COLD WAR MINNESOTA

Elaine Tyler May

In 1958 Minnesota celebrated its one-hundredth year of statehood with grand festivities. The "Parade of the Century," with 7,000 participants, wound through St. Paul as 200,000 spectators cheered. The parade opened not with homage to Minnesota's history and the state's unique contributions to the nation but with a grand show of military might. General Lauris Norstad, a Minnesota native and supreme commander of NATO, led the parade, followed by the Minnesota National Guard, the United States Air Force Bugle Corps, and a float featuring a Bomarc guided missile—a "47-foot long weapon . . . powered by rockets with ram-jet assist." On Statehood Day, 22,000 people poured into Memorial Stadium at the University of Minnesota to hear Secretary of State John Foster Dulles deliver the keynote address. As one of the major architects of cold war foreign policy, Dulles highlighted Minnesota's identification with the nation's cold war aims and values. He extolled the state's many virtues and called upon its citizens to take a strong stand on national security.[1]

The centennial showcased Minnesota's full integration into cold war America. The cold war not only turned the country into an international superpower; it also had a profound impact on life within the United States. U.S. foreign policy was grounded on the theory of "containment": containing the power of the Soviet Union within its post-World War II sphere of influence and preventing the expansion of communism in every corner of the world. The domestic version of this policy, official and unofficial, included containing the perceived threat of Communist subversion as well as other potentially dangerous developments that unfolded in the wake of World War II: pent-up desires for consumer goods, women's emancipation, sexual experimentation, and increasing demands for civil rights.[2] Minnesota was not immune to these upheavals—or to the efforts to contain them.

World War II catapulted Minnesota into a new era and a new identity. In the postwar years, the state began to shift its center of gravity from farms and small towns to cities and suburbs. Veterans came home, married, and contributed to the baby boom. Young families moved to the suburbs and shopped at the new malls. Labor and agrarian radicalism gave way to cold war liberalism and pervasive anti-communism. Reflecting the nation's troubled racial and ethnic divisions, Minnesota gained national attention for civil rights leadership as well as rampant anti-Semitism. Minnesotans celebrated their state's heritage, embraced the fruits of prosperity, and prepared for the possibility of nuclear war. Two new military installations appeared on the rural landscape. Nestled in America's heartland, Minnesota epitomized the paradoxes and contradictions of cold war America.

There is no such thing as a good war. Some wars are necessary; all wars are brutal. In terms of both necessity and brutality, World War II tops the list of twentieth-century conflicts. For the United States, however, the war wreaked relatively minor havoc compared to the other combatant nations. No bombs dropped on the American mainland, while much of Europe and Asia lay in ruins after the war. Out of nearly 60 million war dead worldwide, the United States lost 407,000: a sorrowful tally, to be sure, but one that pales in comparison to the Soviet Union's loss of 20 million—more than 10 percent of its population. In terms of percentage, the United States suffered the smallest loss—0.4 percent—compared to Poland's 17 percent, Germany and Yugoslavia's 10 percent, or the deaths of 60 percent of European Jews.[3]

So when the war ended, amid all the grief and loss, there was much to celebrate. That celebration has increased and intensified in the decades since. For Americans, World War II was the last major war that ended in a clear victory. It was also the last war declared by Congress. While all other combatants suffered economic devastation, the American economy grew strong as a result of the war. No military conflict since has resulted in such tangible economic benefits; most have been

FACING PAGE: *Color guard marching past the Minnesota State Fair grandstand to begin the statehood centennial Parade of the Century, May 1958*

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economically shattering. It is no surprise, then, that a considerable amount of nostalgia about World War II has crept into American consciousness and popular culture. With every bad war we have entered in the last 60 years, World War II has appeared increasingly "good."

But the war and its aftermath did not look so good at the time. Few Americans today remember that until the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, the nation was overwhelmingly opposed to entering the war. No anti-war movement since has come close to this massive opposition. Minnesota's own hero, Charles Lindbergh, led the anti-war charge as the head of the America First Committee, an isolationist organization with 450 chapters and several hundred thousand members. As late as 1941, Lindbergh spoke to cheering crowds about the three dangerous groups determined to drag the nation to war: the British, the Jews, and the Roosevelt administration.[4] Lindbergh's blatant anti-Semitism did nothing to tarnish his huge popularity, especially in his home state. Anti-war sentiment virtually disappeared on December 7, 1941, and the national memory of opposition to the war nearly vanished, as well.

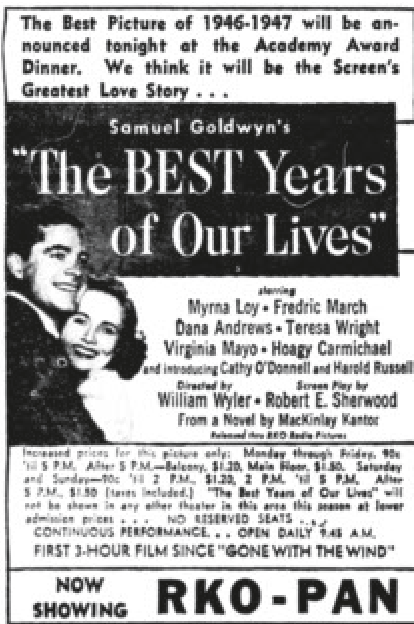
Everyone was joyous when the war ended, of course. But its end also left ominous feelings. The dropping of atomic bombs on Japan stunned the world and raised questions about American scientific and military prowess. By 1949 the Soviet Union had the bomb, too. In the tense years of the cold war, the bomb loomed large. If the United States—the "good guys"—could use such a weapon, was it not reasonable to imagine that Soviet Union—the ultimate "bad guys"—would do the same?

Prosperity seemed precarious, too. Many Americans worried that, after the wartime economic boom, the country would slump into another depression. Returning veterans wondered if they would still have their jobs when they got home or if they would be able to find new ones. They also faced a severe housing shortage, forcing many to double up with extended families.

War had also upset the gender order. Images of triumphant men returning home to waiting wives and sweethearts, ready to take up their prescribed roles as breadwinners and homemakers, told only part of the story. True, young men and women rushed into marriage and baby-making at unprecedented rates, driving the marriage age down, the marriage rate up, and the birthrate sky high, producing the baby boom.[5] But as the men came home, many broken in mind, body, or spirit, the women often seemed to be the ones who embodied strength. Women had worked, earned, built the mighty American arsenal, and kept the home fires burning while the men were away; now they would help rebuild the men. No wonder the powerful 1946 film about returning veterans, *The Best Years of Our Lives*, swept the Academy Awards. The film depicted men who came home wounded—physically and emotionally—in need of strong, capable women to help them put their bodies, minds, and lives back together.

Minnesota contributed its share to the war effort and suffered proportionately. With 2 percent of the nation's population, Minnesotans comprised approximately 2 percent of the service personnel and 2 percent of the American war dead.[6] Like other returning vets, Minnesotans came home to a rapidly urbanizing landscape and a booming economy, but they faced an uncertain future and a changing social and political environment with new possibilities and new challenges.

Crowd arriving at the Minneapolis Auditorium for an America First mass meeting, May 10, 1941



Advertisement, Minneapolis Star, *March 13, 1947, correctly predicting the movie's success*

One new challenge was the atomic age. Minnesota never developed defense industries like those in California, but new military sites appeared. In 1951 the Duluth Air Force Base opened with more than 2,000 military and civilian employees, followed in 1959 by a NIKE missile site seven miles southeast of Farmington. Minnesotans did not rely on these military installations to protect them from the possibility of a nuclear attack. They participated in civil defense training in schools and homes, while city planners considered possibilities for shelter and safety.[7]

The Minnesota Department of Education collaborated with the Department of Civil Defense in 1952 to produce a school civil defense manual. Putting the most positive spin on the threat of nuclear annihilation, the authors hoped that civil defense would foster "constructive citizenship through the stimulation of a keener interest in democratic processes throughout the United States." A major concern was the child's "mental hygiene." Children needed to believe "that life is worth living in spite of any major physical or personal disaster" so that they could "face real danger with a sense of assurance rather than fear." The civil defense curriculum spanned all subjects, from language arts to music, science, and social studies. Children also learned various emergency drills, including the "duck and cover" exercises in which they dove under their desks, curled into a ball and covered their heads.[8] In these ways, Minnesota confronted atomic-age fears with professional expertise combined with traditional values.

This combination of expertise and tradition was nowhere more apparent than in the rapidly changing role of women. During the war, women had succeeded at jobs previously restricted to men, earned good money, enjoyed the sexual freedom and opportunities for adventure that wartime offered, and acquired new confidence and aspirations for public life. As quickly as World War II had opened up new opportunities for women, the postwar years closed them down. The iconic World War II heroine Rosie the Riveter, after considerable fanfare and celebration, was quietly but summarily dismissed and urged to go home to her family. The many thousands of Rosies had no choice but to leave the well-paying and satisfying wartime jobs that they lost to returning veterans, but they did not quietly go home.

In Minnesota as elsewhere, large numbers of women, most notably increasing numbers of married women, continued to work in the paid labor force. The jobs available to them were largely limited to the "pink-collar" sector of the economy: clerical and service occupations traditionally held by women. Women's average weekly pay declined after the war from $50 to $37—a drop of 26 percent, compared to a national

Minnesota family during a civil defense drill, 1956

decrease of only 4 percent. Three-fourths of women who had worked in war industries were still employed in 1946, but 90 percent of them earned less than they had during the war.[9]

In the face of shrinking professional opportunities, women participated in the widespread trend to elevate the role of homemaker to the status of a career with high standards of expertise, creativity, and responsibility. As colleges and universities around the country expanded their home economics curriculum and urged women to become expert wives and mothers, Minnesotans both reinforced and resisted the postwar domestication of women.

If Rosie the Riveter was the fictional heroine who represented the epitome of World War II patriotic womanhood—rolling up her sleeves, donning her overalls, and doing her bit for the country's war industries—Betty Crocker was the female icon for the 1950s. Betty had been around long before Rosie. Invented in Minneapolis by Samuel Gale in the 1920s to be the face of the Washburn Crosby Company (a forerunner to General Mills), Betty became one of the longest-lived trademark creations and undoubtedly among the most famous Minnesotans of the twentieth century. Indeed, many people to this day believe that there is, or was, a real Betty Crocker. She has "authored" dozens of best-selling cookbooks, promoted an entire industry, received and replied to millions of letters from people who believed she was a real person, and aged well over the years—albeit with a fair number of makeovers![10]

Born in the 1920s, Betty truly came of age in the 1950s, when she received more than 5,000 letters a day and had her own radio and television shows (played by Adelaide Hawley). After the war, the fictional Betty pushed the fictional Rosie out of the labor force and instructed her in the domestic arts. Betty Crocker, as a trademark, embodied key aspects of the postwar domestic ideal. With her wholesome Minnesota persona and her commercial raison d'être, she represented the feminine face of consumerism while also providing homemakers with their own role model of professionalism, scientific expertise, skill, and creativity. With Betty's advice and the many products she promoted, American women could satisfy their desires for professional careers by containing their aspirations within the home.

Newlyweds at the gift table, admiring their new Betty Crocker cookbook, 1950

Women who took their professional aspirations outside the home did so at their own risk. Coya Knutson discovered this the hard way. At a time when few women won political elections, Minnesotans displayed their famed liberalism, as well as their traditional family values, by electing Knutson to Congress, where she served from 1955 to 1959 and promoted such causes as college scholarships and school-lunch programs. But when her disgruntled husband went public with his disapproval, her poll numbers plummeted. In an interview with *Life* magazine, he said that his wife had abandoned her family to enter the male world of politics. The article, titled "Coya Come Home," cast aspersions on the congresswoman's morals and featured a photo of the family having Thanksgiving dinner in a seedy Washington, D.C., cafeteria. In the next election, Knutson's Republican challenger used "Coya Come Home" as his campaign slogan, effectively ending her political career.[11]

The tension between progressive politics and traditional attitudes also came into play around the issue of race, on a national level as well as in Minnesota. The country's long history of racial oppression appeared in stark contrast to its postwar image as leader of the "Free World." The United States had just fought a war against a brutally racist foe, but the victorious American armed forces were racially segregated. Soldiers of color in those segregated units, who risked their lives for their country, returned home to face hostility, violence, and lynchings. The Soviet Union pointed to the shameful race relations to discredit the United States and persuade non-white people in the decolonizing world to align with the Communists. For American political leaders, racial segregation had become not only a domestic problem but a major international embarrassment and a key cold war concern.

Minnesota, with a population that was more than 99 percent white, might seem like an odd player in the racial drama that unfolded after World War II. African Americans

comprised 10 percent of the national population in the postwar years but a mere half of one percent in Minnesota. Despite small numbers, black Minnesotans nevertheless had deep historical roots in the state, well-developed social, cultural, and political institutions, a solid economic base, a strong community, and a history of civil rights activism dating back to the nineteenth century. African Americans were initially drawn to Minnesota for the same reasons as many immigrants: job opportunities in the cities and plenty of open land for homesteading. By the end of the nineteenth century, local black leaders worked to bring professionals to Minnesota, helping to establish a small but thriving community that included lawyers, doctors, and journalists.[12]

Women who took their professional aspirations outside the home did so at their own risk.

As was the case elsewhere in the country, African Americans lagged far behind the economic well-being of their white neighbors; by the 1920s, blacks' wages averaged less than half that of whites in Minnesota. During the 1930s they fared even worse: 60 percent of blacks were unemployed compared to 25 percent of whites. Nevertheless, by 1930 the state had the highest rate of black literacy in the nation, also exceeding that of foreign-born whites in Minnesota. Black Minnesotans prospered with the expansion in job opportunities during World War II, even though some companies still refused to hire them. After the war, the small but well-organized black community helped to launch a civil rights movement in the state that had a huge impact on national politics.[13]

After the formidable Farmer-Labor Party merged with the weak and ineffective Democratic Party in 1944 to form the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party (DFL), anti-Communist liberals like Hubert H. Humphrey took control and purged the Farmer-Labor radicals from the leadership ranks. Humphrey's group, ambitious for national power, realized that civil rights might be the one issue that could wrest control of the Democratic Party from the southern segregationists, if northern Democrats united behind the cause. Because national leaders were eager to promote racial equality and improve the country's stature in the eyes of the non-white world, civil rights had a fair amount of traction. With liberals from Minnesota leading the way, the Democratic Party took on civil rights as a central platform issue in spite of southern opposition. It was not long after this internal coup that the Solid South was no longer solidly Democratic.[14]

The issue of civil rights proved to be very beneficial to the white politicians who ran the DFL. It proved somewhat less beneficial to the state's African Americans, although they had supported and participated in the campaign. Minnesota's relative racial tolerance extended only so far. Civil rights was a lofty ideal, but discrimination in jobs, housing, and social life continued unabated. Commercial firms, banks, the Federal Housing Administration, and the Veterans Administration openly discriminated against African Americans who tried to get loans to purchase homes, restricting black settlement to specific areas of the cities.[15]

Minnesota's black citizens suffered the effects of hostile policies,

Coya Knutson, about 1955, the first woman elected to Congress from Minnesota

institutions, and neighbors. Typical is the story of the Wright family, who settled in Minnesota in the late-nineteenth century. John Wright, a third-generation Minnesotan, recalls living comfortably, with no racial tension, in the mixed Phillips neighborhood in Minneapolis. All that changed in 1954 when his family moved to the family homestead in Robbinsdale. His grandmother had sold off most of the farm after the death of her husband, keeping the stately hilltop house where they resided. The Wrights' former farmland below was subdivided into tracts in the new suburb of Crystal. White families quickly moved into the tract houses below.[16]

Young John entered school just weeks after the Supreme Court's historic school desegregation decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. After his tranquil life in the city, he fought his way through school in the suburb, where he encountered daily racial slurs and insults. He, his sister, and a young American Indian friend were the only non-white students in the district. Their neighbors did not cheer when they integrated the school system. Nor were the Wrights welcome in the neighborhood, even though their family had been there long before their white neighbors. The vandalism began almost immediately, with rotten eggs, tomatoes, and trash thrown on their property. In 1958 whites used gasoline and oil to burn a 30-foot cross on the Wrights' front lawn. Twelve-year-old John grabbed the family's rifle and notified the police, but nobody was ever apprehended.

John Wright and his family stayed nevertheless. Their experience differed markedly from that of African Americans who attempted to move into established white suburbs, raising fears of declining property values. As former owners of the land, the Wright family had made white suburban settlement possible. They were not about to be driven from their ancestral home. John Wright went on to earn his Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota, where he now teaches English and African American studies. The story of his family reflects both the perils and the possibilities facing Minnesota's black citizens in the early years of the cold war.

African Americans were not the only minority group to face discrimination in postwar Minnesota. A large smudge on the state's reputation appeared in 1946 when noted journalist Carey McWilliams declared Minneapolis to be the capital of anti-Semitism in the United States. Although McWilliams admitted that his research was not scientific and other cities might vie for this dubious distinction, there was nevertheless plenty of evidence of formal and informal anti-Semitism in Minneapolis. Comprising less than 4 percent of the city's population, Jews were excluded from its service clubs, including Kiwanis, Rotary, and Lions. Even the Automobile Club of Minneapolis refused to allow Jews to join. They also faced discrimination in housing and employment: Jewish teachers had trouble finding jobs, and Jewish physicians were barred from practicing in local hospitals.[17]

McWilliams puzzled over why anti-Semitism would be so much more intense in Minneapolis than in St. Paul. He pointed to the large numbers of Catholics in St. Paul, a community well acquainted with discrimination, and to clergy there who fought intolerance. He also noted that Jews settled in St. Paul earlier, along with other immigrants from western Europe, and established deeply rooted communities. The Jews of Minneapolis, mostly from eastern Europe, had arrived more recently.

Whatever the cause, hostility to Jews was not the sole province of Minneapolis. Anti-Semitism had a long and well-organized history in the state. Jew baiting permeated the 1938 contest for governor, in which Harold Stassen built his campaign against Governor Elmer Benson around the issue of a "Jew-controlled

Robbinsdale's West Broadway between 41st and 42nd Avenues North, 1954, the year the Wrights moved to their family homestead

European-style courtyard cafe (umbrellas in an indoor mall?) at the new Southdale Shopping Center, 1956

state capitol." Notable incidents continued into the twenty-first century, including a case of rampant anti-Semitism in 2000 among faculty at St. Cloud State University.[18]

Along with Minnesota's black citizens, Jews responded to discrimination by asserting their claim to the vision of tolerance promoted by cold war liberalism. They formed the Minnesota Jewish Council, an investigative, lobbying, and educational agency that worked to combat anti-Semitism. They also worked with local African Americans as members of the Urban League and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. City officials, including Minneapolis Mayor Hubert Humphrey, worked with Jewish groups as well as a number of Christian churches to promote civil rights for all.[19]

As conflicts over housing continued in the suburbs, commercial development raised new concerns. Consumerism was a defining feature of postwar American life—and shopping malls became ubiquitous across the country. Family-centered consumer spending eased traditional American worries that extravagance would lead to decadence. In the cold war era, shopping was positively patriotic. Citizens marched off to the malls of America, joining the ranks of cultural cold warriors. The noted anti-Communist newscaster George Putnam described shopping centers as "concrete expressions of the practical idealism that built America . . . plenty of free parking for all those cars that we capitalists seem to acquire. Who can help but contrast [them] with what you'd find under communism?"[20]

Minnesota's claim to fame as a shopping mall showcase came long before the arrival of the Mall of America. On October 4, 1956, Southdale Shopping Center opened to great fanfare as the first fully enclosed, climate-controlled shopping mall in the nation. Southdale was the brainchild of architect Victor Gruen, a Jewish émigré from Vienna who had fled when the Nazis took over Austria. His vision for Southdale combined the European tradition of public life that had guided his designs in Austria with the new needs of suburbanites in cold war America. He hoped the shopping center would "be the one important meeting place of the community, and would be in some measure comparable to the market place or main square of the older cities."[21]

At the same time, with the new realities of the atomic age, Gruen believed that Southdale would provide shelter and sustenance in the event of a nuclear attack.

> All its buildings . . . are of fireproof construction and sprinklered. . . . Two million eight hundred thousand square feet of paved and drained parking area could be used easily for a temporary tent city in case of destruction of homes. An underground truck road 44 feet wide and over 4,000 feet long would offer 175,000 square feet of immediately available shelter space. Cafeterias and restaurants could be used to serve food to emergency victims. The stores themselves would be ideal storage space for food, clothing, tools, etc. The center provides its own utility facilities and could, in an emergency, even generate its own electricity.

Gruen's vision of combining the old-world city plaza with atomic-age protection seemed to have come to fruition. *The Architectural Forum* celebrated the achievement: "Southdale uncannily conveys the feeling of a metropolitan downtown: the magical, intangible assurance that here is the big time, this is where things happen, here is the middle of things." But Gruen's pride in Southdale was short-lived. Soon his design was replicated across the country with outcomes he neither predicted nor desired. Key to Gruen's vision was the shopping center as the site of a vibrant cultural public life, bringing communities together. To his great chagrin, those who copied his design dropped that vision and focused simply on private commercial enterprises, destroying the possibility for the kind of civic plaza Gruen had in mind. In the late 1960s an embittered Victor Gruen retired from his firm and returned to Vienna, denouncing the shopping-mall trend that he had unwittingly fostered. Of the centers built by "fast-buck promoters and speculators" that were nothing more than "gigantic shopping machines," he wrote: "I refuse to pay alimony for those bastard developments."

Anti-communism was not limited to the university. It was "in the air."

As suburbs and shopping malls expanded to meet the needs of postwar Minnesotans, so did the University of Minnesota. It grew exponentially as veterans returned from war and used G.I. Bill benefits to obtain a college education. Across the country, universities benefited from the nation's cold war priorities, as federal funds poured into scientific and technological developments. After the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the world's first artificial satellite, in 1957, panicky national leaders worried about losing the space race to the Soviets and passed the National Defense Education Act, providing tuition for millions of college and university students. These investments helped to strengthen and expand higher education across the country.

At the same time, more sinister cold war developments crept into the nation's universities, none more destructive than the anti-Communist hysteria that swept the land. The University of Minnesota showed its colors as early as 1952, and those colors were far from red. President James L. Morrill refused to allow the distinguished singer and performer Paul Robeson to give a concert on campus, objecting to what he called Robeson's "one-sided and musically overtoned propaganda from a concert platform." Shortly thereafter, the administration banned the showing of a film about China, claiming that any information about that country amounted to Communist propaganda.[22]

Worse than these cancelled events were the fates of some of the university's most distinguished scholars and scientists. Joseph Weinberg and Frank Oppenheimer, physicists who had worked on the Manhattan Project as part of the team that developed the atomic bomb, took positions at the University of Minnesota. Weinberg had come from the Berkeley Radiation Laboratory where he was a part of a group of politically radical scientists who tried to organize a union. Oppenheimer was a former Communist and the younger brother of J. Robert Oppenheimer, the director of the Manhattan Project. Both of these scientists were called before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), which they survived without legal consequences. Professionally, however, they suffered at the hands of the university administration.[23]

Frank Oppenheimer's radical past caught up with him. Despite his distinguished career as a scientist and the physics department's recommendation for tenure and promotion, he left the university after his HUAC hearing. Oppenheimer admitted his brief membership in the Communist Party during the 1930s after having previously denied it, and then submitted his resignation to President Morrill, hoping that it would be rejected and the university would defend him. But Morrill accepted the resignation, and Oppenheimer was sent packing. Weinberg met a similar fate. Liberal members of the faculty tried to organize support to have the two physicists reinstated, to no avail.

Scientists were not the only University of Minnesota scholars to suffer at the hands of anti-Communist administrators. Forrest Oran Wiggins, a radical philosopher and the first African American scholar to hold a full-time appointment at a major American public university, also lost his job. Like the fired physicists, Wiggins was poised for a tenured position, but his politics cost him his job.[24]

Mulford Q. Sibley was one radical professor hired with tenure in the political science department in 1948. Tenure protected him from getting fired, but it did not protect him from controversy. A gentle and soft-spoken pacifist, ardent Socialist, and devout Quaker, Sibley was known for his trademark red tie

Distinguished scholar, teacher, and soft-spoken radical Mulford Q. Sibley (tallest) with, from left, Ronald M. Hubbs, Emily Anne Staples, and Clarke Chambers, 1983

that he wore to reflect "his solidarity with the working class and the socialist movement." He won major prizes for his distinguished scholarship and teaching. But it was not his academic distinction that gained him public attention. Rather, it was his outspoken support of unpopular ideas that got him into trouble. In a letter to the *Minnesota Daily* on December 3, 1963, he articulated his vision of academic freedom at the university: "Personally, I should like to see on campus one or two Communist professors, a chapter of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism, a society for the promotion of free love, a League for the Overthrow of Government by Jeffersonian Violence (LOGJV), an anti-automation league, and perhaps a nudist club." The letter gave rise to calls for his dismissal, but the university did not cave in to the pressure.[25]

Anti-communism was not limited to the university. It was "in the air," according to St. Paul native Patricia Hampl. She writes in her memoir of her terror as a child in the 1950s, unable to sleep for fear of the "*Communists* who lurked in the dark." She did not know what they were, or what they looked like, "Whether to watch for man or beast, goblin or reptile, malicious intent or natural disaster, something large and looming or a thing so insidiously small that no degree of vigilance could assure safety: I didn't know, I didn't know." She recalled watching television shows, including news programs, which were filled with dire warnings about the Communists. Still, "I could not concoct my Communists. . . . They remained, simply, dread."[26]

Communists were phantoms in Cheri Register's childhood world, as well. Growing up in Albert Lea in the 1950s, Register's small-town working-class life was tranquil until 1959. In that year, her father was among the workers in the local meatpacking plant who struck for better wages and working conditions. The company brought in strikebreakers, and the strike turned violent. Teenage Cheri's life turned upside down as heavily armed police and national guardsmen filled the streets. Register recalled that their weapons, "like the nuclear bomb that had us covering our heads in the school stairwells and stocking canned goods in our basement fruit cellars, were meant to deter violence, not provoke it." But to Cheri they seemed to threaten her family. The local media sided with the company, saying that the strikers made Freeborn County "look more like Russian communism than freedom." The U.S. Senate's McClellan Committee sent an investigator to Albert Lea to hunt for Communists among the striking workers. "He didn't find any," she notes.[27]

Far to the north on the Iron Range, long a bastion of labor radicalism, the political landscape shifted so dramatically that even the workers embraced anti-communism. Beginning in 1951, the annual carnivalesque Fourth of July celebrations began to include new forms of nationalist and patriotic symbols. Paraders in festive costumes carried signs that read "Fight Communism." A volunteer fire department wagon bore the slogan, "Fighting Commies or Fighting Fire, Our Style Leaves Little to Desire."[28]

It is no wonder, then, that Minnesota celebrated its hundredth birthday by trumpeting its muscular embrace of cold war aims and values. The centennial received a huge amount of publicity, including articles in 45 newspapers around the country and television coverage on such major programs as the *Ed Sullivan Show*, *Big Payoff*, *Original Amateur Hour*, and Art Linkletter's *House Party*. The United States

Information Agency (USIA) sent films and publications featuring the centennial to countries around the world. Dignitaries came from all over, too—but none from Communist countries. The USIA promoted the centennial because of "the worldwide significance of this historic event . . . and because Minnesota assembled a showcase of Americana."[29]

Along with the display of military power evident in the Parade of the Century, the centennial showcased ethnic pluralism with a careful selection of light-skinned, fair-haired participants. Photographer John Szarkowski's *The Face of Minnesota*, a centennial publication sold widely across the country and distributed to schools and libraries around the world, claimed the state as the epitome of the American melting pot. "A little more than a century ago, the people began to arrive in force; for over half a century they came at flood tide, from every country, of every race, with every kind of previous experience. And now the distinctions have almost disappeared." A number of Minnesota's ethnic and racial groups were conspicuously absent from this picture. As another publication noted, "The blood of Germans, Irish, Norwegians and Swedes had blended and united to make the dream of statehood a reality." With a not-so-subtle claim of racial superiority, an advertising insert in *Fortune* magazine urged businesses to move to Minnesota, touting the "rugged good looks of Minnesotans—the big bones, blue eyes and fair hair. It's a land of tall women and husky men. . . . Because of Minnesota's heritage, it is easier to recruit high quality, intelligent workers here than in almost any other state in the union."[30]

Stocking a civil defense shelter in St. Paul's First National Bank, 1963

The erasure of darker-hued Minnesotans permeated the yearlong celebration in locales across the state. With the exception of centennial powwows and a few noteworthy publications, such as *The Negro in Minnesota*, the celebration overlooked both the contributions and the hardships faced by Minnesota's minorities. The Chippewa County pageant, for example, featured Minnesota's pioneer past with an idealized scene depicting the state's Indians. But the accompanying script was hostile: "There are many beautiful Indian legends that have been told, in song and poetry. What a different beginning our state would have had if all the Indians had been as gentle and romantic as the scene we have just witnessed. . . . Yes, think of all the destruction and suffering our pioneers had to face in the various uprisings of the Indians against them. They killed . . . they burned . . . they destroyed."[31]

The Statehood Centennial Commission funded this production but rejected a proposal by Chief Little White Cloud of White Earth for a pageant that "goes back over a hundred years and portrays the native life of the Chippewa Indians as it was at that time." Misrepresentations and stereotypes extended to other nonwhite groups as well. The Winona minstrel show, for example, included performers in blackface and a tap dancer who "grinned at the audience and rolled his eyes."[32]

Women, however, were a major presence. The Women's Division involved 10,000 workers throughout the year in localities across the state. Most of the events they planned emphasized traditional roles as wives, mothers, and experts in the domestic arts. One major project was the centennial cookbook, *100 Years of Good Cooking*, which is still in print. Women's accomplishments in the public arena did not receive similar attention. When Congresswoman Coya Knutson showed up for the Parade of the Century amidst the controversy unleashed by her husband's

plea, "Coya Come Home," the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* ran the headline "Coya Shows Up for Parade, Throws Officials Into Tizzy."[33]

Overall, the centennial reflected Minnesota's postwar moment rather than its century of history. The celebration of diversity highlighted the blending of northern European immigrant groups while ignoring, idealizing, or stereotyping non-Nordic Minnesotans. Portrayals of the state's history reached back to the pioneer past but erased the radical agrarian tradition and the labor activism that characterized the state's politics for most of its first century. The centennial was, however, a stunning celebration of cold war Minnesota. With its display of military prowess, claims of ethnic diversity, and glorification of women's domesticity, it reflected how much the historical uniqueness of Minnesota had melted into cold war America. ◘

Notes

1. I am grateful to Julia Mickenberg for generously allowing me to cite her unpublished paper, "Pluralism and Paranoia On Parade: Ritualized Paradoxes of the Cold War Era in the Minnesota Statehood Centennial of 1958," drawn from Minnesota Statehood Centennial Commission documents in the Minnesota State Archives, Minnesota Historical Society; this paragraph, Mickenberg, 1–4, cites *Final Report Submitted to the Legislature and the People of the State of Minnesota*, Apr. 1 1959, p. 22; "Official Grande Parade Bulletin"; and "Statehood Day Commemoration" (Recorded Speeches), May 11, 1958. All centennial references, below, are from Mickenberg's work.

2. See Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 2008).

3. On war casualties, see National Archives, World War II Casualties, *www.archives.gov/research/arc/ww2/* (accessed Dec. 23, 2008).

4. Charles Lindbergh, "Address on U.S. Neutrality," Des Moines, Iowa, Sept. 11, 1941, available at *www.charleslindbergh.com/americanfirst/speech.asp* (accessed Dec. 23, 2008).

5. On marriage age and rates and birthrates, see May, *Homeward Bound*, 1–7.

6. On Minnesota's war casualties, see National Archives, World War II Casualties, listed by state: *www.archives.gov/research/arc/ww2/navy-casualties/minnesota.html* and *http://www.archives.gov/research/arc/ww2/army-casualties/minnesota.html* (accessed Dec. 23, 2008).

7. On the Duluth Air Force Base, see *www.vets-hall.org/history/local_units.html* under "Air National Guard"; on the NIKE site, see *www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/hazardous/sites/dakota/nike.html#Site* (both accessed Dec. 23, 2008).

8. State of Minnesota, Department of Education and Department of Civil Defense, *School Civil Defense Manual* (1952).

9. May, *Homeward Bound*, 74–78, 86.

10. Here and below, Susan Marks, *Finding Betty Crocker: The Secret Life of America's First Lady of Food* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

11. Jacqueline Jones et. al., *Created Equal: A Social and Political History of the United States*, 2nd ed. (New York: Pearson Longman, 2006), 850. See also Gretchen Urnes Beito, *Coya Come Home: A Congresswoman's Journey* (Los Angeles: Pomegranate Press, 1993).

12. David Vassar Taylor, *African Americans in Minnesota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2002), 8.

13. Taylor, *African Americans in Minnesota*, 22–23, 34, 39, 46–50.

14. Jennifer Delton, *Making Minnesota Liberal: Civil Rights and the Transformation of the Democratic Party* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

15. Taylor, *African Americans in Minnesota*, 49–50.

16. Here and two paragraphs below, John Wright, interviews by the author, June 17–18, 2007.

17. Here and below, Carey McWilliams, "Minneapolis: The Curious Twin," *Common Ground*, Autumn 1946, p. 61–65.

18. On the 1938 campaign for governor, see Albert I. Gordon, *Jews in Transition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1949), 51; for mention of the St. Cloud State University incident, see Hyman Berman and Linda Mack Schloff, *Jews in Minnesota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2002), 86n107.

19. Berman and Schloff, *Jews in Minnesota*, 47–51; Gordon, *Jews in Transition*, 43–68.

20. George Putnam, 1947 newscast, included in *The Atomic Café*, documentary film by The Archives Project, 1982.

21. Here and two paragraphs below, all quotes from Timothy Mennel, "Victor Gruen and the Construction of Cold War Utopias," *Journal of Planning History* 3 (2004): 116–50.

22. Ellen W. Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 92.

23. Here and below, Iric Nathanson, "The Oppenheimer Affair: Red Scare in Minnesota," *Minnesota History* 60 (Spring 2007): 172–86.

24. Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower*, 289, 387.

25. All quotes and information on Sibley are from "Inventory of the Mulford Quickert Sibley Papers," University of Minnesota Archives, *http://special.lib.umn.edu/findaid/xml/uarc00490.xml* (accessed Dec. 23, 2008).

26. Patricia Hampl, *A Romantic Education* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), 37–39.

27. Cheri Register, *Packinghouse Daughter: A Memoir* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2000), 198–201.

28. Mary Lou Nemanic, *One Day for Democracy: Independence Day and the Americanization of Iron Range Immigrants* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2007), 136–37.

29. Cited in Mickenberg, "Pluralism and Paranoia on Parade," 5.

30. John Szarkowski, *The Face of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1958), 103; Mickenberg, "Pluralism and Paranoia on Parade," 19–21.

31. Earl Spangler, *The Negro in Minnesota* (Minneapolis: T. S. Denison, 1959); Mickenberg, "Pluralism and Paranoia on Parade," 36–37, 29.

32. Mickenberg, "Pluralism and Paranoia on Parade," 29–30, 32.

33. Mickenberg, "Pluralism and Paranoia on Parade," 14–15, 33–34.

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