

Interview with John C. Culver, co-author of
American Dreamer: A Life of Henry A. Wallace
Interviewed by Chip Duncan on May 5, 2003

Q: I'd like to start with something so basic that the American public will want the answer to. Who was Henry Wallace?

John Culver: Well, I think one of the reasons that prompted me to write this book was that on November 1965, when he died, I was asked, along with other members of the Iowa Congressional Delegation to make a comment on his passing. I'd come from a rather prominent Republican family in my native state of Iowa. I really never heard the word Roosevelt without its being accompanied by an expletive and Wallace never at all. And he'd been out of public life for, at that point, fifteen years. I literally had to look him up to find out, get a statement together for the press. And in doing so I was struck by what an extraordinary life of achievement and also by the fact that so little had ever been written about him. Upon further exploration I concluded that he had really become a non-person largely because of the controversy surrounding his opposition to the Cold War and the ensuing McCarthy period which had really very seriously compromised this reputation.

And at that point I felt very strongly that this was a life worthy of a book and fortunately was able, many years later, to work in cooperation with my co-author to do that.

Q: So, your own discovery of Wallace really happened at the time of his death?

John Culver: Absolutely. And that was fifteen years after his leaving public life and he'd really become so discredited after the controversy of the '48 campaign and the Communist Party involvement that it disparaged all his other extraordinary accomplishments.

Q: What brought about that disgrace to Wallace?

John Culver: Well, I think he was the last remaining opposition really to the Cold War. The consensus about the Soviet Union had really formed. He felt so strongly that if there was going to be any prospects for world peace in the post-war period it was essential that the wartime alliance of Russia, Great Britain and the United States be sustained because he didn't feel the U.N could be workable. There was no way to avoid a costly, potentially tragic arms race without that continued cooperation. And he felt that during the period particularly in 1945 to '48 that there was a serious opportunity for a more constructive relationship with the Soviet Union. They were desperate and destitute and they needed everything by way of international trade and so forth.

John Culver: And he felt there was a real potential for that to occur and this ran counter to the prevailing consensus and the established wisdom of the day. He became therefore a threat and became essentially a pariah in the eyes of the opposition to that view. In terms of Wallace and his rise, it had a lot to do obviously with his family, with his grandfather and his father.

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Q: Can you talk about the Wallace family and the stature of that family?

John Culver: Well, I think the Wallace family in Iowa history is the most remarkable family certainly in the history of the state. It really is comparable almost to the Adams family, in Massachusetts in terms of their three remarkable individuals, three generations, all dedicated in their way to public service. The patriarch of that family was the original Henry Wallace, affectionately referred to as "Uncle Henry." He was a retired minister and a scientific farmer in his day and was a major figure nationally for rural America and the problems of agriculture. He had turned down the possible opportunity to be Secretary of Agriculture in 1897 or so. And he was the beloved family member and the first editor of *Wallaces' Farmer*. His son, Henry C. Wallace, was also an editor of *Wallaces' Farmer* and Secretary of Agriculture under Harding and Coolidge, the Republican administrations. And the grandfather particularly had a profound influence on young Henry Wallace, the subject of our book. And he was in terms of his religion and terms of his belief about international cooperation, the social gospel, the grandfather, Uncle Henry, was a very sophisticated man for his time. He traveled in Europe and was interested in and kept up international correspondence and so forth. And Henry Wallace really carried on that tradition of this remarkable family in terms of their values and their idea of service to mankind.

Q: What are the two things you think he got from his grandfather? Was it the spiritual and the communicator or was it the love of agriculture?

John Culver: It was his faith, his belief in God as a fundamental, and the idea that service to your fellow man was the best expression of your life here on Earth. And for the Wallace's that was through agriculture. I think the most important values that he derived from his grandfather were one, his religion, the basic faith in God, the importance of God in his life. And secondly, the idea of service to your fellow man, the social gospel, that the best way to express your love of God was in service to your fellow man and for the Wallace's that was through agriculture and American farming. And those were the two things I think were most important. One of the things that was interesting was on his 21st birthday Henry Wallace received a letter from his grandfather to whom he was very close. It was a very complimentary letter. The grandfather was extremely proud of Henry's achievements.

He said posterity is "very appreciative of the man who does right as he sees right with a single eye to righteousness." That was very prophetic in young Henry's life. It also reappeared in his devotion to peace and his willingness to sacrifice all in the face of opposition, physical harm and threat--- because of his acceptance of that belief and that value. The spiritual guidance that he received from his grandfather would have been specifically Christian and yet he was a very curious man spiritually.

Q: Can you talk about some of his spiritual pursuits?

John Culver: Well, one of the most striking characteristics of Henry Wallace was his insatiable curiosity and secondly was his resistance to blindly accepting the conventional

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wisdom on any subject. And he wanted to explore with his own intellectual rigor and prove to himself the truth or fallacy of a given situation. That was evident as a high school boy when he challenged the conventional wisdom on corn where they thought, at that time, that the most productive corn was the best looking ears of corn. He didn't see any correlation between looks and productivity. He went off and did his own experiments and satisfied himself that that wasn't true. He shattered this belief and the same was true with religion. For about a ten-year period in his life he obviously was under some stress in other ways in terms of the economy, his concern about agricultural prices and the Depression, which hit agriculture much earlier than the rest of the nation. And he took upon himself to explore a whole variety of religions, Western religions, Eastern religions, astrology. He entered into correspondence with various figures who were involved in one or another aspect of this interest.

But in each and every case he explored it fully and then once he satisfied himself that there really wasn't anything here to lead to a further commitment or interest, he dropped it and went on to something else. So, it was rather typical of his whole intellectual approach to matters of science or public policy.

Q: Not a kooky mystic...?

John Culver: I don't think so at all. He wanted to explore his world; he wanted to explore the universe; he wanted answers to the questions; and he pursued them vigorously.

Q: Curiosity obviously is a big part of Wallace's personality. Could you put his personality into a context for us?

John Culver: Well, he was a very unusual personality of course and certainly unorthodox in terms of anything Washington had ever seen by way of a political figure. He was a shy person. He really was not one for small talk. He didn't smoke; he didn't drink; he really wasn't comfortable with off-color jokes. He was very serious. He loved to engage one on one, someone he found of interest. He also was willing to be very patient with someone that others might immediately reject as not having anything worthwhile to offer. He was so curious, and he always believed that someone of that background might really have a key to a problem. But he was very confident in his intellect but basically a very modest man, and different in terms of his dress, his appearance. He was very thrifty in his personal habits and just a very responsible person, remarkably free of any self-promotion. Gossip never interested him at all - a person who really pursued and lived his Christian faith throughout his life.

Q: A genius?

John Culver: I think clearly a genius in terms of his ability and his accomplishments in so many diverse areas. One of the historians at the Department of Agriculture said he was the only true genius ever to occupy that position.

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Q: What did he like to do for fun?

John Culver: Well, he loved to play tennis. He was a vigorous tennis player. When they were young he and his brothers designed a tennis court in their yard. They got the paddles and the ball, and the first games they played they thought they were not supposed to let the ball touch the ground-- kind of like badminton. And they stood there and hit it back and forth. They had no sense of style or anything. And he rarely did develop much of a style, very unorthodox but so tenacious and determined. He always returned the ball. He turned out to be a very competent tennis player. He loved to play badminton, horseshoes, picnics - that was the thing that the family often did. Even when he was at the department he would organize outings of that kind with other staff members and their family. He got interested in throwing boomerangs down along the Potomac River on the Mall. He had an extraordinarily eclectic interest. He really was somewhat undernourished almost as a young boy. It was hard for him in terms of his size to be competitive in sports, although he also had a long way to walk to school, and he had to take care of farm chores. So, he didn't really get into much organized sport.

Q: There is a love of the land, love of the agricultural landscape that's obviously significant to his whole life and eventually to his policy. Can you talk a little bit about his love of nature, love of the land, how it drove him?

John Culver: I think he was influenced by two people particularly in terms of his love of plants and love of the land. One was his mother who was very, very interested in plants and flowers. As a young boy she talked to him about hybrid and of making crosses with plants or pansies. And when his father was an instructor at Iowa State University, he had as a student George Washington Carver, the famous black scientist who later went onto fame at Tuskegee and did all the work with peanuts and other related fields. He was the first Black to go to Iowa State University. He took a real interest in young Henry Wallace who was 4 or 5 years old and took him on nature walks around Ames, Iowa and pointed out to him the various Latin names for flowers and plants. George Washington Carver was very impressed. He came back and told Henry's father how precocious the boy was. And Henry, many, many years later said that he wasn't so sure he was that precocious, but he was so encouraged by George Washington Carver's interest in him that he continued his love of plants. So, that was the beginning for him. And incidentally that relationship continued throughout their lives. Wallace, when he was Secretary of Agriculture, continued to stay in touch with George Washington Carver and invited him up to Washington and the department and so forth.

Q: What is it about Iowa that influences him?

John Culver: I think of course the beauty of the state. I think to him the richness of the soil. I think certainly the quality of the people. His ideas about a rural civilization which was very much a part of Uncle Henry's philosophy too and his father's that the strength of this country, the real character of this country was based on the values that largely are to be found in rural America in terms of the work ethic, in terms of the values of thrift and

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honesty and fair dealing. And I think all that was the cradle of his growing up and of his most important personal interest and contacts and certainly when they were editors of Wallaces' Farmer, the kind of leadership they gave to the farmers in terms of scientific, agricultural suggestions. And Uncle Henry even had a very famous Bible reference repeatedly in the Wallaces' Farmer. That became part of their culture. Throughout his life he felt that nothing was more important than keeping close to the land in terms of just one's mental health, as well as physical health. He lamented the fact that so much of that was lost in some of the problems that our urban environments have experienced historically.

Q: Could you set the tone for Wallace as a political figure? What were the challenges that were taking place on the American farm that motivated, inspired, and pushed him toward the public life?

John Culver: The farm depression had really hit hard in the '20s. Wallace, as editor of Wallaces' Farmer, was extremely concerned, as was his father as Secretary of Agriculture, to bring about some form of federal farm relief for agriculture. And it became his real cause. His two causes throughout his life politically were agriculture, the cause of rural America, this whole idea of the values of a rural environment and peace. And his father fought vainly within the Republican administration, to get legislation enacted that would provide some relief for the farmers. He was continually thwarted and frustrated in those efforts. And Henry was at home championing all those measures and became increasingly frustrated himself with the failure of the Republican Party to respond to the crisis of the American farmer. His father's death in 1928 led eventually to his changing political affiliation and supporting Al Smith, the Democratic candidate for President. He didn't formally leave the Republican Party at that point. But he and his father and his grandfather were very strong Progressive Republicans. Teddy Roosevelt was a real hero particularly of his father's. And that was really where he still was in terms of his political position.

In 1932 he became involved in the Franklin Roosevelt campaign and was asked to be of assistance on developing an agricultural program for the New Deal. That brought him into Roosevelt's circle and ultimately, his Secretary of Agriculture. It wasn't until 1936 that he returned to Des Moines and changed his party affiliation from Republican to Democrat-- after he'd been in the Roosevelt cabinet for four years. Of course at that time Harold Ickes was another Progressive Republican that was in the Roosevelt cabinet. In 1940 after a very extraordinarily successful eight years as Secretary of Agriculture where he was responsible for countless innovations and initiatives that brought about the recovery of the farm economy in large part, he was tapped then by Roosevelt as vice president. It was a very unpopular decision. At the Democratic Convention in 1940 there was great resistance to his being nominated because of his Republican background and also because of the fact that he had been so extremely liberal in many of his views.

Q: Are those contradictory things - the liberal views and the Republican background?

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John Culver: Not really, because the Progressive Republicans were a lot more liberal than the Southern Democrats. The Southern Democrats were opposed to Roosevelt's third term in 1940. Once they realized they couldn't stop Roosevelt and he was determined to run, they were led to believe that they would be able to pick the vice president. When Roosevelt went ahead and picked Wallace that was an additional frustration. That manifested itself in the convention. It was a very uproarious convention. It's the famous convention where Eleanor Roosevelt had to come out and make a speech to calm the convention. Roosevelt didn't attend it. He was in the White House where he had said, "If you don't take Wallace, you don't get me."

He had prepared a note to that effect to be delivered to the convention. He was so determined to get Wallace because he believed, as did his wife, that Wallace was uniquely qualified to carry out the New Deal -- the domestic programs and the international policies that he advocated if anything should happen to him. And of course she came out and she made the famous speech which included the line, "this is no ordinary time," and indicated that the President, under these circumstances, should be entitled to his choice.

And the convention was so uproarious in opposition to this choice that Wallace was dissuaded from even making an acceptance speech that he had prepared all night to give to the convention. So, that was a very turbulent period. And then of course he served with great distinction as vice president. He was the first vice president in history to be given serious executive responsibilities. He was a strong advocate of American intervention in the war. This took a lot of courage because of the isolation sentiment in his own state. As a result, in part, the Roosevelt/Wallace ticket in 1940 did not carry Iowa.

Q: How would you characterize his influence on both the New Deal and on Roosevelt, first as a Secretary of Agriculture and then as a V.P.?

John Culver: I would consider his influence on Roosevelt as really quite remarkable and quite strong. Roosevelt had great admiration for Wallace's intellect. He referred to him as "old man common sense." He once said that "There's no man who knows more of the American soil than you, even though people call you these names about being too left and so forth."

And Wallace was not bashful or hesitant with providing Roosevelt with memos on a whole variety of subjects far outside the realm of his immediate portfolio and responsibility as Secretary of Agriculture. He's been called the spokesman for the New Deal and very valuable in that capacity. Eleanor Roosevelt was particularly devoted to Henry Wallace. An example of that is that in 1943 she had dinner with Henry Wallace and his wife and told him that she hoped that FDR would not run again in 1944 and if he didn't she hoped that Henry Wallace would run. That was indicative of their closeness and the affection that was felt by the Roosevelt's toward Henry Wallace. While the relationship was complex on occasion, he was devoted to Roosevelt not only in terms of his service to the nation but in how he viewed his role of leadership.

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Q: Can you distinguish his role as a supporter of the New Deal from his role as an architect of the New Deal?

John Culver: Well, he clearly was a supporter. In the whole field of agriculture he was a commanding figure in shaping, forming and implementing those programs. But across the board he was often called in to share his views on a whole variety of initiatives. He didn't hesitate to provide Roosevelt with his views. They were greatly appreciated in terms of how constructive his presentations were.

Q: From a policy perspective in terms of implementing that policy, what would you say was the most significant contribution he made during that period of the 1930s, especially in agriculture?

John Culver: The whole subsidy and support program was important. He also did the ever-normal granary. Matters of soil and water conservation were always paramount. He initiated the food stamp program. He did a great deal later in the 1937, '38, '39 period in terms of rural America and the problems of the poorest sectors of the American agricultural economy.

Q: Can you paint a picture of that 1940 convention for us? I know it's been called kind of a crazy convention, but what was going on then?

John Culver: Roosevelt had indicated earlier in the year in 1940 that he would not likely seek a third term. Jim Farley, the national Democratic chairman, understood that he would not be running. He prepared to seek the nomination himself. There was a lot of uncertainty of whether or not Roosevelt would run or not. It probably wasn't until the Nazi invasion of Paris in maybe May of 1940-- that period-- that he finally decided that he should, would run.

And there was also a lot of jockeying, a lot of ambitious people around Roosevelt who also wanted to be considered. He kept everybody pretty much guessing. Henry Wallace knew that he was also a possibility, but had never had any discussions with Roosevelt along those lines at all. He actually literally went out on the train with Harry Hopkins to the convention. Harry Hopkins did not know what Roosevelt's choice was going to be. They had arranged for this appearance of a draft at the convention for Roosevelt himself to be initiated to that it looked like it was ground up rather than he stepping forward without the support of the convention. That was all going to likely work out.

But the Vice Presidential thing was still unclear. Harry Hopkins, who was the only person that really was his agent at the convention, --it's hard to believe in today's times - was equally in the dark. He had a phone connected from his hotel to the lighthouse. It never rang. He had no particular directions or instructions. Finally Roosevelt indicated that he thought it would be Wallace. And Madame Perkins who was Secretary of Labor sensed the reaction of the convention was just absolutely out of control in opposition to the announcement.

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At that point he was very upset and said that "If they don't take him, they won't get me." She urged him to ask Eleanor to come up and speak. It was at that point, he said, "Well, why don't you call her?" And she was actually the one that made the call to Eleanor. She came out and calmed this convention. It was an ugly convention. There wasn't broad support for him at that time at all within the Democratic Party.

Q: In the period leading up to that convention was Wallace someone whose popularity ebbed and flowed? Was he perceived more as an outsider? Why would he have been so controversial?

John Culver: Wallace was a New Dealer rather than a Democrat. At that time the Democratic Party was dominated by two factors-- the big city bosses, who were almost always conservative, and the southern Democrats. And there obviously was a significant liberal element among certain elements of organized labor and the academic university communities. And then you had the farm vote, where he was very popular for the most part with the farm groups. But he wasn't comfortable with the bosses. Their whole approach to politics and patronage-- Wallace didn't believe in any of that. He was interested in the issues and getting things done. He had no real interest in the personalities. I remember one interview we had where Claude Pepper said, "He's going to Chicago, and he would never think to call up the Chicago mayor and pay his respects because Wallace assumed the mayor was busy." He wasn't going to bother him. And Claude indicated that, had he done a little bit more of that, he would have been a more effective politician.

One of the things that are rather humorous was that in the 1940 campaign his son, Bob, who was traveling with him said, "You know, Dad, I think you're getting to be a better politician." And Wallace essentially reprimanded him. He didn't think that was a high compliment. Wallace wasn't interested in political parties. He was a Progressive Republican outside the mainstream. He was a New Dealer really outside the Democratic Party. Then, of course, he left that for the Progressive Party. Then he left the Progressive Party over the Korean War in 1950.

Once later in his life he said, "I've been a member of all those parties and none of them showed me much." His interest in politics was the cause. His interest in government and service was the cause. Those two causes throughout his life were the cause of agriculture and the cause of peace.

Q: If you could, give us a sense of what the late '20s into the early '30s was like. What were those forces that caused the American public to back Roosevelt and to look at the farm policies?

John Culver: Well, the Depression really began in rural America and on the farm in the '20s and mid-'20s. It was very, very serious and severe. As we all know the Depression that most of the nation is aware of was a number of years later. Wallace was in the middle of all this. He was just heart stricken by the conditions-- in terms of the destitute condition of agriculture, rural families, and the farm families losing all these farms to the banks and having all these mortgage foreclosures and having all their

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produce worth nothing. They were burning corn for heat, for example, rather than trying to sell it during that period. It was creating almost revolutionary conditions. There were situations with farm revolts and farm riots. They were taking sheriffs, who were involved in foreclosure sales, out and threatened to hang them. So there was a very serious revolutionary potential in terms of the American economy and society. Wallace was so frustrated in the failure of the federal government to express concern. Interestingly enough, his father's greatest nemesis in the Harding cabinet was Herbert Hoover, another Iowan. And that gave rise to a long-time animosity between the two. When Henry Wallace's father died suddenly in Washington at about age 57, for many years Henry Wallace thought that Herbert Hoover was responsible for his father's death because of his really exhausting himself in his fight for the farmer within the Harding cabinet.

Q: What happens when Roosevelt and Wallace come along in the sense of how government changed?

John Culver: The great political problem that Herbert Hoover faced was the failure to at least be perceived to be interested in taking decisive action to address the crisis of the country and its economy. And Wallace understood, as did FDR, that drastic measures were really required here-- unprecedented initiatives in terms of government involvement in the economy and all aspects of national life in terms of public works programs and in terms of these agricultural programs to get the country back on its feet. Wallace was enthusiastic in his support of Roosevelt's approach to a positive, vigorous, active government. It was at that point that the federal government initiated all these remarkable programs to try to find effective ways to address the situation. One of the ironies is that Roosevelt probably was responsible for saving the capitalistic system by these approaches and was criticized politically within the context of our own country as being leftists or socialistic. In fact, capitalism probably owes its life today to the initiatives and New Deal of Franklin Roosevelt. Obviously the war, when it came along, also contributed greatly to revitalizing the economy and improving the employment opportunities of the country.

Q: Could you talk a little bit about what the role of the Vice Presidency was like when Wallace became Vice President? How was it different than it is today? It's always struck me as interesting that while he was V.P. Wallace was also down in Mexico working on agriculture in the midst of a war. I can't imagine a Vice President doing the same thing today. So, it must have been a very different time.

John Culver: After the 1940 convention, prior to the inauguration of Roosevelt for his third term and for Wallace as Vice President, Roosevelt was asked to attend the inauguration of a newly elected president of Mexico. Wallace had taught himself Spanish during his days in the Secretary of Agriculture's job, because he saw the importance of Latin America and Central America to the United States interests. Roosevelt said, "Would you go there and represent me?" So about the first of December in 1940 he agreed to represent the President. Wallace and his wife got in their Plymouth car and drove from Washington D.C. to Mexico City without any staff and no secret

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Interviewed by Chip Duncan on May 5, 2003

service. When they arrived down in the capital of Mexico, it was a very, very violent and turbulent political scene. The Germans and the Nazis had tried to influence this election, and there was a great resentment that the election had been stolen. They weren't accepting it. There were demonstrations. He got right there in the middle of it all, addressed the parliament in Spanish, became a great hit. Then he proceeded to spend 30 days in Mexico tramping all over the countryside looking at Mexican agriculture. He went along with the Secretary of Agriculture from Mexico. He was just appalled at how poor the production and capability was of the farmers. He said, "You should do down here what I've done in Iowa with hybrid corn to improve your production." And they said, "Well how do we go about that?" And he said, "Well, I'll see if I can help." So, he returned to Washington. He got the Rockefeller Foundation to send a mission there to study the situation. And that led to the establishment of the first international agricultural research station in the world. That, in turn, led to Norman Borlaug, another Iowan, to work on the Green Revolution. Norman Borlaug once said that Henry Wallace should have gotten the Nobel Prize because he started it all. That led historically to a series of agriculture research centers around the world. And they saved billions of lives probably throughout the period here in the last 60 years. When he became Vice President it had been really a "know nothing" position with very little to do. But with the war mobilization underway, Wallace was given by the President serious executive responsibilities to procure the necessary raw resources necessary to fight the war and mobilize the country for war. He was given very important roles in that whole mobilization effort.

Q: Was that a first; did Roosevelt and Wallace change the Vice Presidency?

John Culver: I think they did. I think it was the first time in the history of that office that it was given any serious executive responsibilities at all. One of Wallace's overriding concerns throughout World War II was the post-war period. He felt that we'd lost the chance for establishing a peaceful post-war world. We had now this second opportunity. So, throughout the war he was sort of unique in national public life trying to infuse the war with a moral purpose. And he was of the belief that if we fought this war and it only resulted in a restoration of the status quo it will be a tragic failure. In 1941 Henry Luce, the editor of Time Life, wrote a lengthy editorial-- and that was the spring prior to Pearl Harbor-- in which he urged the United States to become involved in the war in Europe because he said we could emerge from this war "the most powerful nation on Earth-- able to exert and assert our influence wherever and whenever we chose." A year later, May 8, 1942 Wallace really answered Luce without naming him in his famous speech, "The Price of Free World Victory." In that speech he said "Some have called for the century after this war to be called the American century." He said, "The century after this war should be the century of the common man." And that if the United States has a role in the post war world it's to lead and not to dominate. He said racism must go, colonialism must go. He said there should be no privileged peoples. He said we in the United States have no greater claim to superiority than the Nazis. And he outlined an alternative vision of foreign assistance to the third world to help it develop. It was an alternative vision of the post-war period from this idea of an American century which bristled with imperialistic connotations. He later had a correspondence with Luce, who took umbrage

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at Wallace's position. Wallace said, "Well, I just don't think our friends in the United Nations would really be very happy with that term-- "the American century" and what it implied. He mentioned the "united nations" in the sense of the wartime Allies-- not the formal institution of the United Nations.

Q: So, his focus on the post-war really began before the war itself started?

John Culver: He articulated the alternative of the century of the common man in 1942. It was not a good time in terms of the inevitable likelihood of American victory. But he realized that we had failed in World War I. Roosevelt was reluctant. You remember Roosevelt's famous line, "Dr. New Deal is dead; it's now time for Dr. Win the War." Well, Wallace didn't buy that. Wallace was very concerned during World War II that, because of the needs of the war effort, very conservative people were being brought into government who didn't believe in the New Deal in order to help mobilize the country for war. And the military in Wallace's view potentially was getting a disturbingly strong position in terms of influencing American foreign policy in the future and after the war. He was ahead of his time and was pushing hard. Winston Churchill and others weren't pleased when the American Vice President talked about "colonialism must go" when they were resisting any ideas about Gandhi and leaving India.

Q: Let's talk about Wallace as an international thinker during the period of 1940-44. How did the international perspective shape him and shape his values?

John Culver: He believed that if this war were going to be fought just to restore the status quo would be a tragic failure. He strongly believed that there was an opportunity in the world at the time. If the war-time alliance-- Great Britain and Russia and the United States-- could be sustained that technology and other opportunities were going to be opened up to have the capacity to change the face of the world. He wanted to see the elimination of colonialism, the elimination of racism, the elimination of any privileged peoples. He wanted to see the breakup of the international economic cartels that the Germans and the Americans had fostered and participated in. He wanted to see sort of a strong U.N, a strong international U.N police force that he believed in strongly. He wanted to internationalize some airports in order to maintain the peace. He was asked by Roosevelt to head a committee to determine whether or not it was feasible for the United States to produce the bomb after Albert Einstein had written to Roosevelt warning of the German program on nuclear bombs. And because he was the only real scientist in the cabinet, Roosevelt asked him to head this group of scientists to evaluate the possibilities of the bomb. And so he was aware of the Manhattan project from the beginning. When the bomb was finally dropped in August of 1945 at Hiroshima, Nagasaki, he did not feel it appropriate to criticize the decision. But he was immediately preoccupied with the sensibility of getting arms control and getting the nuclear bomb under control with the Soviet Union to avoid an arms race. And he supported a proposal by then Secretary of State Stimson to share some of the atomic energy technology-- not exactly how to make a bomb, but to bring in the Russians and others in the U.N. context in order to avoid an arms race. This was not pursued. As a result Wallace believed that it provided an

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impetus to the Soviet Union to develop their own capabilities, and we missed an opportunity there to cap the arms race and avoid the Soviet buildup. He was always interested in a strong international organization and a strong U.N. and also of course arms control and, above all, economic assistance to the third world. He had proposals for assistance that predated the Marshall Plan, but it was through the administration by the United Nations-- not unilaterally done by the United States alone.

Q: The fact that it went the other direction, that it went Cold War instead of the more diplomatic approach, in what ways did that compromise the developing world over the next 40-50 years?

John Culver: I think it was fundamental. It was a great tragedy, and Wallace foresaw this. Wallace felt so strongly that there was an opportunity. A window was available for a brief time right after the war, where Russia had sacrificed an untold measure in the war effort in loss of life and the destruction of their country and their economy. They desperately needed trade with the United States. Wallace was involved with efforts and aware of efforts where American businessmen had made trips right after the war to Russia and came back with all these stories about the potential for business opportunities there. Wallace felt that there were no differences between the United States and the Soviet Union that necessitated war. At the same time there was this buildup within the military and within other parts of the Congress and politics that were building this strong anti-Communist attitude. Wallace was caught. He saw that if we don't put a check on the arms race, if we don't try to work out our differences peacefully, that there's no way we're going to have the resources to devote to assisting the third world to come out of its poverty and its misery. And with Roosevelt's death in April 1945 it really marked the end of what Wallace felt was an opportunity. The one that he continued to fight for the next three years and led to his leaving the Truman cabinet in September of 1946 and ultimately running on the Progressive Party platform in 1948 on essentially a peace platform.

Q: Can you talk a little bit about his ability to distinguish between Stalin, Communism and the average Soviet citizen at that time? Clearly he wasn't a Stalin fan.

John Culver: No, I think he believed that there were opportunities for mutual development and growth. There were some aspects in terms of education, health and some of the progressive measures of the Soviet society, just as there were strong features in our society in terms of liberty, individual expression and free speech. He thought that the more communication we could have, the more coordination scientifically and in other areas, it would be not only of mutual benefit for our two countries but to the world. And he proposed that in the campaign in May of 1948 in an open letter to Stalin. Stalin replied very positively to the series of proposals that Wallace had made that would be the basis for a summit and discussion about our differences and about providing for exchanges not only of students but of news people and scientists. These were all things that he hoped could be brought about. The Cold War, of course, rather than have a cooperative effect of providing assistance to the world, resulted in us identifying ourselves with every

Interview with John C. Culver, co-author of
American Dreamer: A Life of Henry A. Wallace
Interviewed by Chip Duncan on May 5, 2003

reactionary regime in the world that professed to be anti-Communist, thereby suppressing any legitimate elements of reform and democratization that were coming from the people at the time. Similarly the Soviet Union is aligning themselves with every revolutionary exercise or initiative-- however responsible or irresponsible that association was-- in the world.

Q: In what ways was Wallace conflicted about the Manhattan project and the bomb?

John Culver: Well, he was not. He only participated in the decision regarding the bomb to recommend to Roosevelt that we go forward and develop it in light of what we knew about the German activity in the bomb field. Once it was under way he had no direct participation or involvement with the Manhattan project. He got briefed occasionally about the progress, but he was not really heavily involved. When it was actually dropped, he felt constrained to criticize Truman for the decision of dropping the bomb. He was a member of Truman's cabinet at that point, Secretary of Commerce. In view of the fact that he had been involved in the initial decision to build and develop it, that it would be appropriate for him to take a critical position at that point. However, he immediately aligned himself with some of the scientists who were involved-- Oppenheimer and others, who he described as he'd never seen a more crestfallen group of people. He went out to Chicago and met with all of them. And they were all agreed at that time how critical it was that we have serious arms control discussions with the Soviet Union and do everything we can to avoid an arms race or the future use of these weapons. Because, as a scientist, he uniquely appreciated the awesome destructive potential. He also favored the peacetime development of atomic energy and saw that properly developed and applied in the world as a very important development.

Q: He would have favored sharing technology?

John Culver: Absolutely.

Q: Wallace was criticized as being naive about some of these things, especially about his views on peace. In what ways was he perhaps naïve, or in what way were his critics wrong?

John Culver: They often juxtapose the idea that someone's idealistic and naive and this person is a realist and hardheaded in his approach. Actually I believe that Wallace was really more often than not the realist and the hard headed one. In July of 1946 he sent a memo to Truman at his request about the Soviet Union and why the Soviet Union was acting the way it was acting. He pointed out to Truman the history after the Bolshevik Revolution in 1913, when the British and the Americans entered into cooperative efforts to overthrow that very revolution. And of course this was not lost on Stalin-- nor the history of the Russian experience of being invaded and reinvaded and the paranoia that that society as a result suffered from and the suspicion that they had about certain things. And I think that he, in laying out some of that history, tried to put it in a context that would be more understandable to Truman. But at that point Truman was really headed

Interview with John C. Culver, co-author of
American Dreamer: A Life of Henry A. Wallace
Interviewed by Chip Duncan on May 5, 2003

the other way. His principle advisors were giving him a totally different assessment of that situation. It led to, of course, to the Cold War.

Q: Can you describe the Truman/Wallace relationship, the personalities?

John Culver: Truman wasn't known to Roosevelt at all. Even at the time of convention Truman, when Wallace led him on the first ballot in 1944 and nearly was nominated. An earlier effort to put the Vice Presidential nomination in play was ruled out of order. But the convention was very strongly for Wallace and contrary to what Roosevelt had been led to understand about the mood of the Democrats in the country, totally different than 1940 when the convention was not at all supportive of the Wallace nomination. But by 1944 Roosevelt had been led to believe he was unpopular among the Democrats, and in fact he really wasn't. The bosses had misled him as evidenced at that convention. But the other thing that's interesting is that in 1940 Roosevelt said that Wallace was picked because he had confidence that Wallace was the one person who could effectively carry out his domestic and international program if anything should happen to him. In 1944, when Roosevelt was ill and much sicker than most anyone knew, he really was totally indifferent to who was Vice President, which is sort of interesting and probably a reflection of his own state of health and his desire to see the war ended. So, Truman wins on the second ballot. After the convention, Truman asked to meet with Wallace. Truman says to Wallace, "I need your help. You're a great thinker. I'm not a great thinker, and I need your help." And, when they departed, Wallace shook hands with Truman and said, "That's all right, Harry. We're both Masons." In the campaign Wallace refused to take any money or support from the national committee, and of his own nickel he traveled around the country supporting FDR. In Madison Square Garden near the end of the campaign they were both, Truman and Wallace, were to appear. Because it was a major liberal audience, Truman had a lot of anxiety that he would be booed. Wallace grabbed his arm and walked together into the Madison Square Garden, which was a very considerate gesture to avoid that embarrassment to Truman. He was named Secretary of Commerce after a troublesome nomination. He was then serving with Truman. He said that from that point until September 1946, when he was fired by Truman, they never had a disagreeable word. Truman always seemed to agree with whatever he suggested to him. Wallace was concerned that he thought Truman agreed too quickly on things that many people proposed to him that perhaps didn't make that much sense. And so he thought that sometimes Truman was going one way and then another and not consistent. But he never had any personal disagreements with him. After the 1944 convention, Wallace sadly learned that FDR had not been totally honest with him, even though he'd given him a letter that said if he were a delegate he would vote for Wallace for Vice President and that they'd been a good team. He had also told Wallace that there wouldn't be any other, but the convention must decide, he said. He also told Wallace there wouldn't be any other letters. But he went ahead and gave another letter to the bosses and to the national chairman of the party at the time. And that letter said, "Either Bill Douglas (then on the Supreme Court) or Harry Truman would be acceptable to me"-- which confused the picture. And Wallace learned at the convention that Roosevelt's people were working behind the scenes to help Truman. So, it was about late in August after the

Interview with John C. Culver, co-author of
American Dreamer: A Life of Henry A. Wallace
Interviewed by Chip Duncan on May 5, 2003

convention and Wallace went to see Roosevelt for the first time since the convention in the White House, and Roosevelt greeted him warmly and said, "Henry I was very proud of you at the convention." Because Wallace's performance had really exceeded any expectation that Franklin Roosevelt had about his support for him. And he said, "But you know, you reminded me of my situation in 1932 when at the Democratic Convention it went to six ballots. And if it went another ballot Al Smith probably would have won. But like you, I didn't have any reserve so I had to make a deal with John Garner and William Randolph Hurst in order to get put over the top. And Wallace looked at him, and knowing that he had been deceived, he said, "Mr. President, I could have made a deal too, but I didn't choose to." A lot of integrity.

Q: Describe for us what his role was in the '44 convention.

John Culver: When Wallace went to the '44 convention he had a letter indicating that Roosevelt would vote for him if he were a delegate but the convention must decide. He was aware that Roosevelt would not demand that the convention support him as he had in 1940, but he was very comfortable with that. He didn't ask Roosevelt to do that. He didn't think it would be appropriate, but he was prepared to fight for the nomination. He was asked to second the nomination of FDR. That was one of the most remarkable speeches in the history of political conventions. Wallace knew that if you were going to be put over he had to have the support of the Southern Democrats. But he stood up there before the convention, and he threw down the gauntlet that the Democratic Party must be a liberal party. And he said racism must go, Jim Crow must go. Equal pay for women... and it was an electrifying. The convention really went berserk. We interviewed Senator Claude Pepper, who at the time was a Senator, and he was in charge of the Florida delegation. He couldn't believe his eyes. He was a supporter of Wallace. Suddenly the most genuine, spontaneous demonstration of the whole convention took place. He noted that these placards of each of the state signs were being carried by the head of the delegation. So, it really was a significant move toward Wallace. Claude said that he got on his chair and screamed for recognition. His mic didn't work. He jumped down and fought his way through the crowd, up to the podium. There was a labor union guy guarding the gate. He knew him, and he led him on up. There was a presiding officer-- Senator Jackson of Indiana, freshman Democrat Senator-- and Claude yelled at him to be recognized so that he could offer the motion to put the Vice Presidential nomination in order at that point rather than the next day. And the bosses were screaming in the presiding officer's other ear, "Adjourn this thing; adjourn it; hammer this thing down." So, he called for the yeas and nays on adjournment and the nays were overwhelming but he nevertheless hammered down. They cut the pipe organ out. Fire chiefs came in and ordered the evacuation of the hall. Just pandemonium broke loose. The next morning Claude Pepper said he was in the hotel lobby with that Senator. And that Senator said, "You know, Claude, I'm sorry. I know I should have recognized you, but the bosses wouldn't let me do it." And Claude Pepper said that the failure to be recognized changed the face of history for the next fifty years and put it in a topsy turvy state in terms of what might have been had he been successfully recognized and nominated at that point. So, at that point in time the bosses really were in control of the convention.

Interview with John C. Culver, co-author of
American Dreamer: A Life of Henry A. Wallace
Interviewed by Chip Duncan on May 5, 2003

Q: Let's talk about this period between the time he leaves the Truman administration and the Progressive Party in 1948. What does he do during this period?

John Culver: In September 1946 Wallace was scheduled to make a speech before a liberal audience in Madison Square Garden. It was just on the eve of the Congressional elections. He met with Truman in the White House to go over a speech that he had written for that occasion, which essentially urged a more conciliatory approach to the Soviet Union than was currently being advocated by Truman and his advisors. And Truman approved every line of it. They sat together and at one point Wallace actually said, "May I say this, that you agree with this?" And he said, "Absolutely." So, Wallace went up to New York. There was an advanced copy made available to the press that morning in Washington. When the press saw this, they immediately started to call the White House and say, "This doesn't seem to be consistent with the Truman policy toward the Soviet Union. What's the story here?" People in the state department were upset about it. They couldn't get any kind of a response from Truman about it. That night he was playing cards with Clark Clifford, and he refused to make any comment. So Wallace went ahead and made this speech. Of course it created a furor because the Secretary of State Jim Byrnes was in Paris with Senator Vandenberg and Tom Connelly, a Texas Senator, negotiating with the Soviets and taking a very hard line at that particular point in the relationship. He wired back in effect saying, "You can only have one Secretary of State at a time." to Truman. Truman was sort of shaken up by it. He was asked at a press conference, "Did you agree to this speech that Wallace did?" And he said, "Yes." "Well, did you agree with every word of it?" And he said, "Yes." And then he had a subsequent appearance when he said, "I only agreed with his right to make the speech." Well, Wallace called Truman at that point and said, "You know, I understand why you had to say that." Truman said, "Come on in and see me. I don't want to lose either one of you. I need you both." Wallace went in. They had a long conversation. When he emerged they said that he had agreed not to make any more foreign policy speeches until after the Paris conference. Well, that really wasn't good enough in terms of Burns and the others to tame down the problem. Truman ended up firing him from the cabinet. Truman sent a letter to Wallace which was a very intemperate letter and rather rude. That was precipitated by the fact that Wallace had released the July memo on the U.S./Soviet relations which he had cleared with the White House to release, because they had heard Drew Pearson had a copy of it. Then the White House changed their mind, but the memo was out. And so Truman was upset, and he fired Wallace. When Wallace got the letter, he called Truman right away and said, "You can have my resignation any time you want it, of course, Mr. President." "But," he said, "I don't think you want a letter like this in circulation." And Truman appreciated it, because he agreed. He sent a messenger over to get the letter, and no one to this date has ever seen the contents of that letter. But Truman wrote his family later in his diary and said something to the effect that as upset as he was with Wallace after he did that kind of gesture he wasn't so sure about his decision because it was such a thoughtful and considerate act by Wallace to not embarrass the President where he could have. Then he took a position as editor of *The New Republic* and moved to a farm outside New York City and became the editor of that paper. And it

Interview with John C. Culver, co-author of
American Dreamer: A Life of Henry A. Wallace
Interviewed by Chip Duncan on May 5, 2003

became very strongly advocating various support for a more conciliatory policy toward the Soviet Union and a liberal position on domestic issues. Wallace contemplated challenging Truman at the next Democratic convention as a Democrat. He was running very strongly in the polls. He was attracting huge audiences across the country as he spoke out during the period of 1947 both in this country and abroad in opposition to the policies of the Cold War developing, the Truman Doctrine, aid to Greece and Turkey. Some of the issues there were he thought there should be aid to Greece certainly, but it should be through the UN. And he thought about running against Truman and was running well in the polls. He finally concluded by the end of '47 that the bosses would once again control the convention. The way the conventions were conducted and organized, he really couldn't have a realistic chance. And so he reluctantly agreed to be the candidate for President on the Progressive Party. He had put himself somewhat in a box by saying that if the Democratic Party doesn't change its position on relations with the Soviet Union that "I'll have no other choice but to run as a third party." And that really finally came down to the decision where he had no choice. In December of '47 he announced that he was going to run for a candidate for President on the Progressive Party and campaigned in that capacity until their convention the following summer.

Q: The support that he had from the Democrats went away, they wouldn't cross over?

John Culver: In 1947 the two Democratic factions were formed-- the Americans for Democratic Action near the end of '47 and the Progressive Citizens of America, the PCA, which was the more liberal Wing. A number of liberal unions and artists and largely academics were in the PCA. The ADA was a liberal organization but refused any admission of the Communist party to participate in their liberal organization. And that's where the overwhelming majority of the Democratic New Dealers migrated to in terms of their opposition with some of Truman's policies and so forth. Wallace had hoped to keep them together, but he felt trapped on the matter of free speech and the Bill of Rights, that the Communist Party was a legal party. If they supported him that's their choice as long as they supported him. When he met with the Communist leader to be told that they were going to support him, it was a very brief conversation, only a few minutes. And he said, "I want you to understand two things, I am a Progressive capitalist, and I believe in God." And he knew throughout the course of that campaign that it was an albatross around his neck to have the support of the U.S. Communist Party. But he didn't feel as a basis of the First Amendment that they should be denied participation in the party as long as they were citizens of the United States and weren't doing anything at that point that was illegal. And so it was a very costly thing for him. He was well aware of the cost. It was rather courageous in terms of taking that basic principle and even though it was very costly politically.

Q: Is courage the driving force behind this man, the fact that he had the courage to live up to the principles, really Jeffersonian type principles?

John Culver: I think one of the most profound influences of his life was his grandfather, the former Presbyterian minister. He cautioned him and urged him as a young man in a

Interview with John C. Culver, co-author of
American Dreamer: A Life of Henry A. Wallace
Interviewed by Chip Duncan on May 5, 2003

famous letter on his 21st birthday that if he's on God's side he's on the side of the majority. The world might not always think so, but posterity is appreciative of the man who thinks the right thing. That motivated Wallace, that faith. Even in terms of the cause of peace where he was subjected to so much criticism--that was the thing that sustained him. He felt that in the cause of peace that he was serving what he understood to be the most basic principles and values of life for him.

Q: In what way did his spiritual foundations ground him so that he could live in a certain kind of peace whatever the consequences of his position?

John Culver: He always had this continual faith in some higher power. I think it was very genuine, very sincere. He held to that course in his life and with a real deep and abiding faith. It did provide him the strength and the courage to do things that he thought were right consistent with that faith. I believe that was probably the most important single factor in his values and attitude.

Q: Did his faith give him a sense of confidence in the rightness of a certain action he would take?

John Culver: I think so. I don't think he was at all arrogant or self-righteous about that. That would be inconsistent with his understanding of the faith and his relationship with a God or higher power. The courage he showed too in the 1948 campaign--he was the first candidate for President of the United States ever to campaign in the South and refuse to appear before a segregated audience. And it subjected him to all kinds of violence, rioting and threats on his life. Very, very serious situations developed all through the South. And he at times said that he couldn't believe that he was in America. He later said in a speech in New York, that he'd seen the face of fascism in our own country. And his Vice President, the Senator from Idaho, was kept in jail overnight in Birmingham, Alabama by Bull Conner, the infamous Bull Conner of Selma, Alabama fame for going into a "black only" church. He was thrown to the ground, his suit torn. He was kept overnight in a drunk tank in jail and bailed out in the morning, flew back here to Washington, went onto the Senate floor. And the Southern senators all walked off the floor. Here was a U.S. Senator who was subjected to that kind of treatment. And it gives you some idea of the climate in which Wallace was trying to pursue and support these positions and the hostility and vehemence with which he was confronted.

Q: How did he conduct that '48 campaign? What was unique about it?

John Culver: It was a very open party. It attracted a lot of young people for the first time and a large number of veterans for the first time. It was characterized by a lot of music and songs. The interesting thing is that the platform of the Progressive Party in 1948, which had largely been looked upon as so far out, has now been accepted in the mainstream and adopted into law. It called for things like 18-year-old vote, statehood for Alaska and Hawaii. It called for national health insurance or Medicare type program. It

Interview with John C. Culver, co-author of
American Dreamer: A Life of Henry A. Wallace
Interviewed by Chip Duncan on May 5, 2003

called for equal pay for women and all kinds of things which today are part of our national life and accepted today.

Q: In what ways was Henry Wallace ahead of his time?

John Culver: He was always ahead of his time. That's one of the characteristic features of his whole life. He had an ability to look ahead, to think ahead. He always put great importance on trying to do that and anticipating the future development of events and what the consequences would be for pursuing a particular approach. He predicted the arms race, the Cold War and all the negative consequences to civil liberties here in our own country. It was the very things he hoped he could avoid in the interest of a better world. I think that was one of the most characterizing features of ... He was always thinking ahead and always trying to anticipate what the consequences of a given action may or may not be based on his understanding of history. Roosevelt once said to him, "You know, Henry, the things you believe in are all going to come some day. Your problem is that you're just too far ahead of your time. And in seven or eight years these things that you're advocating will come about." It was always part of his approach to life in terms of being very prophetic about developments.

Q: In the early 60's when he would look back at his political life, his career, do you think he felt happy about it?

John Culver: When Wallace had occasion to reflect and look back on his experiences, he thought a number of things. He was very honest and candid about acknowledging where he thought he perhaps was in error. But the things that he fundamentally believed in, things like arms control, international trade, international organization, the United Nations, the basic things that he really devoted most of his serious life to remained constant with him. I think he also looked back and thought that perhaps he was misled at one instance in the Soviet trip he took about a particular situation. He was very disappointed with the failure of the Soviet Union as well as the United States to avoid the Cold War. He was very disappointed with the Korean situation where he thought that the Soviets and Stalin had apparently decided that the possibilities for peace with the United States weren't going to happen and that they embarked on a dedicated Cold War opposition.

Q: Tell me a little bit about the Progressive Party in terms of who supported the Progressive Party and why they supported it.

John Culver: Most of the New Deal people did not support the Progressive Party. You had that split with the Americans for Democratic Action. They were opposed to any Communist participation in their liberal organization. Eleanor Roosevelt ultimately went along with the ADA as well. The most prominent member of the New Deal, Rex Tugwell, who was part of Roosevelt's original brain trust, and the undersecretary of agriculture for a time with Wallace, stayed with him up until the end. He also was very involved in the platform in 1948. There were a number of people that later were named

Interview with John C. Culver, co-author of
American Dreamer: A Life of Henry A. Wallace
Interviewed by Chip Duncan on May 5, 2003

to be Communists, that Wallace had no idea that they were. Lee Pressman was one of the most prominent in the campaign. John Apt was a lawyer who was very involved in civil liberties cases. He later was learned to be a Communist or assumed to be. There was also a large number of very sincere idealistic people, Anita McCormick Blaine of the International Harvester fortune, the heiress who was extraordinarily generous and provided much of the financial resources for the campaign. She was just an idealist that really believed in a peaceful world. It's important to keep in mind the context of the time. You had the Republican candidate for President in 1940, Wendell Willkie, writing a book about one world which was more idealistic than any of the articulation of Wallace's visions for the world. That was far more acceptable in terms of an approach to be pursued. One of the things about this whole experience is that there is a general acceptance that we won the Cold War. I don't think we always stop and ask ourselves on a tally sheet, "What exactly did we win or what did we lose?" And, "What about the road untraveled? What would have been?" It's one of the great "what if's" of history. It has to remain so. When you contemplate how, within moments, Wallace was not renominated for Vice President in 1944. One has to contemplate what a difference the shape of the world would have been. That doesn't mean that one can't say, "Well, that would have been unmitigated disaster." Certainly his critics felt that would have been the case and take great pride in having been involved in frustrating that possibility from ever occurring. That's the most important achievement of their lives. But it still doesn't answer the question that no one assumes-- that it would be easy--that other road--or that there wouldn't be problems-- that there wouldn't be serious difficulties, maybe of a military nature. But it's hard to imagine. It could be a lot worse than it turned out to be in terms of the Vietnam War if Wallace had been there, because he wasn't going to let the French back in there-- and Truman did. So there're a lot of issues here that it would take a longer perspective of history to resolve.

Q: Do you think he would have probably dropped the bomb, but then at the same time made peace with the Soviets and avoided a lot of what came after?

John Culver: I can't honestly say whether or not. I've never seen in our study of his life and research where that really presented itself. He talked about the guilt-stricken nature of the scientists after the bomb was dropped. He was absolutely obsessed with the need for arms control with the Soviet Union.

Q: Did he have the kind of knowledge of the Soviet Union where he may have realized that they didn't have the might that we thought they had?

John Culver: He certainly believed that the Russians were no military threat to us in the immediate post-war period. He felt that there was that window of opportunity to develop relationships with them that would minimize our differences. He very much appreciated how weak they were and how eager they were for American help in terms of trade.

Q: The flip side was that there must have been people in the Truman administration who felt that peace in many ways did not serve U.S. interests?

Interview with John C. Culver, co-author of
American Dreamer: A Life of Henry A. Wallace
Interviewed by Chip Duncan on May 5, 2003

John Culver: There was a very substantial element in the military and in the political circles who were very aggressive about the need to hit Russia now when they were weak, not let them build up. And certainly there were political interests that fanned the anti-Communists' sentiment that existed among certain émigré groups from Eastern Europe and elsewhere that helped form this anti-Communist consensus and conventional wisdom about what had to be done.

Q: Why was there the suspicion of any Communist influence in his life, in his party?

John Culver: He was always a Progressive capitalist and a believer in God. He made that clear to the representatives of the US Communist Party in 1948 when they came to tell him they wanted to support him.

Q: It's probably the most complicated part of the story to tell because there is so much mythology around it. Yet we roll the clocks forward from '48 to the early '50s. Now there are people who believe that he's a Communist, who believe that there's been a Communist influence in the party. Can you paint the picture for this whole Communist scare?

John Culver: In the 1948 Progressive Party campaign, I don't believe Wallace was aware personally of the Communist affiliation of a number of the key actors in the campaign. He had made clear to the Communist Party USA that he was a capitalist, a Progressive capitalist and he was a believer in God. He also felt that there was such an anti-Communist hysteria that he did not want to participate in that. Red baiting was one of the reasons he took a principle stand in terms of permitting Communists, while they were a legal party, to participate. After the end of the '48 campaign when the political affiliation of some of these participants in prominent positions in the Progressive Party became publicly known, Wallace got increasingly tarred with the brush of being a Communist sympathizer. That, coupled with his advocacy of a more constructive approach with the Soviet Union, ended up where he became the target of these anti-Communist accusations. Nothing ever came out of any of it. One of the most prominent cases involved the situation over the debate of who lost China when China in 1948 was taken over by the Communist Party. Wallace had been sent in June of 1944 to China as well as a trip to Soviet Asia. He had met with Chinese officials over there, Chiang Kai-shek and others, and he had made a report to Roosevelt. Many years later in 1950 or so, when this climate had built up, one of the big political issues was that we lost China because of Communist sympathizers in the State Department. A number were attacked, accused and fired from the State Department in the McCarthy period. Wallace was called in, in connection with the nature of his China report. "Was it sympathetic to the Communists? Did it undercut the nationalist government in China and Chung Kai-shek?" Of course there was nothing to it at all. And as a result Wallace had the report released. It totally exonerated him from any such allegations. If anything he was making recommendations that were very, very much contrary to the Communist interest. As a result, even though he had been subjected to all this vilification, the Senate Internal

Interview with John C. Culver, co-author of
American Dreamer: A Life of Henry A. Wallace
Interviewed by Chip Duncan on May 5, 2003

Security Investigation Committee didn't even mention Wallace. He was shocked and dismayed by this. A Vice President of the United States was hauled before a Congressional Committee amidst all these false allegations. He totally refuted any factual basis or foundation for the charges. The committee didn't even have the courtesy to clearly exonerate him from any wrongdoing of any kind in his public capacity. That was the kind of thing that was very painful to Wallace. In the 15 years between the time he left the Progressive Party and his death in November of 1965, it was a very, very painful period in a lot of ways. In terms of books, articles and newspaper stories appearing which would rehash all kinds of false allegations surrounding his loyalty or his naiveté on a given situation. It was a very lonely thing to contemplate. He was on his farm in upstate New York. He'd get up at five o'clock in the morning and type out on his typewriter answers to all of these things and mail them off. He continually had to endure books by New Deal contemporaries about their period during the Roosevelt administration. Once again their characterization of him or their treatment of him on a given situation was contrary to fact. It had just become safe to attack Wallace. It became politically fashionable almost. It was very painful for him. He knew at the time the esteem and respect in which he was held. Although he was in no way an arrogant person, he took great pride in his public service and particularly his patriotism and his contribution to the war effort. And that was very painful-- that it wasn't properly acknowledged. On the contrary, it was discredited and his reputation was destroyed.

Q: In that sense is he a tragic figure?

John Culver: In many ways the treatment that he experienced as an American public official was certainly tragic. Yes, I think it was tragic. One of the things that I think is so important is that the life of this good man is achieving a more appropriate place in history.

John Culver: When Wallace left public life for the final time and retired to his farm in upstate New York, he had a habit of rising very early. During this period he experienced so many crushing disappointments--in terms of the way his public life and public service had been portrayed by contemporaries whom he felt certainly didn't feel that way at the time they worked with him. He had become sort of fair game for the critics. It was almost if you mentioned his name you had to lend yourself to the chorus of criticism surrounding the anti-Communism issue of the day. He would painstakingly try to reply to every one of these false comments. He would "hunt and peck" on that typewriter. He would begin at five in the morning these letters to Truman and to other prominent people challenging what they said in a memoir. Of course, he rarely if ever would get a reply. He was so meticulous about the facts. He had such excellent records that he really was absolutely persuasive in terms of his own defense. But the lie was halfway around the world before he could get his typewriter out. And it was repeated in newspapers or other places. He couldn't keep up with the allegations and their proliferations.

Q: Why do you think Henry Wallace was, in some ways, forgotten or poorly remembered over the last 50 years?

Interview with John C. Culver, co-author of
American Dreamer: A Life of Henry A. Wallace
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John Culver: Henry Wallace was never really interested in politics or political parties other than as vehicles for the successful pursuit of a great cause that motivated him. And the two great causes were the American farmer and secondly the cause of peace. He started out as a Progressive Republican supporting Teddy Roosevelt. But when he became disillusioned with that party in the '20s because of the Republican Party failure to adequately and properly lend support through federal legislation to the serious economic plight of the farmer, he left the party. He supported the Democratic nomination of Roosevelt because he believed that that offered a better prospect for meeting his primary interests and concern. And then he was a New Dealer. He often commented on how fortunate he was to serve in an administration that did share his sympathy and support for the farmer's interest-- unlike his father who in the Harding and Coolidge administration did not enjoy that support. He left the Democratic Party over the cause of peace as he saw it in terms of when he advocated a more conciliatory approach to the Soviet Union and Truman fired him. He left the Democratic Party and later joined the Progressive Party in late '47, '48. In 1950 he left the Progressive Party over the disagreement with the party on the United Nation's Korean action and the US support for the UN role there and his support for this country when it was at war. So when the end of his career came, unlike most major political figures, he didn't really serve in the Pantheon if you will of political heroes of any of these parties. None of them really came out and claimed him. There was admiration for different aspects of his career, but there wasn't a total acceptance of his public life and positions by any of the major political parties or even third party. That contributed greatly to his becoming more of a non-person. With the Communist criticism associated with the '48 Progressive Party experience, he became a non-person. Another victim of the Cold War debates. Just written out of history. That is probably the most amazing thing of all--that a man of this extraordinary achievement and so many diverse fields could conceivably be ignored by a nation--given his contributions to world agriculture.

Q: What is his legacy?

John Culver: He should be remembered for two things. One is his contribution to world food production as a key developer of the hybrid corn which led to the Green Revolution and directly benefited countless millions of people throughout the world. And secondly, was his dedication to peace in the world, without which he understood that the fulfillment of the social gospel of service to your fellow man in the maximum sense would never be realized. He remained faithful and constant in his pursuit of those two objectives that really were part of his heritage and part of the Wallace legacy to the world.

Q: What are some of the lessons that we can learn from Henry Wallace?

John Culver: Wallace had a great faith in the American people in spite of his experience in politics. He once said that his grandfather gave him some good advice when he urged him not to go into politics, because he thought he could be more effective in servicing fellow man in education or in the ministry. And Wallace said at the end of his life, "My

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grandfather was a very wise man." "But," he said, "I don't regret the course I've taken and the things I've fought for and believed in and I think that I made the right decision." He had such faith in the American public. He got caught in this great historical confluence of events in the post-war period and the Communist issue. He personally got so stigmatized in that controversy that it certainly minimized his later potentials. The example to me is the character, integrity and courage of taking principle positions and advocating them well. And continuing to respect the electorate. That an informed electorate could make wise decisions. Sometimes that process works; sometimes there are periods when it works better than others. I do believe that in the long sweep of history, people will look at this period and look at the things that he advocated and stood for. It's an agenda that's still out there, unfulfilled today, the very things that he posed as priorities and needs and values, are really what we've got to get back to if we're going to continue to make real progress on this planet.

Q: For example?

John Culver: International cooperation, issues like the environment, issues like poverty, health and elevating the condition of the third world. A strong United Nations, international trade cooperation, arms control and restraints, disarmament. And strengthen the UN capability to carry out essential military assignments that may arise in the future.

Q: How would he go about trying to achieve those things today, do you think? Or someone else who might be inspired by him, how would they lead and show that kind of vision?

John Culver: Well, one of the things that we really have to have is people who aspire to leadership who are really deeply, sincerely motivated by these goals, objectives and values. People who are politically fearless in their advocacy and their determination to confront opposition to those same objectives. And to fight fairly and honestly within the appropriate bounds of our political process to achieve them. Have faith in the public and the people to make the right choices and not be distracted by fear and distracted by misinformation. And demand of their government, demand of their elected officials the same kind of sincerity and integrity that they deserve. And when they don't find it, or if they later find it was a trust that wasn't well-founded, they should take action to sanction that kind of conduct and that kind of behavior in elected officials. That ultimately is what's key. I remember they tell the story of Ben Franklin coming down to the Constitutional Convention in 1787 and a woman came up to him and said, "Mr. Franklin, what kind of government have you given us?" He said, "Madame, a republic-- if you can keep it." And that remains to be the case. I think that looking back on Wallace's life, and by way of an explanation for his conduct with regard to his campaign for peace and the Progressive Party and the criticism that he was subjected to, it comes back to the letter that he received from his beloved grandfather on his 21st birthday. His grandfather was so proud of him and his accomplishments and his character. But he said, "You know, the beginning of the thing is not as important as the ending. You can't really evaluate the worth of a man's life until it's over."

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