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1

Prophets Rising, 1955–1956

AS THE YOUNG Black mother saw the Montgomery City Lines bus approaching, she picked up the pace of her walking. She could not miss this bus. But it was not easy to move quickly with two small children in her arms. She breathed a sigh of relief as she made it just before the doors closed. Fortunately, the bus was not too full that day. As she stepped on board, she tried to pull off a feat she had achieved many times before: retrieving fare from her purse while holding both of her children. Today, though, her little boy was being especially rambunctious. As the driver glared at her impatiently, beads of sweat formed on her forehead. This just wasn't going to work. She looked to her left and saw the front seat empty and made a snap decision. I'll put the kids down there for ten seconds, she thought to herself, while I get the fare from my purse. And then we'll make our way to the back of the bus. And so she did. The driver looked on in horror and demanded she remove the children from the "whites only" seat immediately. As she turned to do so, the driver lunged the bus forward, and succeeded in his mission: seeing to it that the children were thrown from the seats onto the floor.¹

In a letter to the "Montgomery Public," King and several fellow ministers provided this as an example of the "physical torture" to which Black people were ordinarily subjected on Montgomery City Lines. In addition to the horror of this incident for the victims, occurrences like this also functioned as a form of terrorism—the point was not just to punish the "offenders," but also to terrorize other Black riders. In the



FIGURE 1.1. A Montgomery City Lines bus with no passengers, 1956, Associated Press

early days of the boycott, the MIA set the relatively modest goal of convincing Montgomery City Lines to take steps to stop such behavior by drivers. And in those early days, the MIA did not even call for an immediate end to segregation on the buses. Instead, it simply asked that the seating of passengers take place on a “first come-first served basis” in the respective “white” and “colored” sections. Black passengers would continue to be seated “from the rear of the bus toward the front, and white passengers from the front toward the rear until all seats were taken.”²

In those first few weeks, the boycott was going remarkably well. The working people of Montgomery were exhibiting the solidarity and moral courage that King called for at Holt Street Baptist Church. It was a tremendous spiritual feat to be sure, but it was also quite impressive logistically. Thousands of leaflets were distributed throughout the community, and within a week and a half, there were dozens of car-pool

dispatch and pickup stations set up throughout the city. Even the White Citizens' Council was impressed by the "military precision" of the boycotters.³ That precision was thanks in large part to the work of women, who were not always in the headlines, but who were undoubtedly in the vanguard of the movement.⁴

While King and the MIA were leading the boycott, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was watching and listening. Within weeks of the Holt Street meeting, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover received a report on the tumult in Montgomery from the bureau's office in Mobile. The report singled out King as the "leader in the bus boycott" and said the bureau was working with local officials to "uncover all the derogatory information" they could about the young minister.⁵

The day after the Montgomery bus boycott commenced, Goldwater made a plea for "minority rights." But Goldwater was not drawn into the fray by events in Alabama. Instead, he had Michigan on his mind. It was there that Walter Reuther, the president of the United Automobile Workers, was headquartered, and it was Reuther who stood out in Goldwater's mind as a symbol of the excesses of "Big Labor." On December 6, Goldwater issued a press release on "the minority rights of Union members" in order to criticize Reuther's regular use of union dues to support Democrats, despite the objections of some rank-and-file members. "The rights of minorities holding different social, economic and political views," Goldwater declared, "must be scrupulously protected and their views accurately reflected."⁶

It is something of a historical accident that Goldwater ended up fashioning himself as a latter-day David taking on the Goliath of organized labor. When Goldwater arrived in Washington about three years earlier, he had been hoping for a committee assignment that would have the greatest impact on his state. "Being from Arizona," he wrote in his journal in February 1953, "and having spent my life in matters pertaining to irrigation and reclamation, land, forests, Indians and everything concerned with the Department of Interior, I had

asked for assignment on the Committee on Insular Affairs.”⁷ But Senate Republican leader Robert Taft had other ideas. “The Labor Committee!” exclaimed Goldwater in response to Taft’s assignment. “What do I know about labor relations?”⁸ Taft explained that he wanted a businessman to serve on the Labor and Commerce Committee, and Goldwater was certainly that.⁹ In fact, he was more businessman than politician, having entered politics with a part-time gig as a Phoenix city councilman only a few years prior to his insurgent run for the US Senate. Goldwater had devoted most of his pre-Senate career to helping run the family business: Goldwater Department Stores. In that work, he considered himself to be a benevolent employer to his non-unionized employees. Reuther was the sort of man who cast suspicion on the self-perceptions of such employers. The rights of workers should not be subject to the personalities and whims of their employers, Reuther argued. Those rights ought to be protected by law and strong unions.

Goldwater and Reuther were on a collision course before either had heard the other’s name. Reuther came from a family of proud leftists. His grandfather was a German Social Democrat who came to the United States in the late nineteenth century, and his father was a socialist and a union organizer. Walter and his three brothers followed in their father’s footsteps as union activists. Walter worked his way up the hierarchy of organized labor, in December 1952 he became president of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), and in February 1955, when the CIO merged with the American Federation of Labor (AFL), Reuther became vice president of the AFL-CIO.¹⁰ He was, without a doubt, one of Big Labor’s most important and dynamic leaders. His red hair, boundless energy, and undeniable charm made him stand out in any crowd, and he was unrelenting in his advocacy for working people.

It was the nature of Reuther’s advocacy that troubled Goldwater, who would insist time and again that he had nothing against rank-and-file workers. His beef was with what he took to be Reuther’s abuse of his authority. In particular, Goldwater was irked by Reuther’s use of union dues to support left-wing political institutions and causes. This activity,

he warned, was a violation of the worker's right to control his own political power and influence. In his early years in the United States Senate, Goldwater had found the dragon he wanted to slay, and that dragon's name was Walter Reuther.

While Goldwater was offering his take on the political freedom of working people, the contours of King's political philosophy were being shaped by the "determined courage of individuals willing to suffer and sacrifice for their freedom and dignity."¹¹ While the buses traveled around the city with few, if any, Black people in the seats, King marveled at the resilience and collaboration of the people of Montgomery. There were reports of some people riding donkeys to work. Others were seen moving about in horse-drawn carriages.¹² Many walked dozens and dozens of miles to get where they needed to go. But most of the nearly 17,500 Black people who had been bus riders participated in a vast system of carpooling. Initially, the MIA had set up a system in which riders would pay drivers the equivalent of a bus fare. But within days, the city shut down that practice through the laws governing the minimum fares for taxi services. So the car pools ran free of charge, and the MIA relied on fundraising to reimburse drivers for gas. Hundreds of automobiles operated out of dozens of pickup and drop-off stations in order to get thousands of people to and from work. This enterprise was assisted by some White housewives, who, "whatever their commitment to segregation, had no intention of being without their maids."¹³

Reflecting on the bus boycott later, King would draw important lessons from the experience about the nature of freedom. For one thing, he was struck by the willingness of the people of Montgomery to sacrifice in pursuit of freedom and dignity. Ordinary people made themselves vulnerable to potential physical, economic, and social hardship in order to assert their humanity in the face of injustice. King was also impressed by the importance of solidarity in the early days of the freedom movement. In order for the boycott to really work,

wide buy-in was necessary. The Montgomery bus boycott was a story of freedom not as rugged individualism, but rather as conscientious collaboration.

On a typical day in Washington, Goldwater would rise early, around five o'clock in the morning, and prepared for the workday by reviewing his notes from the previous day and reading the morning newspaper. If his wife, Peggy, was in town with him, he would make coffee and bring it to her in bed. He himself did not drink coffee (or smoke) because his mother, Jojo, had taught him such habits would stunt his growth. After kissing Peggy goodbye, Goldwater would drive himself to his Senate office.¹⁴ He traveled to work in style in his Thunderbird, and tried to be at his desk by seven thirty in the morning.¹⁵ He took a break for lunch, which was the same nearly every day—a cheeseburger with everything on it and a chocolate milkshake—but he spent the rest of his time grinding away in his office and on the floor and backrooms of the Senate.¹⁶

During his first two years in Washington, Goldwater did not distinguish himself as either a legislator or horse trader. In fact, he struck some of his colleagues as decidedly uninterested in lawmaking.¹⁷ Instead, he rose from the obscurity of the back benches by distinguishing himself as a salesman. Prior to his arrival in the Senate, his claim to fame as a salesman was a product he developed called Antsy-Pants, men's boxer shorts that appeared to be covered in ants. Now he had a new product to sell: conservatism. Goldwater was a senator who felt most at home away from the Senate. It was on the road that he was really in his element, speaking to civic, business, and religious organizations about his understanding of freedom and what he took to be the greatest threats to it.

One such chance came on January 21, 1956, when Goldwater spoke to an advertising group in Phoenix on a topic near and dear to his heart: "The West as a Land of Opportunity." The invitation to speak on this topic was one that the senator accepted with enthusiasm, since it allowed him to address the moral and political themes that mattered most

to him and to situate them in the American West, which was central to his identity and worldview.

As Goldwater looked out at the crowd of advertising men, one can imagine him swelling with pride. Oh, how Phoenix had changed since his forebearers settled in the city in 1872. In those days, the city had but a few hundred inhabitants, most of whom were there to try their hand at farming its desert landscape. The senator's grandfather, Michel Goldwasser, a Polish Jew who had left his homeland in 1835, proceeded to settle and resettle in Germany, France, and England before making his way to the United States in 1852. By the time Goldwasser got to Arizona, he had become "Big Mike" Goldwater as a result of his height and the anglicization of his name during the course of his journey.¹⁸ Barry was proud to be Big Mike's grandchild. Big Mike was an entrepreneur. Big Mike was a pioneer, one of the men who made America great.

Just about a century after Big Mike's arrival on American shores, the greatness of America was on Goldwater's mind as he stood before the room of advertising executives. By almost every measure, the economy was booming. The gross national product was up. Wages, too, were up. The number of Americans at work was at an all-time high. Americans were, in the words of President Eisenhower's recent State of the Union address, "earning more, producing more, consuming more, building more and investing more than ever before."¹⁹ But make no mistake, Goldwater said, these things had not been pulled off because of government. These things had happened because government had gotten out of the way. Through the "removal of controls" and the "release of incentives," Americans had been set free to innovate more, produce more, and consume more. Conservative government had not "created the energies of the American people;" all "we claim to have done is to release them—and you see the results."²⁰

Goldwater was not merely standing before the advertising men gloating about the success of Republican fiscal policy; he was offering them existential validation. You, he said to the Don Drapers of Phoenix, "are the catalysts of our economy." The "more, more, more" of American economic life can happen only if "there is mass consumption of goods to justify the heavy capital expenditures required to tool up for mass production." It was the *duty* of the ad men to convince the public that

they ought to continue to consume more, more, and more, and Goldwater pleaded with them to keep their foot on the gas. As impressive as the “present production level” might seem, we can do so much more. And don’t fret, Goldwater told his listeners, there is no need to feel guilty about any of it. The “efforts of people like yourselves,” he said, have created a “new form of capitalism,” a “people’s capitalism” in which we, the people, all get to enjoy the spoils.²¹

This could have been a feel-good moment with which to end the speech. Goldwater had celebrated unprecedented American prosperity, and he had championed the role the men in the room had played in that prosperity. Along the way, he had also imbued the lives of the people in the audience with meaning and honor. They were in the business of convincing people to buy things, and this was, as far as Goldwater was concerned, the Lord’s work. But he did not sit down to resounding applause at that point; he still had to play the role of warning prophet.

Goldwater had prepared an ending for his speech that was perfectly tailored for his audience. The battle to save American freedom was, in large part, a battle over advertising. It was a battle over language. It was a battle for the hearts and minds of Americans, who needed to be convinced of the preciousness of what they had and motivated to want more and more of it. This battle could be won, in part, by reframing the conversation and blurring the lines between the political and economic realms. “Forward looking businessmen,” he explained, “have begun to describe what is happening in our economy in terms of political concepts.” The consumer is a “voter,” and it is “sales activity” that “brings to consumers the franchise” that empowers them to “rule the whole economy.” And the Left could be defeated only if the battle over framing was won. It is leading the invading armies of control and coercion, Goldwater declared, and you, advertising men of Phoenix, are among the vigilant watchmen on the walls of liberty.

On the same day Goldwater was calling the ad men of Phoenix to the barricades, the Montgomery city commission was engaged in a publicity stunt it hoped might bring the bus boycott to an end.

Mayor W. A. Gayle met with three Black ministers who were *not* members of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) and reported to the press that they had reached an agreement that would allow Black riders to return to the buses. King and other MIA leaders quickly issued a press release of their own, declaring that if there were indeed ministers in the meeting, “they do not represent even a modicum of Negro bus riders.”²² The boycott was still on.

Mayor Gayle and the commissioners, radicalized by their botched ploy, announced that they were joining the White Citizens’ Council, and Mayor Gayle warned Montgomery citizens that the city was being “split asunder” by a group of “Negro radicals” hell-bent on “the destruction of our social fabric.”²³ We “have pussyfooted around on this bus boycott” long enough, the mayor declared. As long as the boycott was on, negotiations were off.

The radicalization of Montgomery city government was not just rhetorical and symbolic. City officials began to take a more aggressive approach to disrupting the conscientious collaboration of the boycotters. In the words of historian David J. Garrow, policemen began “to disperse groups of blacks waiting for carpool rides on street corners” and to tail car-pool drivers in order to give them tickets for “trivial or nonexistent traffic violations.”²⁴

King himself was swept up in this crackdown. On Thursday, January 26, he was pulled over and arrested by Montgomery law enforcement for going thirty miles an hour in a twenty-five mile per hour zone. For this minuscule infraction, King was locked up in the city jail. While his friend Ralph Abernathy scrambled to get the money needed to bail King out, dozens of supporters gathered around the jail. Before long, he was released.

The next day, though his body was free, King’s soul remained in a state of arrest. He was lying in bed at home. His wife, Coretta, was asleep next to him. Their infant child, “Yoki,” was asleep down the hall.²⁵ The phone rang. He picked it up. “Listen, n****r, we’ve taken all we want from you; before next week you’ll be sorry you ever came to Montgomery.” The caller hung up.²⁶ Calls like this were nothing new. King and his family had been fielding messages of hate for well over a month by

then.²⁷ But this particular call hit King in a different way. The city's crackdown had shaken his confidence, and his arrest for next to nothing reminded him of the precariousness of his freedom.

With doubt weighing so heavily on his mind, sleep was not an option. King went down to his kitchen and made himself some coffee. He needed to find a way out. This was not the life he wanted. He had just celebrated his twenty-seventh birthday. Besieged by doubt, he took his "problem to God" by bowing his head in prayer. "I'm at the end of my powers," he said aloud. "I have nothing left. I've come to the point where I can't face it alone." It was then that King experienced "the presence of the Divine" as he had "never experienced Him before." His description of what happened next is telling: "It seemed as though I could hear the quiet assurance of an inner voice saying: 'Stand up for righteousness, stand up for truth; and God will be at your side forever.'" This proved to be, in a sense, a new birth of freedom for King. "My uncertainty disappeared," he wrote later, and "I was ready to face anything."²⁸

In his early days in the Senate, Goldwater, too, grappled with self-doubt. "To say that I felt wholly inadequate to the task," he confessed in his journal, "would be to understate my thoughts. I felt (and feel) like a person standing at the foot of a massive mountain," he continued, "wanting to reach the summit but looking at the long, hard climb ahead with considerable trepidation and with the awareness that much more knowledge must be obtained before my steps will become sure or easy."²⁹

Unlike King, Goldwater was not likely to turn to God for this knowledge. He was not an especially religious man. His father, Baron, was a nonpracticing Jew, and whatever religion he inherited was from his Episcopalian mother, Jojo. Later in life, Goldwater lamented his father's failure to pass down any semblance of religious identity. "Here I am a half-Jew," he told one biographer, "and I don't know a damned thing about what I'm supposed to know."³⁰ From his mother, though, he inherited a this-worldly faith. He did not feel the presence of God in

church; he felt it in the great outdoors. And he did not think you honored God through belief in a particular doctrine, but through a strong sense of personal and social responsibility.³¹ Goldwater, when questioning himself, did not look upward to God; he looked inward. Sure, the workings of Washington, DC, were new and complicated. But he was a Goldwater, damn it; this was simply a new frontier to conquer, and he would conquer it in his own way. He was not about to become a smooth operator who compromised his principles to win friends and influence people. He was sent to Washington to stand by what he believed in, come hell or high water, and that's just what he'd do.

Early in his Senate campaign, Goldwater was asked by a newspaper publisher, "What kind of Republican are you?" He gave his response clearly and forcefully. "I am a Republican opposed to appeasement"; "I am a Republican opposed to Communism" and "Communist-inclined sympathizers." To remain steadfast in opposition to all of these things, Goldwater pledged to be the sort of Republican who was animated by "the principles of honesty, integrity, devotion, and thrift."³²

Goldwater also looked around him for inspiration. He admired Dwight David Eisenhower, who had just been elected president, but he—along with so many others—was not quite sure what "Ike's" political philosophy really was. Senate Republican leader Robert Taft was a hero on the American Right, but the Ohio senator died only a few months into Goldwater's first term. Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin had risen to national fame prior to Goldwater's arrival in the Senate by asserting that members of the Communist Party had infiltrated the State Department. Goldwater admired McCarthy's unapologetic anticommunism and take-no-prisoners demeanor. It would be too much to call McCarthy a mentor to Goldwater, but they grew close, and Goldwater stayed fiercely loyal to him, even after McCarthy died.³³

As Goldwater was seeking mentors and allies in Washington, he did not limit himself to conservatives on his side of the aisle. Indeed, he recognized rather quickly that he might find allies in his conservative crusade in both parties. It was for this reason that he liked to refer to his opponents as "The New Deal Party." "There are many Democrats," he told an audience in 1955, "who feel as intensely as we do about our

peril.”³⁴ In 1953, he explained it in his journal: “There is a group of people in both parties that we like to refer to as New Dealers or Fair Dealers” who believe “the Federal government should have power over everything,” “dominate the states,” “dominate business,” “control the economy,” and “control the life of this country.” On the other side, there are Republicans and Democrats, “particularly” the “Southern Democrats, who believe in states’ rights and who believe that the federal government should be out of the state and local government picture entirely, and out of the affairs of business as well.”³⁵ A case in point was Democrat Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, a former governor and presidential candidate for the States’ Rights “Dixiecrat” Party in 1948, who was a member of Goldwater’s freshman class of senators in 1953. Thurmond was an anticommunist, had a pro-business reputation, and had made his name as an apostle for states’ rights. Thurmond was, in short, Goldwater’s sort of guy.

In that same March 1953 journal entry cited above, Goldwater predicted the political future. “I sense here,” he wrote, “a realignment of Southern conservative Democrats with Democrats and Republicans of the West and Middle West.” On one side of the realignment is “the New Deal and Fair Deal folks,” who are “controlled by the dictates of the labor unions” and “the stronger minority groups.” On the other side, would be “the Western Senator and the Southern Senator who believe in the free enterprise system, who believe in the freedom of the individual and the freedom of the states.”³⁶

In Goldwater’s formulation, “the freedom of the individual” was fundamentally at odds with the power of the federal government, and this freedom was consistent with “the freedom of the states” and the autonomy of “local government.”³⁷ Down in Montgomery, King was having his doubts about the soundness of those propositions. Just days after he had that revelatory moment in his kitchen—and just feet away from where he was sitting when he communed with God—a bundle of dynamite ripped a large hole in the porch of his home and shattered several

windows. Coretta and Yoki were in the house at the time, but escaped unharmed. When King arrived home fifteen minutes later, he saw a large, agitated crowd gathered outside. His friends and allies were outraged by the attack, and several showed up at his house carrying weapons.³⁸

After King checked on the well-being of his wife and child, he stood on what remained of the porch and addressed the crowd. “I want you to love your enemies,” he said. “Be good to them, love them and let them know you love them.” Next to him on the porch were Montgomery police commissioner Clyde Sellers and mayor W. A. Gayle. They joined his call for peace and pledged to do their part to protect King from extralegal violence in the future.³⁹

Legal violence—the use of government power to threaten the lives, liberties, and rights of the people—was another story. Three weeks after the bombing, Montgomery County indicted King and several of his associates for entering into “a conspiracy” for “the purpose of hindering the operation of a public transportation system.”⁴⁰ Rather than relying on dynamite, state and local officials hoped to use arcane laws to interfere with King’s freedom, and to undermine the liberation movement he led. The county had already been engaged in the systematic attempt to use coercion, intimidation, and overpolicing to attack the arms and legs of the radically democratic body politic that was the Montgomery bus boycott. Now they were coming for the head.

On the eve of the trial, King wrote an open letter to President Eisenhower that offered an implicit challenge to Goldwater’s tidy formulation of the idea that the “freedom of the individual” was at odds with federal intervention. “We are convinced, Mr. President,” King wrote, “that by taking a direct interest in this stalemated situation you and you alone can tap fountainheads of goodwill and active ‘white corpuscles’ of brotherhood.” King requested the president use “the great prestige” of his office to convene a conference to discuss the matters at stake in the boycott. Even if nothing “tangible” came out of such a meeting, King insisted, it would matter symbolically.⁴¹

King’s trial, which began on March 19, 1956, proved to be an international sensation. Dozens of reporters from around the United States and abroad packed into the press gallery. Hundreds of Black people lined up



FIGURE 1.2. Boycotters faced resistance from many local whites, including the Ku Klux Klan, Associated Press

outside, clamoring to get into the segregated courtroom where he would be tried. As King's parents, Coretta, and visiting dignitaries including Michigan congressman Charles Diggs Jr. looked on, the stage was set for some political theater, orchestrated by Montgomery County.

It did not take long for all to see that the county's primary purpose in the trial was political. When King took the stand, circuit solicitor William F. Thetford pressed him on matters such as "how many white members" the MIA had and how much money was in the organization's "Atlanta bank account." But perhaps the most revealing moment of the trial came as Thetford attempted to get to the legal heart of the matter and in the process unwittingly provided King with an opening to describe the soul of the movement. Thetford was at pains to get King to admit that he and other leaders were *directing* the boycott. They were the ones, he wanted King to concede, who had drafted the MIA pamphlets and resolutions and so on. This was essential to the county's legal case: Thetford wanted to show that King and the other leaders were coconspirators, directing the boycott from on high. King's response subtly accused Thetford and the county of missing the point. When Thetford demanded to know who had "*formulated* the demands" of the movement, King responded: "More than four thousand people at the Holt Street Baptist Church." "Those four thousand people," Thetford asked incredulously, "formulated these three specific demands; is that what you are telling us?" "Well, it is according to how you interpret the word *formulate*," King responded.⁴² There it was. As a technical legal matter, Thetford would get what he wanted: there were specific individuals within the MIA who were responsible for writing particular documents, distributing them, reading them aloud, and so on. But the *formulation* of what was in those documents came from the people themselves.

The MIA, King believed, was a mere instrument of the will of the people who had so long been victimized by the degrading system of segregation. They may not have written the demands on a piece of paper, but those demands had been written on their hearts and the hearts of their ancestors for generations. Was King a coconspirator in the *formulation* of those demands? Yes. But so were thousands of others. And

although King did not say it in that courtroom, an additional point about conspiracy was implicit in the boycott itself. Thetford and his ancestors were coconspirators of another sort, for they had conspired in the maintenance of a system that made the demands of the boycotters necessary in the first place. Thetford's side may have had the legal power to imprison the bodies of the coconspirators of the boycott, but those coconspirators would continue their moral struggle to liberate not only the souls of the oppressed but also the souls of their oppressors.

Just weeks before King's trial, Goldwater stood in front of a vast assemblage of cadets at the Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina. The cadets were decked out in their uniforms to see the senator speak, every last one of them White. Goldwater had been invited to address the cadets on a topic of his choosing. "I pondered long on what I would speak to you about this morning," he told his audience, "and I finally came up with what to you might seem to be a very simple subject": "I want to speak to you about freedom."⁴³

Before Goldwater launched into his discourse about the meaning of freedom, though, he made sure to pay his respects to the man who was probably responsible for his visit: South Carolina's very own senator Strom Thurmond. Goldwater and Thurmond had entered the Senate together just three years before, had become fast friends, and were, in many ways, ideological soulmates. Thurmond had made his way up the ranks in the South Carolina legal and political establishment throughout the 1930s and 1940s, and in 1946 he was elected governor of the state. In 1948, Thurmond split from the national Democratic Party incumbent presidential candidate, Harry Truman, as a protest of the president's civil rights program. Thurmond ran as a third-party candidate on the Dixiecrat ticket. His campaign was fueled by rank racism and faux populism. The rhetoric at one campaign stop is illustrative: "I wanna tell you, ladies and gentlemen," Thurmond said in a slow and steady cadence, "that there's not enough troops in the army to force the Southern people to . . . admit the Nigra race into our theaters, into our swimming pools, into

our homes, and into our churches.”⁴⁴ Lines like these always made the crowds go wild, and Thurmond went on to carry four states, receiving thirty-nine electoral votes in the election. He would have to wait only four years after the presidential run to get his ticket to Washington, which was punched when South Carolina sent him to the US Senate.

Just weeks before Goldwater visited the Palmetto state, Thurmond was busy writing the first draft of what would become known as the “Southern Manifesto.” This document, which would eventually be signed by every southern senator save three, as well as by eighty-two southern members of the House of Representatives, was a strident declaration of opposition to recent civil rights activities. Outside agitators and federal meddlers, the signatories argued, were “destroying the amicable relations between the white and Negro races” in the South. In response, the signatories pledged to use “all lawful means”—including disobeying federal law—to resist integration. The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision was one of the targets, but it was no mistake that the “Southern Manifesto” was composed and issued during the weeks of the Montgomery bus boycott. Thurmond and his allies could see that something new was afoot in the South, and they were going to do all they could to stop it.

As Goldwater looked out at the cadets, he knew all of this. Well aware of the tumult in Montgomery, he had likely heard, at least in general terms, about his friend Thurmond’s soon-to-be-issued manifesto.⁴⁵ And he wanted to make it entirely clear what he thought of the arch-segregationist: “I have great happiness at being here this morning . . . to stand here and congratulate the people for sending Strom Thurmond to the United States Senate.” Goldwater recognized that his audience might have been taken aback by these words. Were they hearing a Republican praise a Democrat, and in an election year no less? But recall that Goldwater had “sensed a realignment,” and on that March morning he sought to hasten its realization: “I am speaking as an American, not as a Republican, and I say to you people of South Carolina that Strom Thurmond is one of the great men of the United States Senate.” Why? Because Thurmond’s “feelings are dictated entirely by his basic sound beliefs in the American system.”⁴⁶

One of those “basic sound beliefs” would be the theme of Goldwater’s speech: the belief in freedom. More specifically, he set out to discuss what we can learn about freedom from the great “contest between the liberals and conservatives today.” As in his speeches to various business groups, Goldwater began with the idea that freedom was in peril. And this peril was not only from the communists and the socialists, but also the “self-styled” or “pseudo-liberals.”⁴⁷ These are not true liberals, he argued, because true liberalism consisted of a commitment to the idea that individual liberty ought to be realized by way of a system of rights protected by limited government.

The “new liberals” had some very different ideas on their minds. As he stood before the cadets, Goldwater unleashed a torrent of rhetoric about just how wrong these ideas were. New liberals, with their focus on “charity” and “the general welfare,” were revealing themselves to be too “materialistic.” New liberals had a “general contempt for tradition” and argued that progress could be achieved only through “indiscriminate enforcement of change.” And the nature of that change concerned Goldwater deeply. In place of true liberalism’s devotion to “free enterprise,” “initiative,” and “constitutional government,” new liberals sought “regimentation and control” by “bigger government.” True liberals wanted freedom. New liberals believed it “better to follow than to lead—easier to be a slave than to be free.” True liberals valued risk-taking and entrepreneurship, whereas new liberals were marked by their “idolization of security, stability, and the guaranteed welfare.”⁴⁸

Goldwater wanted the Citadel cadets to see that the force of arms might be necessary to protect freedom, but it was not sufficient. For the fight for freedom was also a culture war. The new liberal recognized this and so went to work “in the school, in the political party, in the labor union, in the church, in the professions, and in the legislative forums of our Nation” to advance his agenda. In their quest to win this fight, new liberals relied on “appeals to human emotions” in order to win over “the mind of man.”⁴⁹

It was at this point that Goldwater made his only explicit reference to race in the entirety of his speech. He said that the new liberals rely on the magnification of “differences among men” in order to promote a

politics that is fundamentally “negative and divisive”: “When he speaks, he speaks not to all Americans as Americans, but rather he pits labor against management, farmer against worker, black against white, Jew against gentile, Catholic against Protestant, rich against poor.” This would have seemed an opportune moment for Goldwater to comment on the tumult occurring in Montgomery, just about four hundred miles due west of where he was standing. But he did not utter a word about the situation in Alabama. Knowing full well that most of his audience agreed with Senator Thurmond that Reverend King and his allies were in the midst of upsetting “amicable relations” between the races that were decades in the making, Goldwater kept his comments abstract while at the same time making it clear that he was sympathetic to the spirit of Thurmond’s states’ rights project.⁵⁰ “I want no Federal regulation of any segment of our free economy,” he thundered, “or *any* aspect of our lives as citizens.”⁵¹

The time had come, Goldwater declared, for true liberals to fight back. As he explained what that fight might look like, he introduced a slight twist in his argument: today’s “true liberal” was best described as a “conservative.” Today’s conservatives, he argued, are defined by their desire to conserve the “American system” of constitutionalism, free enterprise, and individual freedom against the “revolutionary liberals.” And he was confident that conservatives would win the day. Americans, after all, “are fundamentally conservative”—“that is our tradition, that is the quality and character of our respect for our liberty and our gratitude to the God who charted our course.” What was needed, he concluded, was fanatical devotion to *our* brand of freedom. “Surely if they can be so fanatic in their devotion to so backward and decadent a philosophy, we can be even more zealous in our allegiance to the ideals of human dignity and justice and right.”⁵² It was more than eight years before Goldwater would deliver his famous “extremism in defense of liberty” line at the 1964 Republican National Convention, but the idea was already on his mind.⁵³

Right around the time Goldwater was explaining his political philosophy to the cadets at the Citadel, King was doing the same in the streets of Montgomery. Although the twenty-seven-year-old King was

then—and as he would forever be—in the storm of activism, he was, at his core, a thinker. By the time he became president of the MIA, he had spent most of the previous decade doing just that: thinking. Time and again during the years to come, he would dream—publicly and privately—about the moment when his activist days were behind him, and he could devote himself to the vocation of teacher and scholar. In early 1956, King was a man of action to be sure.

Later, when King was able to devote sustained time to thinking about the relationship between the boycott and his personal intellectual development, he offered insights into his worldview that can be usefully considered side by side with Goldwater's Citadel speech. Just as Goldwater's worldview was shaped by the legend of his pioneering ancestors and by his family's entrepreneurial spirit on the frontier, King's upbringing was at the foundation of his belief system. His faith, as the grandson and son of Baptist preachers, was his bedrock. While he "came from a home of economic security and relative comfort," King grew up with a keen awareness of the "inseparable twin[s]" of "racial injustice" and "economic injustice." As a child, he witnessed "night rides" by the Ku Klux Klan, saw police brutality firsthand, regularly walked by spots where human beings had been lynched, and "watched Negroes receive the most tragic injustice in the courts."⁵⁴

It was from this foundation that King began to develop his moral and political philosophy and theology. But if he shared with Goldwater a strong devotion to the individual, King's was rooted in a desire to find a philosophical foundation from which to combat racial and economic injustice. Eventually, he found that foundation in the idea of "personalism," which provided him with "a metaphysical basis for the dignity of all human personality."⁵⁵ King was introduced to this philosophy at Boston University, where he studied under Edgar S. Brightman and L. Harold DeWolf. The "personalistic philosophy" these scholars taught him was "the theory that the clue to the meaning of ultimate reality is found in personality."⁵⁶

"My feets is tired, but my soul is rested." These were the words of Mother Pollard, an elderly Alabama woman who insisted on walking throughout the boycott. Pollard's statement is simultaneously simple and profound, and in it we find the essence of King's personalist

philosophy. For in her insistence on walking, Mother Pollard was affirming her humanity in the face of all who had denied it for so long. The very act of walking put her soul in a state of repose that it had never known. She was a marching child of God. Mother Pollard's tired feet, the personalist might say, were portals to the "ultimate reality" of the universe.

But what social, economic, and political conclusions followed from King's personalism? There is no simple answer to this question, and King's response evolved over time. As he was figuring out how to apply the philosophy to the bus boycott, however, he was able to draw on several ideas that had been formative for him during his undergraduate years at Morehouse College and graduate study at Crozer Theological Seminary and Boston University. Over those years, he was especially attracted to thinkers who helped him build a bridge between his faith and his sense of social justice. One such thinker was Walter Rauschenbusch, who emphasized "a theological basis for the social concern which had already grown up in [King] as a result" of his "early experiences." What attracted King to Rauschenbusch was his insistence "that the gospel deals with the whole man, not only his soul but his body; not only his spiritual well-being but his material well-being."⁵⁷ Rauschenbusch's gospel was a *social* gospel; it was just the sort of gospel that spoke to King's desire not just to save souls but also to liberate those around him from the shackles of injustice.

Rauschenbusch's Christian socialism appealed to King in some ways, but less so in others. He worried, for instance, about Rauschenbusch's identification of "the kingdom of God with a particular social and economic system," and was skeptical of his "superficial optimism." King expressed similar concerns about the ideas of Karl Marx, which he studied in graduate school at Crozer Theological Seminary and found excessively "secularistic," "materialistic," and "relativistic." He worried, too, about the tendency of regimes inspired by Marx to impose "political totalitarianism" in pursuit of their goals. This, at least, was something upon which Goldwater and King could agree: the "deprecation of individual freedom" in communist systems was offensive to the idea of man as "child of God." "Man is not made for the state," King

explained, “the state is made for man. To deprive man of freedom is to relegate him to the status of a thing, rather than to relegate him to the status of a person.”⁵⁸

Though clear in his anticommunism, King conceded that there was something appealing about the moral core of the communist critique of capitalism.⁵⁹ “With all its false assumptions and evil methods,” he explained, “communism grew as a protest against the hardships of the underprivileged.” This moral impulse to combat injustice was also at the roots of Christianity. For King, those roots were expressed most powerfully in the words of Christ when he said: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set them at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”⁶⁰ King thought true Christianity required the active pursuit of justice in this world. The communist critique of economic injustice was important, he concluded, but there were aspects of the approach to addressing it that were unjust. As a result, he had to look elsewhere for a workable and morally acceptable social philosophy.

As King sought an approach to social justice that preserved the virtues of individualism and communism without their vices, he was guided by extended reflections on human nature. During his undergraduate and graduate studies, the question of human nature was his central philosophical and theological preoccupation. In essay after essay, he worked through the ideas of thinkers who were grappling with questions about human nature and human potentiality. The central struggle in King’s mind was between a theologically liberal position and the “neo-orthodox” position of the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr.

In an essay King wrote about eighteen months before the boycott began, called “The Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr,” he worked through his views of human nature in some detail. In the piece, King described the modern “liberal” or “progressive version of the Christian faith” as optimistic about the nature of man and held out hope that we would experience a “quick and steady progress to Utopia.” It was against this view that Niebuhr developed his “neo-orthodox” philosophy, which

emphasized the inherent sinfulness of human beings. Niebuhr, King wrote, “places evil at the very center of the human personality: in the will.” Our will to evil, Niebuhr thought, is rooted in our pride and our anxiety, and it tends to be even more aroused when we act in concert with others. He described this last point in his famous “contrast between ‘moral man’ and ‘immoral society.’”⁶¹ Individuals are sometimes able to overcome their will to evil, but it is “difficult, if not impossible, for human societies and social groups” to pull off this feat. “In every human group,” Niebuhr wrote, “there is less reason to guide and to check impulse, less capacity to self-transcendence, less ability to comprehend the need of others and therefore more unrestrained egoism than the individuals, who compose the group, reveal in their personal relationships.”⁶²

Reflecting on his “intellectual odyssey” later, King said that his encounter with theological liberalism had helped awaken him from the “dogmatic slumber” of the “rather strict fundamentalist tradition” in which he was raised. But if liberalism gave him “greater intellectual satisfaction” than fundamentalism, his life experience and philosophical reflection made it impossible for him to accept the liberal view outright. It was Niebuhr, more than any other thinker, who provided King with the corrective and supplement his liberalism needed.⁶³ He would always cherish liberalism’s “devotion to the search for truth, its insistence on an open and analytical mind, [and] its refusal to abandon the best light of reason.” But his life experience taught him “the complexity of human motives and the reality of sin on every level of man’s existence,” and Niebuhr provided him with philosophical tools to incorporate that into his moral theology.⁶⁴

During the bus boycott, there were numerous practical manifestations of King’s philosophical synthesis of liberalism and neo-orthodoxy. After an especially contentious meeting with city commissioners and representatives from the bus company, King felt despondent. “I was the victim,” he explained, “of an unwarranted pessimism because I had started out with an unwarranted optimism.” In other words, he walked into the meeting a bit too liberal and walked out a bit too neo-orthodox. As he reflected on his mistaken philosophical positions, he explained

himself in this way. When he walked into the meeting, he thought: What kind of reasonable human being could possibly deny the moderate demands of the MIA? As he walked out of the meeting, he was struck by just how little reason had to do with the discussion. “I came to see,” he explained, “that no one gives up his privileges without strong resistance.” To achieve justice, King realized, one must be animated by the dream of what human beings might become, while at the same time dealing with them as they are.⁶⁵

Prior to entering national politics, Goldwater had established a relatively progressive reputation on racial matters. As far back as 1939, he had written in his diary: “I have always thought and have never lost sight of the thought that all men were and are created equal. . . . I love my fellow man be he white or black or yellow and I am vitally interested in his well-being for that well-being is my well-being.”⁶⁶ Growing up with a Jewish surname in a state where White Anglo-Saxon Protestantism dominated may have given Goldwater a keener sense of what it was like to feel like “the Other.” His parents do not appear to have promoted strong racial views in their household. Baron’s primary focus was on business, and he did not see how racial discrimination would help his bottom line. As a businessman, Barry followed in his father’s footsteps, proudly selling his wares to all comers, and, according to biographer Robert Alan Goldberg, he became “one of the first Phoenix merchants to employ blacks.”⁶⁷

Goldwater’s relative progressivism on race extended beyond the doors of his family’s business. As a city councilman in Phoenix, he voted to desegregate the restaurant at Sky Harbor Airport. During his service in the Arizona Air National Guard, he desegregated his unit.⁶⁸ Throughout the early 1950s, he offered financial support to the local branches of the NAACP and was a long-time supporter of the Urban League. In 1951, he made a financial contribution to an effort to challenge *de jure* school segregation in Phoenix.⁶⁹ In the words of biographer Edwin McDowell, “Few men not deliberately courting minority bloc votes have

expressed their sympathy for Negroes—verbally and through action—more than Goldwater.”⁷⁰

And yet Goldwater’s racial progressivism had its limits. Goldberg, who has written what is undoubtedly the most serious biography of the senator, has argued that while Goldwater demonstrated views on race that were more enlightened than those of many of his contemporaries, his views have been mythologized by his champions. “Having lived in a segregated community his entire life,” Goldberg writes, “Barry, while free of bigotry, was conditioned to ignore inequality or to understand it as an individual failing.”⁷¹ As an example, Goldberg points out that the Goldwater Department Store practice of giving a wristwatch to the top graduates of Phoenix high schools excluded only one: the Black high school, George Washington Carver.⁷² When Goldwater was confronted about the exclusion by the school’s principal, his response was odd. He told the principal that since he “was opposed to segregation,” he “didn’t intend to encourage it by supplying an all-Negro school with a prize.” The principal explained to Goldwater that by that logic, he ought to forgo giving watches to every all-White school in Phoenix. When reporting about the matter later, writer Richard Rovere said that Goldwater “thought this over for a moment or two and then declared, with a delighted grin, that the educator’s reasoning was unassailable” and that Carver graduates would henceforth get their wristwatches.⁷³ The Carver story, to which I return below, reveals that even in his early “progressive” days, on race matters in Arizona, Goldwater’s thinking was not especially clear.

Perhaps more importantly, Goldberg points out that Goldwater—from a position of considerable influence in Phoenix and beyond—missed several opportunities to act more boldly to promote anti-racist ideas. When he worked to desegregate the Air National Guard in Arizona, for example, he “offered no explanation or public announcement.” His support for the legal challenge to *de jure* segregation in Phoenix public schools was limited to a single donation. In the words of Herb Finn, an attorney fighting for desegregation at the time, “I think I had an intimate involvement with the fight here for civil rights, and Goldwater was just nowhere there. He was never out front. He didn’t carry the banner.”⁷⁴

Once in Washington, Goldwater's racial progressivism and its limits were, once again, on display. In January 1953, he hired Kathryn Maxwell Dixon, an African American Arizonan, to be his Senate aide. Maxwell Dixon was born and raised in Tucson, and her father—a prominent educator and civil rights activist—knew Goldwater. Moving to Washington, DC, in 1953 so that her husband could attend dental school at Howard University, she applied for a job with Goldwater, and she got it. Whatever excitement Maxwell Dixon must have felt upon being hired was shaken when she attempted to eat alongside other legislative aides in one of the Senate cafeterias. According to Goldwater biographer Lee Edwards, "Maxwell [Dixon] was denied service her first day on the job by black servers," and the freshman senator was having none of it. "One blistering phone call by Goldwater," Edwards wrote later, "swept away the Senate's long-standing Jim Crow policy."⁷⁵

Goldwater's apparent personal intervention on behalf of Maxwell Dixon is noteworthy, but so too is his apparent reluctance to bring the incident to the attention of the press or his senior colleagues in the Senate. In the institution's own history of "Integrating Senate Spaces," the Maxwell Dixon incident is not even mentioned.⁷⁶ When she was interviewed late in life for a feature in the *Arizona Daily Star*, she either did not mention the incident or the reporter decided to leave the information out of her profile. In that 2006 profile, Maxwell Dixon said she "disagreed with many of Goldwater's political decisions" and that "they challenged each other often," but they always did so "as friends, never as enemies."⁷⁷

On the political question of what ought to be done about civil rights, Goldwater had made it entirely clear that he had a great deal of sympathy with the views of Strom Thurmond and other segregationists. Goldwater was almost every bit as much of a "states' rights" man as Thurmond was, if not necessarily for the same reasons. Over the years, Thurmond was never shy about admitting that his defense of states' rights was rooted, at least in part, in a belief in White supremacy and an abhorrence of "race mixing."⁷⁸ Goldwater attempted to separate his views from that sort of thing by proposing that while segregation was *morally* wrong, it was a question that ought to be determined *politically* by states

and localities. In the years ahead, he would apply that general principle in a variety of ways, but as a matter of political philosophy his view was clear: the immorality of a state or local law was not reason enough for him to oppose it from his perch as a US senator.

Goldwater and King had at least a *prima facie* agreement about the immorality of segregation. But they disagreed about what ought to be done about it. On the question of federal intervention, King was of the view that the primary obligation of the government was to secure fundamental rights. If states and localities were failing to protect those rights or, worse yet, were actively violating those rights, the federal government was under obligation to intervene. It is undoubtedly true that political decentralization *can be* a safeguard for freedom; but it is not *necessarily* true in every case. The question was when it might be justified for federal authorities to intervene to vindicate rights. King and Goldwater would not always disagree in response to this question, but when they did, their disagreements would be revealing.

One such disagreement was over the question of federal intervention to address the bus situation in Montgomery. From King's point of view, it was obvious that the fundamental rights of the boycotters were being undermined from all sides at the state and local level. The boycotters were engaged in a legitimate form of social protest, he argued, and in response, state and local authorities were locking them up, fining them, and harassing them. Furthermore, state and local law was clearly at odds with the freedom and equality of Black bus riders, and, given the political dynamics of Alabama, nothing short of federal intervention was going to alter the situation.

In the interim—while Black people waited for federal intervention to vindicate their rights—King and others were grappling with the question of *how* they ought to resist. From the earliest days of the boycott, King preached a doctrine of nonviolence. Time and again in those early days, he argued against the use of force in pursuit of justice. Even on the night his home was bombed in late January, he encouraged

supporters to put away their guns and resist the temptation to fight fire with fire.

King's commitment to nonviolence was deeply rooted in his philosophical reflections.⁷⁹ As an undergraduate at Morehouse, he read Henry David Thoreau's *Resistance to Civil Government* and became "fascinated by the idea of refusing to cooperate with an evil system."⁸⁰ While he was in graduate school at Crozer Theological Seminary, he traveled to Philadelphia to hear a sermon by Doctor Mordecai Johnson, who was then president of Howard University, on the "life and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi."⁸¹ King said later that he was so moved by Johnson's sermon that he went out and bought several books to deepen his knowledge of Gandhi's life and works.

In Gandhi, King found a philosophy that expanded on Thoreau in important ways. He was especially taken by the "whole concept of 'Satyagraha' (*Satya* is truth which equals love, and *agraha* is force; 'Satyagraha,' therefore, means truth-love or love-force)."⁸² When King reflected on how this idea fit within his existing worldview, he emphasized how Gandhi helped him transform "the ethics of Jesus" into a *social* philosophy; and more specifically, a social philosophy of protest. Although King's encounter with Niebuhr's chastened view of human nature led him to reject absolute pacifism, he was deeply committed to the idea that *non-violent* resistance was the most morally defensible means to use in pursuit of freedom. King's commitment to nonviolence went beyond merely a moral objection to the use of force. Instead, he was devoted to the idea that there was something morally significant for both the oppressor and the oppressed in *how* liberation was pursued.

King described the "basic aspects" of Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolent resistance in this way. First, it is a philosophy of *resistance*; it is not passive or cowardly. Instead, it calls on the resister to engage actively and creatively in resistance to evil. Second, nonviolent resistance is rooted in love, rather than hatred, of one's opponent. Love turned out to be an extraordinarily complicated and important idea in King's philosophy, but what matters here is that the goal of the resistance was not to "humiliate the opponent," but to "awaken a sense of moral shame" within them so that they might be redeemed. Third, nonviolent resistance seeks to

depersonalize the struggle; the struggle is between justice and injustice, not this group and that. Fourth, King emphasized that those engaged in nonviolent resistance were willing “to accept suffering without retaliation,” be that in the form of imprisonment or even physical violence.⁸³

In late March 1956, King stood before his congregation at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church and applied these ideas to a matter other than the bus boycott. A few weeks earlier, a federal judge had ordered the University of Alabama to permit a young woman named Autherine Lucy to enroll. When Lucy arrived on campus on February 3, she was met, King told his congregation, with the following scene: “Crosses were burned; eggs and bricks were thrown at her. The mob jumped on top of the car in which she was riding.” To calm the situation, the university dismissed Lucy from campus.⁸⁴

King used Lucy’s story to make a point about peace, violence, and resistance. The “peace” achieved by dismissing Lucy from campus was an “obnoxious” peace. This is a type of peace that “all men of goodwill hate,” the type of peace, he said to an increasingly animated crowd, “that stinks in the nostrils of the Almighty God.” In the face of injustice, King declared, peace is not necessarily the answer. “Peace is not merely the absence of tension,” he explained, “but the presence of justice.”⁸⁵

Yet one must engage in the right kind of war, King went on, reiterating his belief that “physical war” was not the answer. What was needed was a “spiritual war,” “a war of ideas,” a war of “fighting pacifist[s]” mobilized to challenge injustice. For King, this was the sort of war modeled by Jesus Christ, who said: “Think not that I am come to bring peace. I come not to bring peace but a sword.” The sword of Christ was not a “physical sword,” of course, but a spiritual one that brought “justice, goodwill, [and] the power of the kingdom of God” to those who sought to maintain an unjust status quo.⁸⁶

Just weeks after King utilized the assault on Autherine Lucy to reflect on the meaning of peace, Goldwater took to the floor of the Senate to speak about an assault of another sort. On April 5, as a journalist named

Victor Reisel was leaving a restaurant in Manhattan an assailant attacked him with sulfuric acid, which left him maimed for life. At the time of the attack, Reisel had been covering corruption in organized labor, and so Goldwater saw the attack as a symbol of Big Labor's threat to American freedom. "The American people," he told his Senate colleagues a few days after the assault, "have been awakened by this event. They rightfully ask the leaders of labor to place a check on the irresponsibility that allowed this attack to happen."⁸⁷

The attack on Reisel fit neatly into a preexisting frame in Goldwater's mind that associated trade unionism with violence. When he was running for the Senate in 1952, he made the acquaintance of a man who went by the name of "William Nelson," who would teach him a great deal about organized labor. Nelson donated \$1200 to Goldwater's campaign, and as a gesture of thanks, Nelson received an autographed picture of the soon-to-be senator. A few days later, Nelson showed up at Goldwater's office to make a proper introduction. He was, in fact, Willie Bioff, a convicted criminal who had turned state's evidence in the 1940s in a case involving organized labor and the mafia. Goldwater later explained that Bioff tutored him in several hours-long meetings in which he described "how unions could and did abuse power" and "how goons posing as labor leaders used illegal and coercive practices." If these lessons by themselves were not powerful enough, Bioff's fate brought them home to Goldwater: one day in 1955, Bioff was killed by a bomb that had been rigged to his ignition.⁸⁸

In the week after his address on the Reisel attack, Goldwater returned to the floor of the Senate time and again to place the event in larger context by delivering addresses titled "Development of Labor Unions" and "The Political Activities of Walter Reuther." Over the previous decade, the United Automobile Workers (UAW) and other "big unions," he explained, had seen meteoric rises in their memberships and financial resources. And what had they done with all of this "bigness"? Just look at Walter Reuther, Goldwater warned, "whose efforts encompass not only the field of labor, but the fields of economics, social work, world affairs, civil rights, public power, reclamation, schools, [and] hospitals."⁸⁹ And all these efforts, he explained, seemed directed toward

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