truman grudgingly take this step, naming a President’s Commission on Internal Security and Individual Rights, only to have McCarthy’s ally Senator Pat McCarran of Nevada block the gambit.²⁵ The “polecat” group’s proposal had a scope wider than most of these schemes: assessing Communist influence across society, not just in government but in unions, education, the arts, and beyond.²⁶ In effect, its writ would be as broad as that of HUAC. But next to the anti-Communist discourse soon to come, Operation Polecat seems sober. With the commission, its proponents contended, Dewey could lift the issue “from the mire of rumor-mongering, smear-ladling, abuse and counter abuse” and strike a balance between fighting Communism and guarding civil liberties.²⁷

The only evidence, however, of the impact of these memos was a stock thank-you note from Dewey: he studied them “with great care” and found them “extremely valuable.”²⁸ But he was loath to rev up the engines of anti-Communism. When entreated by Loeb and Senator Bridges to press the issue, Dewey said he would only “fleck it lightly” or, as George Schuyler recounted, would “touch upon” the topic but devote no one speech “exclusively” to it.²⁹

Fleck it he did. Often he used the line that the Democrats sought \$25 million for their loyalty program to get rid of Communists, “whom they themselves put in the government. I have a better way to handle the Communists—and a cheaper one. We won’t put any Communists in government in the first place.” He had even flicked this jab during the spring primaries. He called for a regime that “does not ‘play footie’ with the Communists,” and he distanced himself from those “who believe exposure of Communists in the government is a red herring.” His Hollywood Bowl speech took up the topic.³⁰

The issue worried Truman’s strategists enough that they had the president reply in a national broadcast from Oklahoma City. He disparaged GOP charges and linked the Republican, Progressive, and Communist parties as a trifecta, with Communists backing the “third party” so as to help elect the Republicans, whose penchant for depressions and other bad ideas made them “unwittingly the ally of the Communists.” The most authoritative voting study of the 1948 election asserted that Dewey actually addressed the Communist issue more often than did Truman, mentioning it significantly in

seven speeches versus two by Truman; a measurement of *New York Times* column-inches treating the subject shows a closer ratio of only 11 to 8 in Dewey's favor.³¹

Why did Dewey merely "fleck" at Communism? First, his overconfidence prompted him to run a "unity" campaign heralding his "unity" administration. His adviser Elliott Bell told a supporter, "I think we may be entering an era of 'good feeling' as it occurred in the days of Monroe." Before the election, newsman Raymond Brandt saw Dewey make out a list of cabinet members-to-be. Dewey and company were determined, in a troubled international climate, not to conduct the slam-bang campaign others urged. "Don't rock the boat," Herbert Brownell advised Dewey's running mate, Earl Warren. "We've got the election won." Even Bill Loeb, though later a critic, confided that the Polecat committee was "so confident of [Dewey's] election" that they were focusing "more keenly on the post-election period than on the next few weeks."³²

Many Republicans deplored the tight cocoon of advisers around Dewey, who lived and worked in what one backer termed "the most provincial capital in the world," constrained under "the baleful influence of the *New York Times* and the *Herald Tribune*." "The Albany Group," lamented Arizona GOP leader Clarence Budington Kelland, seized control and fed the candidate "smug, shallow, insincere speeches," part of a campaign "contemptuous alike of our antagonists and our friends." When party chair Hugh Scott urged Dewey to reprise his 1944 Oklahoma City anti-Red oration, Dewey retorted: "That's the worst speech I ever made." Sounding like Eisenhower on the subject of McCarthy during his presidency, Dewey said, *a propos* Truman, "I will not get down into the gutter with that fellow."³³ Talking about Communists, infiltrators, and spies tested the boundaries of this resolve of Dewey's.

Although historians pay it slight heed, Dewey's route to the nomination, and thus the early pattern of his 1948 campaign, may have confirmed him in reticence. He faced formidable rivals in Senator Robert A. Taft, champion of the party's conservatives; Douglas A. MacArthur, whose backers mounted a proxy drive in the Wisconsin primary while the general bided his time as proconsul in Tokyo; and Harold E. Stassen, the former "boy Governor" of Minnesota, who had emerged from the war with a glistening reputation and an active group of supporters. Stassen had served as an officer on Admiral William "Bull" Halsey's staff and seen action in the Pacific, had come home to perform as a well-regarded member of the American delegation to the founding conference of the United Nations in San Francisco, had traveled the world on his own after the war, and authored a book outlining his political vision. And he was an ingratiating campaigner.

Governor Dewey soon found himself overmatched in the critical April Wisconsin primary. Stassen could invade the Badger State from his base next door. He also had powerful allies, including "Boss" Thomas E. Coleman, who headed Wisconsin's potent Republican Voluntary Committee, and the junior senator, Joseph R. McCarthy. McCarthy had first come into Stassen's view during his 1946 Senate campaign. Victor Johnston, a Stassen aide then on loan to Coleman's Wisconsin organization—"infiltrated" there, by one account—flagged McCarthy as a comer, "a fellow that I think should be tied into your [Stassen's] organization." McCarthy had cultivated Johnston since the previous year, and Johnston assisted his campaign.³⁴

A Stassen-McCarthy alliance soon blossomed. Like Stassen, McCarthy identified himself as an internationalist in a party, and a state, noted for isolationist views. He charged his chief rival for the Senate nomination, Senator Robert M. La Follette, Jr., with "playing into the hands of the Communists' by opposing world co-operation." His views on labor issues resembled those of Stassen, who sought to appear both liberal and pro-union yet no-nonsense against strikes. His victory was taken in Minnesota and elsewhere as a "triumph" for Stassenite internationalism and a leg up for Stassen's 1948 aspirations. The two had met before the primary and considered, but rejected, having Stassen campaign for McCarthy. The weekend before primary day, a group of McCarthy boosters in the Wisconsin Young Republican organization, dividing into teams of four and styling themselves the "Flying Badgers," invaded "nearly every city and village of more than 500 population" to electioneer. "The entire operation," the *Milwaukee Journal* declared, "was imported from Minnesota," where those who had previously used this tactic of saturating the state with a strike force of Stassen volunteers were labeled "Paul Revere Riders." Victor Johnston commissioned Stassen's former law partner to bring the system to Wisconsin.³⁵

Stassen endorsed McCarthy shortly before the general election. McCarthy thus became widely identified as a Stassen supporter at the onset of his Senate career. In 1947, a home-state ally of his even "advanced" a late-summer vacation in Door County by Stassen and his family, a holiday from which politics took no furlough. Barely a month after election as senator, McCarthy endorsed Stassen for president; his energetic work for Stassen in 1948 offered further reciprocation for the latter's aid in 1946.³⁶

Wisconsin's April 6, 1948, presidential primary came near the end of what has been termed a "war scare" that briefly seized Washington. In February, Communists had executed a coup in Czechoslovakia. Anxious about passage of Marshall Plan and defense appropriations by Congress,

Truman administration spokesmen, not always in perfect synchronization, escalated their Cold War rhetoric. On March 5, General Lucius Clay, the U.S. commander in Germany, rang alarm bells with his telegram warning that hostilities might erupt “with dramatic suddenness.”³⁷ In the House of Representatives, GOP Congressmen Karl E. Mundt and Richard M. Nixon pressed ahead with their bill to place the Communist Party under stringent restrictions.

Although *New York Times* military analyst Hanson Baldwin described the March alarum as “a wholly Washington crisis,”³⁸ it tinted and tilted events in Wisconsin. Dewey and Stassen both faced a vigorous primary challenge there from MacArthur’s surrogates, whose cause gained momentum, a key Stassen aide feared, from Truman’s March 17 “war message to Congress” and the resultant uptick of Cold War fever. This, plus a “daily barrage of war news and MacArthur stories and MacArthur pictures laid down by [William Randolph] Hearst’s Milwaukee *Sentinel* and [Robert R.] McCormick’s Chicago *Tribune*,” produced an unparalleled “atmosphere of war hysteria . . . in Eastern and Southern Wisconsin.” These developments stimulated a pro-MacArthur surge that convinced many Stassen campaigners as well as other observers that the General would capture a majority—or close to it—of the primary’s yield of delegates; they also roused Dewey to end his Fabian campaign to rush briefly to Wisconsin to electioneer. With MacArthur as his target, Dewey warned: “This is not a war crisis. It is a peace crisis. Military genius . . . is not the answer.” An early draft of Joe McCarthy’s famous form letter on Stassen’s behalf attacking MacArthur as a *faux* favorite son (noting that neither of his two marriages nor his divorce took place in Wisconsin) alluded to Truman’s “bungling incompetency which is again heading us down the road toward war.”³⁹

Harold Stassen was no novice in the politics of anti-Communism. The Communists’ presence in Minnesota’s Farmer-Labor Party had served as an issue in his victorious 1938 gubernatorial campaign. In his star-turn at the 1940 Republican national convention, the young governor savored some of the preferred antsubversive metaphor of that era, accusing New Dealers of presiding over many “fifth column activities,” and when people protested this malfeasance, they “just smiled and reached over and patted the flanks of the Trojan Horse.”⁴⁰ His 1947 book, confected for the campaign, touted both his international experience (his visit with Stalin) and deft handling of Reds as a district attorney and governor. An entire chapter surveyed and magnified the domestic Communist problem. Without naming New York’s current leader, it unsubtly cocked an eyebrow at the dense concentration of Reds in New York

City. National and international events conspired to make the Communist issue only more salient. Moreover, MacArthur's Wisconsin backers, led by former Governor Philip F. La Follette, sold him as the firmest bulwark against the Red tide, "the one man" capable of "halting Russian aggression without resort to hysteria and war."⁴¹ In this context, it was natural for Stassen to seize on the threat of Communism within America's borders in his Wisconsin primary campaign.

More probably it was Stassen's solidly orchestrated campaign and alliance with Coleman's organization rather than the Communist issue that explained the result. His efforts netted a surprising nineteen Wisconsin delegates to eight for MacArthur. Dewey, in third, was shut out. The Nebraska primary was next, and Stassen won it, too. He thus carried momentum into Oregon, whose primary took place on May 21. Facing a must-win challenge there, Dewey spent three weeks campaigning in an uncharacteristically personal way, town to town and hand to hand in a state with a voting population less than that of the Bronx. Having accused Stassen of electioneering as if for county sheriff, now, said *Time*, Dewey ran "like an alderman." He sought to "come from behind" in a contest that gamblers handicapped 5 to 3 in Stassen's favor.⁴²

Stassen bet all his chips on the Communist issue in Oregon. He had practiced with it in Wisconsin, Nebraska, and Ohio, urging that the Communist Party be "outlawed" and the Mundt-Nixon bill be enacted. He endorsed that measure so vocally that when the House passed it, Nixon thanked him for his "unequivocal support."⁴³ His rivals quickly countered. Bob Taft remarked, "Under our Constitution a man can be a Communist if he desires," and Dewey urged the alternative of keeping Communists out in the open. Yet Stassen saw political gain in fortifying this position against other leading political figures, notably Truman, Dewey, and former Vice President Henry Wallace, whose third-party candidacy assailed Truman from the left. Archly, in Portland, Oregon, Stassen pointed out that all three "continue to believe that the blessing of legality should be extended to the Communist organizations." Conceding Dewey was "sincere," Stassen decried his "soft policy of coddling Communist organizations." New York State illustrated the fallacy: now "national headquarters" for the CP, with only 9 percent of the nation's population, it boasted 40 percent of its Communists.⁴⁴

Stassen challenged Dewey to a debate in Oregon. Dewey agreed to the duel only after holding out for his own terms. The debate must take place in a radio studio (it was broadcast nationally), with no live audience but the candidates' staffs, the moderator, and the press.⁴⁵ The debaters were to engage a single question, "Should the Communist Party be outlawed in America?"

with Stassen arguing the affirmative. Joe McCarthy accompanied Stassen and handed him cards with comments and debating points. Several Stassen aides recognized that Dewey had extracted significant advantage from these terms and urged their candidate to address the fact that the New Yorker had precluded the broader debate format he would have preferred.⁴⁶

An audience estimated at 40 to 80 million heard the debate, carried by three radio networks, on the evening of May 17. Briefly circumventing the single-issue format, Stassen opened by sketching his “four principal objectives” for keeping the nation free and at peace. Citing the recent Czech coup, he warned that “Communist organizations are not really political parties, they are actually fifth columns, they are Quisling cliques.” America had no law on the books that could prevent them “from secretly developing organizations of hidden members, from carrying on secret conspiracies.” Mundt-Nixon would outlaw such practices without cramping constitutional freedoms. He again yoked Dewey with Wallace as favoring “a soft policy towards Communism” and concluded by catechizing Dewey with four questions.⁴⁷

Dewey parried deftly, both answering and deflecting Stassen’s queries. He refuted the claim that the Mundt-Nixon bill outlawed Communism by citing Congressman Karl Mundt’s own testimony and the sponsoring committee’s report. He eloquently repudiated outlawry as ineffective, in that it would drive the Reds underground (as in fascist Europe); as unconstitutional; and as a desertion of American principles. “It is an attempt to beat down ideas with a club, the surrender of everything we believe in.” Stassen rebutted that if Dewey was correct that adequate laws already were in force, why was the CP “growing so strong in New York?” And why had there been no effective action against it? Dewey’s sur-rebuttal trumpeted Stassen’s “surrender” of his call for outlawing the Communist Party because, again, the Mundt bill, which he deemed “perfectly harmless, probably,” but small potatoes, did not do so; and he defended his stewardship of the Empire State.⁴⁸

Both candidates claimed to have prevailed, but Dewey came off as genuinely “flushed by what he believed was a clean-cut victory.” May brought him clear gains in the national polls. In April, before the debate, Gallup surveys showed Stassen with a 7 percent edge, while one taken two weeks after it showed Dewey in front by about 7 percent. Yet just before the debate, public support for the Mundt-Nixon bill to register CP members stood at 77 percent.⁴⁹ A bandwagon effect from winning in Oregon may explain Dewey’s momentum in the polls, but perhaps those observers who sensed that Stassen erred by calling specifically for outlawing the CP were correct.

Attentive observers had no doubt as to the outcome of the disputation in Portland. They widely credited Dewey with winning it and hence the primary and thus the nomination. Said publisher Roy Howard of the debate, "Dewey had it over Stassen like a tent." Newspaper owner Eugene Pulliam found it "the unanimous verdict that Dewey licked the pants off Stassen ... and I think he also won Oregon in that debate." Ralph L. Carr, Colorado's Republican ex-governor, concluded that "Dewey did a whale of a good job" in the debate and Stassen "proved his lack of qualification for the big job." Dewey's triumph became such settled dogma that, two years later, to the American Legion convention, Democratic Senate Majority Leader Scott Lucas justified his reluctance to act on a successor to the Mundt-Nixon bill by declaring: "When they debated the fundamental questions raised by this legislation, Dewey knocked Stassen out of the ring in the second round."⁵⁰

Stassenites agreed that his fixation on outlawing the CP had derailed his campaign. Some so warned even before Oregon voted. One adherent returned a letter soliciting aid in the Wisconsin primary with the tart rejoinder that Stassen's stand had "cost [him] many votes," especially among "most thinking people." A public-opinion analyst found that many Oregonians viewed the Minnesotan positively, but only one voter cited his sturdy anti-Communism. A campaign insider later recalled that Dewey had managed to "manipulate" Stassen by "having headlines indicate that you advocate[d] something quite different from what you intend[ed]."⁵¹ A New York businessman and ally cautioned that the call to ban the CP was politically "vulnerable," ineffective, inconsistent with his record, and "a confession of weakness" telegraphing our fear of the Reds. One Oregon voter thought the error lay in using "the phrase 'outlawing' Communism." She surmised that Oregon, while not isolationist, was far from Europe, the main battleground against Communism, and so tended to dismiss Communists as merely "unattractive loose thinkers who held forth on soapboxes." Top campaign aide Warren Burger found "a pronounced reaction" among many Oregonians that "[the] communism issue is being overemphasized."⁵²

Stassen's chief opinion pulse-taker provided the most unequivocal bad tidings. While noting that Stassen had regained some lost momentum just before the primary, he declared that the results of his "post-debate study were quite alarming, showing a considerable trend toward Dewey and his policies concerned with the Communist situation." Three days later, in a postmortem he wrote: "I think I can show you statistically where the debate cost you 8000 votes." Before it, Oregonians favored "outlawing Communism 2 to 1; afterward they opposed it 2 to 1." Of those who heard the debate, "more than 3 out

of 4 thought Dewey won it.” Dewey managed to convince listeners, and Stassen failed to rebut the premise that outlawry would curb “freedom of speech and Democracy” and that making “martyrs” of Communists only aided them.⁵³

Dewey spent three weeks crisscrossing the state and blanketing Portland, exertions that far exceeded those expended on earlier primaries. His allies back East also called in chits; bankers, by one account, “really put the screws on the boys in Oregon.” While these efforts may have helped Dewey overcome his rival’s initial lead, his victory was inextricably linked to his opposition to Stassen’s insistence on outlawing the Communist Party.⁵⁴ Coming out of the primaries, he was thus identified with a relatively civil-libertarian and less-than-alarmist take on the Red menace. To abandon it would have been awkward, and their reading of the fall campaign, in which he was heavily favored, gave Dewey and his lieutenants no reason to change course.

Would raising the Communist issue more doggedly have altered things? We cannot know. Evidence of the topic’s ripeness is mixed. A July Gallup poll put Communism, at 4 percent, well down the list of “most important” problems facing the nation; foreign policy issues ranked first at 44 percent. The *Boston Globe* polled people on what the top campaign issue was. Only 1 percent cited Communism.⁵⁵ In contrast, an October 18 national poll asked: “What . . . are the three most dangerous threats *within our own country* to a prosperous America?” “High prices and inflation” topped the list, mentioned by 49.5 percent; but 44 percent named “Communism.”⁵⁶ The 1948 Elmira voting study opines that Truman won the election “on domestic issues affecting labor, consumers, and farmers.”⁵⁷ One might guess that the nonsalience of the Communist issue in these findings reflected Dewey’s soft-pedaling of the issue rather than a hard ceiling against which it had bumped. Some journalists reported that the most popular line in Dewey’s stump speeches was his crack that while the Truman administration called for a \$25 million appropriation to clean Communists out of federal jobs, a Dewey administration would simply not appoint them.⁵⁸ Pollster George Gallup’s reputation suffered along with Dewey’s in the defeat neither anticipated—Indiana’s state senate observed a moment of mirthful silence in Gallup’s memory. Years later, Gallup reflected on the fiasco. Those who ascribed political outcomes “to the Machiavellian skill of Madison Avenue experts” erred, he wrote, in neglecting “the important role that events play in presidential campaigns.” “Events” had done in poor Dewey three times. The ease with which Hitler’s armies smashed through France ended his 1940 hopes of nomination. In 1944, Germany’s stiffening defenses heightened election-time gloom and made voters loath to

change leaders. In 1948, collapsing farm prices once more made Dewey "the victim of events."⁵⁹

What is clear is that Dewey let Truman air a narrative of Democrats as tribunes of the people vs. GOP "gluttons of privilege." This may have worked because at the time New Deal-era class loyalties still held. A 1945 study found that 51 percent of American men labeled themselves "working class."⁶⁰ And 1948 seems to have seen the strongest class-based voting patterns of any presidential election for the period 1940–60. The *New York Times*, which had preferred Dewey, grudgingly defined the mandate: "Approximately half of the voting population is still in what might be called the New Deal mood."⁶¹ Dewey did little to counter this appeal; perhaps more talk of Reds in high places might have helped. And while businessmen had their own class interests to pursue, the combination of Dewey's blah campaign and prosperous times may have taken the whet off their political edge. There is anecdotal evidence that some businessmen stayed home.⁶²

Many Republicans did blame Dewey for their defeat, opining that he did not attack Truman aggressively enough. This soon became axiomatic. A pamphlet issued under Chicago Republican auspices laid his loss to his "refusal to engage in a slugging match with the New Deal candidate" on every issue. Although Truman "was vulnerable on the 'Red herring' and a thousand other fronts," the overconfident Dewey and his circle decided "not to stir up the masses."⁶³ A decade later, author Jules Abels wrote that Dewey "skipped" the issue of "Communists in Government." In her widely circulated 1964 tract urging the GOP to nominate conservatives instead of pastel New Dealers, activist Phyllis Schlafly let fly at Dewey and running mate Warren for allegedly agreeing before the campaign "that neither would mention the hottest issue of the day—the one on which the Democrats were most vulnerable—the issue of Communist infiltration in the Federal Government."⁶⁴ But at the time few Party faithful specified the Communist issue as the wasted weapon. No one in Stassen's camp seems to have leaped to that conclusion. An aide who reviewed press analysis of the election found that while "Dewey's failure to wage a fighting campaign on specific issues," his and the party's "overconfidence and smugness," and the absence of "clear-cut choice" were recurrent themes, the commentaries made no mention of underplaying the Communist menace.⁶⁵

No second thoughts on this score troubled Dewey. To William Loeb, he philosophized: "It was written in the stars—even before the conventions"—that the Democrats would recapture Congress, so "it is hard for me to say that the country would be better off with me as President with a heavily hostile legislative branch." Truman, he added, "won a substantial plurality of the

popular votes.” Charging that “ruthless big city bosses” had “stolen” the election, Loeb himself was silent about Communism. Robert Humphreys, another key “Polecat” contributor, likewise did not connect that topic with the result. A decade later, Dewey would concede to Jules Abels, then writing his book about the contest, that “the American people basically want[ed] a blood-and-thunder campaign.”⁶⁶

The greatest significance of the 1948 campaign and Dewey’s strategies in it may have been the grooves these marches and countermarches, as well as the result, left in the terrain of Republican politics. The McCarthy-Stassen linkage loosened after 1948, though the ex-governor did back up McCarthy’s attack on the appointment of Philip C. Jessup as a delegate to the UN in 1951, as well as his claims that Mongolian expert Owen Lattimore had abetted the “fall” of China. The 1952 campaign ended their alliance. Stassen again contested Wisconsin’s primary, but McCarthy and Tom Coleman now backed Taft. After his primary loss, Stassen chided McCarthy for his “wild-swinging recklessness.”⁶⁷

Appointed Director of Mutual Security by Eisenhower in 1953, within weeks Stassen ran afoul of his ex-protégé: when McCarthy boasted that he had pressured some Greek shipowners to halt trade with Red China. Stassen protested that this so-called Greek ship deal undercut orderly progress to attain that goal and “undermine[d]” U.S. policy. The administration left Stassen alone in no-man’s-land. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles termed McCarthy’s deeds “in the national interests,” and Ike averred mildly that, since Congress lacked power to transact such a deal in the first place, McCarthy could not “undermine foreign policy.” Stassen signaled syntactical retreat by conceding that “infringe” was a better descriptor than “undermine.” After a peacemaking luncheon with Dulles, McCarthy allegedly crowed that they dined on “Stassen meat.”⁶⁸

McCarthy’s early loyalty to Stassen had ranged him in opposition to Tom Dewey. In 1947, he claimed dismissively that the *New Yorker* had “slipped tremendously” because of “his refusal to discuss the issues” on a recent political trip. Dewey’s response was a laugh, then a statement that “the Governor never criticizes other members of his party publicly and he does not answer criticism of other members who do not follow this practice.” Later, a Dewey aide sniped at McCarthy for being in Oregon stumping for Stassen rather than in the Senate voting on a dam construction bill crucial to the state.⁶⁹ The McCarthy-Dewey relationship was always icy.

Dewey never totally disdained the Communist issue. In 1949, his ally John Foster Dulles faced Herbert Lehman in a Senate contest and more than flecked at Communism; seconding him, Dewey insinuated that “the only people

who don't want him [Dulles] are the Communists and their supporters."⁷⁰ But generally he distanced himself from Stassen's and certainly McCarthy's anti-Communist politics. By 1954, distraught at Eisenhower's appeasement of the Senator, Dewey itched to play some backstage role. As the Army-McCarthy hearings loomed, he gave Dulles, now Secretary of State, "the impression [that] he had to find [the Army] trial counsel for this McCarthy business." Bruce Bromley, whom Dewey had named to a judgeship, suggested Joseph N. Welch for the job; at a secret meeting the two convinced the Boston attorney to take it, thus setting in motion Welch's successful televised duel with McCarthy.⁷¹

Dewey thus helped exorcize a demon that, by Earl Latham's theory, his failed campaign had helped summon. In various ways historians have surmised that the 1948 election contributed to McCarthy's advent. Zachary Karabell holds that not so much the defeat as Republican outrage at Truman's low-blow campaigning inclined them to tolerate McCarthy. Gary Donaldson and Allen Yarnell argue that Democrats' use of it legitimized red-baiting and alerted Republicans to its utility. Yet few Republicans needed any tutoring by 1948; 1944 was ample dress rehearsal. Earl Latham makes the strongest case that Dewey's defeat opened the door for what was to come.⁷²

In a sense, then, Dewey's doing the right thing (and what seemed, incorrectly, the politic thing) may have ultimately led to the wrong thing. Yet this is a perilous conjecture. For who can say that he would have found a "Goldilocks" response to the Communist issue—not too warm, not too cold, but "just right"? And was referring the Communist issue to a blue-ribbon commission—an attractive idea during the "high" McCarthy era—a scheme that might have depoliticized it? Yet why suppose that Joe McCarthy, still needing an issue in 1950, still being McCarthy, and no Dewey Republican, egged on by the Right, would have respected a Dewey White House any more than he did Eisenhower's? We can only speculate whether Dewey, by not inoculating us with a mild case of red-baiting, may have left us open to a more acute outbreak. Also subject, at best, to speculation is how the experience of campaigning for Stassen affected McCarthy. If the lesson Stassen ought to have learned was not to rely too heavily on the Communist issue, he did not seem to learn it, and working with Stassen seems not to have taught it to McCarthy.

What is clear is that in 1948 the politics of anti-Communism still had a contingent and plastic quality, one that would vanish by 1950. In a roller-coaster of a year, the communist issue soared and dipped in salience. The alarms of the March "war scare" may have magnified anxiety so as to encourage Stassen to risk all on it in Oregon; then Dewey's victory in the debate and primary may

have reinforced his moderate approach to it thereafter. The Hiss-Chambers revelations of August frightened Democrats and heartened Republicans but failed to make Dewey alter course. His defeat left many Republicans embittered and ready for McCarthyite adventure. Truman, meanwhile, benefited from the leftward-veering course of Henry Wallace's candidacy, which gave short-term cover to the Democrats from red-baiting.

That both Dewey's and Truman's advisers gave thought to entrusting the Communist issue to a blue-ribbon commission suggests another conclusion. Both sides may have squandered a brief last moment when this explosive matter might still have been addressed with some comity and deliberation. In 1953, conservative journalist Victor Lasky implied something like this to liberal commentator Elmer Davis, recalling with nostalgia that in 1948, he, Lasky, could read "a good editorial on the Hiss case" by liberal James Wechsler in the *New York Post* and send it to Congressman Nixon, suggesting that he commend its author. "But I'm afraid dem days are gone forever; . . . men of good will, both liberal and conservative, are no longer able to get together for a good argument without shouting 'McCarthyism' or 'anti-anti-Communism.'"⁷³ Nor could they get together on a more substantive solution to the problem of Communism, such as a select commission.

If 1948 was to be the last hurrah for civility on the problem of Communism in America, Dewey's moderate treatment of the issue may have had the ironic effect of terminating that lull. Both Dewey and Truman made political assessments in 1948. Both miscalculated—Dewey in the near term, Truman, despite his election victory, over a somewhat longer term. For each, in this instance, politics may have trumped policy, to the detriment of both, and possibly to the country.

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NOTES

1. William Loeb to Charles D. Breitell, 24 September 1948, Series 5, Box 112, Thomas E. Dewey Papers, Rush Rhees Library, University of Rochester [hereafter Dewey Papers].

2. Not only Truman but also spokesmen for the Progressive (John Abt) and Communist parties (Eugene Dennis) used the phrase. *New York Times*, 4 August 1948, 1; 6 August 1948, 1, 3.

3. Earl Latham, *The Communist Controversy in Washington from the New Deal to McCarthy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1966), 395–99, esp. 398.

4. The risk here is to assume that the "McCarthy era" would have been much different without the senator's personal stamp. Historians have long discounted what we might call the "exceptionalism" and indeed originality of McCarthy's contributions to red-baiting. See Robert Griffith, *The Politics of Fear: Joseph R. McCarthy and the Senate* (Lexington, Ky., 1970) for pre-McCarthy "McCarthyites." For a tiny sample of works that decenter McCarthy in studying American anti-Communism (while yet in thrall to the noun he created), see Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Boston, 1998); Richard M. Fried, *Nightmare in Red: McCarthyism in Perspective* (New York, 1990).

5. Warren Moscow, *Politics in the Empire State* (New York, 1948), 46, 102ff.; *New York Times*, 5 November 1938, 5; 6 November 1938, 8; *Nation*, 147 (19 November 1938): 525.

6. Unsigned memorandum, n.d. [1948], "1937," Box 41, Harold E. Stassen Papers, Minnesota Historical Society [hereafter Stassen Papers]. The memo noted *Daily Worker* coverage of Dewey's 1937 campaign for DA "praising him to the skies" and claimed that he "never attacked the Communists" in the 1938 race.

7. Memorandum, Robert J. Rosthal to Stassen, 15 May 1948, "Communist Activities in New York City," with photos, Stassen Papers, Box 41.

8. *New York Times*, 26 September 1944, 15; 8 October 1944, 1; 26 October 1944, 15; Richard Norton Smith, *Thomas E. Dewey and His Times* (New York, 1982), 410.

9. Busbey franked postcard [1944], Scott M. Lucas MSS, Box 96, Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield; Bruce Barton to Elliott Bell, 9 October 1944, Barton MSS, Box 57, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

10. Roper unsigned note, n.d. [October, 1944], attached to "Bill [Hassett] to "Grace" [Tully], filed 27 October 1944, President's Secretary's File: Public Opinion Polls, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library; Bruce Barton to Russell Sprague, 6 October 1944, Box 57, Barton MSS; Barton to Dewey, 26 September 1944, Dewey Papers, Series 10, Box 3.

11. John Kenneth White, *Still Seeing Red: How the Cold War Shapes the New American Politics* (Boulder, 1997), 40–46.

12. George H. Gallup, comp., *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935–1971*, vol. 1, 756; *Washington Post*, 5 September 1948, II, 1; *Washington Evening Star*, 17 August 1948, in Box 68, George M. Elsey Papers, Harry S. Truman Library [hereafter HSTL]; Harl Adams Dalstrom, "Kenneth S. Wherry" (Ph.D. diss., University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 1965), 782.

13. Roger Morris, *Richard Milhous Nixon: The Rise of an American Politician* (New York, 1990), 440–41; Sam Tanenhaus, *Whittaker Chambers* (New York, 1997), 240–42; Irwin F. Gellman, *The Contender, Richard Nixon: The Congress Years, 1946–1952* (New York, 1999), 255–56; Dulles to Dewey, 10 September 1948, Dewey Papers, Series 10, Box 15.

14. James A. Farley to Robert Humphreys, 9 September 1948, Humphreys Papers, Box 1, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

15. Unsigned memo [George M. Elsey], "Random Thoughts 26 August" (1948), Subject File, "Int. Secy.-Cong. Loyalty Investigations" #2, Elsey Papers, HSTL.

16. Notes on Cabinet Meetings, 13 August and 10 September 1948, Box 2, Matthew J. Connelly Papers, HSTL; Clark Clifford, with Richard Holbrooke, *Counsel to the President: A Memoir* (New York, 1991), 231.

17. Nixon to Bert Andrews, 7 September 1948, Box 344, Nixon Pre-Presidential Files, NARA, Laguna Niguel (now at Nixon Library, Yorba Linda); David McCullough, *Truman*

(New York, 1992), 673–74; William Loeb to Dewey, 26 August 1948, Robert Humphreys Papers, Box 1.

18. Humphreys later worked for the Republican National Committee. Alfred Kohlberg to Levine et al., 16 September 1948, Humphreys Papers, Box 1. For Chambers, see Kohlberg to Dewey, 26 August 1948, Humphreys Papers, Box 1. On some of these figures, see Richard Gid Powers, *Not Without Honor: The History of American Anticommunism* (New York, 1995), 99–100, 145–50, 228–29, and passim.

19. Abels, *Out of the Jaws of Victory* (New York, 1959), 160–61; Smith, *Dewey*, 508; Loeb, “Thomas E. Dewey—Almost President,” *Vermont Sunday News*, 11 July 1971. See also Schuyler, *Black and Conservative* (New Rochelle, N.Y., 1966), 311–12. Humphreys’s posthumous memoir omits the episode. Harold Lavine, ed., *Smoke Filled Rooms: The Confidential Papers of Robert Humphreys* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1970).

20. Telegrams, Loeb to Dewey, 26 August 1948, 31 August 1948, 2 September 1948, Lilian G. Rosse to Loeb, 1 September 1948; Loeb to Rosse, 30 August 1948, Dewey Papers, Series 5, Box 112.

21. William Loeb to Charles D. Breitel, 24 September 1948, Box 112, Dewey Papers.

22. Loeb to Breitel, 24 September 1948; attached undated memoranda [September 1948], “Operation Penetration” and “Memo on China,” Box 112, Dewey Papers.

23. Loeb to Dewey, 23 August 1948; Loeb to Charles D. Breitel, 24 September 1948, Box 112, Dewey Papers. The “polecat” quote is in Humphreys et al., memorandum, n.d. [September 1948], “Operation Polecat,” in *ibid.* For (limited) information on Humphreys, see Lavine, ed., *Smoke Filled Rooms*; Ralph de Toledano, *Lament for a Generation* (New York, 1960), 105.

24. Humphreys et al., “Operation Polecat.”

25. Memorandum, George M. Elsey to Clark M. Clifford, 16 August 1948; attached written summary, “Meeting 16 August 48, both in Subject File, “Int. Sec.-Cong. Loyalty Investigations” #2, Elsey Papers, HSTL. First, perhaps, to suggest a commission on internal security was an editorial in the *Washington Daily News*, 6 August 1948. Truman’s failed initiative was the Nimitz Commission. See Richard M. Fried, *Men Against McCarthy* (New York, 1976), 160–66.

26. Humphreys et al., “Operation Polecat.”

27. Loeb to Dewey, 26 August 1948, Humphreys Papers, Box 1. As the date of this letter shows, from its very inception the committee had cottoned to the idea of a commission.

28. Alfred Kohlberg to Levine et al., 16 September 1948, Humphreys Papers, Box 1; Dewey to Loeb, 1 October 1948, Dewey Papers, Series 5, Box 112.

29. Smith, *Dewey*, 508; George S. Schuyler, *Black and Conservative*, 312.

30. Irwin Ross, *The Loneliest Campaign: The Truman Victory of 1948* (New York, 1968), 197–99; Abels, *Out of the Jaws of Victory*, 190; *New York Times*, 11 April 1948, 37; *Los Angeles Times*, 21 September 1948, 1; 23 September 1948, 11. Cf. David McCullough, *Truman* (New York, 1992), 674.

31. Oklahoma City speech, 28 September 1948, *Public Papers and Addresses of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman, 1948* (Washington, D.C., 1964), 600–614; Bernard R. Berelson, Paul F. Lazarsfeld, and William N. McPhee, *Voting: A Study of Opinion Formation in a Presidential Campaign* (Chicago, 1966 [1954]), 217. “Truman used the issue rarely, but at strategic points.” Alonzo L. Hamby, *Man of the People: A Life of Harry S. Truman* (New York, 1995), 454.

32. Bruce Barton to W. H. Lawrence, 4 November 1959, Barton MSS, Box 17; Barton to Charles H. Brower, 24 August 1948, Barton MSS, Box 58; Raymond P. Brandt oral history interview, 45, HSTL; Bill Lawrence, *Six Presidents, Too Many Wars* (New York, 1972), 166; Loeb to Breitell, 24 September 1948, Dewey Papers, Series 5, Box 112.

33. Bruce Barton to Dewey, 20 February 1948, Dewey Papers, Series 10, Box 3; Clarence Budington Kelland to Barton, 5 November 1948, Barton MSS, Box 58; Smith, *Dewey*, 507, 515.

34. Cabell Phillips, "With Stassen on the Hustings," *New York Times Magazine*, 4 April 1948, 12; Victor Johnston phone message, 18 May 1946, Stassen Papers, Box 17; Thomas E. Coleman memorandum to Victor Johnston, 21 September 1946, Joseph R. McCarthy MSS, Series 1, Box 7, Marquette University; McCarthy to John Wyngaard, 16 April 1945, McCarthy MSS, Series 1, Box 9.

35. *Minneapolis Star and Journal*, 1 August 1946, 14; 14 August 1946, 1; 15 August 1946, 18 (cartoon); *Milwaukee Journal*, 1 August 1946, 18; 5 August 1946, 8, 9; 6 August 1946, 13; 12 August 1946, 12; 16 August 1946, 12.

36. *Wisconsin State Journal*, 4 November 1946, 7; Larry Jolin to Victor Johnston, 14 July 1947, and Stassen to Jolin, 5 September 1947, Stassen Papers, Box 34; *Washington Post*, 19 December 1946, 11.

37. Frank Kofsky, *Harry S. Truman and the War Scare of 1948: A Successful Campaign to Deceive the Nation* (New York, 1993), 104 and passim. Kofsky sees a financial crisis in the airplane industry as a crucial factor underlying the scare.

38. Baldwin quoted in *ibid.*, 195.

39. Warren E. Burger memorandum, 5 April 1948; draft, McCarthy to "Dear Folks," "April" 1948, Stassen Papers, both Box 34; *New York Times*, 29 March 29 1948, 1; 2 April 1948, 3; 4 April 1948, 1; *Time* (5 April 1948). On the primary, see Howard B. Schonberger, "The General and the Presidency: Douglas MacArthur and the Election of 1948," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 57, no. 3 (Spring 1974): 201–19.

40. John Earl Haynes, *Dubious Alliance: The Making of Minnesota's Democratic Farmer Labor Party* (Minneapolis, 1984), 35; *New York Times*, 25 June 1940, 17.

41. Press release, Philip F. La Follette to Stassen, 26 March 1948, Stassen Papers, Box 34.

42. *New York Times*, 2 May 1948, 9 and 119; 16 May, E10; *Time*, 17 May 1948.

43. *New York Times*, 25 September 1947, 24; 20 February 1948, 3; 13 March 1948, 8; 3 April 1948, 13; 11 April 1948, 37; Stassen press release quoting Nixon, 20 May 1948, Stassen Papers, Box 31.

44. William R. Keech and Donald R. Matthews, *The Party's Choice* (Washington, D.C., 1976), 126–30; *New York Times*, 11 April 1948, 37; 25 April 1948, 49 and E3; press release, Harold Stassen Address, Portland Ice Arena, 12 May 1948, Dewey Papers, Series 2, Box 18.

45. These conditions also obviated what may have been one of Stassen's goals—to show off his impressive height next to the shorter Dewey. Abels, *Out of the Jaws of Victory*, 57.

46. Cards from the debate are in Stassen Papers, Box 41. *New York Times*, 11 May 1948, 50; 15 May 1948, 7; telegram, Donald E. Kennedy to Stassen, 14 May 1948; telegram, "Warren" [Burger] to Stassen, 17 May 1948, Stassen Papers, Box 41; Ross, *Loneliest Campaign*, 51; Smith, *Dewey*, 492.

47. "Should the Communist Party in the United States Be Outlawed?" *Vital Speeches of the Day* 14, no. 16 (1 June 1948), 482–84; *New York Times*, 18 May 1948, 1.

48. *Vital Speeches*, 484–89.

49. *New York Times*, 19 May 1948, 23; Gallup, *Gallup Poll*, vol. 1: 728, 730, 733, 736, 740.

50. Smith, *Dewey*, 492–94; Keech and Matthews, *The Party's Choice*, 130; Bruce Barton to Eugene Pulliam, 21 May 1948, and Pulliam to Barton, 24 May 1948, Barton MSS, Box 55; Carr to James F. Lockhart, 22 May 1948, Carr Papers, Coll. #2575, Folder 13, Colorado Historical Society, Denver; Scott W. Lucas speech, 9 September 1950, Lucas MSS, Box 34. Lucas lost his reelection bid to Everett M. Dirksen, but not primarily because of his role in blocking the measure.

51. Reply, Orville R. Clarke to Stassen, n.d., on form letter of 2 April 1948, Box 34; Charles E. Parker to Warren Burger, 30 April 1948, Box 14; memorandum, Amos Peaslee to Harold Stassen, 20 November 1951, Box 83, all in Stassen Papers.

52. Henry Pollak to Stassen, 14 May 1948, Box 14; Barbara Hartwell to Mr. Livingston, 22 May 1948, Box 14; telegram, Warren Burger to Stassen, 17 May 1948, Box 31, all in Stassen Papers. Burger noted that his informants were unaware that Dewey had maneuvered to limit the debate to this one question.

53. Adolph Toigo to Burger, 21 May 1948, Box 14; Toigo to Stassen, 24 May 1948, Box 31, both in Stassen Papers. Toigo worked for William Esty advertising agency in New York, the company that produced Stassen's radio ads.

54. Hatch, "The Men Around Dewey," 41; Toigo to Burger, 21 May 1948, Stassen Papers, Box 14.

55. Domestic Communism had slipped in the Gallup poll since March, when 7 percent described it as the primary issue. Gallup, *Gallup Poll*, vol. 1: 726, 744; *International Journal of Opinion and Attitude Research* 2, no. 3 (Fall 1948): 442.

56. *Fortune* poll (18 October 1948), *International Journal of Opinion and Attitude Research*, 439. Running a poor third at 17 percent were responses mentioning strikes, union power, and labor-management issues; "war talk, threat of war" elicited 11 percent.

57. The authors note in passing that in 1952 Adlai E. Stevenson did not campaign "strongly on economic issues," that these may have run their course while "new Style issues (e.g., Communism in government)" emerged. Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee, *Voting*, 10, 272.

58. Ross, *Loneliest Campaign*, 197–98.

59. Abels, *Out of the Jaws of Victory*, 275; Gallup, untitled memorandum, n.d. [c. 1970], Dewey Papers, Series 13, Box 1.

60. Richard Centers, *The Psychology of Social Classes: A Study of Class Consciousness* (Princeton, 1949), 77. Other options were lower, middle, and upper class. As prosperity spread in the 1950s, many commentators regaled Americans with findings that class boundaries in U.S. society were blurring, if not disappearing.

61. Robert R. Alford, "The Role of Social Class in American Voting Behavior," *Western Political Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (March 1963): 183–85; see also Nelson W. Polsby and Aaron Wildavsky, *Presidential Elections: Strategies of American Electoral Politics*, 5th ed. (New York, 1980), 188; *New York Times*, 7 November 1948, E10.

62. Elmo Roper, "The Opinion Polls and the 1948 U.S. Presidential Election," *International Journal of Opinion and Attitude Research* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1949): 2; Hadley Cantril, "Polls and the 1948 Election," *International Journal of Opinion and Attitude Research* 2, no. 3 (Fall 1948): 315; see also Abels, *Out of the Jaws of Victory*, 300–301.

63. Abels, *Out of the Jaws of Victory*, 302; pamphlet, National Precinct Workers, Inc., "So, We Lost the Election," n.d. [1948–49], Ralph L. Carr Papers, Coll. #1208, Folder 371. This

group was largely the creation of John Leonard East, a ward committeeman and then Cook County Republican chairman. On East, see *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 29 February 1944, 2; 21 January 1947, 5.

64. Phyllis Schlafly, *A Choice Not an Echo* (Alton, Ill., 1964), 49. In fact, neither candidate was silent on the issue, and some news accounts emphasized the two's anticommunist oratory in their coverage.

65. Memorandum, Bob Matteson to Stassen, 15 November 1948, Stassen Papers, Box 88. Stassenites seem to have expected Dewey to be elected.

66. Dewey to Loeb, 6 December 1948; telegram, Loeb to Dewey, 28 November 1948, Series 5, Box 112, Dewey Papers; Alf M. Landon to Robert Humphreys, 12 November 1948, Humphreys Papers, Box 3; Jules Abels, *The Degeneration of Our Presidential Election: An American Institution in Trouble* (New York, 1968), 147.

67. Fried, *Men Against McCarthy*, 189–91; Robert P. Newman, *Owen Lattimore and the "Loss" of China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1992), 344–45; *New York Times*, 8 April 1952, 23.

68. *Washington Post*, 29 March 1953, 1; 31 March 1953, 1; 3 April 1953, 1; 10 April 1953, 55.

69. *New York Times*, 14 November 1947, 19; 21 May 1948, 16.

70. Fried, "Voting Against the Hammer and Sickle: Communism as an Issue in American Politics," in *The Achievement of American Liberalism: The New Deal and Its Legacies*, ed. William H. Chafe (New York, 2003), 109; *New York Times*, 4 October 1949, 23.

71. Phone conversations with Dewey, 31 March 1954, and with Herbert Brownell, 1 April 1954, both in Telephone Call Subseries, Box 2, Dulles Papers, Eisenhower Library; Robert Shogan, *No Sense of Decency: The Army-McCarthy Hearings: A Demagogue Falls and Television Takes Charge of American Politics* (Chicago, 2009), 168–69; David M. Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense: The World of Joe McCarthy* (New York, 1983), 410. Welch "family legend" also credited Dewey with recruiting the Boston attorney. Author phone interview with Lyndon Welch, 4 September 1975.

72. Zachary Karabell, *The Last Campaign: How Harry Truman Won the 1948 Election* (New York, 2000), 262; Gary A. Donaldson, *Truman Defeats Dewey* (Lexington, Ky., 1999), 218; Allen Yarnell, *Democrats and Progressives: The 1948 Presidential Election as a Test of Postwar Liberalism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1974), 114.

73. Lasky to Elmer Davis, 10 October 1953, Davis MSS, Box 3, Library of Congress.